SCENES, SEASONS, AND SPACES: TEXTUAL MODES OF ADDRESS

IN MODERN FRENCH, AMERICAN, AND RUSSIAN LITERATURE

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines how literary form adapts to emergent print environments by identifying common strategies for incorporating the act of reading into the situation of the text. In my analysis of original textual forms, I investigate the material specificity of constitutively modern practices of reading and subjectivity, focusing on how innovative publications structure these practices by involving the reader in the process of production. This project assembles six pioneering writers across literary traditions, genres, and periods, from the 1830s to the 1910s, in three chapter pairings: novelistic episodes of Honoré de Balzac's *Comédie humaine* and prose poems of Charles Baudelaire's *Spleen de Paris* in nineteenth-century Parisian periodicals; the prose poetry books, *Une saison en enfer* by Arthur Rimbaud and *Spring and All* by William Carlos Williams; and genre-bending texts from the œuvres of Stéphane Mallarmé and Vladimir Mayakovsky, including the typographically irregular page spreads of *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* and *Vladimir Mayakovsky: A Tragedy* (*Vladimir Maiakovskii:*

Tragediia). My discussion locates reflexive conceptions of modern

literature in constructions of the reading subject, while extending the

performative framework of textual modes of address to new media and

digital technologies—social interfaces that mediate subjectivity by

structuring practices of reading.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Under the conditions of high technology, literature has nothing
more to say."

Friedrich A. Kittler

"Literature … was never only words, never only disembodied verbal
constructs."

N. Katherine Hayles[1]

Amidst what we now call "new media,"[2] literature is old news—

literally: it was an event among events when print made the news. But

that is not to say that literature (or "print culture,"[3] for that matter) is

not worth talking about anymore, or that "literature has nothing more to

say," as German media theorist Friedrich Kittler insists, closing the

production of meaning in the digital fusion of distinct media. What

silences literature is not the high-tech media apparatus itself, but rather

the hard-line emphasis on the technology of media to the exclusion of all

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[1] Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter.* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999) 263;
Lisa Gitelman, "'Materiality Has Always Been in Play': An Interview with N. Katherine
Hayles" (U of Iowa, 2002) 12.

[2] For an interrogation of the term "new media" tempered by the theoretical,
methodological, and archival range of the burgeoning field of new media studies, see
Chun and Keenan 1-10.

[3] In *Paper Knowledge,* Lisa Gitelman argues against the usage of the negatively, if at all
defined term "print culture," which in her view, blurs the specificity of print
technologies, processes, and practices into one explanatory milieu of cultural change
(8). While "print culture" may be a faulty designation for an object of study, it provides a
vital social and material dimension to the analysis of literary texts in their specificity, as
I will suggest in this dissertation.

possibilities of meaning-making as hermeneutics.[4] Under what conditions *does* literature have more to say? Through historical examples, literature stirs up the field of new media studies as "old media," returning to remind us that it, too, was once new, on the leading edge of production with technology and its users. But literature has more to offer than some *revenant*; it has a body. This is what N. Katherine Hayles, working in the intersection of literature and science, calls to our critical attention: "literature . . . was never only words," for it has always been bound up with materiality, in embodied forms and practices. If literature is to have more to say in a text-saturated culture, it must at once assert its distinctive properties—what separates literary from other forms of text?—and enter into a leveling discourse of textuality and textual production: literature, as we've come to view all text, is media; and like all media, literature is a specific kind of text. Re-examining the object of study in literary scholarship necessarily blurs disciplinary lines—genre categories, literary histories, theoretical traditions, methodologies, print and digital artifacts. This is the course that this dissertation has taken, taking up observations of literary form— how the text folds its own production into the form of language—as aspects of materiality, the workings of the literary text as media addressed to the reader.

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[4] For the purposes of this discussion, I am defining hermeneutics negatively, that is, as the "romantic" interpretive regime against which Foucault, Kittler, and other media theorists formulate their analytics (Fornäs 502).

By making this address explicit, for example, the literary text
mediates the reader's encounter with its form. In place of a conventional
preface, a barrage of insults presents *Les Fleurs du mal*, Charles
Baudelaire's revolutionary book of verse, to the reader. Every edition of
the book (the 1857 original, the censored 1861 publication, and the 1868
posthumous version) begins with a veritable inventory of human vices in
the ten-stanza poem, "Au lecteur." This provocative poem spells out an
exhaustive list of sins, culminating in the most insidious—*Ennui*, an
exoticized figure made familiar to the reader by means of direct address:
"Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat, —Hypocrite lecteur, —mon
semblable, —mon frère!" (*Œuvres complètes* 1: 5). In this accusatory turn
toward the reader, Baudelaire's poetic speaker establishes a preexisting
relationship of knowing kinship, climaxing in the act of apostrophe,
which is, in Jonathan Culler's distillation, the quintessence of lyric: the
impassioned call gives voice to the very presence of the speaker and the
object of address, bringing both into mutually constitutive subject
relations in the momentary situation of the speech act (*Signs* 142). In
some measure, the reader's response to the relationship presumed in the
familiar address of "Au lecteur" bears on the course of continued reading,
which passes along the spectrum of sympathetic identification and moral
indignation. By opening in this confrontational manner, instead of

addressing the reader in any one of Baudelaire's unapologetic "Projets du preface,"[5] the formal structure of *Les Fleurs du mal* insists on the reader's participation in the process of the text, as it proceeds through the trials of mortal experience.

Baudelaire's invocation of a *kind* of reader in "Au lecteur"—a fraternity in fraud, so to speak—makes the presumption of address radically explicit: the shift in modes of address in the poem establishes the relationship between the speaker and the addressee as one of extreme identity, basing the construction of the reader in the text on presumed understanding. To some extent, then, the situation of the text hinges on the reader's self-recognition. In its context as the prefatory poem of *Les Fleurs du mal*, "Au lecteur" thus serves as a performative frame of reading, foregrounding the role of the reader in the act of producing meaning. As I will clarify, I am using the term *performative*[6] here in the literary-inclusive sense elaborated by speech-act theory; this usage extends the agency of utterances in J. L. Austin's classic *How to Do Things with Words* to the words addressed to the reader in the situation of the text. Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of speech act

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[5] See "Projets du Préface" (*Œuvres complètes* 1: 184).

[6] J. Hillis Miller's thorough "disambiguation" of the term in "Performativity as Performance / Performativity as Speech Act: Derrida's Special Theory of Performativity" offers further insight into its discourse-specific meanings and implications.

theory[7] also bears on my understanding of the performative; to presume to address the reader in a performative role is to presume to erase *différance,* the difference between actual subjects and subject positions and the deferral of textual production from writing to printing to reading. Where Derrida evacuates the text of any producing subjects, I propose that a text posits its own theory of the subject, in a sense, in the attempt to overcome *différance.* I am interested in the *construction* of the situation of the text as an interface enabling the productivity of practices of subjectivity; even if the situation of the text is an impossible meeting of posited subjects, as Barbara Johnson elucidates in "Apostrophe Animation Abortion," the interface is still an object for formal analysis in the performative framework.

This approach attends to how modes of address, as performative aspects of literary form, establish the situation of the text in relation to the reader. In particular, I focus on the internal gestures that secure an operative relationship between the reader and the text itself. I identify *textual modes of address* as strategies for positioning the reader in the situation of the text as a process of production. This formulation includes Baudelaire's "hypocrite" reader—or the reader directly called out—and the "hidden" reader, exposed by Victor Brombert as a multi-layered construct in literary communication, communing a "variety of

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[7] For further discussion, see Dieter Freundlieb, "Has Derrida Deconstructed Speech Act Theory? The Derrida-Searle Debate Revisited."

'readers'—real, fictional, metaphorical" (1). While the unqualified term *the reader* may correspond to a historical reader with all the assumptions and exclusions that an intended reader entails, for the purposes of this discussion, I refer to the reader in the context of the text, that is, in the referenced act of reading that structures the text as a co-operative situation.

In this configuration, textual modes of address extend the performative scheme of speech-act theory to include not only verbal utterances, but also non-verbal articulations of the situation of the text as a relationship. Speech-act theory conceptualizes the literary text as a speech situation in which types of utterances may be classified, as in Mary Louise Pratt's seminal work, *Towards a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse.* While this framework helps to recognize specific acts of address in writing, I want to focus on literary form as a response to the projected act of reading—in a sense, how the text intrinsically prepares the way for the reader. What concerns me, then, about the situation of the text is its ongoing construction; more precisely, how the act of reading is incorporated into the process. As I will demonstrate in my analysis of textual modes of address, this process of construction mobilizes bibliographic or editorial elements, among the varieties of formalizing structures that Gérard Genette catalogues as "paratexte," to *present* the text to the reader: "pour le *présenter* [le texte], au sens habituel de ce verbe, mais aussi en son sens le plus fort: pour le *rendre*

present, pour assurer sa présence au monde, sa 'reception' et sa consommation" ["to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb, but also in its strongest meaning: to *make it present,* to assure its presence to the world, its 'reception' and consumption" (*Seuils* 7; "Paratexte" 261)]. To return to my opening example of address, Baudelaire's poem, "Au lecteur," carries the paratextual significance of prefatory material by virtue of its position in *Les Fleurs du mal.* The address of the poem establishes the book as a "scene of reading" in which the reader is complicit in the acts to follow (McGann 4).

By exposing the performative situation of the text, textual modes of address account for the specificity of material form—the "scene of reading" in Martha Nell Smith's interpretation (Bornstein and Tinkle 195). In the aim of reconciling material and formal concerns, speech-act theory further informs my analysis through historicizing approaches to textual construction. As George Bornstein argues in *Material Modernisms: The Politics of the Page,* the material dimensions of the text, which correspond to the "bibliographic code" in Jerome McGann's terminology, comprise a signifying vehicle for the "delivery of a speech act," conveying the content of the "linguistic code" (7-8). The material form of the text thus participates in the process of producing meaning, which, as Peter Shillingsburg draws out in the distinction between sentence and utterance, imbricates the performances of "[a]uthoring, manufacturing, and reading":

Sentence is the formal structure of the words and their relations . . . Utterance is the intended meaning in the use of the sentence; the same sentence can be used on separate occasions to mean different things . . . In writing, the extra-textual clues are less immediate than in speech but include the 'bibliographic code' as a means writers, publishers, and readers use to help distinguish sentence meaning from utterance meaning. (*Resisting Texts* 105)

In this accentuation of the use of the text, material form mediates in the interactions that produce meaning, providing access to utterance by making the text readable. The material form of the text conditions its use and, accordingly, its available meaning. At the same time, the use of the text is contingent upon the reader, who uses the text according to its own rules, but also, as Michel de Certeau brings into view in *L'invention du quotidien* (*The Practice of Everyday Life*), the constraints and affordances of the situation of use. Certeau exposes the agentive side of the user as an improvisational subject who makes do with what is available in the "nœud de circonstances" ("nexus of circumstances") in which the operations of the text on and by the subject are embedded (56; 33).

I consider the materiality of the medium significant in this regard, since the text is nothing if not a processing of available material, which includes the medium enabling the reader's productive interactions.

According to Marshall McLuhan's dictum, "the medium is the message," the specific materiality of print culture is not only integral to literary form, but also inseparable from its content: the "message of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs" (8). I want to suggest ways in which print technology deposits its impact in the text as strategic forms that address the reader in a situation of co-operation. In framing this inquiry, I refer to materiality as an emergent quality along the lines of Katherine Hayles's digitally inflected definition in *Writing Machines:*

> Materiality thus emerges from interactions between physical
> properties and a work's artistic strategies. For this reason,
> materiality cannot be specified in advance, as if it preexisted the
> specificity of the work. An emergent property, materiality depends
> on how the work mobilizes its resources as a physical artifact as
> well as on the user's interactions with the work and the
> interpretive strategies she develops—strategies that include
> physical manipulations as well as conceptual frameworks.   (33)

This angle on materiality encompasses the features of the work—not only physical, but also intrinsically formal adaptations—that negotiate between artistic and interpretive strategies brought to bear on the text as an object in discourse. Through this dialectical materiality, textual modes of address structure the reader's interactions with specificity. On

this point, I align these textual strategies with Vincent Kaufman's notion of address as "la specificité du lien que le texte littéraire a pouvoir d'établir avec un lecteur" [the specificity of the link which the literary text has authority to establish with a reader (8)]. By embedding links to potential action in the text, textual modes of address carry out the relational function of literary form as shaped material.

The intertwining of reading, form, and materiality in textual modes of address raises a difficult question: how does the *form* of the literary text record its response to print culture, or to its own material circumstances? I apprehend this problem through Theodor W. Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, which offers a historicizing framework for melding form and content in the literary text: "Artworks are alive in that they speak in a fashion that is denied to natural objects and the subjects who make them. They speak by virtue of the communication of everything particular in them" (6). In this proposition, the literary text constitutes a special speech situation as an object *made to speak* through its particular composition. The text addresses the world as a world apart, a whole system of internal relationships between parts. These constituent components do the *work* of the text, which is the "communication of everything particular in them"; the text speaks of and through its material specificity. Further, the work of art imposes itself as separate from other objects, Adorno insists, by virtue of its intention as material shaped into a form for communication of its own particularity; "yet it is

precisely as artifacts, as products of social labor, that they also communicate with the empirical experience that they reject and from which they draw their content [Inhalt]." In its specific materiality as a product, the literary text bears the marks of its production (the artist's struggle to give separate form to the material) in the very texture of its content. For this reason, Adorno distinguishes form and content only in their interpenetration in the work of art: "If art opposes the empirical through the element of form—and the mediation of form and content is not to be grasped without their differentiation—the mediation is to be sought in the recognition of aesthetic form as sedimented content." I consider textual modes of address to be instances of the "sedimented content" that is the bedrock of compositional form. As strategic means of drawing the reader into the text, textual modes of address connect the internal world of the text with the outside. In this manner, the text affirms its material reality as a situated encounter by acknowledging the reader's role in its production.

This self-conception of the text as a process marks the post-structuralist transition or "epistemological slide" memorably theorized by Roland Barthes (155). In "De l'œuvre au texte" ("From Work to Text"), Barthes proclaims the rise of "le Texte" ("the Text")"[e]n face de l'œuvre—notion traditionnelle" ("[o]ver and against the traditional notion of the work"); the replacement of the categorically complete and contained work and all its theological authority with the unstoppable "production" that is

"playing" ("jouer") the infinitely expansive and plural text (70-76; 156-62).

Whereas the work closes on the intended meaning of its authorial source,

the text opens to the interactions of discourse. To do this, the exemplary

text—the text enabling the play of reading—necessarily resists the

conventional structures of the literary work in order to respond more

porously to its environment. I propose that textual modes of address

differentiate the work from the text by transgressing the boundaries of

genre to reach the reader in the act, in the moment of encounter.

In classical terms, modes of address are pivotal to the genre

divisions traced back to Plato via Aristotle. In *Poetics*, Aristotle lays the

foundation for the tripartition of genres (lyric, epic, and dramatic, to use

the inherited designations[8]) in distinguishing representations by the

"manner or mode of imitation": whether the poet is speaking directly,

through characters, or in some combination of both. As Gérard Genette

explains in *Introduction à l'architexte* (*The Architext*), "il ne s'agit pas à

proprement parler de « forme » au sens traditionnel, comme dans

l'opposition entre vers et prose, ou entre les différents types de vers, il

s'agit de *situations d'énonciation*" ["[s]trictly speaking, we are not dealing

with 'form' in the traditional sense, as in the contrast between verse and

prose or between different types of verse, but with situations of

enunciating" (17; 12)]. As I will demonstrate, textual modes of address

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[8] See Genette's critique of this tripartite division in *The Architext* (1-10).

disrupt the workings of genre by complicating the situation of the verbal act: through textual modes of address, material form participates in constructing the situation of the text. Consequently, the materiality of the text bears on the reader's encounter with it— the "attention" and "affective" response that direct the reader's approach, as Genette describes in "Le genre comme œuvre" (107). Textual modes of address regulate attention in emergent print environments, prompt cognitive effort, and elicit affectivity by establishing a relationship with the reader. All of these factors determine the operational effect of genre (what Genette calls the "attitude de lecture") as Jonathon Culler explicates in *Structuralist Poetics*, using the example of lyric poetry in its perceptible difference from journalistic prose: "these differences can only be explained by the expectations with which one approaches lyric poetry; the conventions which govern its possible modes of signification" (162). As I will illustrate, textual modes of address supplant generic models of reading, breaking the easily identifiable molds of genre to make the text available as a process of production.

To extend Culler's example of lyric poetry, literary form evolves by exceeding the parameters of genre through textual modes of address. By progressively challenging the conventions of genre, lyric poetry effectively secures the passage from work to text in the post-structuralist narrative of modernity. In "Lyric and Modernity," Paul de Man traces out the

allegory of modernity[9] in lyric form: an absolute crisis of representation plays out in the disintegration of long-standing forms and conventional unities, in the rupture of settled rhythms and references (183). Indeed, lyric registers the break with tradition traumatically, for even the tiniest deviation sounds *off*, giving voice to an immanently modern strife, an audible striving against the hold of history, against the structures of experience embedded in language. The freedom to break form, to break habits of language and the encrusted layers of convention and cliché, comes at the cost of assurance in representation, which rests on the assumption of a shared language. Even the lyric "I"—the pillar of unified expression as it still stands, long after the temple of romanticism falls to the "high priests" of modernism—is no longer sure of self. Lyric formalizes modernity as a crisis of representation that is experienced in language as a crisis of subjectivity.

No matter where or when or with whom we begin to tell this story—which is all a matter of how we center or de-center modernism—we can follow the "progress" of lyric and modernity along lines of fracture as they branch off at moments of rupture, varying with the cultural tradition and

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[9] In his seminal work, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism,* Walter Benjamin posits an allegorical relationship between lyric and modernity, but he considers allegory as the lyric poet's (Baudelaire's) nostalgic but nonetheless strategic response to new modes of representation, namely, the photograph: "The crisis of artistic reproduction which manifests itself in this way can be seen as an integral part of a crisis of representation itself. What prevents our delight in the beautiful from ever being satisfied is the image of the past, which Baudelaire regards as veiled by the tears of nostalgia" (147).

the critical perspective. But even De Man's deconstruction of literary history reinforces a particular "family romance"[10] as the archetypal story of modernity: the development of nineteenth-century French lyric from Charles Baudelaire to Arthur Rimbaud and Stéphane Mallarmé. These literary relations provide a linear narrative structure in which the myths of rupture and progress intertwine: a line of rejected inheritance, moving away from the tradition of representation and toward language as an object. As Charles Roy puts it in his preface to *Anthologie de la poésie francaise du xxieme siècle,* "Une revolution (de la poesie) qui avait été, ici et là, préfigurée depuis longtemps, mais qui ne s'accomplit et ne se déploie qu'avec l'éclatement du 'poemes en prose' et du 'vers libre,' avec la trinité Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé" [A revolution [of poetry] that had been, here and there, prefigured for a long time, but which is not accomplished and is not deployed until the eruption of 'poems in prose' and 'free verse' with the Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé trinity (13)]. This "trinity" is not confined to the canon of French poetry. Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé appear together exclusively and in varying configurations with other major and minor players as points of reference in literary history across a range of critical perspectives. The choice of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, OR Mallarmé as the precursor to the avant-garde produces different histories: Baudelaire bifurcates aesthetics with his

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[10] Harold Bloom also uses Freud's term "family romance" to characterize the history of poetry as "misreading" in his theory of poetic influence (8).

notion of "modernité," Rimbaud's "dérèglement" opens the floodgates of surrealist imagery, and Mallarmé cloisters language in his aspiration toward "la poésie pure." Each poet offers a framework of rupture and progress that has come to serve many diachronic studies and summary statements, according to the formulae "since x," "after x," "from x to y."[11] As Svetlana Boym observes in her judicious survey of literary monuments, "One can write two different histories of modernity starting from Mallarmé or Rimbaud" (38). But Mallarmé and Rimbaud also write their own histories as they struggle to purge nostalgia, to write past Baudelaire, who looms in the wings of their tortured productions.

In this dissertation, I aim to destabilize the interpretive framework of literary history by separating the three major, transcultural figures of modern French poetry—Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé—into three uncommon pairings: Honoré de Balzac, a pioneer of the novel, and Baudelaire; William Carlos Williams of the American avant-garde and Rimbaud; Vladimir Mayakovsky, Russia's poet of revolution, and Mallarmé. What connects the distant concerns of these writers is precisely their critical engagement with genre and print formats, which they carry out with great versatility—all working in and between multiple genres and publishing venues. In each of three chapters, I draw out

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[11] This sampling of works demonstrates the critical trend: Henri Lemaître, *La Poésie depuis Baudelaire*; Béatrice Marchal-Vincent, *La poésie française depuis Baudelaire*; Marcel Raymond, *De Baudelaire au surréalisme*; Georges Emmaneul Clancier, *De Rimbaud au surréalisme*; Thomas A. Clark, *After Mallarmé*, Dominque Combé, *L'Exclusion théorique du narratif dans la poésie française depuis Stéphane Mallarmé*.

common strategies that serve as textual modes of address: the *scenes* that situate prose works by Balzac and Baudelaire in journalistic contexts; the *seasons* that play against conventions of time in prose poetry books by Williams and Rimbaud; and the *spaces* that displace the lyric subject in multi-genre compositions by Mayakovsky and Mallarmé.

In Chapter II, "Scenes: Balzac and Baudelaire Stage the Modern Reader," my analysis of textual modes of address focuses on how the reading subject is positioned in scenes. I discuss prose works by Balzac and Baudelaire in their original contexts of publication in periodicals, attending to formal adaptations in specific print environments. Through my comparison of these two influential writers, I draw out the material specificity of their literary innovations, Balzac's novelistic episodes and Baudelaire's poems in prose, as compositional units of comprehensive representations of modern life.

In Chapter III, "Seasons: Williams and Rimbaud Turn Against Time in Modern Poetics," I foreground the metatextual moments in Williams's *Spring and All* and Rimbaud's *Une saison en enfer* as I compare these two prose poetry books in their material specificity as hybrid textual forms. Both texts disrupt conventional temporalities of reading through textual modes of address to continually recall the moment of process over and against the myth of progress.

In Chapter IV, "Spaces: Mayakovsky and Mallarmé Throw the Voice of the Poetic Subject," the critical myth of "the death of the author" gives way to "the birth of the reader" in my study of spaces in the poetics of Mayakovsky and Mallarmé. Both poets manipulate the traditional lyric subject to develop spaces for the performance of voice. I trace out this development of spaces in their early poems, genre-ambiguous works, typographic experiments, and ambitious book projects.

The common threads of scenes, seasons, and spaces not only lead to alternative configurations of canonical modernist writers, both also provide intertwine textual processes and practices in the productive constructions of modernity. As strategies for responding to the material circumstances of modern literature, textual modes of address reveal the process of constructing subjectivity in media, the interactions between writing and reading subjects that enable critical and creative thinking, and the innovations of material form that adapt literary texts to new environments and social experiences. These constitutively modern phenomena arise as the boundaries of genre collapse into new textual forms of encounter. In the Conclusion of this dissertation, textual modes of address offer ways of approaching today's new media: my analysis of emergent print forms ("old" media when it was new) opens lines of inquiry into the interfaces and subject-object relationships of the rapidly evolving digital environments in which we are practicing our subjectivity as readers and users, consumers and producers.

CHAPTER II

SCENES: BALZAC AND BAUDELAIRE STAGE THE MODERN READER

It is Tuesday, August 26, 1862. Stocks and sales rise and fall. The papers chatter about foreign affairs and local administration. Gossip gathers around marriages and promotions, road construction and garden renovation, new museum and zoo acquisitions, the latest spectacles in the theater and in the courts, and the recently bankrupt and deceased. The weather in Paris is nice this morning. Commodities tug at purse strings: home furnishings, hunting rifles, perfumes, medicinal creams, and new books in print. An old woman cries in a corner; an ass and a dandy pass in the muck; a man smashes a pile of windowpanes. And immediately after these last scenes, *La Presse* announces the contents of tomorrow's *feuilleton*: more poems in prose by Charles Baudelaire.[12]

All the miscellaneous details of these happenings (numbers, names, quotations, graphics, and poetic material) stand out according to the reader's interest, while blending into the impression of today's news in virtually one *coup d'oeil*. World events and local goings-on are equally newsworthy in the four-page spread; tables of numerical values compete for attention with columns of compact prose, including those in the lower

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[12] The contents of "Le feuilleton de *La Presse* du mardi 26 août 1862" include "À Arsène Houssaye," frequently cited as prefatory material, and nine poems in prose—among them "La Desespoir de la vieille," "Un Plaisant," and "Le Mauvais Vitrier," to which I allude above. Eleven other poems in prose would appear in the *La Presse* of August 7 and September 24, 1862.

division of textual space: here, the first in a series of Baudelaire's poems in prose to appear in the *feuilleton* of *La Presse* (see fig. 1). Situated in the midst of daily commerce, the poet's endeavor to capture "la modernité"—"dégager de la mode ce qu'elle peut contenir de poétique dans l'historique, de tirer l'éternel du transitoire" (Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes* 2: 694)—interfaces with the newspaper format, a crowded space of chance encounters.

What I want to suggest in this casual reading of one daily edition of *La Presse* are the *formal* relations between literary works and historical contexts of publication in print artifacts: To what extent does the newspaper—the particular object and the particularities of commercial print culture—shape the experience of Baudelaire's poems in prose? How do the *feuilleton*[13] and surrounding textual spaces of the marketplace frame the reader's encounter? In what ways does literary form respond to its situation in the press (as a form of commodity) and to the situation of the modern reader?

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[13] My treatment of the *feuilleton* is limited to particular examples in their immediate context. For scholarship on the material history of the *feuilleton* and its development as a literary form, see Lise Queffélec, *Le Roman-feuilleton français au XIXe siècle* (1989); Marie-Françoise Cachin, Diana Cooper-Richet, Jean-Yves Mollier et al, eds. *Au Bonheur du feuilleton: Naissance et mutations d'un genre : États-Unis, Grande-Bretagne, XVIIIe-XXe siècles* (2007).

Fig. 1. The first of four pages of the March 26, 1862 issue of *La Presse,* featuring Baudelaire's poems in prose in "Feuilleton de *La Presse* du mardi 26 août 1862."

My approach to these questions aims to account for the materiality of print culture in formal analysis by identifying common strategies: *textual modes of address* that implicate a reading subject in the situation of the text. Through acts of textual address, literary form adapts to the periodical format, as I will demonstrate, by incorporating the reading process into the production of meaning in the text. Although my analysis focuses on a selection of literary works in context—as parts of whole print artifacts and uncompleted œuvres—and not on the periodical itself as an object of study, my methodology aligns to some degree with current directions in periodical studies, combining the practices of close reading and object analysis as recently proposed by Ann Ardis ("Towards a Theory of Periodical Studies").[14] The periodical serves as a comparative framework for the limited corpus of my study, which centers on examples of innovative literary forms as they emerged in the mass print culture of nineteenth-century Paris.[15]

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[14] Ann Ardis's intervention in the disciplinary discourse of periodical studies addresses the salient concerns and methodologies of scholars working on modernist Anglo-American magazines. I am displacing this center in my approach to reading French literature in the mid-nineteenth century Parisian press. Other statements of the field of periodical studies include Sean Latham and Robert Scholes, "The Rise of Periodical Studies" (2006); Sean Latham and Mark S. Morrisson's introduction to *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* (2010); Ann Ardis's editor's introduction to "Mediamorphosis: Print Culture and Transatlantic/Transnational Public Sphere(s)" (2012).

[15] Walter Benjamin's observations in *The Arcades Project* and "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" (in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*) remain foundational to our understanding of emergent commercial culture in Paris. Recent studies of material culture in nineteenth-century Paris include Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in fin-de-siècle Paris* (1998) and Hazel H. Hahn, *Scenes of Parisian Modernity: Culture and Consumption in the Nineteenth*

This project brings together two monumental French writers, Honoré de Balzac and Charles Baudelaire, in their common task of discovering the epic in the everyday—the *journalier.* The connection between Balzac and Baudelaire has long been established as literary fact. As Graham Robb duly notes at the beginning of his extensive study, Baudelaire persistently recognizes Balzac's authoritative presence as "le grand historien" and "poète," a "héro" and a "visionnaire," among other honorable titles (qtd in Robb 8). In scholarship devoted to the two writers, a rich intertextuality emerges between them—from echoes of Balzac in particular works by Baudelaire to correspondences between Balzac's universe, his Paris, his notion of the modern, and Baudelaire's.[16] In broader strokes, P.-G. Castex qualifies their relationship as an epistemological one: "Baudelaire et Balzac sont surtout proches l'un de l'autre par leur façon de poser les problèmes essentiels de l'existence humaine, bref . . . par leur philosophie" (qtd in

Century (2009). The scope of my discussion of print culture is limited to the contextualized analysis of textual forms. For additional historical context on the press and book publishing industries, see Dean de la Motte, Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds. *Making the News: Modernity & the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France* (1999) and Christine Haynes, *Lost Illusions: The Politics of Publishing in Nineteenth Century France* (2010).

[16] Graham Robb's exhaustive study in *Baudelaire: lecteur de Balzac* (1988) examines the intersections of Balzac and Baudelaire in critical discourse and draws out connections to Balzac in Baudelaire's formulations of "la modernité." Many studies of Balzac and Baudelaire tease out common threads in particular texts; for example, *Le Lys dans la vallé* and "Les Correspondances" in Régis Michaud's reading (1938); and *La Peau de Chagrin* and *Les Fleurs du mal* in Nicolae Babuts's analysis (2010). For discussion of Balzac's influence on Baudelaire's aesthetics, see Jean Prévost, "L'Influence de Balzac sur Baudelaire. La Fanfarlo" (1946); Rosemary Lloyd, *Baudelaire's Literary Criticism* (1981).

Robb 30). With all the merited attention to common concerns in the

œuvres of Balzac and Baudelaire, there is surprisingly little discussion of

common strategies. Garnet Rees touches on this aspect of the Balzac-

Baudelaire relation in raising the historical question of changing

modalities; both writers take up genres with troubled identities, caught

up in "entirely differing stages of development and critical acclaim": the

novel emerging as a "serious" form of literature, poetry verging on the

obsolescence of "noble pedigree" (171). Further, both writers *challenge*

genre, as I intend to show, by varying literary form in the publishing

context of the commercial press. Through close reading in this

comparative framework, I want to explore a kind of intertextuality aside

from influence, focusing instead on textual strategies that negotiate the

inseparable conditions of representation, reading, and subjectivity in

print culture. My analysis specifically examines how textual modes of

address in selected works by Balzac and Baudelaire transgress the

boundaries of genre to reach the reader in the act.[17]

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[17] I am interested in the historical reader of Balzac and Baudelaire only in terms of the
conditions of reading which the two writers stage in their representations of the city.
What concerns me, then, is the construction of the reading subject in the text, a
function of language, which performs the act of reading as a mode of emergent
subjectivity. My methodology is informed by the approaches in Susan R. Suleiman and
Inge Crosman Wimmers, eds., *The Reader in the Text* (1980). For primary materials on
Balzac's historical reader, see Judith Lyon-Caen, *La Lecture et la vie: les usages du
roman au temps de Balzac* (2006). Stamos Metzidakis, "Baudelaire et Ses Hypocrites
Lecteurs" (1989) and Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles
Baudelaire* (2006) reconstruct Baudelaire's relationship to his historical reader.

In their literary representations of Paris, Balzac and Baudelaire stage the act of reading the city—body language in daily motion, street-signs of life, stories in footprints and faces, dramas on display in windows—in *scenes,* or sequences of action that are framed to be seen. Scenes unfold before the eyes of the reader, that is, the reading subject *in the text*: Balzac's observer-narrator, Baudelaire's poetic speaker, and, at times, the reader whom they address in the role of spectator.[18] By framing what is seen from situated points of view, scenes present the experiences of a speaking subject as objects of knowledge. These "structures de la lisabilité," as Karlheinz Stierle identifies textualizing representations of the city in *La Capitale des signes,* contribute to the "semiotisation" of nineteenth-century Paris: "La grande ville [comme] l'espace sémiotique où aucune materialité ne reste non sémiotisée" (3). In this regard, scenes structure reading material by spotlighting spaces of the city, enhancing the signifying potential of certain features and relationships. What I want to specify in my analysis of scenes is the transmission of signs; as Balzac's observer-narrator and Baudelaire's poetic speaker enact the semiotic practices of the city in scenes, textual modes of address highlight the situation of reading as a communicative act, establishing a cooperative relationship with the reader. In this

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[18] I will address the distinction between "observer" and "spectator" in terms of subjective and objective roles in the text as I develop comparisons of scenes by Balzac and Baudelaire.

manner, *voice visualizes*; scenes address the eye of the reader in new contexts of encounter—both textual (mass media) and phenomenological (urban realities). As I will further suggest, this performativity, incorporating the act of reading into the text, enables scenes to function as units in the compositional unity of larger projects of representation. By analyzing examples of textual modes of address in scenes, I intend to trace out the innovation of literary form in the violation of genre, from Balzac's early serial publications to Baudelaire's poems in prose.

<u>From Panorama to Close Encounter: Balzac's *Ferragus*</u>

In 1842, Honoré de Balzac gave a name and number (a sense of scope) to the daunting task of representation for which he is most widely known and celebrated, *La Comédie humaine.* The "Avant-propos" to this magisterial project gathers over a decade of previously published works and any number of projected novels into an overarching framework:

> Ce n'était pas une petite tâche que de peindre les deux ou trois mille figures saillantes d'une époque, car telle est, en définitif, la somme des types que présente chaque génération et que *La Comédie Humaine* comportera. Ce nombre de figures, de caractères, cette multitude d'existences exigeaient des cadres, et, qu'on me pardonne cette expression, des galéries. De là, les divisions si naturelles, déjà connues, de mon ouvrage en Scènes de la vie privée, de province, parisienne, politique, militaire et de campagne. (*Comédie* 18)

In this compositional scheme, an arrangement of frames in galleries

corresponding to sections of social life in *La Comédie humaine,* Balzac's

earlier texts become the scenes (in his metaphor) of an epochal drama;

his various characters become related parts of a sum—an assemblage of

all walks of modern life. This strategy of compilation is neither new nor

unique to *La Comédie humaine;* for example, Louis-Sébastian Mercier

captures "la physionomie de [son] siècle" in *Le Tableau de Paris* (1781-

88), compiling details into a sweeping panoramic view, the singular

"Tableau" (x);[19] and in 1843, one year after the "Avant-propos"

announcing *La Comédie humaine,* Balzac collaborates on another

"tableau," the second volume of the anthology, *La Grande Ville,* which

purports to "réédifier pour le XIXième siècle l'œuvre populaire de Mercier"

(Kock 1). The ambition of total representation in nineteenth-century Paris

generates a veritable genre of panoramic literature, as Walter Benjamin

famously calls it (*Arcades* 37).[20] Yet what distinguishes Balzac's

approach to the great "tâche" of *La Comédie humaine* is the development

of discrete textual forms, from journalistic episodes to novel editions.

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[19] For a sustained comparison of Balzac and Mercier, see Stierle, *La Capitale des signes* (2001)*,* pp. 193-209.

[20] See also Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (1976). Karlheinz Stierle presents a history of the genre as a context for reading Baudelaire's "Tableaux Parisiens" in "Baudelaire and the Tradition of the Tableau de Paris" (1980). For more recent scholarship on representations of nineteenth century Paris in the genre of panoramic literature, Bernard Comment, *Le xixe siècle des panoramas* (1993); Margaret Cohen, "Panoramic Literature and the Invention of Everyday Genres" (1995); Sophie Lefay, *Lectures du panorama* (2009); and Nathalie Preiss and Valérie Stiénon, eds. "Croqués par eux-mêmes. La société à l'épreuve du panoramique" (2012).

Prior to being named ("Scènes") as components of any unifying structure, scenes (in my sense of the term) compose the self-sufficient parts of Balzac's œuvre as they appeared in the press. I propose to examine scenes as a strategic continuity between Balzac's press pieces and his novelistic project as a whole: scenes adapt to publishing formats and achieve a larger scale of representation by incorporating the reading process into the text through textual modes of address.

The development of textual forms in Balzac's œuvre is inarguably bound to his engagement with the press. In *Balzac Journaliste,* Roland Chollet marks the writer's debut in the commercial press as "le tournant de 1830," beginning with the publication of *La Physiologie du mariage* (Dec. 26, 1829), Balzac's associations with Émile Girardin and other print entrepreneurs and satirists, and his political interventions in *Feuilleton des journaux politiques* (10).[21] Balzac entered this arena at the time of a drastic expansion of public discourse, driven by the revolutionary events of July 1830, during which popular uprising led to the establishment of a liberal constitutional monarchy in France; the growth of the literate population by way of urban demographics and social legislation; the mechanization and multiplication of the press; and the proliferation of periodicals, including the invention of the *revue* and

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[21] For discussion of these early articles, see Bruce Tolley, "Balzac and the 'Feuilleton des journaux politiques'" (1962).

the genre of periodical literature (Bellanger 15, 19, 108).[22] Producing for the press at this time engaged Balzac in a struggle to reconcile his primary concerns as a writer with those of the journalist and with certain political and formal constraints (Chollet 64, 12).[23]

By 1843, Balzac's embattled relations with the press qualify him as "le champion," the one formidable enough to "saisir le géant corps à corps" in *La Grande Ville,* to which he contributes his "Monographie de la presse parisienne" (Kock 3-4). This article, as Maurice Nadeau explains, serves as the starting point for understanding Balzac's "longue et profonde expérience personnelle" with the press, rather than the more widely cited *Illusions perdues,* where this experience "se transforme et se sublimise" (3).[24] Sparing none in the attack, "Monographie de la presse parisienne" speaks to Balzac's disillusionment with the press and its impact on his own process of production. A sarcastic portrayal of editorial work, exposing the economy of the page, reveals a keen awareness of textual space, or the spatial (and temporal) pressures on the material: "Les choses les plus importantes, les grands et les petits

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[22] For nineteenth-century accounts of the (r)evolution of the press, see Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, "De la littérature industrielle" (1839); Émile de Girardin, *Études politiques* (1849); Eugène Hatin, *Histoire du journal en France 1631-1853* (1853); Fernand Giraudeau, *La Presse périodique de 1789 à 1867* (1867). In addition to Bellanger, see Charles Ledré, *Histoire de la presse* (1958).

[23] Maurice Bardèche discusses this context with regard to Balzac's early development as a novelist in *Balzac romancier,* pp. 176-82.

[24] See Nadeau, pp. 12-23 and McLaughlin, pp. 25-41 for illuminating discussions of *Illusions perdues.*

articles, tout devient une question de *mise en page* entre une heure et minuit, l'heure fatale des journaux" (Kock 144). In this time frame, the format of the newspaper imposes a relative value system on its contents. The constraints of this commercial space are measurable: "Les Annonces prenant la quatrième page du journal, et le feuilleton un quart de ce qui reste, les journaux n'ont plus d'espace" (Kock 146). In showing where the writer might fit into this cramped picture, Balzac's critique is not without sympathy; his portrait of "Le Pêcheur à la ligne" points to the strain of the newspaper format on literary form—worse, on the imagination itself:

> Chaque jour, il use les qualités les plus précieuses de l'esprit à sculpter une plaisanterie en une ou deux colonnes; il découpe ses phrases en pointes, il s'épuise à donner les fleurs de son esprit dans cette espèce de mauvais lieu d'imagination, appelé *Le Petit Journal.*   (Kock 194)

While he maintains a critical distance from this type of content-producer, Balzac personifies a threat to the integrity of his own works published in the press, which is the economy of print. It is in this milieu that Balzac's texts were originally produced, often in verbose defiance and with silent disruptions of the editorial process.[25]

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[25] I will discuss Balzac's record of production in the details pertinent to my analysis. Charles de Lovenjoul provides a wealth of historical documenation in *Un dernier chapitre de l'Histoire des œuvres de H. de Balzac* (1880) and Stéphane Vachon provides an exhaustive timeline in *Les Travaux et les jours d'Honoré de Balzac: Chronologie de la création balzacienne* (1992).

Balzac's critique of the publishing industry in "Monographie de la presse parisienne" reveals its impact on his conception of form, but only in part; his cynicism hides his own economic interests. The shift in Balzac's thinking about the press, from the "quatrième pouvoir" of 1830, to the body of corruption detailed in "Monographie de la presse parisienne" of 1843, may be due, as Maurice Nadeau suggests, to the writer's personal experience: "nul grand écrivain n'a été plus que Balzac sous-estimé et moqué par les journalistes" (5). According to this version of events, Balzac simply responds in kind, such that by the 1840s, "[o]n dirait que Balzac ne veut plus faire du journalisme que contre les journalistes" (10). But this polemic, however personal, cannot be understood apart from economics. As Roland Chollet explains, Balzac's career in journalism arose in response to a crisis in book publishing,[26] "[une] crise de la librairie, et plus particulièrement la librairie du roman" (9). Put simply, "[l]e romancier constate qu'il ne peut vivre de ses romans, et il demande du pain aux journaux." Given this financial situation, the rise of the *revue* among the proliferation of newspapers represents "la mise en œuvre d'un moyen de diffusion nouveau pour [Balzac]," who exploited the venue in the development of the novel, even as he laments the "dispersion des lumières" in the mass media market (64; qtd in

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[26] Balzac examines this crisis in one of the first articles published in his joint publishing enterprise, *Le Feuilleton des journaux politique,* "De l'état actuel de la librarie" (March 3 and 10, 1830).

Chollet 536). Like any other newspaper, the literary-minded *revue* still traffics in "l'actualité," its function being to "donner à lire" (63). Balzac's publishing record reveals to what extent he capitalized on the practices of the *revue,* and further suggests how his own actions damaged his relations with the press. In a series of articles originally published in *La Revue de Paris* (May 22 and 29 and June 5, 1836), a pattern emerges in Balzac's habits of productivity over several disputed works, leading his editors to suspect him of "spéculation habituelle": Balzac would allegedly commit to producing a work for a certain sum, only provide a portion, and then seek other offers for the rest (qtd in Lovenjoul 48). By producing his works in parts, in installments of scenes that can be published serially and separately, Balzac would play the system, taking advantage of the economy of print.

By situating Balzac in the material context of the press, I want to suggest ways of thinking about formal relations between literary works and publishing circumstances. This approach aligns with Kevin McLaughlin's framework for commoditized literature in *Writing in Parts,* which uses Marxist critique to shed light on mimetic relations between nineteenth-century European literature and the marketplace: how literary texts not only reflect, but also respond to the "tension" of exchange by representing their situation in commerce (3). Rather than focus on the reflexive action of mimesis, I want to identify textual strategies that adapt literary form to the situation of the text.

Returning to "Monographie de la presse parisienne," then, my purpose in treating Balzac's contribution to *La Grande ville* is two-fold: to suggest the influence of the press on Balzac's conception of textual form and to indicate common strategies developed in his press pieces and in his novelistic project. In his critical approach to representing the press, a massive network pulsing through modern life, Balzac focalizes the strategy of *La Grande Ville,* which is to compile observations in a catalog of types. The conclusion of Balzac's "Monographie de la presse parisienne" thus insists on a comprehensive view: "Tel est le dénombrement des forces de la PRESSE, le mot adopté pour exprimer tout ce qui se publie périodiquement en politique et en littérature . . . Vous avez vu les rouages de la machine" (Kock 205-6). By addressing the reader directly as "vous," Balzac's expert speaker (arguably inseparable from Balzac the journalist here) corroborates and completes the panorama from a situated point of view; each cog fits into the "la machine" as the reader has come to see it in textual representation. However powerful and pervasive, the press is only one piece of the machinery exposed in *La Grande Ville;* and Balzac is only one of many "peintres" chosen by the editors of the volume "pour chaque partie de cet immense tableau" (Kock 3). According to this schema, each specialist or "peintre[]" gives his view of one entity of Paris ("les *restaurants*, par exemple, les *petits théâtres*, les *marchands d'habits*, les *rivoyeurs*, les *banquistes*, et d'autres sujets"). The city is unveiled one part at a time, as

if it were immediately available, "there to be 'read'"; however, it is only legible to "the properly positioned subject," in Christopher Prendergast's phrase (*Paris* 2)—or, in my own formulation, to the reading subject positioned in the text. *La Grande Ville* extends access to specialized experience and encyclopedic knowledge by addressing the reader as a witness to the experts' routine observations, to scenes of Parisian life. Moreover, *La Grande Ville* not only demonstrates strategic continuity, but also complementarity*:* the anthology constructs a comprehensive gaze by negotiating between elevated and embedded points of view, or, correspondingly, between the panorama and the close encounter. As my analysis will demonstrate, the scenes of Balzac's novels also shift between perceptual frames in this fashion, capturing the immensity of the city in its particularities, by positioning the reading subject in the text.

The movement from panorama to close encounter in one of Balzac's first novelistic episodes, the opening of *Ferragus*, which appeared in *La Revue de Paris* in March and April of 1833, effectively draws the reader into the fantastic everyday of Paris. The narrator of *Ferragus* begins by establishing the authority of his observations, identifying the moral character of the streets below in their "physionomie":

> Il y a dans Paris certaines rues déshonorées autant que peut l'être
> un homme coupable d'infamie; puis, il y a des rues nobles, puis

des rues simplement honnêtes, puis de jeunes rues sur la moralité

desquelles le public ne s'est pas encore formé d'opinion . . . Enfin

les rues de Paris ont des qualités humaines, et nous impriment,

par leur physionomie, certaines idées contre lesquelles nous

sommes sans défense.   (*La Revue de Paris* 48: 156)[27]

Certain streets have the disreputable character of criminals, others the

virtue of nobility, and still others the presumed innocence of youth. As

Balzac would later expound in "Histoire et physiologie des boulevards de

Paris," every street wears the history of its crimes and the quality of its

character on its face, composing parts of a "poème" that can be read from

the proper position: "le grand poème de l'étalage chante ses strophes de

couleurs depuis la Madeleine jusqu'à la porte Saint-Denis"; and further,

requiring greater coordination, "Allez au grand trot d'un cheval anglais de

la place de la concorde et de la Madeleine au pont d'Austerlitz, vous lirez

en un quart d'heure ce poème de Paris, depuis l'arch de Triomphe de

l'Étoile . . ." (223; 238).[28] The guide of the "boulevards" positions the

reader of the city with deliberate precision; in contrast, the narrator of

Ferragus withholds the coordinates of his point of view, and thus holds

on to his authority. He is particularly concerned with the influence of the

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[27] *RP* in subsequent parenthetical citations.

[28] Martina Lauster's reading of this article emphasizes the "epistemological category" of "physiologie" and the reader's participation in "the very act of mobile observation and simultaneous understanding" (75). In a historical reading of this text, Jean-Dominique Goffette compares Balzac's perspective on boulevards to Flaubert's in the context of urban transformation.

streets, each with its own distinct "physionomie," on the temperament of

passersby ("nous impriment . . . certaines idées"). Informing the reader

as a caution, he addresses a shared concern about moral contamination

("nous sommes sans défense") and advises good judgment of character:

"Il y a des rues de mauvaise compagnie où vous ne voudriez pas

demeurer, et des rues où vous placeriez volontiers votre séjour" (*RP* 48:

156). Evoking the reader as both "nous" and "vous" activates common

lived experience as the basis of local knowledge. Through leading

questions, Balzac's narrator appeals to the Parisian reader directly—

here, asking about a specific example that only a resident observer might

know: "Pour résumer ces idées par un exemple, la rue Fromenteau n'est-

elle pas tout à la fois meurtrière et de mauvaise vie?" (*RP* 48: 157). This

turn of address elicits the reader's response and personal testimony to

reinforce the narrator's observations. In his insistence on local

specificity, he targets an audience of fellow observers:

> Ces observations, incompréhensibles au-delà de Paris, seront sans
>
> doute saisies par ces hommes d'étude et de pensée, de poésie et de
>
> plaisir, qui savent récolter, en flânant dans Paris, la masse de
>
> jouissances flottantes, à toute heure, entre ses murailles; par ceux
>
> pour lesquels Paris est le plus délicieux des monstres.

This declaration not only presumes the unique embodied perspective of a

particular locale, but also the special mode of productivity of an urban

subject ("qui savent récolter, en flânant dans Paris") and, to a certain extent, a common reading knowledge of the city.

The mention of a certain activity here merits a digression: the privileged activity of an unnamed urban figure, the *flâneur*.[29] The *flâneur* has come to serve as "the embodiment of modernity" (in association with nineteenth-century Paris), as Aimée Boutin explains, by virtue of his mobile subjectivity: "Variously defined as a fashionable male idler, a leisurely stroller, an expert reader of urban signs, an artist or writer, and a sociologist *avant la lettre*, the flâneur remains as multifarious and elusive as the city with which he is associated" (124). Balzac is credited with fleshing out the productive *flâneur* (Tester 30); indeed, this passage contains the germ of such productivity: perception as *poiesis,* an *in situ* mapping of space in which reading translates into writing that produces (and later, in reading, reproduces) social knowledge. But Balzac does not name the *flâneur* here; he only gestures toward the identifiable, yet variable type, "ces hommes d'étude et de pensée, de poésie et de plaisir." In reserving the full impact of his observations for this particular type of reading subject ("qui savent récolter, en flânant dans Paris"), Balzac's

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[29] As I will later discuss, Walter Benjamin's study of Baudelaire in the context of nineteenth-century Paris remains foundational to the cultural construction of the *flâneur.* Critical responses to Benjamin in the works of Martina Lauster and Susan Buck-Morss provide invaluable insight into this phenomenon. Other recent works contributing to my understanding of the *flâneur* in action are Priscilla Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth Century* (1997); Mary Gluck, *Popular Bohemia. Modernism and Urban Culture in 19th Century Paris* (2005); and Aimée Boutin, ed. "Flânerie and the Senses." *Dix-neuf* 16.2 (2012).

narrator offers a glimpse behind the scenes, so to speak: it is only by

gathering experiences of the city "en flânant" that one can grasp the

whole, organizing details into a comprehensive view. In this regard,

Balzac's exposition of Paris in *Ferragus* contains the strategy of the

encyclopedic representation in *La Grande ville*: the elevated, panoramic

perspective derives its authority—its penetrating and all-inclusive

insight—from the embedded, close encounter. Although Balzac only

evokes the *flâneur* with a vague hand wave, this passage demonstrates

how the activity of the *flâneur* enacts "an urban epistemology" in

presuming an acquired reading knowledge of the city (Tester 30).

To return to the panoramic scene at hand, the observations of the

Ferragus narrator do not reveal his exact location, but rather his relative

position, elevated to a point of assumed mastery. It has also been

suggested, by Christopher Prendergast among others, that this privileged

position is plainly ideological in its claims to authority and access (*Paris*

47).[30] Indeed, the gaze of Balzac's narrator penetrates into a limitless

field of vision, exposing the monstrous body of Paris as a cellular mass of

moving parts, as it can only be seen from a bird's-eye view:

> Toutes les portes bâillent, tournent sur leurs gonds, comme les
>
> membranes d'un grand homard, invisiblement manœuvrées par

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[30] For trenchant critiques of the Balzacian gaze along the axes of gender and sex, see
Shoshana Felman, "Women and Madness" (1975); Peter Brooks, *Body Work* (1993); and
Catherine Nesci, *Le Flâneur et les flâneuses* (2007).

trente mille hommes ou femmes, dont chacune ou chacun vit dans

six pieds carrés, y possède une cuisine, un atelier, un lit, des

enfants, un jardin, n'y voit pas clair, et doit tout voir.   (*RP* 48: 158)

While the millions below have a limited view from their own

compartments, the narrator can presumably see all that is happening at

once, all the movements of the city coordinated in one living organism

("comme les membranes d'un grand homard"). The lives of the

innumerable denizens of Paris unfold in modular units of personal

property ("dont chacune ou chacun vit dans six pieds carrés"),

delineating the individual segments and the vast sprawl of Parisian life in

one *coup d'oeil.* This panoramic perspective affords a plethora of

information through the narrator's observations, which evince a detailed

familiarity with the city's routine: "Insensiblement les articulations

craquent, le mouvement se communique, la rue parle. À midi, tout est

vivant, les cheminées fument, le monstre mange; puis il rugit, puis ses

milles pattes s'agitent." Removed from the commotion, the narrator

attends to the rumblings of the city as synchronized sounds, as one

unified movement ("le mouvement"). He discerns utterances

("articulations") in the urban noise, the expressive roar of a singular

beast. Yet the city only speaks to those who come to know its body

language, those who can read the city as a whole—like Balzac's narrator,

who is moved by its immense scope to a sudden outburst: "Ô Beau

spectacle!" This apostrophe is a sustained performance of his authority, his acquired knowledge of Paris:

> Mais, ô Paris! qui n'a pas admiré tes sombres paysages, tes échappées de lumière, tes culs-de-sac profonds et silencieux; qui n'a pas entendu tes murmures, entre minuit et deux heures du matin, ne connait encore rien de ta vraie poésie, ni de tes bizarres et larges contrastes.[31]

Apostrophe, as I understand it through Jonathan Culler's insightful formulation, is the quintessential form of lyric address, a form of voice that dramatizes the act of calling in a triple-assertion: the subjectivity of the speaker, the presence of the addressee, and the relationship between them. Moreover, intersubjective relations between the speaker and the one called into presence are an *apriori* condition of apostrophe, which is a calling-out in response to an emotion—spontaneous, in excess of language, and thus taking a "pure" form of voice, the figure "O" (*Signs* 142). In this lyric turn of address, Balzac's narrator breaks the conventions of genre, disrupting the presumedly objective description of the realist novel. Yet in doing this, he presumes a relationship with the city and the intimate understanding that this claim entails. The apostrophe thus converts perceptual experience into a form of specialized knowledge. By amassing the sights and sounds of the city, the "bizarres

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[31] See Stierle's reading of this passage in terms of the project of "lisabilité" in *La Capitale des signes*, pp. 253-4.

et larges contrastes," into a scanning perspective, the narrator of *Ferragus* masters the "monstre," taming the beast into a manageable text, an object of knowledge. Through textual modes of address, the panoramic scenes of *Ferragus* establish Balzac's narrator as a *reading* subject, such that his perceptual frame comes to serve as a frame of reading, providing access—both penetration and unity of perception—to the "vraie poésie" of the city.

In the transition from panorama to close encounter in the opening sequence of *Ferragus,* the narrator's address further involves the reader as a present, positioned subject. The play of light in the Parisian night— "des effets de nuit singuliers, bizarres, inconcevables"—becomes a source of intrigue as the narrator lures "vous" into the path of a captivating stranger, "un feu follet qui vous entraîne par un ardent magnétisme jusqu'à une maison décente où la pauvre bourgeoise, ayant peur de votre pas menaçant ou de vos bottes retentissantes, vous ferme la porte cochère au nez sans vous regarder" (*RP* 48: 161). By drawing "vous" into direct contact with the streets of Paris (by way of a serpentine sentence), the narrator leads the reader to the critical intersection of the novel, when the apparition of a woman arouses the suspicions of a certain "jeune homme" named Auguste, who entangles himself in the mystery of Madame Jules and her guarded secret (her father, the elusive

Ferragus).[32] This focalizing narrative frame occurs in many of Balzac's novels, as the narrator literally walks the reader through the legible surfaces of a particular location.[33] By simulating the reader's direct participation in scenes, textual modes of address contribute to the construction of shared experience in Balzac's project of representation.

The opening sequence of *Ferragus,* when considered in light of the text's original publishing context, further reveals how Balzac develops textual strategies in his novels as he produced expressly for the press. Maurice Bardèche makes this connection in laying out the sources of *Ferragus,* citing the material circumstances of Balzac's nine-month contract with *La Revue de Paris* at the time, "trop tyrannique pour de lentes maturations" (*Balzac* 240). Bardèche proposes that passages of *Ferragus,* namely the scenes of my own analysis, reflect the pressure of producing for multiple periodicals:

> sous prétexte de décrire, on allait pouvoir faire de la 'copie' facile,
> placer des 'fantaisies' d'une rédaction rapide comme celles que
> Balzac donnait à la *Caricature . . .* toutes choses fait propres à
> rempir les fameuses quarante pages de la *Revue de Paris* [.]
>
> (*Balzac* 243)

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[32] In a brilliant reading of this passage, Catherine Nesci shows how this encounter enacts certain rules governing the woman's body in urban space, pp. 118-24.

[33] I will discuss the narrative frame of *Le Père Goriot* as an example of this strategy. For other examples, see the expository passages of *Gloire et Malheur* or *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote, Eugénie Grandet,* and *La Peau de Chagrin.*

One of the "fantaisies" that Bardèche cites as an example is the description of Madame Jules which, as P.G. Castex notes in the Garnier edition of *Ferragus,* contains identifiable parts of Balzac's *Théorie de la demarche.*[34] As units of production, scenes constitute versatile textual forms for maximizing the profits of the material.

Scenes also enable Balzac to profit from a certain flexibility not granted by his publishing contracts. *La Revue de Paris*'s account of his contractual transgressions gives a more general editorial perspective: "les explications prouvent que ce n'était pas à la legère que la revue promettent au public ces divers articles, et qu'elle avait largement acheté le droit de les promettre" (qtd in Lovenjoul 4). In the view of his editors, the discontinuities in Balzac's production, progressing in discrete units rather than as wholly conceived, not only cost the publishing venue, but also the reading public (here, again, *La Revue de Paris* speaking for all): "ce silence est un malheur public, et tout le monde y perd" (qtd in Lovenjoul 46). Yet this "silence" between episodes is a condition of possibility for the development of textual strategies in Balzac's scenes, namely the strategies for addressing the reader in the act—in the *process* of reading that is part of the production of the text. As Félicien Marceau reminds us, "s'il nous est loisible maintenant de lire la *Comédie humaine* dans l'ordre qui nous plaît, on peut imaginer que, lorsqu'il écrivait,

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[34] See editorial note on p. 45.

Balzac pensait parfois aux lecteurs de son temps, aux lecteurs qui le lisaient tout de suite" (19). In my analysis of *Ferragus* as a textual object, I aim to provide evidence of this strategic consideration of the reader in Balzac's use of the periodical format to connect the scenes of works in progress.

In its original textual form, published in four issues of *La Revue de Paris,*[35] *Ferragus* signals to the reader over the "silence," or the delay in serial publication and thus in the reading process. The extra-narrative space of the periodical addresses the eye in the act of reading, framing the encounter *with* the text and *in* the text. For example, an epigraph accompanying the original publication of *Ferragus* prepares the way for the opening scenes of the novel:

<div align="center">

LAUTOUR-MEZERAY

</div>

. . . . . Personne encore ne nous a raconté quelque aventure parisienne comme il en arrive dans Paris, avec le fantastique de Paris, car je soutiens (*il fait tourner sa canne*) qu'il y a beaucoup de fantastique dans Paris.

<div align="right">

(DISCUSSIONS PHILOSOPHIQUES.)

(*RP* 48: 156)

</div>

These words first appear as an epigraph above the "Préface" to *Histoire des treize* (see fig. 2), the trilogy inaugurated by *Ferragus.* Since the first

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[35] See Vachon, pp. 130-31 for exact dates as well as concurrent publications. For more background on *La Revue de Paris,* see Chollet, pp. 539-55; and Bellanger, pp. 108-09.

episode ("Madame Jules") did not make it into the issue with the "Préface" (to the director's dismay, a preview of mounting tensions over Balzac's productivity), the epigraph was reformatted to appear again (see fig. 3), in proximity to the reader's own experience of the "fantastique" in the optical play of street lights: "ceux-la seulement qui se sont amusés à les observer savent combien la femme devient fantastique" (*RP* 48: 161). The third and fourth, concluding installments of *Ferragus* also include the reformatted epigraph, creating continuity in discontinuous reading. In a certain sense, the mixed spaces of the periodical, where the event is coextensive and contiguous with the everyday, stage the central concern of *Ferragus,* effectively blurring the lines between what is real and what is read.

In another example, Balzac addresses the reader of the periodical in his admittedly indulgent "Préface" to *Histoire des Treize,* where he further suggests how he takes advantage of disruptions in publication. These prefatory remarks anticipate the reading process that would link the separate parts of the text as a whole, a process wholly contingent upon the state of the text in commerce.

HISTOIRE DES TREIZE.

I. — FERRAGUS, CHEF DES DÉVORANS.

> . . . . . Personne encore ne nous a raconté
> quelque aventure parisienne comme il en arrive
> dans Paris, avec le fantastique de Paris, car je sou-
> tiens qu'il y a beaucoup de fantastique dans Paris...
>
> (LAUTOUR-MÉZERAY.)

Préface.

Il s'est rencontré, sous l'Empire et dans Paris, treize hommes
également frappés du même sentiment; doués d'assez d'éner-
gie pour être fidèles à la même pensée; assez probes entre eux
pour ne se point trahir, alors même que leurs intérêts se trou-
vaient opposés; assez profondément politiques pour dissimuler
les liens sacrés qui les unissaient; assez forts pour se mettre au-
dessus de toutes les lois; assez hardis pour tout entreprendre, et
assez heureux pour avoir presque toujours réussi dans leurs des-
seins; ayant couru les plus grands dangers, mais taisant leurs dé-
faites; inaccessibles à la peur et n'ayant tremblé ni devant le prince,
ni devant le bourreau, ni devant l'innocence; s'étant acceptés tous,
tels qu'ils étaient, sans tenir compte des préjugés sociaux; crimi-
nels sans doute, mais certainement remarquables par quelques-unes
des qualités qui font les grands hommes. Enfin, pour que rien ne
manquât à la sombre et mystérieuse poésie de leur histoire, tous
sont restés inconnus, quoique tous aient réalisé les plus bizarres

Fig. 2. "Préface" of *Histoire des Treize* in *La Revue de Paris,* including the epigraph in its original format.

HISTOIRE DES TREIZE.

I. — FERRAGUS, CHEF DES DÉVORANS.

LAUTOUR-MÉZERAY.

. . . . . Personne encore ne nous a raconté quelque
aventure périlleuse comme il en arrive dans Paris, avec le
fantastique de Paris, car je soutiens (il faut mourir en cette)
qu'il y a beaucoup de fantastique dans Paris.

(DISCUSSIONS PHILOSOPHIQUES.)

§ Ier. — MADAME JULES.

Il y a dans Paris certaines rues déshonorées autant que peut l'être un homme coupable d'infamie; puis, il y a des rues nobles, puis des rues simplement honnêtes, puis de jeunes rues sur la moralité desquelles le public ne s'est pas encore formé d'opinion; puis, des rues assassines, des rues plus vieilles que de vieilles douairières ne sont vieilles, des rues estimables, des rues toujours propres, des rues toujours sales, des rues ouvrières, travailleuses, mercantiles. Enfin les rues de Paris ont des qualités humaines, et nous impriment, par leur physionomie, certaines idées contre lesquelles nous sommes sans défense. Il y a des rues de mauvaise compagnie où vous ne voudriez pas demeurer, et des rues où vous placeriez volontiers votre séjour. Quelques rues, ainsi que la rue Montmartre, ont une belle tête, et finissent en queue de poisson. La rue de la Paix est une large rue, une grande rue; mais elle ne réveille aucune des

Fig. 3. "1er. -- Madame Jules," the first episode of *Ferragus,* appearing in *La Revue de Paris* with reformatted epigraph.

The "Préface" itself is evidence of this relationship: it appears separately from what it announces, *Ferragus* not appearing until the following issue, and the next two works in the trilogy *Histoire des Treize* not appearing in *La Revue de Paris* at all.[36] Bound to no fixed form, only the idea of the work in progress, the self-referential author presents the work with mixed generic labels ("le récit de l'épisode," "cette histoire," "cette histoire presque romanesque," *RP* 48: 131; 138) and with a grand meta-textual gesture:

Malgré son aversion pour les préfaces, l'auteur a dû jeter ces phrases en tête de ce fragment, parce qu'il est en quelque sorte un épisode de la grande Histoire des treize, à laquelle il tient par d'invisibles liens, et que la puissance naturellement acquise par ces hommes explique certains ressorts qui pourraient sembler presque surnaturels dans son drame. Quoiqu'il doit permis à un conteur d'avoir une sorte de coquetterie littéraire, en devenant historien, il doit donc renoncer ici, par des explications succintes, aux bénéfices que lui procurerait autrement l'apparente bizarrerie des titres sur laquelle se fondent aujourd'hui de légers succès.

(*RP* 48: 128)

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[36] A note from the director of *La Revue de Paris* at this time, Amédée Pichot, demonstrates the pattern of Balzac's speculation with the example of *Histoire des Treize*, a work promised and only delivered in part (qtd in Lovenjoul 48). This note accounts for the publication of the rest of *Histoire des Treize* in *L'Echo de la jeune France.*

In the midst of author-inflicted genre trouble, Balzac places emphasis on the materiality of print, specifically the spatial form of the text ("en tête de ce fragment") and the intertextual relations made possible in the specific context of the periodical. Balzac takes advantage of the formal indeterminacy engendered by the press, as my reading of the *Ferragus* exposition demonstrates, by variously employing textual modes of address, bending and breaking the conventions of genre to give rise to new literary forms.

As Balzac's novelistic project unfolds in commercial print, the shape of the text becomes inseparable from the reader's situation. These formal relations are not confined to the vast editorial spaces commanded by Balzac's productivity. In the next section, I will explore how Baudelaire's poems in prose innovate textual forms in more delimited spaces of the *feuilleton.*

The *Flâneur* and the *Feuilleton*: Baudelaire's Poems in Prose

By way of a dedication to one of his publishers, Charles Baudelaire provides the vague terms that enduringly define his project of poems in prose.[37] His letter to Arsène Houssaye, appearing with the first of three

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[37] As I will later discuss, I am primarily using the term "poems in prose"—rather than "petits poèmes en prose" or *Spleen de Paris*— to discuss Baudelaire's project in its many iterations, not limited to the collection in *La Presse* and the ultimate book project. The term "poems in prose" emphasizes what I want to explore: the parts of an undetermined whole and the resistance of the project to a name, a genre, and a final, bound form.

sets of poems in the *feuilleton* of *La Presse* in August 1862, describes the

labile form of the project:

> Mon cher ami, je vous envoie un petit ouvrage dont on ne pourrait
>
> pas dire, sans injustice, qu'il n'a ni queue ni tête, puisque tout, au
>
> contraire, y est à la fois tête et queue alternativement et
>
> réciproquement. Considérez, je vous prie, quelles admirables
>
> commodités cette combinaison nous offre à tous, à vous, à moi, et
>
> au lecteur. Nous pouvons couper où nous voulons, moi ma rêverie,
>
> vous le manuscrit, le lecteur sa lecture.   (*La Presse* n.p.)[38]

The "petit ouvrage" in question is at once a compositional whole,

conceived as a textual object with spatial dimensions, and a combination

of individual units, arbitrary in their arrangement. Further, its form is

ambiguous and adaptable ("y est à la fois tête et queue alternativement et

réciproquement"), lending itself to the productivity of reading. According

to this schema, the *process* of the reading subject, the unpredictable

motion of subjectivity, involving random discontinuities and connections,

as well as personal interests and itineraries, yields any number of

"commodités." The text takes the shape of one's reading experience as it

is conditioned by modernity, replicating the fragmentation of life in the

midst of commerce. In his attempt to register modern life kinetically,

Baudelaire incorporates the specific materiality of commercial print into

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[38] *P* in subsquent parenthetical citations.

the very form of his poems in prose.[39] My analysis of Baudelaire's poems in prose (the project as a whole and a selection) identifies textual strategies for addressing the reader in the act, focusing on scenes in the reader's performance of the text, or sequences of action in which the reading subject is implicated by textual modes of address.

Baudelaire's poems in prose are inseparable from the poet's situation in textual commerce. In his foundational study, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism,* Walter Benjamin exposes the deposit of capitalist consciousness in the poet's activity, declaring that "Baudelaire knew what the true situation of the man of letters was: he goes to the marketplace as a flâneur, supposedly to take a look at it, but in reality to find a buyer" (34). Substantiating his analysis, Benjamin's account of innovations in the press suggests the connection between textual forms and technologies. He attributes the state of the marketplace that Baudelaire knew to Émile Girardin and his enterprise of *La Presse,* which had created the conditions in which literary texts circulate as news commodities: lowering subscription prices and extending advertisements ensured the commercial development of the serial novel through the *feuilleton* (*Baudelaire* 27). Benjamin further relates the poet's perspective to the history of commercial literature:

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[39] Marshall Berman discusses Baudelaire's poems in prose as periodical content (147). Jean-Christophe Bailly approaches the poems in prose as a more general problem of genre: "the intrusion of prose into prosody" (125).

Once a writer has entered the marketplace, he looked around as if in a panorama. A special literary genre has captured the writer's first attempts to orient himself . . . These works consisted of individual sketches, which, as it were, reproduce the dynamic foreground of those panoramas with their anecdotal form and the sweeping background of panoramas with their store of information . . . [T]hese anthologies are products of the same belletristic collective work for which Girardin had procured an outlet in the feuilleton. They were the salon attire of a literature which fundamentally was designed to be sold in the streets.

(*Baudelaire* 35)

As Benjamin indicates here, textual strategies emerging in panoramic literature—compiling scenes into an expansive perspective—paved the way for Baudelaire's response to his situation in the marketplace. Like Balzac in the 1830's and '40s, the writer of Baudelaire's time, a time of expanding print culture, continues to cope with the circumstances of textual commerce by producing in parts of a compositional whole. In this connection, I want to explore the continuity of textual strategies between Balzac and Baudelaire by identifying how scenes adapt to the material context of commercial print: through textual modes of address, scenes prompt the reader to link situated perspectives in a comprehensive view.

Baudelaire's own critical representation of the writer in the marketplace betrays to what extent he understands his own situation

through Balzac's methods of production. In his article, "Comment on paie ses dettes quand on a du génie"(in *Le Corsaire-Satan*, November 24, 1845), Baudelaire confronts this situation anecdotally, invoking Balzac's example, even echoing the language used to describe the economy of print in "Monographie de la presse parisienne": "C'était bien lui, la plus forte tête commerciale et littéraire du dix-neuvième siècle; lui, le cerveau poétique tapissé de chiffres comme le cabinet d'un financier" (*OC* 2: 6).[40] Despite the vulgarities of his commercial savviness, Balzac earns the title of genius for producing quality under the pressure to produce quantity: "l'oeil fixé sur l'horloge, le génie de l'invention sent la nécessité de doubler, tripler, déculper ses forces dans la proportion du temps qui diminue, et de la vitesse approchante de l'heure fatale" (*OC* 2: 7). The influence of Balzac's method is evident here, the production of works in economical parts, but also the disdain that Baudelaire felt toward the production of works under commercial and financial pressure: "l'oeil fixé sur l'horloge" and the necessity of "l'heure fatale." For a model of artistic genius closer to his own ideal, Baudelaire turns to a method of production in which form more directly takes the shape of the content and the material.

The poet-critic's most widely-read essay, "Le Peintre de la vie moderne"—published in *Le Figaro* in 1863, but originally composed in

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[40] Hereafter, *OC.*

1859, concurrent with poems in verse and in prose—attests to the influence of journalism on his conception of form. In this essay, Baudelaire turns to commercial print culture for a new model of artistic production; "le peintre de la vie moderne" is not a "peintre" in the strict sense of the word, but rather an ideal artist pseudo-anonymously modeled after the illustrator, Constantin Guys.[41] This depiction of Guys as a model artist also contains Baudelaire's vision of modern art:

> Maintenant, à l'heure où les autres dorment, celui-ci est penché sur sa table, dardant sur une feuille de papier le même regard qu'il attachait tout à l'heure sur les choses, s'escrimant avec son crayon, sa plume, son pinceau, faisant jaillir l'eau du verre au plafond, essuyant sa plume sur sa chemise, pressé, violent, actif, comme s'il craignait que les images ne lui échappent, querelleur quoique seul, et se bousculant lui-même. Et les choses renaissent sur le papier, naturelles et plus que naturelles, belles et plus que belles, singulières et douées d'une vie enthousiaste comme l'âme de l'auteur. (*OC* 2: 693-4)

The physical vocabulary ("s'escrimant," "faisant jaillir," "se bousculant") calls attention to the method of production, which is a violent struggle

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[41] For alternate readings of "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" in relation to Baudelaire's art criticism and aesthetics, see the dialogue in *Critical Inquiry* between Michael Fried's "Painting Memories" and Richard Shiff's "Remembering Impressions." J.A. Hiddleston offers some insight into Baudelaire's choice of Constantin Guys as "le peintre" in "Baudelaire, Manet, and Modernity."

against the limitations of media and memory. As he grasps after fleeting images, each stroke of the artist's pen, every darting glance of his eye, gathers and transposes his impressions into physical form. The work of art, then, is the product of a struggle to represent "les choses" as they happen, and its very form materializes the artist's total experience in its immediacy, in the moment of impact on the senses. Guys's art of sketching effectively links form and content in the act of capturing modernity in "les choses" of everyday life.

"Le peintre de la vie moderne" is not an artist confined to his drawing table, but rather an addict of the crowd. Baudelaire compares "le peintre" to "le parfait flâneur," the Parisian type celebrated for his art of strolling,[42] to situate the artist in the midst of it all, residing "dans le nombre, dans l'ondoyant dans le mouvement, dans le fugitif et l'infini" (*OC* 2: 691). In this analogy, Baudelaire characterizes both the artist and the object of art, which is the beauty to be found in the chaos of modernity. He thus evokes the *flâneur* in the capacity of a "strategy of representation"; as Priscilla Ferguson amply demonstrates in *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City,* the *flâneur* embodies "a moving perspective that tallies with the complexity of a situation that defies stasis" (81; 91). Like the artist-flâneur pioneered in Balzac's works,

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[42] In "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," Griselda Pollock explores the exclusions and privileges of the *flâneur*'s subjectivity in terms of artistic production and the modernist tradition. Catherine Nesci examines the (absence) of a feminine counterpoint to the *flâneur*'s position with attention to the power relations inscribed in social spaces.

Baudelaire's "peintre" turns his free visual experiences of the city into legible texts, or representations of the city that make it readable. But unlike Balzac's observer-narrator, Baudelaire's ideal artist works from the inside, immersed in the churning sea of masses that he renders in his art; further, he works from inside his own subjectivity, recording every jolt to his senses like "un kaléidoscope doué de conscience, qui, à chacun de ses mouvements, représente la vie multiple et la grâce mouvante de tous les éléments de la vie" (*OC* 2: 692). Baudelaire's vision of the ideal artist of modernity exemplifies what Ferguson observes about the activity of the *flâneur:* "Flânerie urbanizes observation by making the observer part of the urban scene" (Tester 27). By integrating subject and object in this elaborate metaphor for the artist, Baudelaire represents both the form and content of modern art as shifting fragments of experience: "C'est un *moi* insatiable du *non-moi*, qui, à chaque instant, le rend et l'exprime en images plus vivantes que la vie elle-même, toujours instable et fugitive" (*OC* 2: 692). Combining the materiality of Guys's sketching and the metaphoricity of the *flâneur*, Baudelaire's model of artistic production seeks out new aesthetic forms at the level of urban consciousness.

To some extent, "le peintre de la vie moderne" is an avatar of the poet-critic in his quest for the more elastic form of "une prose poétique," as announced in the prefatory epistle, "À Arsène Houssaye." In Baudelaire's notes for the dedication of this project ("Canevas de la

dédicace"), he envisages a structure for "cet ouvrage tenant de la vis et du kaléidoscope" (*OC* 1: 365). By transposing the kaleidoscope metaphor into the medium of "une prose poétique," Baudelaire articulates his vision of a form responsive to the swirling fragments of consciousness that make up modern life. In the version of the "dédicace" published in *La Presse*, Baudelaire sketches out the intention of his project in the hazy figuration of movement:

> Quel est celui de nous qui n'a pas, dans ses jours d'ambition, rêvé le miracle d'une prose poétique, musicale sans rhythme et sans rime, assez souple et assez heurtée pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la rêverie, aux soubresauts de la conscience? (*P* n.p.)

The phrasing of this question, evoking a shared sense of possibility, raises uncertainty as to whether "le miracle d'une prose poétique" is fully realized in form. It remains a nebulous idea, defined by its difference from poetry: the absence of prosody ("musicale sans rhythme et sans rime") and the adequacy of pliability ("assez souple et assez heurtée").

Indeed, Baudelaire's "prose poétique" is often discussed in terms of the difference between poetry and prose.[43] In *Le poème en prose de*

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[43] For critical perspectives on this problematic in Baudelaire's poems in prose, see Jacques-Henry Borneque, "Les Poèmes en prose de Baudelaire" (1953); Pierre Citron, *La Poésie de Paris dans la littérature française de Rousseau* à *Baudelaire* (1961); Allison Fairlie, "The Prose Poems of Baudelaire" (1963); J. A. Hiddleston, "Baudelaire and the Poetry of Prose" (1983-4).

Baudelaire jusqu'à nos jours, Suzanne Bernard argues that Baudelaire charges his "prose poétique" to do what could not be done in verse: the poem in prose would be "une forme beaucoup plus libre, plus 'ouverte' que le poème en vers, admettant les dissonances, les ruptures du ton, l'ironie surtout" (122). Baudelaire makes this relative designation in his correspondence of 1866: the poems in prose are "encore les Fleurs du Mal, mais avec beaucoup plus de liberté, et de détail, et de raillerie" (*Correspondances* 2: 615). The poem in prose not only responds to the rhythms of modern life, but even registers the trauma which, in Christopher Prendergast's version, impacts traditional forms of poetry like a death blow: "The dissonances of the city strike at the very heart of verse, the principle of harmony . . . As the city fractures experience, so it also defigures what is understood as poetry" (*Paris* 129). While Prendergast places the emphasis on external forces of modernity, Barbara Johnson brings critical attention to internal tension in *Défigurations du langage poétique: la second révolution baudelairienne.* Johnson's analysis of several poems in prose and their verse-counterparts brings into focus "la nature d'un besoin de différence à l'intérieur de la langue," which is "une différence de codes (10). It is this "différence" that constitutes the discursive identities of poetry and prose, marking poetry as *poetry*—that is, as *marked* discourse, marked by its difference from prose, which is neutral, unmarked discourse (36-7). In short, the poem in prose conflates the two codes to remark the difference

between poetry and prose. Baudelaire's notion of "une prose poétique" belongs to a critical tradition linking the poem in prose to poetry in crisis.

I want to suggest, however, that Baudelaire's poems in prose also merit reading *on their own uncertain terms.* In this regard, Baudelaire's revisions to his proposal of "une prose poétique" are illuminating. His draft of the dedication to Houssaye formulates the defining question as, "Quel est celui de nous qui n'a pas rêvé une prose particulière et poétique pour traduire les mouvements lyriques de l'esprit, les ondulations de la rêverie, les soubresauts de la conscience?" (*OC* 1: 365). The two adjectives qualifying the prose ("particulière et poétique") accentuate its primary position and relegate the "poétique" quality to secondary status. Linking the dream-form to a potential action, the prepositional phrase ("pour traduire") further defines the particular type of prose by what it enables to be done. The second modification in the phrasing, from "traduire" to "s'adapter," calls for a certain immediacy and formal responsivity to change—a capacity not unlike the jostled kaleidoscope of Baudelaire's "peintre de la vie moderne"—and also implies a vital connection between form and content, a synchronicity between the "mouvements" of the material and the "mouvements" of subjectivity. It is the verb "s'adapter" that distinguishes "une prose poétique" by what it does. The third modification, from "mouvements lyriques de l'esprit" to "mouvements lyriques de l'âme," grasps for the

intangible "mouvements" of something at once individual and beyond the individual, the final choice of "âme" over "esprit" resonating of something at once personal and transcendent, unifying. This is precisely the impulse of the "parfait flâneur" in Baudelaire's portrait of the artist, at home only in the crowd, fusing with its energy. The idea of "une prose poétique," then, is the desire for union, not only between prose and poetry, but also between materiality and modern consciousness. At the same time, it is the *tension* contained within the paradoxical fusion of "une prose poétique" that makes its form so amenable to representing modernity in all its facets and fluctuations.

Baudelaire highlights this duality in his dedication to Arsène Houssaye, where he reframes the poems in prose—many of which had already appeared in print—for the specific material context of the newspaper, *La Presse.* "À Arsène Houssaye" presents the entire project of poems in prose to the reader in the figure of a segmented serpent, responsive to one's every move:

> Enlevez une vertèbre, et les deux morceaux de cette tortueuse fantaisie se rejoindront sans peine. Hachez-la en nombreux fragments, et vous verrez que chacun peut exister à part. Dans l'espérance que quelques-uns de ces tronçons seront assez vivants pour vous plaire et vous amuser, j'ose vous dédier le serpent tout entier. (*P* n. p.)

The reader is to approach the poems in prose as parts of a whole, as dislocated pieces, to be unified in the act of reading, joined by metaphorically cutting the whole—spread across the four uncut pages of *La Presse* (Bellanger 21)—into separate yet cohesive parts. Baudelaire offers Houssaye and the projected reader his work as a whole ("le serpent tout entier") for cutting, selecting. This repackaging of the text, drafted for the purpose of submitting the poems in prose for *La Presse,* is significant in light of subsequent publishing outcomes: Houssaye would delay the publication process in his attempt to suppress certain pieces, maintaining that Baudelaire had already published them in other periodicals. Houssaye's editorial interruption problematizes the whole idea of the "petit ouvrage," a unifying idea based on the presumed autonomy of the reading subject in commercial print culture. This conflict, anticipated in the irony of Baudelaire's cover letter, demonstrates to what extent the relationship between parts and the whole depended on textual commerce in the space of the *feuilleton.*

As Baudelaire's preface further suggests, textual forms *adapt* to the experience of the reader, who is encouraged to select parts, to let connections arise. Choosing any "combinaison" of units in the act of reading produces any number of "commodités" in the passage from one unit to another. In this dynamic image, Baudelaire accentuates the adaptable form of "une prose poétique" by animating the formal relations between the text and the context of reading. The form of "une prose

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poétique" thus consists of a specific *material* context: the assortment of "commodités" to be stumbled upon and selectively filtered in the daily news. The very idea of "une prose poétique" is inseparable from this context: Baudelaire's poems in prose exhibit the capacity to "s'adapter" to new textual spaces, appearing in the columns of the feuilleton; to new conditions of reading, accommodating for the divided attention of the modern reader; and to the new *tout court*, apprehending the sense of *happening* in day-to-day life. The interactive form of "une prose poétique" does not draw from just any prose, but rather exploits the particular prose environment of the newspaper, appealing to habits of reading cultivated in daily encounters with columns of ephemera, miscellany, novelty, simultaneity, and seriality.

Moreover, reading the poems in prose in the *feuilleton* reproduces the idea of "une prose poétique" in the performance of the text. As Baudelaire highlights the role of the reading subject in his figuration of the project, he prompts the reader to cut a path through the poems in prose, following the poetic subject through the city, from one scene to another. The comparison between reading the text and walking the city is implicit here, but there is nonetheless a direct relationship between *feuilletonner* and *flâner*. Indeed, Baudelaire's confession to Houssaye relates how the content of the *feuilleton* originates in the activity of the *flâneur:* "C'est surtout de la fréquentation des villes énormes, c'est du croisement de leurs innombrables rapports que naît cet idéal obsédant

[d'une prose poétique]" (*P* n.p.). The realization of "une prose poétique" would simulate the *discovery* of everyday life. In this connection, Ross Chambers situates the idea of "une prose poétique" in "a more specific project": "inventing a lyric mode that would enact 'la beauté moderne', following in the steps of Balzac and the prose flâneur tradition" (250). As a strategic continuity between Balzac and Baudelaire, the *flâneur* gives rise to new textual forms inspired by the experience of exploring the city, generating a lyrical prose, in Chambers's description. Rather than an inherent lyricism, what I want to emphasize is how the freedom of the *flâneur* enables formal exploration in a chaotic print environment; the medium of the commercial press would allow Balzac and Baudelaire to play with textual forms, as evident in their loose usages of generic terms in the prefatory material accompanying their works (Balzac: "récit," "histoire," "drame" for the first "fragment" of *Ferragus;* Baudelaire: "prose poétique" for the "commodités" or "tronçons" of poems in prose). Looking beyond Baudelaire's own description of his project, Patrick Labarthe proposes that "l'idée même d'un ouvrage sans 'queue ni tête . . . ' procède autant d'Aloysius Bertrand que de ce qu'on pourrait appeler les 'fragments poétiques' balzaciens" (48). As I develop comparisons of scenes by Balzac and Baudelaire in my analysis, I want to further suggest how the *flâneur* is transposed into the text as a reading subject: textual modes of address enable the reader to follow in the steps of the

flâneur in the print environment of periodicals, more or less analogous to spaces of urban intersection.

In the fashion of the *flâneur,* the reader happens upon the scenes of Baudelaire's poems in prose in the *feuilleton* of *La Presse* as random events—overheard confessions and conversations, dramatic conflicts and confrontations; yet there are no logical relations (causal, temporal, geographical, or otherwise) determining their order or connections. To demonstrate this effect, by which the process of reading interacts with the text, I will follow Baudelaire's suggestion to choose any one of the pieces, selecting one poem from the divided spread of the entire work for my analysis.

"Les Veuves" is reprinted in the second installment of poems in prose in *La Presse,* a repetition and continuation of the poetic speaker's perambulations—and the reader's. Here, Baudelaire's speaker sets the scene in the manner of Balzac's narrator, presenting knowledge of a particular locale to situate the subject in a *place* of encounter:

> Vauvenargues dit que dans les jardins publics il est des allées hantées principalement par l'ambition déçue, par les inventeurs malheureux, par les gloires avortées, par les coeurs brisés, par toutes ces âmes tumultueuses et fermées, en qui grondent encore les derniers soupirs d'un orage, et qui reculent loin du regard insolent des joyeux et des oisifs. Ces retraites ombreuses sont les rendez-vous des éclopés de la vie.   (*P* n.p.)

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By alluding to Vauvenargues, a minor French writer from the previous century, Baudelaire immediately activates the non-poetic code (to draw from Barbara Johnson's terminology), using a prose structure to evoke genius loci. This paraphrase distances the speaking subject from what he presents, which is *already* represented. Instead of speaking with the authority of an observer, like Balzac's narrator, who is an uninhibited reader of signifying details, Baudelaire's speaker lets his own musings (on the observations of Vauvenargues) convey the subjective impact of what is there to be seen. Further, topography takes on the traits of human character in this opening scene, as in the view of the streets in *Ferragus;* but where Balzac's narrator gives precisions of place and focuses on particularities of perception, Baudelaire's speaker populates a delimited space with abstract figures. Rather than indulge in the accumulation of meticulous material detail, which is Balzac's forte, Baudelaire transforms a common venue of urban life into an allegorical atmosphere. "Les Veuves" thus delves into the spiritual depths of the city by registering the "mouvements lyriques de l'âme" through the mediation of the poetic subject.

Baudelaire's speaker in "Les Veuves" is nonetheless an experienced reader of the city. Like Balzac's narrator, he implies the aptitude of his observations by rehearsing a reading of available surfaces:

Un oeil expérimenté ne s'y trompe jamais. Dans ces traits rigides
ou abattus, dans ces yeux caves et ternes, ou brillants des derniers

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éclairs de la lutte, dans ces rides profondes et nombreuses, dans

ces démarches si lentes ou si saccadées, il déchiffre tout de suite

les innombrables légendes de l'amour trompé, du dévouement

méconnu, des efforts non récompensés, de la faim et du froid

humblement, silencieusement supportés.   (*P* n.p.)

By suppressing the first-person pronoun, which is the conventional

iteration of the poetic subject, the speaker acts the poet *in prose,*

lavishing poetic value on ordinary appearances. He demonstrates a

certain reading knowledge, the capacity to decode the secrets etched in

passing faces and figures ("il déchiffre tout de suite les innombrables

légendes"), but does not claim this capacity exclusively; in theory, any

"oeil expérimenté" could penetrate to the depths of mystery.

    As he recalls what he has seen, the poetic subject in "Les Veuves"

reaches out to the reader through textual modes of address enabled by

the prose medium. With a direct question, the speaker turns to "vous" as

a fellow observer: "Avez-vous quelquefois aperçu des veuves sur ces

bancs solitaires, des veuves pauvres?" The connection between the

speaking subject and the reading subject deepens as the general inquiry

elicits a personal testimony:

Quelle est la veuve la plus triste et la plus attristante, celle qui

traîne à sa main un bambin avec qui elle ne peut pas partager sa

rêverie, ou celle qui est tout à fait seule? Je ne sais... Il m'est arrivé

une fois de suivre pendant de longues heures une vieille affligée de

cette espèce; celle-là roide, droite, sous un petit châle usé, portait

dans tout son être une fierté de stoïcienne.   (*P* n.p.)

The transition from dialogic to anecdotal structures effectively frames the

past-tense narrative as a subjective account. By his own admission, the

speaker's curiosity inflects the scene as it is replayed for the reader who

consents to sharing his concern. This common concern, which is the

pretext for the speaker's address, provides narrative cohesion in the

abrupt transition from one scene to another, connected only by obsessive

interest:

Une autre encore:

Je ne puis jamais m'empêcher de jeter un regard, sinon

universellement sympathique, au moins curieux, sur la foule de

parias qui se pressent autour de l'enceinte d'un concert public.

In the brusque gesture toward another example, a related memory, the

poem in prose captures the sudden movement of subjectivity between

scenes. Moreover, the speaker's confession positions him as an

interested observer of a recurring scene into which he is irresistibly

drawn. He inflects his gaze with subjective bias ("un regard, sinon

universellement sympathique, au moins curieux"), and centers the

sequence of action on his personal investment in it. As the poetic subject

reacts to the "vision" as he recalls it, the shock of seeing and recognizing

the lives of others is registered in explicit acts of address:

Singulière vision! "A coup sûr, me dis-je, cette pauvreté-là, si

pauvreté il y a, ne doit pas admettre l'économie sordide; un si

noble visage m'en répond. Pourquoi donc reste-t-elle

volontairement dans un milieu où elle fait une tache si éclatante?"

The emotional outburst ("Singulière vision!"), conveying subjective

impact, takes the place of description; furthermore, this act of calling out

is an event in itself, involving the subject in the scene as it is being

replayed from his point of view. In his response, in the sympathetic

address of his questions, the speaker of "Les Veuves" invests himself in

the scene as a reading subject (reading the signs of others' stories) and

elicits the speculation of a confidant (the reader positioned in the

situation of the text). The poem is not so much about the solitary figure

as it is about her impact on the poetic subject, which is the movement of

subjectivity both attracted to and repulsed by the lives of others. By

relating the event through textual modes of address, framing acts of

perception as meaning-laden through the speech acts of the text,

Baudelaire's speaker goes further into the depths of scenes than Balzac's

authoritative narrator, going so far as to question inner thoughts, the

intentions lurking beneath the surface, beyond the visible.

The performance of the speaker in "Les Veuves," his show of

empathy and personal feeling, demonstrates how Baudelaire's project is

discordant with Balzac's model of reading as *knowing*. It is by "une sorte

de physionomie mystique," as Patrick Labarthe affirms, that reading

serves as a method of knowledge production for Balzac, "apte à saisir les 'effets' du visible comme hiéroglyphes de l'invisible" (48). The narrator's all-seeing eye is an "I" seeing all from a distance—a *reading* distance, as Priscilla Ferguson emphasizes in her portrait of the *flâneur* in his "productive detachment": "In control of his actions, the flaneur reads the city as he would read a text—from a distance" (Tester 30, 31). By refusing to admit any interference of subjectivity, Balzac's narrator renders the invisible legible; in contrast, Baudelaire's speaker registers the "mouvements" of modern life by dramatizing the impact on his subjective state.

Baudelaire's project of "une prose poétique" is nonetheless concerned with knowing, albeit in a different sense than Balzac's novelistic project. In seeking the ultimate "sens caché" in *La Comédie humaine*, Balzac unifies the scenes of his novels in service of knowledge. The "Avant-Propos" lays the foundation of the *Comédie* in the basic principle of human behavior, the "loi" of nature re-iterated in social relations (*Comédie* 8). By observing the movement of human energy as it plays out in dramatic situations, Balzac proposes to infer "la raison de ces effets sociaux" (*Comédie* 11). Whereas Balzac creates order to reveal this "sens caché," Baudelaire creates *disorder* to reveal the beauty of modern life—in the facts that make no sense, or in the individual struggle to make sense. Both writers stage the act of reading the city as "un champ de 'semiotisation'" as Catherine Nesci describes it, extending

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Stierle's term, "où toute matérialité visible renvoie à une autre matérialité spatiale ou temporelle, à un ordre du sens plus ou moins caché, à une mémoire profane ou spirituelle déposée dans les choses" (54). Yet where Balzac looks for the higher, hidden order linking social causes and effects in determining relations, Baudelaire seeks the fleeting connections between material and spiritual realities in conflicting experiences. Priscilla Ferguson aptly seizes on this trajectory in the development of the *flâneur* subject from Balzac to Baudelaire: "Balzac's controlling narrator gives way to Baudelaire's anguished poet, for whom exploration of the city is a pretext for the exploration of self" (*Revolution* 94). If Balzac's "sens caché" is the product of control, the meaning disclosed in Baudelaire's poems in prose is the *loss* of control, the unsettling desire to know the self through others and the world outside.

In Baudelaire's exploration of the city and the self, the prose medium in particular allows the poet to seek out the full effects of disorder that verse structures would not permit. Moreover, the specific material context of Baudelaire's project (the news marketplace) situates the ordinary, the very movements of subjectivity, among the events of the time shaping notions of modernity. Baudelaire's project brings poetry into contact—direct, unsettling confrontation—with the everyday. By taking up the "everyday as a new and surprising object of poetic, rather than journalistic or novelistic, interest," the poems in prose give form to a new mode of knowledge, which originates in the experience of urban

reality—what Ross Chambers calls "the shock of knowing" (250). The poeticized everyday valorizes the momentary over the monumental to explore the possibilities (and the limits) of knowing through the subjective encounter, through lived experience. The poems in prose conduct the "subjective shock" between reading subjects, that is, between the poetic speaker reading the city as a *flâneur* and the consumer of the *feuilleton* also reading the city. By establishing these intersubjective relations, textual modes of address transmit the shock waves of Baudelaire's "prose poétique." Baudelaire's project thus aims to sublimate the ordinary, the individual crisis of seeking knowledge through the experience of the self in the city—not an absolute, historical product like Balzac's "sens caché," but a "sens caché" in its own right.

The movement of the *flâneur* in Baudelaire's poems in prose, re-enacted in reading, leads to close encounters in vaguely delineated spaces of the urban life. That is to say, Baudelaire's Paris remains hazily allegorically, escaping identification. In my next set of readings, this theater stands in sharp contrast to that of the "drame" presented by Balzac's narrator, scenes which could be located precisely in the urban labyrinth of nineteenth-century Paris.

<div align="center">

The "Drame" of Reading:

Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* and Baudelaire's "Le Crépuscule du Soir"

</div>

In "Balzac jugé par Baudelaire," the poet attributes the complete vision of the novelist to his inordinate aptitude for seeing: "Son goût

prodigieux du détail, qui tient à une ambition immodérée du tout voir, de tout faire voir, de tout deviner, l'obligeait d'ailleurs à marquer avec plus de force les lignes principales, pour sauver la perspective de l'ensemble" (2). What Baudelaire detects in Balzac's ordering impulse is the need for moderation, for the means to manage too much perceptual information. Balzac's eye for detail finds signifying potential in everything, seeing everything as *there to be read*. To organize this excess, to make it accessible, his novelistic project maintains "les lignes principales" to guide the reader's recognition, interpretation, and assimilation of material signs into a totality of meaning. Baudelaire's criticism of Balzac also contains a fundamental difference between the novelist's approach to "tout faire voir" and the poet's own: where Balzac sees all, makes all visible, all that is *there to be read*, Baudelaire sees only the self, makes the self visible, always there to be read (or to elude being read). This optic is articulated in the first and last words of Baudelaire's speaker in the poem in prose, "Les Fenêtres":

> Celui qui regarde du dehors à travers une fenêtre ouverte, ne voit jamais autant de choses que celui qui regarde une fenêtre fermée.
>
> [. . .]
>
> Qu'importe ce que peut être la réalité placée hors de moi, si elle m'a aidé à vivre, à sentir que je suis et ce que je suis? (*OC* 1: 339)

When the self is the only measure of the real, when all that matters is subjective effect, what is *not* seen is as significant as what is there to be

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seen. This irony brings into focus the distinction between Balzac's observer-narrator and Baudelaire's poetic subject: whereas Balzac's narrator reports what he sees, regulating his perspective to capture a whole universe of particularities, Baudelaire's poetic subject relates what he feels, immersing himself in the flux of urban phenomena. In this regard, Balzac's narrator and Baudelaire's poetic subject roughly correspond to the terms *observer* and *spectator,* respectively, as Jonathan Crary defines them etymologically in *Techniques of the Observer:* whereas the observer exhibits rule-bound behavior, recording what he sees as purportedly objective realities, the spectator displays affectivity, responding to what he sees as part of the spectacle (5-6). Along these lines, Balzac's Paris is the representation of an ordered world—complete, integrated, and transparent; Baudelaire's Paris, the reflection of modern subjectivity—broken, alienated, and ambivalent. This contrast comes into view in the juxtaposition of Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* and Baudelaire's "Le Crépuscule du soir" as attempts to *read* others (for Balzac, to identify them; for Baudelaire, to identify *with* them). My analysis will focus on textual modes of address that assert the reading subject in the text, not only Balzac's narrator and Baudelaire's speaker, but also, at marked times, the reader of the text in process.

Le Père Goriot represents a culminating point in Balzac's early production or, rather, a turning point, inaugurating the practices that bring *La Comédie humaine* to fruition. This work is often discussed as a

pivotal text in terms of Balzac's emergent novelistic practices: the technique of recurring characters and the organizational scheme of categorized scenes.[44] As Maurice Bardèche notes in *Balzac romancier,* it was *Le Père Goriot* that gave rise to "la réapparition des personnages" as a means of linking the scenes of Balzac's novelistic project, and he retroactively applied this technique to earlier, separately produced texts in preparation for collected editions (338). As I touch on these developments, I will do so with attention to the immediate material context of *Le Père Goriot*: Balzac's contractual production. By approaching this text in its original context, I will treat it as an example of how scenes develop as textual strategies in response to the contingencies of commercial print.

The first episode of *Le Père Goriot*—"Une Pension Bourgeoise"— appeared in *La Revue de Paris* in December 1834. The reader first encounters the text in a divided space: the opening passage of "Une Pension Bourgeoise" appears with an editorial note equal in spatial dimensions to the narrative (see fig. 4). The note explains an interruption of expected content, the continuation of Balzac's *Séraphita,*[45] and seeks to reassure the reader of its imminent delivery:

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[44] For discussions focused on the analysis of these developments, see A. R. Pugh, "Recurring Characters in 'Le Père Goriot'" (1962); E. Preston, *Recherches sur la technique de Balzac* (1926); Félicien Marceau, *Balzac et son monde* (1955), pp. 17-25; H. J. Hunt, *Balzac's Comédie Humaine* (1959), pp. 93-7.

[45] For further documentation of this contractual conflict (from the editorial perspective), see Lovenjoul, p. 9. For exact dates of published installments, see Vachon, pp. 142-50.

Si la REVUE DE PARIS a souvent annoncé la fin d'une Étude

philosophique commencée dans ce recueil par M. de Balzac en

juillet dernier, la REVUE, comme l'auteur, espéraient de jour en jour

pouvoir la donner.   (*RP* 12: *73*)

Le Père Goriot is thus entangled from the start in commercial discourse

and chronology. In acknowledging the impact of the availability of texts

on the reading public, this editorial apology appeals to the reader's sense

of investment:

le petit nombre de personnes aux-quelles cette œuvre a pu plaire

comprendront les travaux matériels qu'elle a nécessités, et qu'il est

nécessaire de lire, ont exigé des recherches, et se sont fait

attendre.

The editor's emphasis on the materiality of the work in progress seeks to

confirm the reader's loyal interest and establish a committed

relationship. The reader is thus constructed in the text (here, in extra-

narrative space) in the moment of reception as a participant in the

process of production. Through this interpellation, the *Revue* effectively

frames the entire work of *Le Père Goriot* in relation to the reader's

experience and expectations:

Malgré le peu d'importance que les lecteurs attachent à ces

explications, il était indispensable de les donner, pour l'auteur et

pour la REVUE, du moment où M. de Balzac publiait, avant de

terminer, *Séraphita,* un ouvrage aussi considérable que l'est le *Père*

Goriot, espèce d'indemnité offerte aux lecteurs et à la R<small>EVUE</small>.

The original textual form of *Le Père Goriot* contains its valorization as "un ouvrage aussi considérable" to justify discontinuities, broken promises, and compromised integrity; indeed, the *Revue* offers the work as a special product, an "espèce d'indemnité." It also contains a reference to future texts ("La fin de Séraphita paraîtra d'ailleurs dans le prochain volume"), casting *Le Père Goriot* as a sort of interlude in *Séraphita.* The reader's encounter with *Le Père Goriot* in the press is inseparable from this activated context of commodity consumption, the market, which is folded into the text through textual modes of address.

In addition to the footnote, the first page of "Une Pension bourgeoise" makes use of extra-narrative space to address the reader of the periodical in an epigraph (see fig. 4). The words "All is true," attributed to Shakespeare, prepare the way for the opening scenes of *Le Père Goriot* (*RP* 12: 73). In this allusion to the history of theater (*Henry VIII*), Balzac throws into question the generic identity of his work and skews the reader's expectations. Problematizing the relations between representation and reality (what is "true"), the citation activates both the resonances of the literary tradition and the surrounding context of the journalistic enterprise.

Fig. 4. "Une Pension Bourgeoise," first episode of *Le Père Goriot,* appearing in *La Revue de Paris* with a sizable explanatory note from the editor.

The reader thus encounters *Le Père Goriot* through mixed schemata of the drama: Shakespearean drama on the historical stage and everyday Parisian drama in the streets. With these multiple valances, the epigraph signals the conditions of reading created by the literary *revue*, at once dedicated to the value of literature and driven by the circulation of news commodities.

The epigraph to *Le Père Goriot* also previews the referential excess of the narrative. In the exposition of "Une Pension bourgeoise," Balzac's narrator provides specific details for potentially identifying the scenes of the novel in real life. The first lines of the text indicate particularities of personal history and location: "Madame Vauquer, née de Conflans, est une vieille femme qui tient depuis quarante ans, à Paris, une pension bourgeoise établie rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, entre le quartier latin et le faubourg Saint-Marceau" (*RP* 12: 73). Transposing topography into the recent past (the time of the story in 1819) establishes the reader's bearings in Paris as Balzac's narrator activates local knowledge. Indeed, the references in the work are so local that he must insist, "tout en demi-teintes, les poésies de cette scène empruntée à la vie parisienne, ne peuvent être parfaitement comprises, qu'entre les buttes de Montmartre et les hauteurs de Montrouge"; this exclusivity links representation to "the real" (to the concept of "the real" mediated by the text) of a shared, localized, lived experience. It is significant that Balzac adds the question, "Sera-t-elle comprise au delà de Paris?," to the book edition of *Le Père*

Goriot (Garnier 6)*,* confirming that he adapts the narrator's address to the textual form—here, to the book with wider circulation than *La Revue de Paris.*

Furthermore, textual modes of address specific to the periodical seek to establish an active relationship between the reader and the text, interlinked in the process of constructing meaning. By addressing the reader in the act, Balzac's narrator ostensibly locates the real *outside* the text through external reference—not only to what lies within the bounds of Paris, but also to the bounds of the periodical itself:

> Ainsi ferez-vous, vous qui tenez la Revue de Paris d'une main blanche, et vous enfoncez dans un moelleux fauteuil en vous disant: -- Peut-être ceci va-t-il m'amuser? Après avoir lu les secrètes infortunes du père Goriot, vous dînerez avec appétit en mettant votre insensibilité sur le compte de l'auteur, en le taxant d'exagération, en l'accusant de poésie. Eh bien, sachez-le! Ce drame n'est ni une fiction, ni un roman; *all is true*: il est si véritable que chacun pourra en reconnaître les élémens [sic] chez soi, dans son cœur peut-être! (*RP* 12: 74)

By repeating the epigraph in this narrator intervention, Balzac incorporates the act of consumption into the text itself, valorizing the reader's personal experience as part of the revelatory action of the "drame." The revision of this passage in the book edition of *Le Père Goriot* affirms Balzac's strategy of addressing the reader in context; here, the

narrator speaks directly to "vous qui tenez ce livre d'une main blanche,"

making contact with the reader in the act of reading (that is, with the

reader whom Balzac has in mind: Parisian and white with ample time to

"[s']amuser" in a "moelleux fauteuil"). By referring to the text at hand—in

hand—to incorporate the reader, this gesture disrupts the "referential

illusion" given in Roland Barthes' model of realism:

> The truth of this illusion is this: eliminated from the realist speech-
>
> act as a signified of denotation, the "real" returns to it as a
>
> signified of connotation . . . in other words, the very absence of the
>
> signified, to the advantage of the referent alone, becomes the very
>
> signifier of realism. (148)

When Balzac's narrator calls out to the reader holding the *revue* or the

book, the "signified" (the act of reading in the present) is neither

denotation nor connotation, but *invocation*: the addressee, "vous qui

tenez la Revue de Paris" or "ce livre," is made present in the speech

situation, which breaks the form of the "realist speech act." In this self-

referential turn of address, the text exposes its own "referential illusion";

this illusion derives its power from "the very absence of the signified,"

when what is signified in the direct reference to the reader is the very

presence of the one addressed (*as* addressed, the approximation of

Balzac's operative reader-construct). In the hands of the reader, the

details of the "drame" do not simply produce what Barthes calls "the

reality effect" of realism, by which "the very absence of the signifed"

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comes to signify "the real" as such; as the narrator makes clear, the reader is to assimilate the details of the "drame" ("chacun peut en reconnaître les éléments chez soi, dans son cœur peut-être"). The reference to the "drame" itself insists on its referential truth, while locating the production of this truth in the reader.

In this regard, Balzac's particular use of the term "drame" brings the conventions of genre into subversive play. The reiterated claim that "All is true" blurs the distinctions between representation and its object in the Shakespearean trope of the world stage. Victor Brombert also interprets "a call for an ironic reading of the message of realism" in the repeated references to the text as a "ce drame," which "alert us to the duplicities of the narration" (21-2). As the narrator situates the action historically, both at the beginning of the era represented ("en 1819, époque à laquelle ce drame commence") and at the time of reception, the contemporary abuse of the term "drame" requires some justification for its use: "En quelque discrédit soit tombé le mot *drame,* par la manière abusive et tortionnaire dont il a été prodigué dans ces temps de douleureuse littérature, il est nécessaire de l'employer ici" (*RP* 12: 74). Balzac wrests the term "drame" from its wide circulation for his narrator's specific use, but it is through its function as a sort of catch-all category that the term serves this purpose. By refusing all other generic terms, Balzac defies narrative conventions to bring the text closer to life

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as it happens in scenes. To this end, the reader is prompted to follow in lockstep with the narrator's gaze.

The beginning of the episode "Une Pension Bourgoise" enacts the movement toward everyday life in the "drame" by leading the reader to the Maison Vauquer. Balzac's narrator situates his observations precisely, as if the reader could seek out "the real" outside the text: "La maison où s'exploite la pension bourgeoise appartient à madame Vauquer, et se trouve située dans le bas de la rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, à l'endroit òu le terrain s'abaisse vers la rue des Bourguignons par une pente si brusque et si rude que les chevaux la montent ou la descendent rarement" (*RP* 12: 75). In his emphasis on local topography, describing a difficult point of passage, the narrator tacitly puts forward his own extensive, insider knowledge. Yet to enable identification with the "drame," Balzac situates the place of interest in the path of the ordinary passerby: "L'homme le plus insouciant s'y attriste comme tous les passants" on seeing the Maison Vauquer, which could be stumbled upon by any "Parisien égaré" (*RP* 12: 75). The opening of *Le Père Goriot* is as much a description of the setting as it is a construction of the reading subject in the text, both the observer-narrator and the potential spectator of the "drame," a reader about to be moved by something uncovered in their everyday vicinity.

In the pages of description that follow, Balzac's narrator enacts a reading of the Maison Vauquer that merits comment—from the narrator

himself. A narrative intervention, giving voice to Balzac's typical cynicism toward his critics, justifies detaining the plot in a lengthy exposition: "Pour exprimer combien ce mobilier est vieux, crevassé, pourri, tremblant, rongé, manchot, borgne, invalide, expirant, il faudrait en faire une description qui retarderait trop l'intérêt de cette histoire, et que les gens pressés ne pardonneraient pas" (*RP* 12: 78-9). This list illustrates *how much* ("combien") the narrator must hold back from explaining; each adjective adds a quality that is impossible to illustrate in the quantity of textual space, or in the time of reading set by "les gens pressés." This meta-textual moment recalls the commercial context of production and consumption, as well as the *process* of reading, bringing the reader into the situation of the text.

In staging the act of reading, Balzac's text draws on the strategy of the *flâneur* to mobilize the reader's experience, situating the scenes of the novel in the familiar, in the comings and goings of Parisian life. The narrator's language also links these scenes to the filial, already invoking the "cadres" of family portraits that would come to comprise the larger framework of the *Comédie Humaine*: the Maison Vauquer is to be read as a microcosm of relations in society at large. As the boarders gather for breakfast, the scene is compared to a family meal ("l'aspect d'un repas de famille"), casting the types at the table in the "theater of the world." This scene offers a feast to the observing eye, a bounty of information, as the narrator performs the act of reading:

Aussi le spectacle désolant que présentait l'intérieur de cette

maison se répétait-il dans le costume de ses habitués, également

délabrés. Les hommes portaient des redingotes dont la couleur

était devenue problématique . . . des vêtements qui n'avaient plus

que l'âme. Les autres avaient des robes passées, reteintes,

déteintes . . . Mais presque tous montraient des corps solidement

charpentés, des constitutions qui avaient résisté aux tempêtes de

la vie. C'étaient des faces froides, dures, effacées comme celles des

écus démonétisés . . . enfin, c'étaient des drames ambulans, non

pas de ces drames joués à la lueur des rampes, entre des toiles

peintes; mais des drames vivans et muets, des drames glacés qui

remuaient chaudement le cœur, des drames continus. (*RP* 12: 82)

The appearance of the Maison Vauquer, the individual inhabitants and

the building itself, reflects the spectacle of social life at its most tragic, in

its deterioration. The correspondence between the characters and their

clothing, "également délabrés," provides a moral dimension to the scene,

which sets the "drame" in motion without any action, only silence. An

indefinable color is an unequivocal indicator of character, fading with the

wear of years and neglect to become "problématique." These threadbare

garments expose the soul, if only in contrast with the tough

"constitutions" of the world-weary figures. The lived experiences that

fortified these bodies are etched on their faces, but their identities are

nearly rubbed off, like old coins. The narrator restores their signifying

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value through close examination, reading the signs of life that they bring to the table. This scene presents a silent surface to be scanned in its totality, like a *tableau vivant*, which would be easily transformed into one of the "cadres" of the *Comédie.*

Balzac's narrator maintains a distance from the "drames continus" unfolding before his eyes. He calls the family meal a "spectacle désolant," but immediately moves on to validate his observations as significant (signifying), remarking a correspondence between the house and its inhabitants ("se répétait-il"). The general patterns he notes in appearances—first in clothing, then in faces—lead to his inference of the off-stage dramas. He arrives at this understanding not by empathy, but by deductive reasoning. In contrast, the analogues of the human family in Baudelaire's "Le Crépuscule du soir" emerge by essentially the opposite approach: it is through the speaker's subjective responses that observable life becomes identifiable.

Baudelaire's "Le Crépuscule du soir" holds particular insight into the project of poems in prose as the first composed, one of the first published (in 1855, with "La Solitude" in *Hommage à C.F. Denecourt*), among the most published in periodicals (four times), and as the double of a poem in verse, one of the "Tableaux Parisiens," identically entitled "Le Crépuscule du soir."[46] In *Défigurations de la langue poétique,* Barbara

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[46] For a comprehensive analysis of these two poems, see Graham Chesters, "The Transformation of a Prose Poem: Baudelaire's Crépuscule du soir."

Johnson makes the interpretive choice to read Baudelaire's "doublets" in verse and prose together to "voir, textuellement, de quelle façon la prose s'inscrit dans son propre 'venir-après'" (34). For Johnson, the poems in prose exist to destabilize the poems in verse:

> Le poème en prose nous intéresse non parce qu'il est ordinaire, mais parce que sa façon d'être ordinaire est stratégique. S'il est impossible de savoir si un énoncé marqué 'non marqué' est ou n'est pas marqué, ce qui est certain, c'est que la définition de 'marqué' n'est plus certaine. (54)

Rather than insist on the effects contingent on verse, my reading of "Le Crépuscule du soir" throws into relief the "mouvements lyriques de l'âme" specific to the prose medium and the material context of publication. By comparing the poem in verse to the poem in prose, I will draw out this specificity as I indicate how the reading subject in the text orchestrates the scene through textual modes of address.

The poem in prose, "Le Crépuscule du soir," appears for the fourth time in print in the Parisian newspaper, *Le Figaro,* on February 7, 1864. This periodical publication of Baudelaire's poems in prose (a total of six over two issues) speaks to the development of the project since the "petit ouvrage" dedicated to Arsène Houssaye in *La Presse* (August 1862). The reader's encounter with the poems in prose in *Le Figaro* is prepared by an editorial introduction to *Spleen de Paris* (see fig. 5), announcing Baudelaire's book project (which would not be realized in his lifetime):

"Le Spleen de Paris est le titre adopté par M. G. Baudelaire pour un livre qu'il prépare, et dont il veut faire un digne pendant aux Fleurs du Mal" (*Le Figaro* 3).[47] In effect, this introduction simultaneously frames the reading of the poems in prose as parts of a whole and as counterpoints to the poems in verse. The *Figaro* editor further clarifies these relations in terms of what is excluded in verse:

> Tout ce qui se trouve naturellement exclu de l'oeuvre rhythmée et rimée, ou plus difficile à y exprimer, tous les détails matériels, et, en un mot, toutes les minuties de la vie prosaïque, trouvent leur place dans l'oeuvre en prose, où l'idéal et le trivial se fondent dans un amalgame inséparable.

In pointing to "l'œuvre en prose," the editorial text anticipates the unification of the separate poems into "un amalgame inséparable," projecting an integral experience of the work beyond its present, fragmentary form.

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[47] Hereafter, *F*.

dans le pays de maman. Je veux voir le pays de maman.» Oh! la touchante prière! ceux qui l'entendaient ont pleuré!

Dieu vient de reprendre la mère, les enfants sont seuls aujourd'hui! Qu'ils se souviennent et qu'ils lui ressemblent. Dieu donne aux orphelins ce qui leur manque : asile, patrie, et le reste !

La mort frappe et les deuils se multiplient. Amis, parents s'en vont demander à Dieu le prix du sacrifice et de la fidélité ! Que de cœurs dévoués qui ne battent plus! Où est la sainte famille du roi martyr? où est le duc de Lévis? où va la duchesse de Parme? Au ciel, hélas! hélas! au ciel. Vertu, tendresse, amour !

COLOMBINE.

MOYENNE DU
TIRAGE QUOTIDIEN

DES PRINCIPAUX JOURNAUX DE PARIS

(Décembre 1863.)

Journal	Tirage
Siècle	56,000
Moniteur	29,000
Presse	22,600
Opinion nationale	21,700
Patrie	21,600
Constitutionnel	18,600
Débats	11,000
France	11,500
Temps	9,500
Union	8,500
Gazette de France	5,400
Villes et campagnes	5,400
Nation	5,000
Pays	5,000
Nord	1,800

CORRESPONDANCE

Monsieur de Villemessant,

Un des grands avantages que présente la publicité du *Figaro*, c'est qu'elle se prête libéralement et impartialement à toutes les réclamations et que vous accueillez volontiers le *pour* après avoir donné le *contre*. Permettez-moi donc d'user de cette faculté et de plaider chez vous ma propre cause.

Dans votre numéro du 31 janvier, et sous votre signature, vous racontiez une histoire de jeu qui s'est passée il y a huit jours.

« Le lendemain de la partie, disiez-vous, M. le comte de G... rencontra M. X...

» Monsieur, lui dit-il, je ne vous paierai pas ce que j'ai perdu hier, et vous devez comprendre pourquoi.

» — A votre aise, monsieur, répondit simplement M. X..., annulons la partie.

« Ce facile abandon d'un gain assez important confirma les soupçons de M. le comte de G... »

J'oppose à ces faits le démenti le plus formel. Ce n'est que trois jours après que M. de G... me rencontra sur le boulevard. Il me tendit la main et me dit en présence d'un des perdants :

— Les différences que nous avons faites sont si considérables, que nous avons décidé de prier les gagnants d'annuler la partie.

Comme je ne gagnais qu'une somme de 16,000 francs, je répondis :

— Avez-vous consulté W..., qui gagne 300,000 francs? Ce qu'il fera, je le ferai.

— Non, mais nous allons chez lui.

Il se gardait bien de dire que M. W..., consulté, s'était déjà énergiquement refusé à cette annulation.

Rien dans la conduite et dans les paroles de M. de G... n'avait pu me faire supposer qu'il se crût *en droit* d'annuler sa perte.

Ce n'est que par M. W... et plusieurs autres personnes qui avaient assisté à la partie, partie qui, d'un commun accord, avait commencé le 25 décembre pour finir le 15 janvier, que j'appris le lendemain l'accusation portée contre moi et dont je me suis empressé de demander raison.

Rien, par conséquent, dans l'entretien que nous eûmes et que je viens de rétablir exactement, ne peut avoir *confirmé* les soupçons de M. de G...,

J'ajoute qu'en se battant avec moi, M. le comte de G..., ainsi que le lui a dit M. W..., a reconnu la créance et l'honorabilité du créancier. Il ne saurait me contester le titre d'ami, puisqu'il m'a remis, avant de se battre, 35 louis qu'il m'avait empruntés quelques semaines auparavant.

Veuillez agréer, etc.   X...

Cette lettre, dont nous conservons l'original, porte la signature entière de celui qui l'a écrite ; mais nous croyons plus convenable de ne pas l'imprimer, et nous laissons subsister l'X... par lequel nous l'avons désigné dans notre article.

H. de V....

Monsieur le rédacteur [1],

A propos de la vente judiciaire du 25 janvier, à l'hôtel Drouot, où M. Lainé a déclaré qu'*au nom de la justice* il ne garantissait ni l'authenticité ni la non-authenticité des tableaux, je tiens à faire remarquer :

1° Que nos catalogues et les affiches ne parlent que de cinq tableaux, attribués à Raphaël, et attribués avec d'autant plus de raison, qu'ils étaient tous signés de ce maître, sans que l'authenticité de cette signature ait été contestée.

2° L'hôtel du Louvre, notre unique créancier pour la somme de 1,893 fr. 75 c., qui nous a fait ce crédit sur la seule exposition du tableau de la *Mort de saint Joseph*, dans les salons de lecture, avec l'affiche de Rome, le présentant comme signé de Raphaël et sanctionné par l'Académie de Berlin, a demandé, dès le à janvier, le sequestre de ce tableau et de cinq autres que nous avions offert librement, ce qui a *été* exécuté, le 6, sans estimation préalable (du moins connue de nous), et après le refus du tribunal d'autoriser une commission d'estimation.

3° En parlant de l'adjudication de la *Mort de saint Joseph* pour la somme de 1,240 francs, sur la misérable offre de 50 francs, prix de la boîte et de l'encadrement, il y a un Anglais qui, d'après vous, a présenté un portefeuille qui devait contenir un million et demi, vous oubliez d'ajouter ce que porte le procès-verbal de la vente non signée par nous, que les cinq autres ont été adjugés au même Anglais pour la somme totale de 1,020 francs.

4° Il n'est pas vrai de dire que j'aie retiré *Jésus au Jardin des Oliviers*, qui se trouvait au Musée de Berlin, le 12 décembre, jour de l'ordonnance du tribunal, et que nous avons ajouté librement à la vente. M. Lainé, qui avait annoncé lui-même cette ébauche dans ses annonces de la vente judiciaire, et qui l'avait consignée dans le

[1] Nous insérons la lettre de Mlle Elisa Nicolle sur les instances très réitérées et nous l'avons prisée de réduire à trente lignes le volume de réclamations qu'elle nous apportait. Maintenant, voici notre avis là-dessus : si les tableaux en litige ont été vendus 1,020 francs, à Paris, au milieu des amateurs les plus acharnés, des marchands de tableaux les plus experts, c'est qu'ils n'étaient point authentiques.

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procès-verbal même de reconnaissance, du 23, à 10 heures, a refusé lui-même de satisfaire à la juste demande du public. Ce n'est pas moi de le justifier.

En terminant, je tiens à constater comme vous, que la *mort de Saint Joseph* est bien le tableau exposé par moi à Paris, Bruxelles, Berlin, Dresde, Turin, Florence, Bologne, Rome, qui a été adjugé dans la vente judiciaire du 25.

Veuillez agréer l'expression de ma considération distinguée.

ELISA NICOLLE.

3 janvier 1864.

Le *Spleen de Paris* est le titre adopté par M. C. Baudelaire pour un livre qu'il prépare, et dont il veut faire un digne pendant aux *Fleurs du Mal*. Tout ce qui se trouve naturellement exclu dans l'œuvre rhythmée et rimée, ou plus difficile à y exprimer, tous les détails matériels, et, en un mot, toutes les minuties de la vie prosaïque, trouvent leur place dans l'œuvre en prose, où l'idéal et le trivial se fondent dans un amalgame inséparable. D'ailleurs, l'âme sombre et malade que l'auteur a dû supposer pour écrire les *Fleurs du Mal* est, à peu de chose près, la même qui compose le *Spleen de Paris*. Dans l'ouvrage en prose, comme dans l'œuvre en vers, toutes les suggestions de la rue, de la circonstance et du ciel parisiens, tous les soubresauts de la conscience, toutes les langueurs de la rêverie, la philosophie, le songe et même l'anecdote peuvent prendre leur rang à tour de rôle. Il s'agit seulement de trouver une prose qui s'adapte aux différents états de l'âme du flâneur morose. Nos lecteurs jugeront si M. Charles Baudelaire y a réussi.

Certaines gens croient que Londres seul a le privilège aristocratique du spleen, et que Paris, le joyeux Paris, n'a jamais connu cette noire maladie. Il y a peut-être bien, comme le prétend l'auteur, une sorte de spleen parisien ; et il affirme que le nombre est grand de ceux qui l'ont connu et le reconnaîtront.

G. Bourdin.

LE SPLEEN DE PARIS

POÈMES EN PROSE

LA CORDE

A Édouard Manet.

« Les illusions, — me disait mon ami, — sont aussi innombrables peut-être que les rapports des hommes entre eux, ou des hommes avec les choses. Et quand l'illusion disparaît, c'est-à-dire quand nous voyons l'être ou le fait, tel qu'il existe en dehors de nous, nous éprouvons un bizarre sentiment, compliqué moitié de regret pour le fantôme disparu, moitié de surprise agréable devant la nouveauté, devant le fait réel. S'il existe un phénomène évident, trivial, toujours semblable, et d'une nature à laquelle il soit impossible de se tromper, c'est l'amour maternel ; il est aussi difficile de supposer une mère sans amour maternel qu'une lumière sans chaleur ; n'est-il donc pas parfaitement légitime d'attribuer à l'amour maternel toutes les actions et les paroles d'une mère, relatives à son enfant? Et cependant, écoutez cette petite histoire, où j'ai été singulièrement mystifié par l'illusion la plus naturelle.

» Ma profession de peintre me pousse à regarder attentivement les visages, les physionomies, qui s'offrent dans ma route, et vous savez quelle jouissance nous tirons de cette faculté qui rend à nos yeux la vie plus vivante et plus significa-

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naissance pour ses bontés et ses bienfaits me rendaient odieuse jusqu'à la pensée de ne pas lui dévouer le reste de ma vie ; mais aussi l'honneur me défendait de prendre parti pour le gouvernement des Bourbons, lorsque j'étais placé dans la nécessité de conserver des correspondances avec lui. Quel châtiment n'aurais-je pas subi et n'aurais-je pas mérité, si le gouvernement du roi, après avoir reçu mes serments, eût fini par découvrir que j'étais dépositaire d'une partie de la fortune de Napoléon et que j'en disposais d'après ses ordres ?

» A l'époque où je me livrais à ces réflexions si tristes, trois cents Prussiens occupaient le château de La Verrière : quinze couchaient dans la pièce qui recélait le trésor. Ces soldats ne se doutaient guère qu'il leur suffisait de lever avec la pointe de leurs sabres deux feuilles du parquet pour tomber sur des monceaux d'or. Ils y restèrent plus de deux mois. Ma vie, pendant tout ce temps, était un supplice ; je m'attendais chaque jour à apprendre que tout était découvert. Heureusement ils partirent, et je fus du moins tranquille sur ce point.

» Le prince Eugène allait retourner en Allemagne. N'ayant aucune nouvelle de l'île d'Elbe, je pris le parti de lui confier ma position. Il était dévoué à l'Empereur, il était mon ami. Je lui proposai de se charger de 800,000 fr. et de les faire passer à l'île d'Elbe. Un peu plus tranquille, puisque la moitié de la somme était sauvée, je m'appliquai à doubler de prudence pour écarter de moi la surveillance de la police.

On pourrait se demander ce que devinrent les autres 800,000 fr. Lavalette, qui écrivait sous la Restauration, ne le dit pas expressément ; mais il y fait allusion quand il raconte sa dernière entrevue avec l'Empereur à la Malmaison :

« Et alors il me donna, sur un objet qui l'intéressait personnellement, des instructions qu'il est inutile de rappeler ici. »

Aussitôt après la capitulation de Paris, Lavalette quitta l'hôtel

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des postes, sans attendre qu'on lui donnât officiellement un successeur ; Bourrienne s'empara de la position vacante, comme Lavalette le devait faire au 20 mars suivant, sans que personne ait jamais songé à en faire contre lui un sujet d'accusation capitale. Nous avons vu le même fait se renouveler aussitôt après 1830 et 1848 ; mais par l'intérêt public ou par leur intérêt privé, bon nombre d'individus se sont emparés des places où ils croyaient pouvoir être utiles, ou qu'ils trouvaient à leur convenance. Un gouvernement régulier établi, quelques-uns ont été maintenus dans ces places, par cela seul qu'ils s'y étaient installés ; d'autres en ont été expulsés, mais il n'est entré dans la tête de personne de les faire passer en jugement, encore moins de les condamner à mort.

La défaite des Bourbons et de leur parti, achevée en vingt jours de promenade militaire, l'arme au bras, sans tirer une amorce, était une preuve accablante de leur propre impopularité. Naturellement, quand ils nous furent ramenés par les baïonnettes étrangères, après le désastre de Waterloo, ce ne fut pas ce motif qu'ils voulurent donner d'un fait sans exemple dans les annales de tous les peuples, à quelque époque que ce soit. Ils préférèrent se persuader à eux-mêmes, pour essayer de le persuader à l'Europe, que le retour magique de l'île d'Elbe avait été amené et préparé par une conspiration, laquelle n'avait cessé d'exister pendant toute la durée de... première Restauration. Ney, Labédoyère, Lavalette, etc., furent d'abord décrétés d'accusation pour y avoir pris part. Le fait n'était vrai à l'égard d'aucun d'eux.

Dans les deux premiers mois de 1815, il s'était cependant organisé deux conspirations à Paris, et pour ainsi dire au grand jour [1] :

[1] On conspirait, comme on dit, sur les bornes, au coin des rues ; personne, si ce n'est le ministère, n'ignorait ce qui se passait.

(Mémoires du duc de Rovigo, tome VII.)

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l'une, *civile* et *légale*, qui se proposait de ramener le gouvernement représentatif à plus de vérité, en remplaçant, au besoin, la branche aînée des Bourbons par la branche cadette d'Orléans ; l'autre, *militaire* et *impérialiste*, se proposant d'expulser tous les Bourbons sans distinction de branches, de se saisir du gouvernement au nom de Napoléon, d'envoyer une flotte le chercher à l'île d'Elbe et de le rétablir purement et simplement sur le trône, sans aucune condition. Les membres de cette conspiration se réunissaient allée des Veuves, n° 6, chez le général Berton. Il est prouvé aujourd'hui que Napoléon n'est jamais entré en rapport avec les chefs de l'une ou de l'autre de ces deux conspirations.

Lavalette y était demeuré également étranger. Un moment il avait failli être entraîné dans la seconde par le prince d'Eckmühl ; mais il en avait été détourné par Cambacérès, qui lui avait dit :

« Nous ne connaissons pas les intentions de l'Empereur ; il est homme à trouver mauvais que nous ayions disposé de sa personne sans son ordre, même pour le replacer sur le trône ; il a failli me faire fusiller pour m'être permis de prendre une initiative dans l'affaire Mallet ; tenons-nous tranquilles et attendons. »

Lavalette se tint donc tranquille. Seulement, du 13 au 14 mars, il crut devoir quitter son logement particulier et se tenir caché dans une dépendance de l'hôtel du cardinal Fesch, alors occupé par la reine Hortense. Donnons maintenant la parole à M. de Vaulabelle :

« Ce fut vers six heures du matin, le 20 mars, que le bruit du départ du roi se répandit dans Paris. Une heure après, le comte de Lavalette, directeur général des postes sous l'Empire, voulant connaître les nouvelles que les courriers avaient pu apporter dans la nuit, se présentait à l'hôtel de la direction. Il était sept heures du matin, M. Ferrand ignorant le départ du roi. On lui annonça l'évènement en même temps que la présence du comte de Lavalette dans ses bureaux. Bien que ce dernier fût seul (il était accompagné du

Borrowing from Baudelaire's dedicatory piece, "À Arsène Houssaye,"

Le Figaro evokes the movements of subjectivity as the unifying force of

the work:

> Dans l'ouvrage en prose, comme dans l'oeuvre en vers, toutes les
>
> suggestions de la rue, de la circonstance et du ciel parisiens, tous
>
> les soubresauts de la conscience, toutes les langueurs de la
>
> rêverie, la philosophie, le songe et même l'anecdote peuvent
>
> prendre leur rang à tour de rôle. Il s'agit seulement de trouver une
>
> prose qui s'adapte aux différents états de l'âme du flâneur morose.

The vague terms of Baudelaire's project, as laid out in *La Presse,* are

reiterated here in the context of *Le Figaro:* the content of the poems in

prose contains the "soubresauts de la conscience" and the form of the

project "s'adapte" in the function of reading, in the free, urban style of

the *flâneur.* Further accentuating the unbound form of the project and

the reader's role in the work-in-progress, the *Figaro* editor even echoes

Baudelaire's humble remarks about whether he will have accomplished

what he had in mind: "Nos lecteurs jugeront si M. Charles Baudelaire y a

réussi," and also if "[i]l y a peut-être bien, comme le prétend l'auteur, une

sorte de spleen parisien [dont] le nombre est grand de ceux qui l'ont

connu et le reconnaîtront." By referring to *this* situation of the text, *Le*

Figaro places the work in the reader's hands as is—in a liminal,

commercial state between periodical installment and book—where

reception is imminent.

In this material context, "Le Crépuscule du soir" in prose already refers to the problematic of a "Spleen de Paris": the poem is one of several examples that may (or may not) illustrate this experience for the reader's recognition. The poem in prose begins by situating point of view in a familiar situation, using the simple phrase structures of stage directions to set the scene with a few gestures, as in a sketch: "Le jour tombe. Un grand apaisement se fait dans les pauvres esprits fatigués du labeur de la journée; et leurs pensées prennent maintenant les couleurs tendres et indécises du crépuscule" (*F* 4). This first paragraph prepares the backdrop of the scene. Yet with no subject position yet given, there is no center; the mood spreads out intersubjectively, a wash of colors on the canvas of workday-weary minds. Unlike Balzac's scene-setting in "Une Pension bourgeoise" of *Le Père Goriot,* the exposition of "Le Crépuscule du soir" in prose does not provide details to locate what is seen in "the real," but rather evokes a vague, situated feeling in the reader's sympathetic imagination.

Yet whereas Balzac's narrator guards the secret location of his all-seeing point of view, Baudelaire's speaker positions himself precisely as a receptive subject; indeed, this position is part of the phenomenon of "Le Crépuscule du soir." The speaker locates his point of view in the second paragraph of the poem, where prepositions of place, perceptual boundaries, and a single possessive pronoun create a sensorial space: "Cependant du haut de la montagne arrive à mon balcon, à travers les

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nues transparentes du soir, un grand hurlement, composé d'une foule de cris discordants, que l'espace transforme en une lugubre harmonie, comme celle de la marée qui monte ou d'une tempête qui s'éveille." The trajectory of sound, rather than the penetration of sight, effectively frames the scene as a perceptual field, in which the experience of the senses is mediated by social space. In granting agency to the forces of sound ("arrive . . . un grand hurlement") and space ("que l'espace transforme"), rather than to a self-asserting "je," this description immerses the poetic subject in a phenomenal transformation that exceeds the bounds of singular subjectivity. Baudelaire's speaker conveys this experience personally by taking a first-person subject position; suggestively, however, it is not the singular: "Cette sinistre ululation nous arrive du noir hospice perché sur la montagne." Through the relational address that "nous" implies, the speaker registers the movement of his desire for shared experience. By situating perspective around an open center of subjective effects, "Le Crépuscule du soir" in prose enacts the approach to the other, to the world outside, that destabilizes any possible singular construct of the self.

The "Crépuscule du soir" in verse conveys this experience through other turns in the speaker's address, revealing the medium-specificity of subjective effects. In contrast to the poem in prose, the poem in verse establishes the speaker's intimate contact with his transitional surroundings from the first enunciation, addressed to the enveloping

night itself. Unlike the poem in prose, which mediates the speaker's experience through description, the poem in verse relates this experience through solitary dialogue, through the voice of the lyric subject reaching out. The "tableau" does not begin by painting the backdrop, effectively distancing the speaker from the scene, but immediately plunges the subject into the crepuscular atmosphere with the deictic phrase, "Voici le soir charmant, ami du criminel" (*OC* 1: 94). By indicating dusk in this relational way, the poem in verse captures the arrival of the night in its immediacy, through the speaker's familiarity with its seductive nature. This opening line also suggests existing relations between the speaker and "le soir," perhaps a secret relationship like that of the criminal and the accomplice. Confirming their special bond, the speaker calls out to the night, "O soir, aimable soir," his voice reaching out to the named object of his desire. Yet this emotional connection does not remain exclusive; the speaker's apostrophe opens out to all those affected by the coming of night through the impersonal construct, "désiré par celui," further qualifying the "aimable soir" by a common desire. In this inclusive embrace, the speaker seeks connection with the anonymous masses below, scanning them in a sympathetic reading of figures, "Dont les bras, sans mentir, peuvent dire: « Aujourd'hui / Nous avons travaillé! »." He populates the scene of the "tableau" with figures of the night, all seen from an unspecified point of view; there is no "je" (and no "balcon") from which to speak. With each line, a dynamic sensorium materializes

around the impersonal subject position: "On entend çà et là les cuisines siffler, / Les théâtres glapir, les orchestres ronfler" (*OC* 1: 95). The experience of the city under the influence of the crepuscule is distilled into the speaker's voice, which expands beyond the scope of his own senses by taking up other subject positions, by shifting pronouns. As the "je" is swallowed by the tumultuous atmosphere, the poem in verse expresses the speaker's initial desire to absorb the night into the fibers of his thought. By eschewing the conventional authority of the "je" in verse, "Le Crépuscule du soir" offers a glimpse of an intersubjective experience of temporality.

In the medium of prose, on the other hand, "Le Crépuscule du soir" remains bound to the speaking subject; the "je" authorizes observations of the crepuscular phenomenon. Indeed, the "je" provides the organizing center of the scene in this description: "et, le soir, en fumant et en contemplant le repos de l'immense vallée, hérissée de maisons dont chaque fenêtre dit: « C'est ici la paix maintenant; c'est ici la joie de la famille! » je puis, quand le vent souffle de là-haut, bercer ma pensée étonnée à cette imitation des harmonies de l'enfer" (*F* 4). This complex phrase emphasizes the capacity of the subject ("je puis") as a witness to the event of the everyday. The sights and sounds of the city gather around the "je" reading the crepuscular scene—an expanse of social space punctuated by glimpses into private life—as an "imitation" of a metaphysical drama. The speaker reports his special relationship with

the night, cradled by the nocturnal rhythms as they resonate through him. But rather than linger on this personal connection, the speaker changes the tone of his observations to the general claim, "Le crépuscule excite les fous." He then substantiates this claim with the stories of "deux amis que le crépuscule rendait tout malades," recalled in detail from the point of view of an eye-witness ("Je l'ai vu"). On the basis of anecdotal evidence, the speaker gives his diagnosis: "je crois que le crépuscule allumerait encore en lui la brûlante envie de distinctions imaginaires." The subjunctive construction ("Je crois que") inflects the observation with the subject's own point of view, while encasing personal experience in generality. The prose medium effectively depersonalizes individual experience in reportage, subsuming emotional content in an empirical account.

In a word, both "Crépuscule" poems dramatize the setting sun through a splitting subject, shattering the fiction of self-consistency. By linking complex phrases, the poem in prose moves from eyewitness accounts of the crepuscule taking effect to the speaker's own experience: "La nuit, qui mettait ses ténèbres dans leur esprit, fait la lumière dans le mien; et, bien qu'il ne soit pas rare de voir la même cause engendrer deux effets contraires, j'en suis toujours comme intrigué et alarmé." Noting a difference in his own response to the night, the speaker relates his experience in terms of causal relationships, comparing effects on subjectivity. Yet the air of objectivity dissolves into the confusion of his

altered state as he professes, "j'en suis toujours comme intrigué et alarmé." Objectivity cannot hold, that is, it cannot fully account for the effects of the crepuscule, the subjective shock. The speaker breaks form at this point, bursting an apostrophe that is all the more dramatic in its prose environment: "O nuit! ô rafraîchissantes ténèbres! . . . vous êtes pour moi le signal d'une fête intérieure, vous êtes la délivrance d'une angoisse!" Sustaining this apostrophe (and the special relationship it implies), he charges the scene emotionally; the changing tones "imitent tous les sentiments compliqués qui luttent dans le cœur de l'homme aux heures solennelles de la vie." As an "imitation" of the human drama, the scene of the crepuscule takes on larger dimensions than the speaker's own field of perception. Although the emotional resonances harmonize with the poem in prose, the poem in verse ends on exactly the opposite note; in the "tableau," the movement toward general experience takes a different turn—an inward turn, splitting the subject as the speaker addresses his soul: "Recueille-toi, mon âme, en ce grave moment, / Et ferme ton oreille à ce rugissement" (*OC* 1: 95). Here, the movement of subjectivity folds on itself, insulating the speaking subject, rather than folding into the moment, immersing him in the connecting energy of nightfall. The speaker further separates himself from others as he observes their difference in the finishing, emotive touch of the "tableau": "Encore la plupart n'ont-ils jamais connu / La douceur du foyer et n'ont jamais vécu!" Ringing with pathos, this exclamation reaches for others

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through pity, but it is a self-centered pity; the speaker generalizes his experience to account for the lives of others. In the lack brought to light in the dusk, the speaker takes refuge in his own subjectivity. The poem in verse thus presents the crepuscule as a scene in the theater of the self, a projection of the speaker's own interior.

The medium-specific modes of address in verse and in prose highlight different effects of the atmosphere or, in Ross Chambers's formulation, different forms of subjective shock, in "Le Crepuscule du soir." The poem in verse breaks convention by supressing the "je," only to retreat from failed communion into self-contained lyric form. The poem in prose stresses the "je" to a breaking point, to an apostrophic crescendo that penetrates the depths of human connection in solitude. To return to the operative words of the introduction in *Le Figaro,* the poem in prose includes "tous les détails matériels, et, en un mot, toutes les minuties de la vie prosaïque." As the counterpoint to verse, the poem in prose overcomes the limits of representation through variation in repetition. The textual modes of address in prose reveal the aspects of "l'idéal" that can only be apprehended through "le trivial"; the wholeness that can only be grasped through the fragmentary.

In this regard, "Le Crepuscule du soir" bears further comparison to *Le Père Goriot* in terms of how the texts are as recast in different forms: Balzac's novel was first conceived as a "nouvelle," then developed through serial episodes in *La Revue de Paris* before appearing as a book

edition, and finally as one of the "Scènes de la vie privée" in the collected book editions of *La Comédie humaine*; Baudelaire's poem in prose "doubles" a poem in verse, first appearing in an anthology, then in several *revues* prior to *Le Figaro,* and finally in the *Le Spleen de Paris* of the posthumous *Œuvres complètes* and in a separate book edition. I will draw out this connection to suggest how scenes contribute to a versatility of form as compositional units, linked in the process of reading as parts of a changing whole.

  Le Père Goriot is an example of how Balzac's textual strategies adapt to the press; it is also an example of how Balzac's textual strategies develop *beyond* the press. Balzac uses the serial contracts with *La Revue de Paris* to produce more expansively, which translates to an expansion of the text in book format. In the process of writing *Le Père Goriot,* "en réfléchissant sur son personnage, Balzac aperçoit les perspectives du sujet qu'il a choisi et l'étendue qu'il faudra lui donner," and informed his publisher Everat that the "nouvelle" would be "une œuvre plus importante . . . qui exigera plusieurs livraisons de la *Revue de Paris"* (Lovenjoul 288). By producing for the periodical and then for the book publisher, Balzac pushed the limits of textual forms while developing the framework to support and unify his production as a whole. Concurrent with his contract with *La Revue de Paris,* a new "contrat de programme" for book editions "à la fois déclarant une ambition globale et promettant une rapide réalisation," carved out the

divisions that would comprise *La Comédie humaine;* as Maurice Bardèche

explains, this "contrat Béchet" evolved from the idea for a new edition of

Scènes de la vie privée to the idea of the three series of *Études de mœurs*

au XIXe siècle (*Scènes de la vie privée, Scènes de la vie de province, et*

Scènes de la vie parisienne) (*Balzac* 268; 267). Through this proposal,

Balzac created the conditions to increase his publishing volume by

reproducing the same text in multiple formats (periodical, book edition,

edition in the series). Bardèche categorically attributes "le contrat

Béchet" with the evolution of scenes into the series or divisions of *La*

Comédie humaine (*Balzac* 269).

 As Balzac began projecting scenes into larger frameworks, he

developed textual strategies for linking parts into the developing whole.

The technique of recurring characters enables Balzac's scenes to adapt to

these different contexts as self-sufficient parts of the complete work. As

Felicien Marceau suggests, Balzac engages the reader even in the

"silences" of the publication process, thus breaking the novelistic

convention of a beginning and an end to reflect the experience of reality:

> La vie, elle, ne commence ni finit jamais. Elle n'est pas une tranche
>
> . . . Chez Balzac, ce prolongement existe d'autant plus que par le
>
> retour toujours possible des personnages, l'acteur en quelque
>
> sorte, nous le promet et nous force à y penser. Voilà encore un des
>
> miracles de cette oeuvre: elle laisse quelque chose à faire au
>
> lecteur.   (25)

The task of the reader in connecting the plots achieves a realist effect in an open, unfinished form enabled by the periodical context and the framework of the book project. A.R. Pugh further elaborates on this specific effect in *Le Père Goriot,* "a maze of parallels and echos and cross-references" resulting "from the counterpointing of dramas that could be (in some cases, already had been) conceived separately"; the continued, yet discontinuous development of characters through this "counterpointing" enables scenes to arrange themselves on a larger scale through the reading process (522). In this system, Pugh goes on to describe, "the individual lines [are] provided, not by the episodes that make up a single novel, but by the novels that make up the whole of the *Comédie humaine.*" This analysis of *Le Père Goriot* hits on the points of relation between Balzac's method and Baudelaire's: the technique of "counterpointing" in the poems in verse and in prose, and the maintenance of the "lignes principales," as Baudelaire observes in Balzac's work and achieves in his own in the technique of compiling and rearranging the parts of a compositional whole.

It is not until its fourth appearance, in *Le Figaro,* that "Le Crépuscule du soir" is framed by Baudelaire's vision of a book project, *Spleen de Paris.* This project, though never finished by Baudelaire himself, suggests that the individual poems are to be read as parts of a whole representation of Paris, akin to the scenes of Balzac's novelistic project. As J. A. Hiddleston points out, Baudelaire conceives of this work

as a complement to his collection of poems in verse, *Les Fleurs du Mal.*
The first indication of this relationship is the inverse echo of Baudelaire's
project description in "À Arsène Houssaye": the "petit ouvrage" of poems
in prose would have "ni queue ni tête," whereas *Les Fleurs des Mal* "a un
commencement et une fin," an order or "architecture secret" (qtd in
Spleen v). Baudelaire developed this idea of the book project, of the
overarching frame, as he published his poems in the periodical press,
changing the names of the poems themselves and the title of the
collection on multiple occasions.[48] By producing his poems as parts of a
nebulous whole, Baudelaire develops the strategies of scenes as
moveable pieces, defying genre, order, the form and ideology of the bound
work.

Both Balzac's and Baudelaire's projects of representing Paris take
up *flânerie* as a practice of reading that unifies parts into a greater
signifying whole. Priscilla Ferguson counts this capacity of the *flâneur*
among those defining the genre as a "response to particular cultural and
social conditions that allowed conception of the city simultaneously in
terms of its parts and as a whole" (Tester 39). The extent of Balzac's
"tâche" of representation in *La Comédie humaine*, the sheer quantity of
life and the wide-ranging spread of society, requires manageable parts
and a unifying principle; scenes serve both purposes as "cadres." By

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[48] See *OC* 366-74.

arranging these "cadres" in "galéries" corresponding to "divisions" of life,

Balzac configures each of his novels as scenes in the larger structure of

La Comédie Humaine. Like family portraits, scenes reveal identity face by

face—or better, type by type—as the reader encounters these "existences"

in the novels. To borrow Susan McCarthy's apt formulation, it is the

"reader's personal network" of characters and interlaced plots that

ultimately provides the links between the novels (94). The scenes of the

Comédie are nested in an interactive matrix in which the reader is

implicated in the production of knowledge. As Prendergast further

elaborates, scenes carry out the "totalizing impulse" of Balzac's work

through "the related technique of recurring characters," which act like

joints in the encompassing framework of the *Comédie*: "forging

connections between the disparate novels of the *Comédie*, they form a

"mosaic" (Balzac's term) of fluid yet integrated patterns, suggesting

finally a whole society, a 'total' world that remains nevertheless

unfinished and theoretically open-ended" (*Melodrama* 70). Scenes thus

enable a fluidity of structure in which the reader moves leisurely,

building new connections in the edifice with each encounter in reading.

In comparable fashion, Baudelaire's "petit ouvrage" of poems in prose

unfolds by dividing in the reader's hands like a segmented snake, each of

the poems in prose standing as a self-sufficient part of the whole. These

"tronçons," like the slices of life in Balzac's novels, correspond to

moments of encounter—scenes organized by the point of view of

Baudelaire's poetic subject. By loosely connecting scenes in the process of reading, Balzac and Baudelaire interpolate the reader into an active role of consuming and composing the spectacle of modern life.

As I will perform in the next chapter, the inherent "drame" of reading in scenes is also enacted in the text by the reading subject—Balzac's characters (including but not limited to the narrator) and Baudelaire's speaker—to varying effects. Both Balzac and Baudelaire attribute a certain "héroïsme" to the reader of the city by recuperating figures from the shadows of modernity.

<div align="center">

The "Héroïsme" of Reading:

Decrypting Figures in *La Comédie humaine* and *Le Spleen de Paris*

</div>

In *Salon de 1846,* Baudelaire invokes Balzac as a model of "L'Héroïsme de la vie moderne" in this superlative apostrophe: "—et vous, Ô Honoré de Balzac, vous le plus héroïque, le plus singulier, le plus romantique et le plus poétique parmi tous les personnages que vous avez tirés de votre sein!" (*OC* 1: 952). By assuming the role of one of his characters, as Baudelaire's apostrophe suggests, Balzac gets up close and *personal* to the face of human society in its present age. What makes this act of reading *heroic?* In a less melodramatic tone, Baudelaire attributes Balzac's genius to his eye for detail, his ability to flesh out characters in the signature dress of their time and type, "to clothe pure triviality with light and purple" in signifying description (qtd in Kanes 31). For Baudelaire, then, Balzac's "héroïsme" lies in framing material as

meaningful, reaching through the surface of things to the depths of history, drawing forth an inner light to elucidate the nature of social life. Baudelaire takes up the banner of this "héroïsme" himself as he unveils the eternal in passing, dressed in the fashion of the moment, in the most ordinary encounter. To elucidate how Balzac and Baudelaire depict a certain "héroïsme" of reading the city, I will juxtapose scenes of decrypting (moral or physical) decrepitude in the recurring figures of storied women and suspicious old men.

  In an explicit, yet nonetheless complicated example, the intriguing figure of Madame Jules provides Auguste with the occasion to play the hero in Balzac's *Ferragus*. Indeed, Auguste takes center stage, assigning himself an entangling role in the mystery: "Puis il résolut de se vouer entièrement, dès le lendemain, à la recherche des causes, des intérêts, du noeud que cachait ce mystère. C'était un roman à lire; ou mieux, un drame à jouer, et dans lequel il avait son rôle" (Garnier 61-2). By virtue of his position (in just the right light, at just the right time to glimpse *this* woman in this particular place, looking the part of a woman *out-of-place*), the chance observer becomes involved in a life-endangering quest to discover the hidden meaning behind the appearance of things. But Auguste is no hero in his dogged pursuit of Madame Jules, for his curiosity is the undoing of a heroine, who guards the secret of her father's identity to her death. Yet in being duped by the elusive Ferragus ("le pauvre de la rue Coquillière, le Ferragus d'Ida, l'habitant de la rue

Soly, le Bourignard de Justin, le forçat de la police, le mort de la veille,"
Garnier 86), Auguste's predicament speaks to the stakes that make
reading an act of "héroisme." His innocent (albeit prideful) curiosity puts
him in harm's way as Ferragus slips through the cracks, exposing the
flaws in a system of representation in which identity becomes a matter of
life or death. The "héroïsme" of reading lies in the risk of deception, the
threat of uncontrollable identities. *Ferragus* sums up this lesson in the
admission, "Ni la police, ni le pouvoir ne savent lire au fond des cœurs"
(Garnier 78). It seems that only Balzac's narrator can assume the all-
seeing position of authority to pronounce the truth, to read the signs of
social identities.

Balzac and Baudelaire present many reading subjects who defy
impenetrability, claiming to "lire au fond des cœurs" to varying results:
the pensionnaires who point to Goriot's debauched soul on his sullied
sleeves; the onlooker who claims to know the lives of widows and workers
in "Les Veuves" and "Le Crépuscule du soir." Are these simply *bad*
models of reading, avatars of the alienation of "la vie moderne"? What
hope is there for "héroïsme"? I want to show that what Balzac and
Baudelaire valorize in reading is the *desire* to impart meaning, to
integrate what one sees as parts of a totality.

Such is the desire behind the portrait of Madame Vauquer and
"Les Veuves," as Balzac's narrator and Baudelaire's speaker attempt to
recuperate the value of marginalized figures. In this regard, "L'Héroïsme

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de la vie moderne" lies in a purposeful approach to otherness that penetrates to a deeper understanding of appearances.

In *Le Père Goriot*, Balzac's narrator displays the "héroïsme" of reading in his portrait of Madame Vauquer. He presents the aging woman as an identifiable type in that "[elle] ressemble à toutes les femmes qui ont eu des malheurs" (Garnier 13). Evoking the reader's acquaintance with this peculiar condition of life, the narrator draws on a common repertoire as the foundation for his description, in which he offers particular detail, fleshing out Madame Vauquer as an individual and a general type. He amplifies the signifying value of superficial details as he intervenes to assert their explanatory power: "Sa figure fraîche comme une première gelée d'automne, ses yeux ridés, dont l'expression passe du sourire préscrit aux danseuses à l'amer renfrognement de l'escompteur, enfin toute sa personne explique la pension, comme la pension implique sa personne." The narrator gives a clear picture of Madame Vauquer's appearance and her essence by unpacking her features, only to condense them in the summary statement of her person, positing a determining relation between the social system and personal character. The decryption of Madame Vauquer thus exemplifies the "héroïsme" observed by Baudelaire in the "purple and light" of Balzac's description, which infuses the visible with the glow of determined character.

In "Les Veuves," it is not simply the black garment and grieved expression worn by the widow that permit Baudelaire's speaker to interpret her situation; it is the supplement of imagination and the accessoires of her overall appearance that enable his sympathetic reading. His understanding seeks to go beyond what he can see:

> Mais en passant curieusement auprès d'elle, le crus en deviner la raison. La grande veuve tenait par la main un enfant comme elle vêtu de noir; si modique que fût le prix d'entrée, ce prix suffisait peut-être pour payer un des besoins du petit être, mieux encore, une superfluité, un jouet.
>
> Et elle sera rentrée à pied, méditant et rêvant, seule, toujours seule; car l'enfant est turbulent, égoïste, sans douceur et sans patience; et il ne peut même pas, comme le pur animal, comme le chien et le chat, servir de confident aux douleurs solitaires.
>
> (*OC* 1: 247)

In this response, the speaker reaches out to the other whose suffering is on display before him, without acting, without addressing a word. He revels in his own "understanding," his pity, as a sign of his own humanity, but makes no move to use the knowledge that he has gained in "reading" for human connection. In recognizing the public appearance of "douleurs solitaire," Baudelaire's heroic reading subject falls short of action, lingering on the intrigue of imagined intimacy, of distanced interest and investment.

With the "héroïsme" of reading comes the risk of mistaking the action of imagination with real-life agency. And it also comes with the possibility of short-sighted approaches to otherness. The misreadings of Balzac's "père Goriot" and Baudelaire's "Le vieux saltimbanque" (in the poem in prose by that name) present this scenario.

Balzac implicates Madame Vauquer in representing the social order in her person, but also in misconstruing it in her perspective: the gross misreading of Goriot acts out the folly of detecting identities in appearances, effectively undoing any claims to knowledge through careful inventorying of self-presentation. Against the backdrop of transparency and correspondence in the narrator's reading, the figure at the center of the "drame," "le père Goriot" (as he comes to be called at the Maison Vauquer) serves as an example of *bad* reading, that is, reading that disfigures the social order. When Goriot first arrives, his appearance gives Madame Vauquer "des idées," dreams spun off the wrong idea of his situation, his social value:

> Quoique le larmier des yeux de Goriot fût retourné, gonflé,
> pendant, ce qui l'obligeait à les essuyer assez fréquemment, elle lui
> trouva l'air agréable et comme il faut. D'ailleurs son mollet charnu,
> saillant, pronostiquait, autant que son long nez carré, des qualités
> morales auxquelles paraissait tenir la veuve . . . Quoique un peu
> rustaud, il était si bien tiré à quatre épingles, il prenait si
> richement son tabac, il le humait en homme si sûr de toujours

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avoir sa tabatière pleine de macouba, que le jour où monsieur

Goriot s'installa chez elle, madame Vauquer se coucha le soir en

rôtissant . . . Elle rêva tout l'Eldorado des petits ménages

parisiens.   (Garnier 27-8)

The repetition of "Quoique" indicates Madame Vauquer's selective

attention, which leads her to misapprehend Goriot, mistaking him for

what she wants to see, the object of her *petit bourgeois* desire. His body

language—his manner of smoking, in particular—seems the expression

of self-assurance, but Goriot, as the narrator soon reveals, is far from

"sûr de toujours avoir." When the "true" character of Goriot comes out,

the narrator is forgiving toward Madame Vauquer; in her error, "elle

ressemblait à beaucoup de personnes qui se défient de leurs proches, et

se livrent au premier venu. Fait moral, bizarre, mais vrai, dont la racine

est facile à trouver dans le cœur humain" (31). The Maison Vauquer is

not so forgiving of "le père Goriot," however, assuming the worst of his

deteriorating appearance:

Quand le père Goriot parut pour la première fois sans être poudré,

son hôtesse laissa échapper une exclamation de surprise en

apercevant la couleur de ses cheveux, ils étaient d'un gris sale et

verdâtre. Sa physionomie, que des chagrins secrets avaient

insensiblement rendue plus triste de jour en jour, semblait la plus

désolée de toutes celles qui garnissaient la table. Il n'y eut alors

plus aucun doute. Le pére Goriot était un vieux libertin dont les

yeux n'avaient été préservés . . . La couleur dégoûtante de ses

cheveux provenait de ses excès et des drogues qu'il avait prises

pour les continuer. (Garnier 37)

Only one plunged into the depths of debauchery—"aucun doute," the

pensionnaires reason—could fail so miserably in keeping up

appearances. Outward signs of character (hair color, eye health, the

overall impression of "sa physionomie") weave into a narrative of deep

corruption to account for what is seen. Balzac calls attention to this

movement between surface and depth in the recurrence of the word

"cœur" amid the superficialities of character descriptions. The Maison

Vauquer carries their reading to the point of ridicule and cruelty in

naming "le père Goriot," assuming that they know his character, that the

heart can be read on a sleeve.

In this light, the reading practices of Balzac's characters, especially

his narrator, set in motion the epistemological principles that emerge in

his earlier press pieces. In *Traité de la vie éleganté*, for instance, minor

variations in items of self-presentation reveal what an inherited title once

told: "la différence qui distinguait le courtisan du noble ne se trahissait

guère que par des pourpoints plus ou moins chers, par des bottines plus

ou moins évasées, une fraise, une chevelure plus ou moins musquée, et

par des mots plus ou moins neufs" (34). By inventorying all available

signs of character on a nuanced spectrum of quality, Balzac arrives at a

method of reading that reproduces the bygone social hierarchy. In *Le*

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Père Goriot, the characters themselves enact this mode of reading—or better, its failure; the misidentification of Goriot demonstrates error in detecting social value. Madame Vauquer and the *pensionnaires* attribute too much significance to visible signs of "fortune" and—as they later re-interpret Goriot's appearance—manifestations of a debauched existence, "un vieux libertin" (37). The scenes at the Maison Vauquer, then, play out both sides of the equation of self-presentation and social value, given as fundamental in Balzac's *Traité de la vie élégante*: "cette vaste et perpetuelle image qui représente* votre fortune ne doit jamais en être le spécimen infidèle" (*Théorie* 62). In the asterisked note, he further enhances the signifying power of dress, declaring that the very concept of representation "non pas d'autre origine" than the image one projects of social value. The false image that Madame Vauquer initially holds of Goriot and his "fortune" is an example of a "spécimen infidèle," generated by misreading; Madame Vauquer sees only what she wants to see: through her desire, "Eldorado"; through her disappointment, desperado (28, 37). In their harsh judgement of Goriot, the Maison Vauquer holds to the easy correspondence between appearance and moral character that Balzac systematizes in *Traité de la vie élégante* (i.e., "une déchirure est un malheur, une tâche est un vice," *Théorie* 90). A catalog of signs provides the basis for reading knowledge of social texts, as Balzac encapsulates in the axiom, "la toilette est l'expression de la société" (*Théorie* 79). In his novels, Balzac's narrator demonstrates how to read

this "expression" by unpacking the significance of all the available signs of appearance, and points out the reading practices of other characters, who negotiate social identities and interests by reading *to the letter.*

In "Le Vieux saltimbanque," Baudelaire's speaker identifies the decrepit figure before his eyes by reading *himself,* by identifying *with* an old, disregarded man as a projection of his future self. Past-tense description sets the scene of encounter as it was seen—through the mass of Parisians on holiday: "Partout s'étalait, se répandait, s'ébaudissait le peuple en vacances" (*OC* 1: 247). The speaker does not situate his gaze with a subject position; rather, the expanse of the view implies a removed, elevated vantage. He does, however, identify the scene as a familiar occurrence with demonstrative pronouns: "C'était une de ces solennités sur lesquelles, pendant un long temps, comptent les saltimbanques . . . En ces jours-là il me semble que le peuple oublie tout, la douceur et le travail." The speaker distances himself from "le peuple" as he delineates a spectrum of types—from *enfant* to *homme du monde*— each in their own role in the scene, in which he himself participates as an omniscient spectator. As he scans the variety of people with a penetrating gaze, he also acknowledges his own presence as a Parisian type: "Pour moi, je ne manque jamais, en vrai Parisien, de passer la revue de toutes les baraques qui se pavanent à ces époques solennelles." In revealing his identity, the speaker positions himself in the scene as a resident observer. The scene unfolds as his gaze spans the space below,

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filling it with a limitless exuberance in the restrictive clause, "Tout n'était que lumière, poussière, cris, joie, tumulte." In a parallel structure, indicating how thoroughly he surveys the scene, he populates his field of vision with a balanced diversity of people, "les uns dépensaient, les autres gagnaient, les uns et les autres également joyeux." The poem then zooms in on a single figure as the speaker delimits his perceptual field: "Au bout, à l'extrême bout de la rangée de baraques, comme si, honteux, il s'était exilé lui-même de toutes ces splendeurs, je vis un pauvre saltimbanque, voûté, caduc, décrépit, une ruine d'homme, adossé contre un des poteaux de sa cahute" (157). In this focalizing move, the prepositions of place ("Au bout, à l'extrême bout") frame the figure in the bounds of the speaker's perception, but at its furthest reaches, thus positioning the "pauvre saltimbanque" visibly out of place in the scene, on the fringe of society. Further, the emphatic repetition of prepositions draws out the contrast between this figure and his surroundings: "Partout la joie, le gain, la débauche; partout la certitude du pain pour les lendemains; partout l'explosion frénétique de la vitalité. Ici la misère absolue, la misère affublée, pour comble d'horreur, de haillons comiques, où la nécessité, bien plus que l'art, avait introduit le contraste." The speaker indicates the deeper meaning of the contrast, accentuated by the signs of misery in the demeanor of the figure. An avalanche of negatives sets the figure apart from the lively gathering: "Il ne riait pas, le misérable! Il ne pleurait pas, il ne dansait pas, il ne gesticulait pas, il ne

criait pas; il ne chantait aucune chanson, ni gaie ni lamentable, il n'implorait pas. Il était muet et immobile. Il avait renoncé, il avait abdiqué. Sa destinée était faite." In short, the story of the "vieux saltimbanque" is written in his blankness. The contrast between this isolated figure and the fullness of life pulsing through the crowd singles out his gaze, which reflects his separation, his outsider perspective: "Mais quel regard profond, inoubliable, il promenait sur la foule et les lumières, dont le flot mouvant s'arrêtait à quelques pas de sa répulsive misère!" As the speaker reads the depths of despair in the gaze of the "vieux saltimbanque," seeing through the eyes of the other causes a subjective shock: "Je sentis ma gorge serrée par la main terrible de l'hystérie, et il me sembla que mes regards étaient offusqués par ces larmes rebelles qui ne veulent pas tomber." The violence and physical nature of this response indicates that the speaker relates involuntarily to the situation of the "vieux saltimbanque," not thoughtfully, as through a righteous sympathy with human suffering; this "ruine d'homme" comes alarmingly close to home.

The speaker regains control of emotional response to the "vieux saltimbanque" by telling the story, *his own* story, seeking validation from an addressee. Textual modes of address, situating the reader as an addressee involved in the *process* of constructing a meaningful experience, re-centers the scene on the speaking subject as he justifies his role, asking for reassurance in his course of inaction: "Que faire? A

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quoi bon demander à l'infortuné quelle curiosité, quelle merveille il avait

à montrer dans ces ténèbres puantes, derrière son rideau déchiqueté?

En vérité, je n'osais; et, dût la raison de ma timidité vous faire rire,

j'avouerai que je craignais de l'humilier." This confessional discourse

captures the "mouvements lyriques de l'âme" in prose structures ("Que

faire?," "À quoi bon," "En vérité"), in the reasoning that turns the speaker

inward, and in the address that turns toward the reader for

understanding. The "vieux saltimbanque" serves as a pretext for the

speaker to show his sympathy, to project his own self-image. Textual

modes of address specific to the poem in prose reveals this underlying

concern: he chooses not to approach the "vieux saltimbanque," but the

"vous" to which he confides as a sympathetic ear. In sharing his inner

monologue, he tells the story of the other as his own performance:

> Et, m'en retournant, obsédé par cette vision, je cherchai à analyser
>
> ma soudaine douleur, et je me dis: Je viens de voir l'image du vieil
>
> homme de lettres qui a survécu à la génération dont il fut le
>
> brillant amuseur; du vieux poète sans amis,
>
> sans famille, sans enfants, dégradé par sa misère et par
>
> l'ingratitude publique, et dans la baraque de qui le monde oublieux
>
> ne veut plus entrer!

As the speaker reports his encounter with the "vieux saltimbanque," he

retraces the "mouvements lyriques de l'âme" by expressing sympathy for

a pitiful figure, seeking that sympathy for himself.

Baudelaire's speaker clothes his observations in an other-centered narrative that unravels to reveal naked self-consciousness. This poem follows the pattern of other scenes of Parisian life in Baudelaire's poems in prose: the tenuous construction of self holds through a coherent reading of the surrounding chaos. Baudelaire's poetic subject shows an understanding of others by reading the figures he encounters—reading the city aloud, essentially—merely as a projection of self. The immediacy of textual modes of address invests the speaking subject with the kinetic energy of social relations, bonds forged and broken in the movements between self and other, in the passing glance, the chance encounter, the sudden collision. Yves Bonnefoy correlates the "mouvements lyriques de l'âme" with "le simple essor de la subjectivité" ("Paris" 16), but this valorization of the position of the subject also corresponds to a new mode of knowledge—a lyric mode, as Chambers explains in "Modern Beauty"— that brings the subject closer to the everyday as an object worth knowing.

To a certain extent, the scenes of Baudelaire's project draw on the *flâneur* tradition of knowledge production, largely inherited from Balzac. Yet where Baudelaire lionizes the free subjective experience of the mobile, urban subject, Balzac leads the captivated reader through a closed system of social knowledge. In service of Balzac's ideological project, the strategy of positioning the reader in scenes does more to limit individual subjectivity than to enable it; the properly positioned subject does not so

much produce knowledge as reproduce a determining order. That is not to say that Balzac's reader is deluded or disempowered, relegated to a function in the larger scheme of the novelist; rather, Balzac moderates the power of the reader as a producer in a rabid consumer culture of print. Scenes bring the reader direct access to power, albeit the power of a mediating structure. Balzac's Paris has been criticized as a closed system, populated by characters already determined by their designations,[49] but its operations are opened to the reader as socially, if not morally, instructive. By addressing the reader as a participant in the production of knowledge, Balzac transgresses boundaries of discourse, if only to reinforce the distinctions of ideology.

In this sense, Baudelaire picks up the pieces of Balzac's fixed universe of Paris, and plays with them, building bridges only to tear them down and approach the project again. Only instability provides the grounds for a viable project of subjectivity that absorbs the shock of knowing (and not knowing), that valorizes the transitory and the uncertain, that accommodates a full range of movements (erring, entreating, retreating) to relentlessly seek the self and understanding in individual experience; for self and understanding, in Baudelaire's universe, are grounded in the moment in which one stands, and it is the

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[49] In "Balzac and the Modern Reader," Sylvia Raphael summarizes this vein of criticism: "One of the complaints made against Balzac is that he presents us with a static, closed society described in tedious detail, often selected with a view to pointing a moral or proving a theory" (21).

truth of this illusion—that the link between self and understanding is a stretch of imagination—that Baudelaire imparts to the reader who takes up the many guises of his poetic subject. Baudelaire unmasks human relations as a series of performances, but that is not to suggest that the desire to connect with the world outside the self, with the other, is all a farce—an impossibility. Through the mobility of his mediating gaze, Baudelaire's poetic subject performs the very possibilities of self and understanding in a world of untethered meanings. Acting out the struggle to recuperate fragments of experience into a wholeness of self and understanding, Baudelaire's subject offers his account of urban experience as a testimony to the role of the modern reader as a conduit of deeper meaning.

"L'Héroïsme de la vie moderne" lies in recognizing the battle, registering the social struggle at the level of subjectivity in reading. By inviting the reader into scenes of Parisian life, Balzac and Baudelaire approach an immense task of representation through the intimacy and intensity of textual modes of address, breaking the mold of genre to open literature to the labile forms of experience that achieve critical mass in modernity. Scenes bring the "héroïsme" of modern life into the spotlight as Balzac and Baudelaire valorize everyday acts as events—for Balzac, the epic moments of self-presentation in the "histoire des mœurs," and for Baudelaire, the subtle "mouvements lyriques de l'âme" registered on a seismic scale. In the monumental works of Balzac and Baudelaire, the

unified representation of the book project originates in the piecemeal

text, interspersed throughout commodified spaces of print. In the next

chapter, Balzac and Baudelaire remain in the shadows of production in

the prose poetry book, in which Arthur Rimbaud, writing self-consciously

in Baudelaire's shadow, and William Carlos Williams, mocking the

tradition of mimetic representation, aim to go beyond their predecessors

in the discovery of wholeness in fragmentary forms.

CHAPTER III

SEASONS: RIMBAUD AND WILLIAMS TURN AGAINST TIME

IN MODERN POETICS

"It is spring" (*Spring and All* 10). All is new, beginning again—but

not yet: "It is spring. That is to say, it is approaching THE BEGINNING."

But not yet: on the next page, "—at last, SPRING is approaching" (*Spring

and All* 11). Spring is now and it is not, cropping up again and again in

choppy prose until, suddenly, it teeters into a poem leading down "the

road to the contagious hospital": sickly stick-trees and weedy chaff adorn

the path to illness and death, paving the way for the advent of spring

once again. In a single two-page spread of *Spring and All* (see fig. 6), a

slim, pale blue book filled with prose and poems by the American poet

William Carlos Williams, the capricious swing of the text teases the

reader with the coming of spring—one moment in prose, then again (but

not yet) in poetry. The seasons turn with every sudden shift in discourse.

By continually disrupting temporal flow, the unsettling mix of

prose and poetry in *Spring and All* prompts critical reflection on the

experience of the book as a hybrid whole. As unevenly interspersed

poems in free verse chafe against clumsy blocks of interrupted prose, the

friction gives rise to an unexpected form of poetry that bears its rough

edges, its piecemeal composition. The unstable discourse maintained by

Williams's speaker incorporates the difference between prose and poetry

into the very form of the text, which structures an experience of temporal rupture: *Spring and All* forces the process of reading *against* the conventional currents of time in both prose and poetry to clear a space for the present moment in itself.

CHAPTER 2

It is spring : life again begins to assume its normal appearence as of „ today ". Only the imagination is undeceived. The volcanos are extinct. Coal is beginning to be dug again where the fern forests stood last night. (If an error is noted here, pay no attention to it).

CHAPTER XIX

I realize that the chapters are rather quick in their sequence and that nothing much is contained in any one of them but no one should be surprised at this today.

— THE TRADITIONALISTS OF PLAGIARISM

It is spring. That is to say, it is approaching THE BEGINNING.

In that huge and microscopic career of time, as it were a wild horse racing in an illimitable pampa under the stars, describing immense and microscopic circles with his hoofs on the solid turf, running without a stop for the millionth part of a second

until he is aged and worn to a heap of skin, bones and ragged hoofs — In that majestic progress of life, that gives the exact impression of Phidias' frizze, the men and beasts of which, though they seem of the rigidity of marble are not so but move, with blinding rapidity, though we do not have the time to notice it, their legs advancing a millionth part of an inch every fifty thousand years — In that progress of life which seems stillness itself in the mass of its movements — at last SPRING is approaching.

In that colossal surge toward the finite and the capable life has now arrived for the second time at that exact moment when in the ages past the destruction of the species *Homo sapiens* occured.

Now at last that process of miraculous verisimilitude, that grate copying which evolution has followed, repeating move for move every move that it made in the past — is approaching the end.

Suddenly it is at an end. THE WORLD IS NEW.

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By the road to the contagious hospital
under the surge of the blue
mottled clouds driven from the

Fig 6. "SPRING" on pages 10-11 of *Spring and All*.

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Leafing through the pages of *Spring and All* sparks questions about how publishing formats shape poetry, for the prose poetry book clearly provides a special medium of experimentation with form. I propose to examine the formal relations between poetic content and immediate material context by focusing on textual strategies that bind the prose poetry book as a continuous text: rapid reversals of discourse perennially recall the present situation of the text through *textual modes of address,* startling turns of address that activate the tension between prose and poetry as an experiential part of the textual process of producing meaning.

I treat the prose poetry book (for lack of a better term, and to avoid confusion with prose poems or poems in prose, which are self-sufficient poems) as a particular print environment, or a context for creating a peculiar experience of poetry *in* prose. This formulation will enable me to consider the relationship between this specific textual form and other attempts at freer forms of poetry, including the discrete prose poem and the much-debated practice of free verse. My discussion will consider the bound pages of prose poetry as one of many ways in which prose and poetry meet in the forging of modern poetics.

Indeed, Williams's *Spring and All* hearkens back to an earlier season in the prose poetry book: *Une saison en enfer,* the only book of poems that the legendary French poet Arthur Rimbaud ever published

himself. The end of *Une saison en enfer* furnishes the project of modern poetics with its imperative: "Il faut être absolument moderne" (52). This famous quotation has come to signify the project of modernizing poetry, expressing an absolutist stance against the constraints of tradition. Yet the significance of this claim lies in its context, in the *process* of Rimbaud's text, *Une saison en enfer*, which arrives at what it means to be modern after a long, brutal struggle, both psychological and formal: a friction of mixing prose and verse that is finally resolved in a concluding series of prose poems. One must *become* absolutely modern. Rimbaud dramatizes this process of becoming in the movement toward new forms (the prose poems at the end of *Une saison en enfer)* by way of prose and verse—or rather, as my textual analysis will show more precisely—by way of verse *in* prose. When returned to its original context, the process or trials of the poetic subject in the text, Rimbaud's pronouncement also suggests a relationship between being "absolument moderne" in form and being "absolument moderne" in subjectivity. How does modern poetry express and develop this relationship?

Fifty years after Rimbaud's explosive work, with the post-WWI rise of a transatlantic avant-garde, modern poetry remains bound up with this concern. William Carlos Williams raises the question of what it means to be modern in *Spring and All* (like Rimbaud's *Saison*, a little book containing verse *in* prose), by entertaining the voices of critics: "« You moderns! it is the death of poetry that you are accomplishing. No. I

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cannot understand this work. You have not yet suffered a cruel blow from life. When you have suffered you will write differently? » (2). Williams resists the traditional notion that poetry represents life in the very form of *Spring and All,* an uneasy mingling of prose and free verse (although Williams would bristle at this term), which enacts the movement of modern poetry toward becoming an experience in itself. From Rimbaud's *Saison* to Williams's *Spring,* the question of what it means to be modern gets worked out in the meeting of prose and verse. What happens at this meeting? To investigate, I will look more closely at *where* it happens: on, across, and between the pages of the prose poetry book.

Through the incendiary form of poems embedded in prose, Rimbaud and Williams carry out the double subversion of time in prose poetry—against progress in narrative and against prosody in verse. *Une saison en enfer* (1873) and *Spring and All* (1923) appear in disparate contexts of the development of prose poetry (in the wake of the Paris Commune and in post-WWI America), and also come at different moments in the poetic careers of Rimbaud and Williams: in *Spring and All,* Williams comments on the method of his prose poetry in *Kora in Hell: Improvisations* (1920)*,* as well as the reception his prose poems, in particular their noted resemblance to Rimbaud's *Illuminations,* which are speculated to have been composed concurrently with *Une saison en enfer*

and published later (the first poems appearing in 1886, the complete edition in 1895).[50]

Although the object of study here is not the history of the prose poetry book as a genre of publication or historical artifact, my methodology draws on the material approaches to studying literary modernism in original textual forms. Combining close reading and object analysis, considering the format of the page and the organization of the book itself, the impact of units, sections, and the compositional whole, my approach aligns with George Bornstein's argument in *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page.* I consider the specific print environment in which prose and poetry interact as part of the "bibliographic code," the signifying material dimension of the text, which, in Jerome McGann's terminology, conveys the "linguistic code" (Bornstein 7). As I analyze the contents of *Spring and All* and *Une saison en enfer* in their original publishing contexts, the prose poetry books, I draw on Bornstein's methodology in approaching the "bibliographic code" as "the textual form taken by speech acts," highlighting the "factors that make it an utterance rather than merely a sentence" (8). I argue that the form of the text prepares the way for its *performance* through textual

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[50] The noted resemblance of Williams's *Improvisations* to Rimbaud's *Illuminations* raises the question of influence, which I discuss in the concluding section of this chapter. What concerns me about the chronology of Rimbaud's works is the movement toward prose poems in *Une saison en enfer.* Yves Bonnefoy, James Lawler, David Decarie, and David Evans draw on biographical readings of Rimbaud's works to speculate about the timeline of composition.

modes of address, continually resituating the act of reading in the process of the text.

By interrupting the process of the text in *Une saison en enfer* and *Spring and All,* Rimbaud and Williams take aim at the structures of subjectivity that inhere in the temporalities of prose and poetry, jerking the individual subject free from the intertwined straightjackets of history (causality) and tradition (prosody). The figurative titles of these books twist material privileged by traditional poets—*Une saison en enfer* playing with the trope of seasons among many rarified "things of poets" (Boym 98), *Spring and All* dismissing the lofty theme of spring in mocking colloquialism—into something other than poetry as usual. Rimbaud and Williams thus mobilize *seasons* as poetic currency of time to suggest alternative temporalities. As a means of referring to the texts themselves as works in progress, seasons continually recur in turns of address, which riddle these texts with broken time references and other discursive ruptures (e.g., shifts in genre, mode, context, tense, and subject position). By sustaining intersubjective relations between the speaker and the reader in the present moment of address, seasons provide continuity in discontinuity, stretching across the fragmentary temporal spaces of these texts. My analysis thus attends to utterances in context; drawing on Bakhtin's schema of dialogism, I consider the prose in which the poems are embedded as discursive context, "a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgments" that

inflects the meaning of each utterance (281). In the turbulent medium of

the prose poetry book, textual modes of address interlink the prose and

the poems in an active relationship between the speaker and the

addressee (the reading subject in the text). Through the disjointed self-

referentiality of seasons in *Une saison en enfer* and *Spring and All,*

textual modes of address break through the constructs of time in prose

and poetry to enable a mode of subjectivity *in real time*—that is, on its

own time, in an absolute present of reading.[51]

Opening Seasons: The Prose Poetry Book as Timely Critique

The opening narratives of *Une saison en enfer* and *Spring and All*

usher in untimely seasons, flouting the expectations of temporal

regularities, for the purposes of timely critique. Through the disorienting

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[51] I anticipate questions about the intended audience of these two little books, which
were unusually small in their publication. Yves Bonnefoy insists on the private nature
of *Une saison en enfer,* citing Rimbaud's confessional remarks ("*My fate depends on this
book,* he wrote to Delahaye"), the difficulty of the text itself ("the great number of radical
ellipses and the resolutely personal allusions to be found everywhere in these pages"),
and the small-scale of the self-publishing venture ("He knew he would receive only five
or six copies if the book were not paid for") (*Rimbaud* 83). All this goes to show, for
Bonnefoy, that Rimbaud "is not concerned with being read," and that he invested *Une
saison en enfer* with an objective value, a kind of personal presence in his own life." Yet
it is precisely in this "objective value" that the text exceeds the bounds of a single "life,"
above all the author's, for Rimbaud is engaged in creating a space in which the singular
subject escapes the construction of the self (of a "life") in the experience of subjectivity
as plurality. This happens at the level of language, regardless of Rimbaud's intention.
Spring and All was also a small, independent production, and Williams himself raises
the question of its intended audience: "Nobody ever saw it," he admits, "it had no
circulation at all but I had a lot of fun with it." (qtd in Miller, "Progress" 28). Part of the
"fun" of *Spring and All* is making fun of traditional and contemporary artists, and
though "they" remain nameless others, this mockery lays the groundwork for new
relations between writer, reader, and the work. (All subsequent citations refer to *Spring
and All* as *SA.*)

references of seasons, textual modes of address establish the situation of the text as a self-parodic performance.

Rimbaud's *Saison en enfer* begins with spring and what it brings: the end of coherent discourse. A past tense narrative situates the speaker in both space and time ("in hell" in the present moment of address) and frames his speech as the product of a descent into madness—beyond the logic of language, like unrestrained laughter: "Et le printemps m'a apporté l'affreux rire de l'idiot" (1). "Et" suggests a logical connection to the preceding utterances, as if there were no break in continuity, when what this assertion performs is precisely *a break*—the splitting of a subject beside himself with laughter. The very structure of the phrase, which positions the speaker as an object ("m[e]"), subject to the influence of "le printemps," lets the speaking subject slip into another state under the guise of changing seasons. "Et le printemps" suggests temporal logic at the level of grammar (the causality of "le printemps") and discourse (the sequentiality of "Et"), in effect, lending coherence to the speaker's discourse just as cultivated madness erupts into maniacal laughter. But the change of season—spring and what it brings, the "rire de l'idiot"—comes at the end of a series of debaucheries in which the speaking subject is unquestionably the agent, culminating in the act of playing the fool ("Et j'ai joué de bons tours à la folie"). In the context of surrounding utterances, which is a performance of changing states of

being in time, seasons disrupt logic in accordance with the speaker's *modus operandi* of contradiction.

In the fitful turning of seasons, textual modes of address emphasize the dialogic orientation of *Une saison en enfer* by locating the speaker (and the text) "in hell." A piece of reported speech betrays the present situation of the speaker by identifying an interlocutor: "« Tu resteras hyène, etc…», se récrie le démon qui me couronna de si aimables pavots. « Gagne la mort avec tous tes appétits, et ton égoïsme et tous les péchés capitaux »" (1). The future and imperative tenses of this familiarly addressed remark ("« Tu resteras . . . Gagne . . . »") reinforce a progressive orientation, while the verb of locution in the present indicative ("se récrie") situates the action—a speech act, the reverberation of demonic speech through the speaking subject—in the present time. In an impassioned response to "le démon," the "je" establishes an active relationship with "vous":

> Ah! j'en ai trop pris: —Mais, cher Satan, je vous en conjure, une prunelle moins irritée! et en attendant quelques petites lâchetés en retard, vous qui aimez dans l'écrivain l'absence des facultés descriptives ou instructives, je vous détache ces quelques hideux feuillets de mon carnet de damné.   (2)

In a single utterance, "je" pleads with Satan ("je vous en conjure") and depicts a particular type of reader ("vous qui aimez dans l'écrivain"),

while positioning "vous" as the receiving target of the text. Textual modes of address point to the text in process, and in the referential gesture, the text at once folds upon itself and reaches beyond itself—a signature acrobatic move that Svetlana Boym observes in the self-inflicted violence of Rimbaud's sentences (100). In this manner, speaking blends into writing, enfolding the act of reading into the text, which is offered in excerpt ("je vous détache ces quelques hideux feuillets de mon carnet de damné"). The heated narrative leading up to the "carnet" thereby activates developmental arcs, only to subvert any unifying conventions of genre in the piecemeal text.

Moreover, the direct reference to "mon carnet de damné" qualifies the text as a process rather than a product. Evoking the text itself in this manner, in extraction and exchange, resists the closure that Roland Barthes identifies with the "work" as opposed to the "text," and displaces the "work" (in the other, active sense of the word) onto the reader, who receives and holds together any number of torn-out pages. To some extent, the offering of the "carnet" through textual modes of address exemplifies the movement "from work to text" in Barthes's schema: 1) the text is not a "defined object," a finished work that is finite in its meaning, but a "methodological field" to be worked by the reader who brings forth its potentially infinite meaning; (2) the text slips through the distinctions of literature and "divisions of genre"; (3) the text comes into "play" with the reader's approach; (4) the text is a "plurality" of voices; (5) the text

defers its meaning to the reader's approach; (6) the text escapes the determining forces of history, including the author's biography; (7) the text is not merely consumed but "produced" in reading; (8) the text gives "pleasure" without the feeling of "separation" from its source, pleasure in the free play of language (57-64). The loose identity of the "carnet" (is it a book? a journal? is it prose? will it be poetry?) also troubles the concept of "work" in yet another sense by collapsing the "division of labor" inscribed in genre conventions (Ross 27). By toying with narrative frames and attendant structures of experience in time, the speaker opens a space of alternative temporalities (at once immanent and, like seasons, temporary and timeless), preparing the way for the subject to come unbound from the self—from the time-contingent constructs of identity, history, and knowledge—in the imaginary bounds of the book.

In the opening narrative of *Spring and All,* Williams's ecstatic speaker confuses progression—interrupting, stalling, and even reversing movement through time—by making repeated references to seasons. A meta-textual announcement synchronizes the changing seasons to the time of reading: "Meanwhile, SPRING, which has been approaching for several pages, is at last here" (16). "Meanwhile" marks a point in time "here" in the text, in the space measured out in "pages." And the temporal marker "here" corresponds to "now" in the present progressive act of reading. By alluding to the progression of seasons, the speaker refers to the text itself as a space of time in which the present moment

springs forward. Yet "Meanwhile" also marks a point of intersection in time, a switch from one trajectory to another, simultaneous one. The speaker thus sets up a parallel between what has been happening (between "SPRING, which has been approaching" off the record, as it were, and what the text has been presenting to the reader), only to re-focus on what *is* happening: "SPRING . . . is at last here." Rather than orient the text in a reliable structure of time, "SPRING" contradicts temporal logic by breaking up the speaker's discourse. "SPRING" not only calls attention to itself when it suddenly erupts in all caps, but also to the context of surrounding utterances: what does the speaker push to the background (the progressive past of "Meanwhile") to bring the present forward? What does "SPRING" interrupt?

Through the effects of textual modes of address, the announcement of "SPRING" sets up an opposition between what has been happening *in the text* and what has been happening *outside*: "SPRING . . . has been approaching" against the backdrop of an entrenched resistance to anything new. With the temporal reference "Meanwhile," the speaker's discourse turns inward, leaving off a polemical description of the art world: "Those who led yesterday wish to hold their sway a while longer. It is not difficult to understand their mood. They have their great weapons to hand 'science', 'philosophy' and the most dangerous of all 'art'" (*SA* 16). According to this outsider perspective, "they" hold fast to the consolidated power of institutions by

wielding established ideas as "weapons." Who are "they"? The speaker

does not name any names; he defines the project at hand against the

shadows of a faceless enemy. But Williams's more explicit statements of

his aesthetics provide for some speculation about who might speak for

"they" in *Spring and All.* In his 1913 correspondence with Harriet

Monroe, Williams articulates his vision of modern poetry through his

criticism of her editorial judgment and an undisguised contempt for "the

divine" Ezra Pound:

> To me, what is woefully lacking in our verse and in our criticism is
>
> not hammered-out stuff but stuff to be hammered-out. A free
>
> forum, there is the need, which asks only, 'Is it new, interesting?' I
>
> should think, even, that at times you would be concerned lest you
>
> get nothing but that which is hammered and worked out—except
>
> when the divine Ezra bludgeons you into it.   (*Letters* 25)

His ideological divisions with Pound, namely over what constitutes

something "new," reverberate through "Prologue to *Kora in Hell,"* where

Williams belabors the responses to his "improvisations," which were

published in the *Little Review* (1917-18), quoting a letter from Pound

nearly in its entirety.[52] At times, *Spring and All* is simply a blast of hot air

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[52] In the belligerent doggerel of this letter, Pound attacks Williams as "a blooming foreigner" with no claim to speak as an American, angling this nationalism against the "improvisations": "I was very glad to see your wholly incoherent unamerican poems in the L.R." (qtd in *Essays* 8). Williams deflects the accusation with an unflattering portrait of Pound: "E.P. is the best enemy United States verse has" (*Essays* 24).

in the face of critics, but it is also Williams's unbridled effort to "cling

firmly to the advance" in poetry (*SA* 24), to make it *move* at a time when

to "make it new," according to Pound's dictum, was to make it cling with

heavy allusions and foreign borrowings (as in *The Waste Land,* which

Eliot edited with Pound in 1922). Williams's gesture in *Spring and All*

dismisses the very thing that he thrusts forward in "SPRING"—over-

wrought and worn-out cliché—to untangle the roots of a new American

poetics from tradition.

What comes immediately after the announcement of "SPRING"

further illustrates   how textual modes of address cause continual

displacements in time, in the many seasons of *Spring and All.* Resuming

a critical stance, the speaker situates his present act (of writing) in

opposition to what "they" expect:

> —they ask us to return to the proven truths of tradition, even to
>
> the twice proven, the substantiality of which is known . . . I myself
>
> seek to enter the lists with these few notes jotted down in the
>
> midst of the action, under distracting circumstances—to remind
>
> myself (see p.2, paragraph 4) of the truth.   (*SA 16*)

 The abrupt shift from what is happening in the text ("SPRING") to what

"they ask us" leaves the speaker's discourse hanging on a dash. Yet the

address of these meta-textual remarks maintains the connection to the

reader—and thus the coherence of the text— through the ongoing

process of reading: first, the opposition between "they" and "us" aligns the reader with the "I" and his side "of the truth"; the reference to the text in process ("these few notes jotted down in the midst of action") and under present "circumstances" places the speaker and the reader in the very moment of production; and the directive in parenthesis ["(see p.2, paragraph 4)"] enlists the reader in the process of uncovering "the truth." In fact, a look back to the specified page and paragraph links this statement of authorial intention to an earlier one, a preemptive response to critics with prejudiced notions of poetry and the poet (2). While this parenthetical reference to the text itself upsets the integrity of the speaker's discourse and the linearity of the reader's experience, the interactive role of the reader supplies links between broken stretches of time. Textual modes of address thus maintain continuity through the seasons, through the sudden turns of address in Williams's prose poetry book, as temporal structures of experience disintegrate to enable immediacy in the present.

How do these untimely seasons carry out timely critique? By calling attention to *process* of the text in *Une saison en enfer* and *Spring and All,* seasons draw out the political stakes of prose poetry for Rimbaud and Williams. As Kristen Ross explains with regard to Rimbaud's chosen mode of poetic production, prose poetry collapses the "division of labor" in discourse, making poetry do the work of "critique . . . [as] an agent as well as an active mode of existence" (27). This critical

praxis not only wrenches poetry out of social seclusion, but also lays bare how prose does its work: hiding the seamy side of reality in clean narrative lines, trafficking the wares of cultural hegemony as something new—as progress—in the "seamlessness of that narrative," all in service of a "vast bourgeois cultural project" (27; 48). This project of "acculturation" manifests itself in narrative (in biography and the developmental novel, as in history and cultural myth) as the process "of constructing the bourgeois subject, of even recounting a life" (49). Rimbaud resists this dominant notion of progress in *Une saison en enfer* by *de*constructing the subject in discourse, by refusing the ease of "recounting a life." By superimposing clichéd time structures of poetry (the temporary and the timeless) and prose (program and progress), Rimbaud's prose poetry in *Une saison en enfer* produces the conditions of possibility for subjectivity to escape modes of *re*production in discourse. Although Williams's prose poetry is not as celebrated or culminating as Rimbaud's, Margueritte Murphy locates the subversion of prose poetry, that is, the double subversion of time in prose and in poetry, at the center of Williams's poetics: "Williams himself argued that subversion is essential to modern poetry, paralleling the subversiveness of life as experienced in time" (102). To elucidate this point, Murphy cites Williams as he defines "modern verse" to push back (in defense of two rejected poems) against Harriet Monroe's editorial vision for *Poetry:*

Most current verse is dead from the point of view of art . . . Now life

is above all things else at any moment subversive of life as it was

the moment before—always new, irregular. Verse to be alive must

have infused into it something of the same order, some tincture of

disestablishment, something in the nature of an impalpable

revolution, an ethereal reversal, let me say. I am speaking of

modern verse. (qtd in 102; *Letters* 23-4)

Here, Williams speaks specifically of verse as something dead, lifeless in

lacking the "subversive" nature of life itself, which is "always new" "at

any moment" by destroying itself "as it was the moment before"; the

movement through time is "revolution." What must verse do "to be alive"?

Murphy suggests that Williams infuses verse with "some tincture of

disestablishment" from prose. Although what is described here is the

collection of prose poems, *Kora in Hell: Improvisations,* these are precisely

the maneuvers of prose poetry that interest me in *Spring and All:*

Williams breaks the forms of traditional prosaic discourse, be it

descriptive, narrative, rhetorical, or aphoristic, by abrupt shifts in

tone, speaker, and topic, but the effect of these shifts could not be

felt without an original gesture toward a traditional manner of

writing prose. (131)

I propose that the "abrupt shifts" of discourse in *Spring and All,* the turns

of address in the movement between the prose and the poems, are

gestures toward writing and reading, and both prose and poetry, through the self-referentiality of seasons. By focusing on textual modes of address through the trope of seasons, my comparative approach to *Une saison en enfer* and *Spring and All* discloses how these texts interweave writing and reading in an open process of subjectivity, resisting coalescence into unitary structures of experience in time.

To attend to the formal specificity of the prose poetry book in my comparison of *Une saison en enfer* and *Spring and All,* I must situate these texts in the contexts of discourse in which they intervened: the different phases of development in the reshaping of poetic language, from the birth of the prose poem in France, to the transcontinental debates concerning prose poetry and free verse. As my analysis will further illustrate, the contrast between the prose and the poems in *Une saison en enfer* and *Spring and All* throws into relief the identities and ideologies of prose, poetry, and prose poetry (as their double subversion). Drawing from Todorov's structural system, I consider the prose and the poems (verse and prose poems in *Une saison en enfer,* free verse in *Spring and All*) as "genres in discourse," or as different sets of utterances in a single "enunciatory context"—"discourse," as Todorov defines it, "constituted by speech acts" (16). To register the multimodal critique of prose poetry in *Une saison en enfer* and *Spring and All*, I approach the seasons conjured up by Rimbaud and Williams as references to their discursive contexts, both internal (the texts themselves) and external, to the discourse of

various non-traditional forms of poetry (i.e., the prose poem, free verse). I turn first to the prose poem, for it is through this object—as it comes to be recognized as a genre—that prose poetry is defined, from both the side of poetry and the side of prose.

The story of the prose poem, as distinct from what might be called poetic prose, begins with the "poèmes en prose" of Charles Baudelaire. Here, the poet plunges into the murky sources of poetry, bringing up groundbreaking questions about "the then widely accepted formal and phonic premises of poetry, namely the presence of rhyme and meter" (Delville 1). Todorov states unequivocally that "[i]t is natural to begin with Baudelaire . . . [I]t was he who gave to its title its nobility . . . made it into a model for writing: a genre, in the historical sense of the word. It was he too who popularized the very expression, 'prose poem'" (Caws and Riffaterre 63). I would argue that Baudelaire's "poèmes en prose" are not equivalent to the "prose poem," which implies a singular, self-sufficient work, whereas Baudelaire emphasizes the plural when presenting his "poèmes en prose." Moreover, Baudelaire provides no clear criteria for identifying a genre. And his own examples of "poèmes en prose" do not stand the tests later proposed by critics; as Michel Beaujour explains, Baudelaire's project contains "prosaic" and "anecdotal" pieces that have been deemed canonically spurious (Caws and Riffaterre 42). What

connects the "poèmes en prose" *formally* is the famously vague "ambition" that Baudelaire sketches out in the dedication of his project:[53]

> Quel est celui de nous qui n'a pas, dans ses jours d'ambition, rêvé le miracle d'une prose poétique, musicale sans rythme et sans rime, assez souple et assez heurtée pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la rêverie, aux soubresauts de la conscience?   (*Œuvres complètes* 1: 229)

This formulation is exacting in its imprecision—in both quality ("musicale" how, if not by "rythme" and "rime"?) and quantity (how much is "assez"?)—and in the dissonance between physicality ("souple," "heurtée, "ondulations," "soubresauts") and impalpability ("mouvements lyriques de l'âme," "la rêverie," "la conscience"). The gymnastics of the very question leaves room for a future "miracle d'une prose poétique," for Baudelaire does not claim to achieve this "ambition" here, nor does he attempt to provide a clear definition. Rather, he further obfuscates his project by invoking the idea of "une prose poétique," a *prose* that is somehow poetic, to frame his poems in prose, which declare themselves first as *poems,* discrete units of a composition (which, Baudelaire insists, may be read in any order, like so many "tronçons" of the "serpent entier"). Baudelaire himself does not separate the prose poem from poetic prose. The prose poem is thus born in ambiguity.

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[53] See my discussion of this dedication in Chapter I, pp. 58-61.

Baudelaire's dedication nonetheless provides the elemental shape of the prose poem as a form unto itself. In her monumental study, *Le Poème en prose de Baudelaire à nos jours,* Suzanne Bernard unpacks a formal code of the prose poem from each "type de phrase" described by Baudelaire:

> un type de phrase *heurtée*, correspondant, par différents moyens (brisures de rythme, raccourcis d'expression—ruptures de ton ou dissonances) aux 'soubresauts' de la conscience, et donc souvent à un certain ton d'ironie ou de sarcasme . . . un type de phrase *ondulatoire,* si l'on peut ainsi s'exprimer, c'est-à-dire de phrase longue et sinueuse, présentant les mêmes meandres que la rêverie . . . un type de phrase *lyrique*, ascendante et dynamique, s'accordant avec des sentiments intenses, des élans joyeux ou douloureux. (129-30)

This typology draws out the correspondence of movement ("correspondant," "les mêmes meandres," "s'accordant") between form and consciousness, and the responsivity of form that enables a special "dynamisme" of the poem, which is "un dynamisme qu'ont perdu tous les autres genres du lyrisme traditionnel" (Bernard 11). The "ambition" behind Baudelaire's "poèmes en prose," the drive to invent a more labile

form, is the starting point for definitions of the prose poem,[54] both on its own terms, and in its negative or negating relation to "tous les autres genres"—not only traditional forms of poetry, but prose as well.

Indeed, the particular relation between Baudelaire's poems in prose and his own poems in verse entangles the definition of the prose poem in the difference between poetry and prose. Barbara Johnson elucidates the larger implications of this difference in her much-lauded work, *Défigurations du langage poétique,* a case study of "la nature d'un besoin de différence à l'intérieur de la langue" (10). This inherent linguistic difference, as Johnson elaborates, is a "différence de *codes*": the markers of discourse that distinguish poetry from prose (i.e.,"l'unité de douze syllabes signalée comme telle par la majuscule et par l'isolement typographique"), and the absence of such markers that identify prose as "précisément un énoncé qui *n'est pas marqué*" (36). By reading selected "poèmes en prose" with their verse counterparts, Johnson shows how the prose poem issues from the difference between

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[54] It is not my ambition here to define the prose poem, but to demonstrate the difficulty of defining it. Beaujour captures this phenomenon in his attempt at consensus: "The critics, who have failed to provide a definition of the genre able to account for the features of all canonical 'prose poems,' seem to agree at least on one point: not only are prose poems observably 'short' (and autonomous), but they must be so" (Caws and Riffaterre 40). John Simon's definition of "the prose poem" in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* goes to show the extent to which the prose poem is defined as a genre by what it is not: "PROSE POEM (poem in prose). A composition able to have any or all features of the lyric, except that it is put on the page—though not conceived of—as prose. It differs from poetic prose in that it is short and compact, from free verse in that it has no line breaks, from a short prose passage in that it has, usually, more pronounced rhythm, sonorous effects, imagery, and density of expression" (664).

poetry and prose ("dérive en fait, *également,* des *deux* codes"), remarking its identity by referring to what it is not (a poem in verse) (37). Thus defining itself in its negative or negating relation to poetic language (as its "défiguration"), the prose poem disturbs the identities of genres in discourse:

> Le poème en prose nous intéresse non parce qu'il est ordinaire, mais parce que sa façon d'être ordinaire est stratégique. S'il est impossible de savoir si un énoncé marqué "non marqué" est ou n'est pas marqué, ce qui est certain, c'est que la définition de "marqué" n'est plus certaine. (54)

The prose poem, as it is inherited from Baudelaire (via Johnson and other critics who not overlook it as simply "oxymoronique," 10) not only produces uncertainty about the definitions of poetry and prose, but also destabilizes the very foundation upon which language operates.

The prose poem moves beyond its propensity to trouble language to "trouver une langue" in the words and works of Arthur Rimbaud (*Poésies* 203).[55] In seeking something new, not only something different from poetry in verse, Rimbaud is credited with making the prose poem into a veritable genre: "il semble que c'est justement dans la mesure où

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[55] Rimbaud is quick to fault Baudelaire with not going far enough: "Baudelaire est le premier voyant, roi des poètes, *un vrai Dieu.* Encore a-t-il vécu dans un milieu trop artiste; et la forme si vantée en lui est mesquine: les inventions d'inconnu réclament des formes nouvelles" (*Poésies* 205).

se précisera ce désir de 'trouver une langue', selon l'expression de

Rimbaud, que le poème en prose deviendra à la fois un genre littéraire

original et une forme répondant aux besoins du lyrisme moderne"

(Bernard 12). To unfold the significance of this critical expression of

Rimbaud, I quote it here in its original context, in one of the so-called

"lettres dites du voyant," where the young poet specifies the object of his

search for a language: "Trouver une langue . . . Cette langue sera de

l'âme pour l'âme, résumant tout, parfums, sons, couleurs, de la pensée

accrochant la pensée et tirant" (*Poésies* 203-04). This "langue" is

reminiscent of Baudelaire's "prose poétique," which would be a medium

of the "mouvements lyriques de l'âme," but Rimbaud goes further in his

search for a more responsive form of poetry: his "langue" would not only

adapt to such movements, but also enact them ("de la pensée accrochant

la pensée et tirant"). Rimbaud also valorizes the process of searching for

form, which may equally be the breakdown of form: "si ce qu'il [le poète]

rapporte de *là-bas* a forme, il donne forme; si c'est informe, il donne de

l'informe. Trouver une langue" (203). Bernard seizes on this declaration

to derive a principle of the prose poem, "un principe anarchique et

destructeur," that explains its development: "[le poème en prose] est né

d'une révolte contre les lois de la métrique et de la prosodie—et parfois

contre les lois habituelles du langage; mais toute révolte contre les lois

existantes est obligée très vite . . . de remplacer ces lois par d'autres,

sous peine d'arriver à l'inorganique, à l'informe" (13). Rimbaud's search

becomes the story of the prose poem as a genre that defines itself in negation, the product of "révolte." The prose poem is thus born again in revolution.

The movement from verse to prose in Rimbaud's poetry inaugurates the prose poem as poetic praxis. The definition of "PROSE POEM" in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* declares (to the demotion of Baudelaire's poems in prose), "Rimbaud is the first, and probably only, poet whose greatest work is his prose poetry: *Les Illuminations . . .* and, somewhat less developed, *Une saison en enfer*" (665). Indeed, Rimbaud's "révolte" against the particularly strict prosody of French is a condition of possibility for the prose poem: "Had it not been for Rimbaud's battle with the alexandrine, the *poème en prose* as we know it would probably not have been born" (Caws and Riffaterre 11). The prose poem cannot be separated, then, from the battle to break free of verse *in verse,* which includes the contemporaneous phenomenon of free verse.[56] It even seems that what separates the prose poem, according

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[56] It is not my task here to define free verse, only to demonstrate the difficulty in defining it. Williams's definition in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* shows to what extent free verse defines itself as verse without meter: "A term popularly, but not accurately, used to describe the poems of Walt Whitman and others whose verse is based not on the recurrence of stress accent in a regular strictly measurable pattern, but rather on the irregular rhythmic cadence of the recurrence, with variations, of significant phrases, image patterns, and the like. F.v. treats the device of rhyme with a similar freedom and irregularity . . .Whenever and however, either by the agency of the eye or ear, a persistent irregularity of the metrical pattern is established in a poem, it can justly be called f.v. The irregularity involves both the eye and the ear . . . In f.v. the measure has been loosened to give more play to vocabulary and syntax—hence to the mind and its excursions" (289).

to the *Princeton* definition, is the engagement with other forms of poetry, as exemplified by *Une saison en enfer,* "a wholly flexible form sometimes becoming vers libre or even rhymed verse" (665). If the prose poem is "part of a general movement toward a free verse," as Clive Scott considers it (Bradbury and McFarlene 350), what is its relation to free verse?

For one, both the prose poem and free verse raise questions of definition. Their insistent identification with poetic form (*poem* in the prose poem, *verse* in free verse) troubles the definition of poetry. As Todorov puts it, "if poetry is not verse, what is it?" (Caws and Riffaterre 60). Neither the prose poem nor free verse offers clear answers, for their own definitions are troubled. T.S. Eliot flatly declares, "*Vers libre* does not exist" (31); William Carlos Williams, in the same year of 1917: "let it be stated with finality that 'free verse' is a misnomer" ("America" 28). Williams may reject the name, but he embraces the freedom of free verse in *Spring and All* as the freedom of words from meter: "To understand the words as so liberated is to understand poetry. That they move independantly [sic] when set free is the mark of their value" (*SA* 91). Yet Williams also burdens the word with the freedom of free verse, which is bound up with its negative relation to meter: "meter formerly provided poetry with music, and words provided poetry with meaning; now, however, meter has been abandoned, and words, merely in their capacity as words, must serve the function that meter once served" (Steele 214). Free verse is not wholly free (and is, therefore, a "misnomer") because it

must make up for the lack of meter. Ezra Pound further reveals the paradox of free verse in "A Retrospect": "I think one should write *vers libre* only when one 'must', that is to say, only when the 'thing' builds up a rhythm more beautiful than that of set metres" (*Modern American Poetry Site*). Free verse is only free in so far as it earns this freedom, proving itself to be poetry by still being verse without meter. The "révolte" of the prose poem, then, can be apprehended as "hostility to the 'straight jacket' of verse (including *vers libre)"* (Caws and Riffaterre 39). Free verse defines itself against poetry as "something *other* than meter" (Steele 10), while the prose poem also defines itself against prose as something *other.*

What separates the prose poem from free verse, then, is a critical relation to genre. In *Missing Measures: Modern Poetry and the Revolt Against Meter,* Timothy Steele problematizes the definitions of the prose poem and free verse in the case of Rimbaud: the poems "Marine" and "Mouvement" may be called *vers libre* (albeit anachronistically, since their composition predates the term by a decade), but when they were originally published in *La Vogue* in 1886, they appeared in the typeface used for prose, instead of the italic reserved for verse (5). The prose poem is different from free verse precisely in this *marked* engagement with genre. Thus, while the prose poem and free verse may be considered "part of a general movement toward a free verse," they diverge into specific movements, one in prose, the other in verse. Clive Scott further

suggests how the prose poem goes beyond free verse in the desire for "meaning to reside in the process of experience":

> Hence the pressure toward *vers libre,* and the growing traffic between poetry and prose. Prose was looked to because it moves at a pace of its own making, has an option on itself at every step, is able to capitalize upon coincidence, creates its own impetus and is good at registering life's miscellaneousness. Why not a poetry of the odd thought that springs to mind and is as quickly forgotten? Prose is supremely impressionable and should be able to mould itself to the human condition at any particular historical moment.
>
> <div align="right">(Bradbury and McFarlene 350)</div>

Prose is malleable, responsive, plastic, providing the material for poetry to break the mold of verse and give form to modern experience as it happens. This conjoined leap of form and content, as seen in the synchronized dance of Baudelaire's "prose poétique" and the "soubresauts de la conscience," prepares the way for prose poetry to perform ideological critique. Prose poetry comes to serve as an oppositional discourse, exposing the strictures that it strives against, by engaging with the structures of time in prose and poetry. It is precisely this function of critique that separates Baudelaire from the likes of Rimbaud in Jonathan Monroe's account the development of the prose poem:

In Baudelaire's prose poetry one function of the genre's brevity and

condensation is to establish a point of resemblance and contact

with the verse lyric in order then to point to its deficiencies and

weaknesses from both a more narrowly aesthetic and a more

broadly sociopolitical perspective; subsequently, writers such as

Rimbaud and Jacob would realize that the prose poem's mode of

printing sets it up also to mount a critique of the novel as the

paradigmatic form for the imaging of historical/narrative progress.

(11)

The critique of genre in the prose poem is a critique of ideology, both in

prose and in poetry, which the prose poem carries out in formal

relationships to both (the compact form of the lyric poem, the building

blocks of narrative prose).

What about other forms of prose poetry, namely, the form of prose

poetry in *Une saison en enfer* and *Spring and All,* poems embedded in

prose, the prose poetry book? As in Monroe's theoretical framework for

the prose poem, my approach to the prose poetry book draws on

Bakhtinian distinctions of discourse to apprehend the special linguistic

environment of poems in prose: the prose sets the poems in a

"heteroglossic" context, putting the "monoglossic" language of subject in

the poems in multiplying dialogue (Monroe 31). Further, textual modes of

address in the prose poetry book intensify the contrast between the prose

and the poems in the disruptive, self-referential turns of seasons, as they call attention to the present moment of reading as what holds the text together. As I examine each text more closely, I will show how *Une saison en enfer* and *Spring and All* subvert ideological structures of experiential time by playing with the convention of seasons.

Une saison en enfer with Rimbaud

In *Une saison en enfer,* textual modes of address transform a singular subject into a site of intersubjective relations between self and other, self *as* other. Rimbaud's "je" is not an instrument of unified self-expression, but rather the conductor of an entire "concert d'enfers" (17), a plurality that reverberates in the space constructed by the process of the text. The "je" is always an other speaking because there is no stable reference to a unified, complete, finite self. What enables this continuity in constant change, this unity in disintegration, is the self-referential nature of the speaker's address, established from the very beginning, when the text opens with quotations marks that are never closed. Many critics attribute deep structural effects to this grammatical error. Hermann Wetzel's remarks on "les guillements" in his study "Les 'Points d'Ironie' dans *Une saison en enfer*" are particularly germane to my discussion: "on pourrait y voir le signe traditionnel d'une voix autre que celle de l'auteur ou même du locuteur. Le fait que les guillements ne sont pas fermés pourrait être l'indice qu'il ne s'agit pas d'une seule citation

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généralisée, de voix hétérogènes" (Guyaux et al. 122). The quotation opens a space for the "je" to speak from different positions in time, to commingle other voices, without ever closing the possibilities in a singular assertion of self. Already in the first utterance, "« Jadis, . . ." (*Saison* 1), the speaking subject slides along temporal fault lines, where the past comes forward in the present, which is marked as such by the quoting of speech. The citation, or, more precisely, the *re*-citation, establishes *Une saison en enfer* as a coming to subjectivity that is deferred to the present moment of the text, to the process of reading or recitation with difference, such that the self is always already other.

Moreover, the "je" is constituted in the *différance*—as Derrida doubly charges it, deference and difference between moments in time ("Différence" 3)—of the seasons in *Une saison en enfer*. The "je" first appears in a conjuration of the past, a present action of uncertain memory: "« Jadis, si je me souviens bien" (*Saison* 1). A sequence of events then unfolds through multiple iterations of the "je": "Un soir j'ai assis la Beauté sur mes genoux. —Et je l'ai trouvée amère. —Et je l'ai injuriée." The agency of "je" and the repeated conjunction "—Et" link the actions in this series in close sequentiality, both in the present of the utterance and in the past of the actions themselves. In this sense, "je" is not a unitary subject in time, but a movement of subjectivity between positions in time, between the present moment of relating and the past momentum of action. Sharp turns of address escalate this temporal slide: the speaker

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replays the scene of injury and its consequences ("Je me suis armé contre la justice. Je me suis enfui") as complete actions, distanced from the present by the *passé composé,* but then erupts into emotive apostrophes, breaking the past-tense narrative form: "Ô sorcières, ô misère, ô haine, c'est à vous que mon trésor a été confié!" By calling these powers into presence *now,* re-membering parts of the self in the past, "je" *is* speaking—no more, no less; the subject is bodied forth in the present moment of the speech act through textual modes of address.

By remaining grammatically unfinished, the speaker's performance in *Une saison en enfer* pushes against the tradition of poetic language to open the self-enclosed subject to plurality. My understanding of this situation of the text, which I am insistently locating in the unclosed quotation marks, engages Bakhtin's observations of the unitary, even proprietary nature of poetic language:

> The language of the poet is *his* language, he is utterly immersed in it, inseparable from it, he makes use of each form, each word, each expression according to its unmediated power to assign meaning (as it were, "without quotation marks"), that is, as a pure and direct expression of his intention. Now matter what 'agonies of the word' the poet endured in the process of creation, in the finished work language is an obedient organ, fully adequate to the author's intention. (286-7)

In light of Bakhtin's remarks here, the unclosed quotation marks in *Une saison en enfer* separate the poet from "*his* language," or rather, the other way around: this language *with* quotation marks separates itself from its source by resisting closure, exceeding its "use" in play, and suspending the subject *in the process* of the text. Any meaning is marked as the *mediated, impure, unfinished* product of a language that is *disobedient,* in excess of original intention. This language, then, is not the "unitary, monologically sealed-off utterance" that Bakhtin identities with the poet, who "must assume a complete single-personed hegemony over his own language . . . a single intentional whole" (297). Rimbaud's "je" resists this notion of language ownership through the displacement of the subject in the process of the text, in an utterance with quotation marks without closure.

The Bakhtinian heteroglossia of *Une saison en enfer* may be apprehended in its carnivalesque aspects, or as symptoms of schizophrenia—self-disaggregation. George Macklin takes up the latter interpretation in his reading of *Une saison en enfer* as a manifestation of "madness," "a presentation of insanity in [a] tormented diary," approaching the entire "carnet de damné" by way of the speaker's isolated signpost, "une histoire d'une de mes folies," which leads into the subsection "Délires II" (379-80). I would argue that any reading of *Une saison en enfer* as "une histoire," as the product of an affliction, assumes an origin of discourse in a unitary subject, or, to use Bakhtin's terms, "a

single intentional whole"; "je" is indeed a "focus for conflicting impulses,"

as Macklin asserts, but this conflict necessarily exceeds the bounds of a

"tormented diary," which imposes the time constraints of writing on self-

expression. Rather, it is through the continuous performance of

disjointed speaking, the simulation of voice[57] reaching out in any and all

directions, that "je" arrives at a desired plurality by way of de-centering

turns of address. Rimbaud's images for the plurality of subjectivity

through voice ("Je devrais avoir . . . un concert d'enfers," "Je devins un

opéra fabuleux") are more than suggestive in this regard (*Saison* 17, 34).

The passage to plurality in *Une saison en enfer* happens through speech,

as Wetzel emphasizes, in the "désagrégation de l'unicité du sujet

parlant," which makes "je" "autre" to itself in the very act of address

(Guyaux et al. 121). If "je" is a locus of conflict, the addressee (or the

addressed reader) is the locus of reconciliation, following the speaker

through the *trials* of subjectivity, through the turning of seasons,

maintaining close contact in the present of this *process*. Here I am

invoking Kristeva's double-edged notion of the "sujet en procès" (in

process and on trial) to anchor an approach to the performance of

Rimbaud's "je" that brackets biography to focus on the *subject in the text*

(*Revolution* 37).

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[57] André Bandelier's inventory of punctuation indicates to what extent the text inscribes
voice: "ce texte est ponctué de manière à évoquer le cri: il contient 32 points
d'exclamation, 5 d'interrogation; les points de suspension reviennent à 9 reprises et le
tiret coupe 18 fois l'énoncé" (Guyaux et al. 68).

In the overlay of speaking, writing, and reading, *Une saison en enfer* foregrounds the act of address itself as substantive: the subject is constituted, not in narrative lines of development, but in ruptures of discourse—the narrative *breaks*, as in the "rire de l'idiot," the incoherence that comes with the turning of seasons ("Et le printemps"). Moreover, the speaker evokes narrative structures of time to break them, while at the level of grammar, an excess of temporal markers punctuate the text to the point of perforation. What holds the text together is the intervention of textual modes of address, linking the speaking and reading subjects in a processual present, traversing the seasons as one, *Une saison en enfer,* which is a continuous performance of the "je" in an unlimited range of positions in time. To return to my first example, "Et le printemps" gives way to a continued descent into madness and subsequent, purposeful action: "Or, tout dernièrement m'étant trouvé sur le point de faire le dernier *couac!* j'ai songé à rechercher la clef du festin ancien, où je reprendrais peut-être appétit" (*Saison* 1). "Et" and "Or" serve grammatically as links of coherent discourse, yet they function dramatically here as turns of disordered speech, deviations from logical progression. At the same time, this testimony sets up a progressive orientation, the quest for a lost "clef." The speaker identifies the object of this quest ("La charité est cette clef"), only to obfuscate its identity, breaking off into exclamation ("—Cette inspiration prouve que j'ai rêvé!"), without explaining what "la charité" ultimately means to him as the "clef"

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to salvation. The "inspiration" of the "je" is offered as self-evident, leaving the significance of "la charité" to be sought in the searching, in the *process* of the text. This move destabilizes the narrative structure of the quest by obscuring its goal, laying value instead on the present moment of address. The "je" dramatizes this moment through the self-referential gesture of offering the reader "ces quelques feuillets de mon carnet de damné." The partitive "quelques feuillets" and the book-analogue "carnet" signal the unpolished, intermittent nature of the writing, which the speaker hands over for reading. Texual modes of address fold speaking, writing, and reading into the production of meaning, "un processus," as Jean Molino affirms: "il n'est pas donné, mais construit. C'est pourquoi il est multiple . . . c'est ce qui se produit en particulier lorsqu'un texte est obscur" (Guyaux et al. 11). Molino proceeds to describe the gesture toward reading the "carnet de damné" as characteristic of difficult (difficult but "pas illisibles") texts, and of Rimbaud's in particular: "plus que d'autres ils attendent, ils appellent le lecteur qui, bien loin de rester passif en face d'une opacité refermée sur elle-même, s'engage dans la construction du sens." Textual modes of address thus elicit the reader's tacit cooperation in a project under construction, an unfinished project that resists the reproduction of finite meaning.

The first titled section of the "carnet" serves to illustrate this point. The timescape of *Une saison en enfer* (a temporal escape) is concentrated in "MAUVAIS SANG," a pseudo-confession that interweaves and unravels

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personal and impersonal narrative lines. The beginning of "MAUVAIS

SANG" plays against the conventions of ancestry, the determining

structures of relations between subjects in time, by proceeding along

splintering lines of inheritance (*Saison* 5). Rather than a complete,

singular self-portrait, "MAUVAIS SANG" details the movements of the "je"

through multiplying identities in time. In this manner, the "je" resists

coalescence into a unified self, a construct of narrative (biography,

history, and other cultural myths). The "je" identifies with an inventory of

inherited traits ("J'ai de mes ancêtres gaulois . . . "), only to fall far from

any one family tree: "Sans me servir pour vivre même dans mon corps, et

plus oisif que le crapaud, j'ai vécu partout. Pas une famille d'Europe que

je ne connaisse" (5-6). A section break disrupts the narrative of ancestry,

which is then nullified in the interjection, "Si j'avais des antécédents à

un point quelconque de l'histoire de France! Mais non, rien" (6). The

speaker negates the condition as soon as it is posited, only to entertain

its impossibility in a projection of memory through the history of France,

an *alternative* past in which the "je" makes multiple appearances: "Je me

rappelle l'histoire de la France fille aînée de l'Église. J'aurais fait,

manant, le voyage de terre sainte; j'ai dans la tête des routes dans les

plaines souabes . . . Plus tard, reître, j'aurais bivaqué sous les nuits

d'Allemagne." The "je" moves along the trajectory of this imagined past as

it becomes the speaker's memory in the present moment of address: "Ah!

encore : je danse le sabbat dans une rouge clarière, avec des vieilles et

des enfants." Through the shifts in tense—from past, to conditional,[58] to present—led by maneuvers of temporal logic ("Si," "Mais," "encore"), the "je" changes position in time to escape the temporal constraints of narrative on subjectivity, on what *could be* experienced. Indeed, by way of a past that *was not*, the "je" returns to the present, detached from past contingencies: "Qu'étais-je au siècle dernier : je ne me retrouve qu'aujourd'hui." Yet this present materializes in historical constructs of time: "Plus de vagabonds, plus de guerres vagues. La race inférieure a tout couvert—le peuple, comme on dit, la raison; la nation et la science" (6-7). The enumeration of negative substantives removes vestiges of the past from the space of the present, which is then filled by the abstract nouns and the notions of progress embedded in them. The reference to the prevailing discourse in "comme on dit" ironizes "le peuple" in its relation to the intertwined narratives of "la raison" and "la nation et la science." Apostrophe exaggerates this irony: "Oh! la science! . . . La science, la nouvelle noblesse! Le progrès. Le monde marche! Pourquoi ne tournerait-il pas?" (7). Here, the opposing models of temporality (linear and circular) undermine the historical-genetic project of progress. The "je" intensifies this conflict by simultaneously identifying with mutually

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[58] Marcel Raymond notes the frequent use of the conditional in Rimbaud's writing to signal a rejection of what is in light of what could have been: "[Rimbaud] entend signifier que tout ce qui existe est absolument arbitraire et depend d'un fait initial, qui aurait pu ne pas être, d'une faute qui fut commise un jour où nous avons accepté de n'être que ce que nous sommes" (42).

exclusive temporal structures of experience: "J'attends Dieu avec gourmandise. Je suis de race inférieure de toute éternité." This anticipatory orientation in the present ("J'attends") collapses the past and the future into the de-historicized temporality of "de toute éternité." Yet this claim to "race" as something of "éternité" subverts the structure of time, the redemptive narrative of religious teleology. By thus entertaining incompatible positions in relation to time, the "je" subverts the hegemony of history, commingling multiple identities and ideologies in "MAUVAIS SANG" to achieve a mobility that exceeds the self, a Babel-like plurality of voice. By virtue of this position, straddling the temporary (seasons) and the timeless (hell) in the present moment of address in *Une saison en enfer*, the "je" comes to embody subjectivity beyond the limits of conventionally structured time. This project of intersubjectivity is enabled by the prose poetry book, which sustains a continuum of temporal rupture through textual modes of address.

In this framework, the contradictory iterations of "je" stage plurality in polyphony. "Nuit de l'enfer," for example, dramatizes the disintegration of the subject as a self-identifying singularity through voice, through textual modes of address that direct attention to the disorderly process. In the transition to this episode, the "je" disappears into a physical hell as all semblance of coherent discourse devolves into bodily cries, a quick succession of speech acts: "Assez! voici la punition. –*En marche!* Ah! les poumons brûlent, les tempes grondent! la nuit roule

dans mes yeux, par ce soleil! le cœur... les membres..." (*Saison* 12). This "punition" takes place in the body, but through the voice, which gives form to the tormented parts of anatomy. From the descriptive to the imperative mode, the discourse disintegrates with the subject into body parts and pure sensation in "Nuit de l'enfer": "—Les entrailles me brûlent. La violence du venin tord mes membres, me rend difforme, me terrasse. Je meurs de soif, j'étouffe, je ne puis crier. C'est l'enfer, l'éternelle peine! Voyez comme le feu se relève! Je brûle comme il faut. Va, démon!" (15). The "je" reappears as a pyre of voice that constitutes hell itself, hell as the self. This visceral experience, "C'est l'enfer. . . Et c'est encore la vie," which is to say, hell is neither here nor there, but speaking makes it so: "Je me crois en enfer, donc j'y suis." Indeed, it is the exchange between "je" and Satan, among others, including the othered self, that recalls the situation of the text in hell: "Tais toi, mais tais-toi!...C'est la honte, le reproche, ici: Satan qui dit que le feu est ignoble, que ma colère est affreusement sotte. –Assez! [. . .] Pitié! Seigneur, j'ai peur. J'ai soif, si soif! [. . .] Marie! Sainte-Vierge!...— Horreur de ma bétise!" (16). Any trace of narrative structure in "Nuit de l'enfer" dissolves into fragments of speech, elliptical exclamations, rapid turns of address—all in pleas for relief from the self, *hell itself*.

By reaching out with voice through textual modes of address, the disintegrating subject in in *Une saison en enfer* embodies the struggle to break free of temporal structures of experience. Through turns of address

that refer to intersubjective relations, ("Ecoutez!…," "Fiez-vous donc à moi," "—Et pensons à moi"), the "je" transforms from one self addressed to another into a plural subject, moving toward a freer space of subjectivity: "Décidément nous sommes hors du monde. Plus aucun son" (17). Voice overcomes *différence,* the difference in time and space that creates distance. No longer bound by temporal constraints on the pluralizing possibilities of subjectivity, the speaking subject multiplies the seasons (and "Les soirs, les matins, les nuits, les jours") into a "un concert d'enfers." It is here, in this space of plurality enabled by the collapse of temporal bounds, that "je" is fully immersed in otherness.

At this moment in the text, another set of quotation marks embeds the speech of others—"Délires"—in the speaker's discourse. In this transition, textual modes of address foreground the relations between subjects across the curtains of fire: "Écoutons la confession d'un compagnon d'enfer:" (*Saison* 21). Reading the "carnet" gives voice to this "confession" through the "je," and thereby incorporates the testimony of "la vierge folle" in the trial/process of subjectivity enacted in the text. This "confession," "Délires I," is often read in terms of Rimbaud's turbulent relationship with Verlaine.[59] Rather than engage in biographical interpretation, I apprehend the "Délires" as turns of address

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[59] To take a more complex example, Decarie maps the relationship between poetry and prose in Rimbaud's poetics onto the troubled coupling (Verlaine/"la vierge folle"/poetry and Rimbaud/"l'epoux infernal"/prose) (258).

(*tours* or de-tours) in the total movement of discourse in *Une saison en enfer.* From this angle, the "je" registers the voice of "la vierge folle" as an other, then returns in "Délires II" to speak for yet another, another self: "À moi. L'histoire d'une de mes folies" (*Saison* 29). Although this self-referential turn may be read, at least grammatically, as a self-dedication (Macklin 387), the metalanguage serves to foreground the turn-taking of voices. This statement is commonly taken as the summation of Rimbaud's poetic development,[60] and, indeed, it is easy to point out the references to his exploratory poems:

> J'inventai la couleur des voyelles! –A noir, E blanc, I rouge, O bleu,
> U vert. –Je réglai la forme et le mouvement de chaque consonne,
> et, avec des rhythmes instinctifs, je me flattai d'inventer un verbe
> poétique accessible, un jour ou l'autre, à tous les sens. Je réservais
> la traduction.
>
> Ce fut d'abord une étude. J'écrivais des silences, des nuits, je
> notais l'inexprimable. Je fixais des vertiges.   (*Saison* 30)

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[60] Evans affirms this common knowledge of Rimbaud criticism: "It is generally agreed that 'L'histoire d'une de mes folies' . . . refers to the poetic activity of the Spring and Summer of 1872" (163). This agreement is the basis for reading *Une saison en enfer* as Rimbaud's biography, "relating his descent into madness after rejecting absolute aesthetic values." Bonnefoy reads the "Délires" as necessary "failures" in Rimbaud's poetic development, of which *Une saison en enfer* is an "examination," "the search for an answer, which he intends his time to find once and for all, to the problem of changing life" (*Rimbaud* 82).

The allusion to Rimbaud's poem "Voyelles" points to external evidence of these acts. Yet the testimony immediately gives way to two other poems, as if to provide further demonstration of the "étude" (see figs. 7-8). As for "la couleur des voyelles," the first poem contains many "O" sounds ("oiseaux" "troupeaux" "Ormeaux" "Oise" "bois" "noisetiers"), but few pure "voyelles," and a handful of colors ("vert" and "jaune," which would make "O bleu" if blended, and the substantives "d'or" and "l'or"), but only one of the aforementioned; in the second poem, the rampant "O" bursts ("Ô," "Ouvriers," "Ô," "eau-de-vie") are without color (30-1). To some extent, the two poems activate "tous les sens": the first poem privileges taste ("Que buvais-je," "Que pouvais-je boire," "et [je] ne pus boire"), but also combines sight and touch ("Dans un brouillard d'après-midi tiède et vert"); the second poem distances the senses of smell and touch ("s'évapore / L'odeur du soir fêté," "En attendant le bain des mer à midi"). Briefly, neither poem seems to provide demonstration of the "étude" described above, thus raising the question: why quote these verses here, instead of the "Voyelles" poem? Or, a better question: why quote verse at all? In the prose that immediately resumes after the poems, the speaker explains that these verses stand as instances of "la vieillerie poetique [qui] avait une bonne part dans mon alchimie du verbe" (31). The poems show what was done, not as the product, but as the *precursor*, thus overturning temporal logic. Further, the reference to the past ("la vieillerie poetique avait") establishes each poem as another

season in *Une saison en enfer,* another iteration of subjectivity through voice with no regard to the constraints of time. In the self-referential turn from the poems back to the prose, seasons build a bridge between rifts in structures of time through textual modes of address, connecting the speaker and addressee in the present moment of the text.

Toward the end of *Une saison en enfer,* several transitions from prose to poetry interrupt the progress of narrative by foregrounding speech acts through textual modes of address. In prose, the "je" proceeds to recount a transformation of subjectivity and its subsequent expression in words: "Je m'habituai à l'hallucination simple: je voyais très-franchement une mosquée à la place d'une usine . . . les monstres, les mystères; un titre de vaudeville dressait des épouvantes devant moi. Puis j'expliquai mes sophismes magiques avec l'hallucination des mots!" (*Saison* 31). This descriptive testimony presents a proto-surrealist poetics ("l'hallucination des mots") as the product of a process of habituation ("Je m'habituai"), or, rather, a process of breaking habits of seeing. Instead of a sample of this product, the speaker sets up a quotation ("Je disais adieu au monde dans d'espèces de romances:") that declares its likeness to a traditional song: "CHANSON DE LA PLUS HAUTE TOUR" (32) (see fig. 9). This poem features many configurations of time that trouble temporal progression: the subjunctive defers time ("Qu'il vienne, qu'il vienne, / Le temps dont on s'éprenne"); "patience" calls to mind a cultivated orientation toward "the unavoidable flow of time" (Whidden

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142); and the rhyme "patience"/"souffrances" activates the process/trial of the subject in the text. The poem thus refers to the text itself in its movement against time, a continuation of the present.

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J'inventai la couleur des voyelles ! — *A* noir, *E* blanc, *I* rouge, *O* bleu, *U* vert. — Je réglai la forme et le mouvement de chaque consonne, et, avec des rhythmes instinctifs, je me flattai d'inventer un verbe poétique accessible, un jour ou l'autre, à tous les sens. Je réservais la traduction.

Ce fut d'abord une étude. J'écrivais des silences, des nuits, je notais l'inexprimable. Je fixais des vertiges.

———

Loin des oiseaux, des troupeaux, des villageoises,
Que buvais-je, à genoux dans cette bruyère
Entourée de tendres bois de noisetiers,
Dans un brouillard d'après-midi tiède et vert !

Que pouvais-je boire dans cette jeune Oise,
— Ormeaux sans voix, gazon sans fleurs, ciel couvert ! —
Boire à ces gourdes jaunes, loin de ma case
Chérie ? Quelque liqueur d'or qui fait suer.

Je faisais une louche enseigne d'auberge.
— Un orage vint chasser le ciel. Au soir
L'eau des bois se perdait sur les sables vierges,
Le vent de Dieu jetait des glaçons aux mares ;

Pleurant, je voyais de l'or — et ne pus boire. —

———

A quatre heures du matin, l'été,
Le sommeil d'amour dure encore.
Sous les bocages s'évapore
L'odeur du soir fêté.

Fig. 7. Prose breaking into poems on page 30 of *Une saison en enfer.*

Là-bas, dans leur vaste chantier
Au soleil des Hespérides,
Déjà s'agitent — en bras de chemise —
    Les Charpentiers.

Dans leurs Déserts de mousse, tranquilles,
Ils préparent les lambris précieux
        Où la ville
    Peindra de faux cieux.

O, pour ces Ouvriers charmants
Sujets d'un roi de Babylone,
Vénus! quitte un instant les Amants
Dont l'âme est en couronne.

    O Reine des Bergers,
Porte aux travailleurs l'eau-de-vie,
Que leurs forces soient en paix
En attendant le bain dans la mer à midi.

La vieillerie poétique avait une bonne part dans mon alchimie du verbe.

Je m'habituai à l'hallucination simple : je voyais très-franchement une mosquée à la place d'une usine, une école de tambours faite par des anges, des calèches sur les routes du ciel, un salon au fond d'un lac ; les monstres, les mystères ; un titre de vaudeville dressait des épouvantes devant moi.

Puis j'expliquai mes sophismes magiques avec l'hallucination des mots !

Je finis par trouver sacré le désordre de mon esprit. J'étais oisif, en proie à une lourde fièvre : j'enviais la félicité des bêtes, — les chenilles, qui représentent l'innocence des limbes, les taupes, le sommeil de la virginité !

Fig. 8. Poems giving way to prose on page 31 *Une* s*aison en enfer.*

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Mon caractère s'aigrissait. Je disais adieu au monde dans d'espèces de romances :

CHANSON DE LA PLUS HAUTE TOUR.

Qu'il vienne, qu'il vienne,
Le temps dont on s'éprenne.

J'ai tant fait patience
Qu'à jamais j'oublie.
Craintes et souffrances
Aux cieux sont parties.
Et la soif malsaine
Obscurcit mes veines.

Qu'il vienne, qu'il vienne,
Le temps dont on s'éprenne.

Telle la prairie
A l'oubli livrée,
Grandie, et fleurie
D'encens et d'ivraies,
Au bourdon farouche
Des sales mouches.

Qu'il vienne, qu'il vienne,
Le temps dont on s'éprenne.

J'aimai le désert, les vergers brûlés, les boutiques fanées, les boissons tiédies. Je me traînais dans les ruelles puantes et, les yeux fermés, je m'offrais au soleil, dieu de feu.

« Général, s'il reste un vieux canon sur tes remparts en ruines, bombarde-nous avec des blocs de terre sèche. Aux glaces des magasins splendides! dans les salons! Fais manger sa poussière à la ville. Oxyde les gargouilles. Emplis les boudoirs de poudre de rubis brûlante... »

Oh! le moucheron enivré à la pissotière de l'auberge, amoureux de la bourrache, et que dissout un rayon!

Fig. 9. "Chanson de la plus haute tour" on page 32 of *Une saison en enfer.*

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Textual modes of address further reinforce the links between the prose and the poems by highlighting their disjunction. For example, the "je" moves from prose to poetry by setting up a quotation of "une expression bouffonne" (34). In this "expression," the "je" plays with the "masks" of language that Bakhtin observes in the heteroglossic discourse of "buffoon spectacles":

> At the time when poetry was accomplishing the task of cultural, national, and political centralization of the verbal-ideological world in the higher official socio-ideological levels, on the lower levels, on the stages of local fairs and at buffoon spectacles, the heteroglossia of the clown sounded forth, ridiculing all 'languages' and dialects . . . where all 'languages' were masks and where no language could claim to be an authentic, incontestable face.   (273)

The prose thus furnishes a context of re-citation that pluralizes the monoglossic language of poetry in discourse. The quoted poem itself also contains temporal references that rub against the surrounding context:

> Elle est retrouvée!
>
> Quoi? l'éternité.
>
> C'est la mer mêlée
>
> Au soleil.   (*Saison* 34)

The completely rounded echoes of the rhyming lines reinforce the

circularity of "éternité" and its return (Whidden 160), repeated for all

time, in synch with the solar cycle. This shape of temporality produces

friction with the fractured time structures in the surrounding text (see

fig. 10).
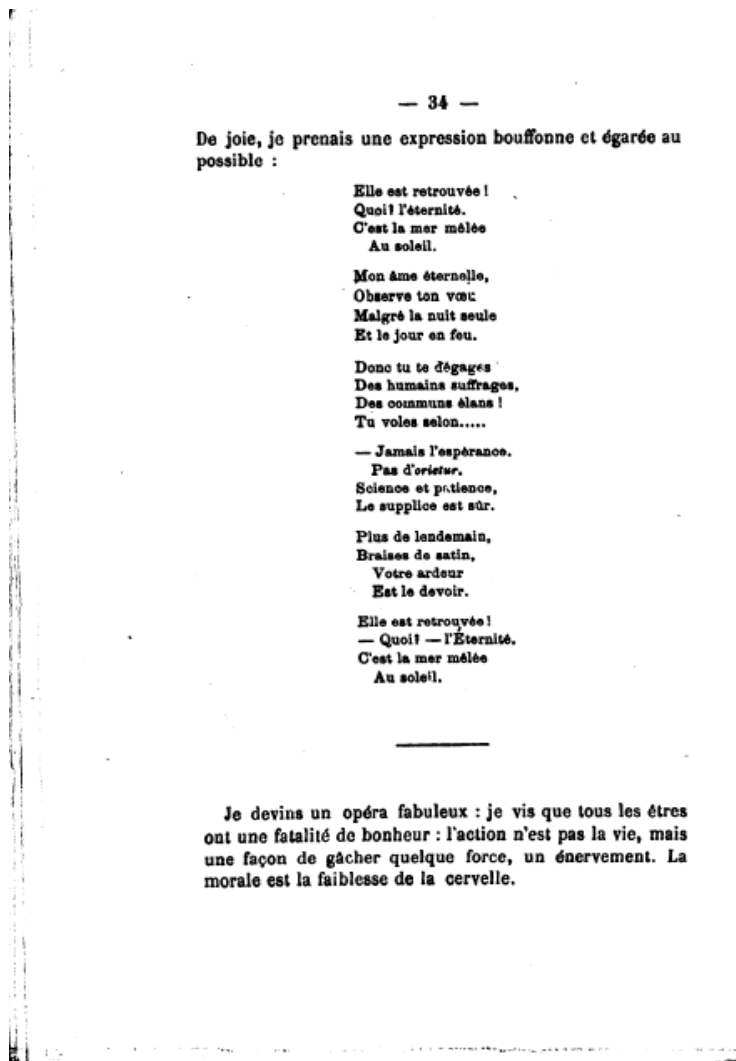
Fig. 10. "Elle est retrouvée" on page 34 of *Une saison en enfer.*

The prose transitions into poetry (and back into prose) not only foreground the act of address in *Une saison en enfer*, but also dramatize the plurality of subjectivity through voice. Toward the end of the prose discourse, the "je" enacts the movement of the text toward this plurality: "Je devins un opéra fabuleux. . . À chaque être plusieurs *autres* vies me semblaient dues" (*Saison* 34). These "*autres*" existences become part of the process/trial of the subject in the text through a series of voyages, which provide context for the re-citation of another poem, "Ô saisons, ô chateaux!" (35). The return of the season in this poem gives way to another as the prose resumes with the definitive statement: "Cela s'est passé. Je sais aujourd'hui saluer la beauté" (36). Here, the reference to the text itself—as a passage from the injured ideal "Beauté" in the opening scene, to the embraced reality of "beauté"—marks the end of a process of transformation, which "constitutes, along with the gradual construction of a plural subject, the primary direction and movement" of *Une saison en enfer* (Ross 40). As Kristen Ross further notes, "the decanonization of beauty is not just a change in the object; it is a transformation in the relation of the narrator to the object—a transformation signaled by the verb *saluer* . . . thus, a relation to beauty that is no longer timeless or immortal, but transitory, acknowledging change and death." This change in relation to time signals a newfound way to "saluer la beauté," which comes in a series of prose poems,

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("L'Impossible," "L'Éclair," "Matin," and "Adieu"), connected yet self-contained in the frames of their titles and format (see figs. 11-14).

L'IMPOSSIBLE

—

Ah! cette vie de mon enfance, la grande route par tous les temps, sobre surnaturellement, plus désintéressé que le meilleur des mendiants, fier de n'avoir ni pays, ni amis, quelle sottise c'était. — Et je m'en aperçois seulement!

— J'ai eu raison de mépriser ces bonshommes qui ne perdraient pas l'occasion d'une caresse, parasites de la propreté et de la santé de nos femmes, aujourd'hui qu'elles sont si peu d'accord avec nous.

J'ai eu raison dans tous mes dédains : puisque je m'évade!

Je m'évade!

Je m'explique.

Hier encore, je soupirais : « Ciel! sommes-nous assez de damnés ici-bas! Moi j'ai tant de temps déjà dans leur troupe! Je les connais tous. Nous nous reconnaissons toujours; nous nous dégoûtons. La charité nous est inconnue. Mais nous sommes polis; nos relations avec le monde sont très-convenables. » Est-ce étonnant? Le monde! les marchands, les naïfs! — Nous ne sommes pas déshonorés. —

Fig. 11. "L'Impossible" prose poem on page 39 of *Une saison en enfer.*

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L'ÉCLAIR

—

Le travail humain! c'est l'explosion qui éclaire mon abîme de temps en temps.

« Rien n'est vanité; à la science, et en avant! » crie l'Ecclésiaste moderne, c'est-à-dire *Tout le monde*. Et pourtant les cadavres des méchants et des fainéants tombent sur le cœur des autres... Ah! vite, vite un peu; là-bas, par delà la nuit, ces récompenses futures, éternelles... les échappons-nous?...

— Qu'y puis-je? Je connais le travail; et la science est trop lente. Que la prière galope et que la lumière gronde... je le vois bien. C'est trop simple, et il fait trop chaud; on se passera de moi. J'ai mon devoir, j'en serai fier à la façon de plusieurs, en le mettant de côté.

Ma vie est usée. Allons! feignons, fainéantons, ô pitié! Et nous existerons en nous amusant, en rêvant amours monstres et univers fantastiques, en nous plaignant et en querellant les apparences du monde, saltimbanque, mendiant, artiste, bandit, — prêtre! Sur mon lit d'hôpital, l'odeur de l'encens m'est revenue si puissante; gardien des aromates sacrés, confesseur, martyr...

Fig. 12. "L'Eclair" prose poem on page 45 of *Une* s*aison en enfer.*

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MATIN

—

N'eus-je pas *une fois* une jeunesse aimable, héroïque, fabuleuse, à écrire sur des feuilles d'or, — trop de chance! Par quel crime, par quelle erreur, ai-je mérité ma faiblesse actuelle? Vous qui prétendez que des bêtes poussent des sanglots de chagrin, que des malades désespèrent, que des morts rêvent mal, tâchez de raconter ma chute et mon sommeil. Moi, je ne puis pas plus m'expliquer que le mendiant avec ses continuels *Pater* et *Ave Maria*. *Je ne sais plus parler!*

Pourtant, aujourd'hui, je crois avoir fini la relation de mon enfer. C'était bien l'enfer; l'ancien, celui dont le fils de l'homme ouvrit les portes.

Du même désert, à la même nuit, toujours mes yeux las se réveillent à l'étoile d'argent, toujours, sans que s'émeuvent les Rois de la vie, les trois mages, le cœur, l'âme, l'esprit. Quand irons-nous, par delà les grèves et les monts, saluer la naissance du travail nouveau, la sagesse nouvelle, la fuite des tyrans et des démons, la fin de la superstition, adorer — les premiers! — Noël sur la terre!

Le chant des cieux, la marche des peuples! Esclaves, ne maudissons pas la vie.

Fig. 13. "Matin" prose poem on page 49 of *Une saison en enfer.*

ADIEU

—

L'automne déjà ! — Mais pourquoi regretter un éternel soleil, si nous sommes engagés à la découverte de la clarté divine, — loin des gens qui meurent sur les saisons.

L'automne. Notre barque élevée dans les brumes immobiles tourne vers le port de la misère, la cité énorme au ciel taché de feu et de boue. Ah ! les haillons pourris, le pain trempé de pluie, l'ivresse, les mille amours qui m'ont crucifié ! Elle ne finira donc point cette goule reine de millions d'âmes et de corps morts *et qui seront jugés !* Je me revois la peau rongée par la boue et la peste, des vers plein les cheveux et les aisselles et encore de plus gros vers dans le cœur, étendu parmi les inconnus sans âge, sans sentiment.... J'aurais pu y mourir... L'affreuse évocation ! J'exècre la misère.

Et je redoute l'hiver parce que c'est la saison du comfort !

— Quelquefois je vois au ciel des plages sans fin couvertes de blanches nations en joie. Un grand vaisseau d'or, au-dessus de moi, agite ses pavillons multicolores sous les

Fig. 14. "Adieu" prose poem on page 51 of *Une saison en enfer.*

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The prose poems that conclude *Une saison en enfer* culminate a movement of subjectivity against constraining relations to time. Why does Rimbaud arrive at the prose poems by way of the prose? The principle of the prose poem that Bernard derives from Rimbaud's "révolte" sheds light on this process: "toute revolte contre les lois existantes est obligée très vite . . . de remplacer ces lois par d'autres, sous peine d'arriver à l'inorganique, à l'informe" (13). According to Bernard's history, Rimbaud carries out the search for language ("Trouver une langue," as he pronounces in the "lettres dites du voyant") in the prose poem, formed by the impulse to go "au-delà de langage, et [qui] se sert du langage; briser la forme, et il crée des formes" (13). As the tortures of the prose give way to the ordering finish of the prose poems, *Une saison en enfer* affirms Bernard's observation that "il y a toujours cristallisation en poème" (14). The process of arriving at the prose poems in *Une saison en enfer* formalizes a process of coming to subjectivity free of temporal bounds: "et il me sera loisible de *posséder la vérité dans une âme et un corps"* (*Saison* 53). The writing ends here, but the space of voice remains open; the quotation marks are never closed, gesturing beyond the bounds of the book to reverberations of its truth. Seasons hold the text together as it resists the means of coherence available through genre, enabling the mobility of the subject in time. And this movement of subjectivity through the seasons of prose and poetry joins "je" and "autre" in present moment of address: "je est un autre."

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By lurching from one time to another, *Spring and All* undermines the hold of temporal structures on experience. Williams's speaker dramatizes this struggle to free subjectivity through textual modes of address, through the seasons that continually refer to the process of the text. With the rhetorical question, "To whom then am I addressed? To the imagination," the speaker distinguishes his discourse as a creative act (*SA* 3). He calls the imagination into presence as the binding force of the book. (And, indeed, this filament runs through the entire text: imagination appears 64 times from cover to cover.[61]) But the subject "I" is not "addressed [t]o the imagination" in the sense of an interlocutor; this is the role of the reader, to whom the speaker clarifies his intention:

> In fact to return upon my theme for the time nearly all writing, up to the present, if not all art, has been especially designed to keep up the barrier between sense and the vaporous fringe which distracts the attention from its agonized approaches to the moment. It has always been a search for "the beautiful illusion". Very well, I am not in search of "the beautiful illusion".

Here, the speaker acknowledges a turn in his discourse—and thus the addressee who must follow this turn (or "return"). To some extent, this

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[61] The word "imagination" does not appear once in the poems. This number does not include the many appearances of "imagine," "imaginative," or other variations of "imagination."

piece of commentary performs the very distinction that the speaker is trying to make: his candid, self-referential discourse breaks down the "barrier" between the reader and "the moment" of address, effectively dispensing with "illusion" in favor of the immanence of imagination. In its imprecision, the temporal reference "for the time" swivels between an internal frame of reading (*this* stretch of time in the text) and an external frame of reference (the history of writing), at once placing the moment in an immediate present, and displacing it onto an indefinite trajectory. By indicating a separation from "the moment" in "nearly all writing, up to the present," the speaker primes the reader for a different experience in time in the "present" act of writing. In the familiarity of his address ("Very well, I am not in search of 'the beautiful illusion'"), the speaker establishes an unexpected relationship with the reader in the text at hand (in hand):

> And if when I pompously announce that I am addressed—To the imagination—you believe that I thus divorce myself from life and so defeat my own end, I reply: To refine, to clarify, to intensify that eternal moment in which we alone live there is but a single force— the imagination. This is its book. I myself invite you to read and to see.

The conjunction "And" along with the repeated reference "—To the imagination—" signal continuity in the speaker's address. Here, the

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capitalized "T" of this fragment indicates self-citation rather than mere repetition, again emphasizing the act of address, which is precisely the concern of the speaker. A hypothetical situation of speech acts ("And if when I pompously announce that I am addressed . . . I reply") draws the reader into the present moment of enunciation, which is a gesture of invitation ("This is its book. I myself invite you to read and to see"). In this turn of address, the "I" reaches for "you," establishing the discursive bonds that conduct the imagination through "This," "its book," connecting "you" and "I" as "we" in the present moment. By addressing the reader in the act of reading, the speaker establishes an interactive relationship that carries out the purpose of the book—to give place to the imagination. The speaker's address then reinforces this relationship by melding the subject positions "I" and "you" through continuous movement in time: "In the imagination, we are from henceforth (so long as you read) locked in a fraternal embrace, the classic caress of author and reader. We are one. Whenever I say "I" I mean also "you". And so, together, as one, we shall begin." The duration of reading corresponds to the space of the book, which coheres through the bonds between "I" and "you" "[i]n the imagination," in the perpetual approach to the present moment.[62]

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[62] In *The American Background,* Mike Weaver relates the connection between writer and reader to Williams's conception of time through the theory of relativity, specifically its illustration by a moving train in A.N. Whitehead's schema of perception: "If the poet was

In the prolonged approach of seasons, enacted through inordinate references to time in the text, *Spring and All* continually interrupts the process of reading through textual modes of address. When the speaker seems to cue a narrative line, a confusion of guideposts (e.g., chapter headings, deictics, time markers and measures) leads the reader forward through a scattering of temporal lines. First, the way we "begin" is the way we end; the speaker opens the first chapter, "CHAPTER 19," with an apostrophe to the world facing imminent destruction:

> o meager times, so fat in everything imaginable! imagine the New World that rises to our windows from the sea on Mondays and on Saturdays—and on every other day of the week also . . . Imagine the monster project of the moment : Tomorrow we the people of the United States are going to kill every man, woman, and child in the area west of the Carpathian Mountains (also east) sparing none. Imagine the sensation it will cause. (*SA* 4)

By calling out, "o meager times," the speaker's voice reaches for a temporal field of reference *outside* the text. The run-on sentence that follows this apostrophe loosens any grip on time with the irony of naming days of the week, only to level out the event to the everyday. By putting

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analogous to the person riding the train and the reader analogous to the observer beside the track, it was clear that according to the theory of relativity the length of the track (line of verse) and the elapsement of time (the measure) were relative to the conditions of their observation" (49).

forth "the monster project of the moment," the speaker again reaches to ground the text in the present, but then immediately projects it into "Tomorrow" and beyond ("Imagine the sensation it will cause"). The scenario of imminent destruction provides the context for what is to come after: "Then, oh then, the great feature will take place." By repeating the temporal marker with expressive voicing ("Then, oh then"), the speaker draws out the reference, pointing to an event in an unfolding causal series, a future determined from a new beginning—the end that the reader is called to "imagine." This future drama establishes the splintering temporalities of the text over and against the momentum of world-historical processes, setting the stage for the work of imagination to take place.

The repetitive coming-of-spring narrative in *Spring and All* sets up a straw-man notion of progress for imagination to dismantle. The depiction of total destruction as a clean slate plays out the paradox of "progress" that J. Hillis Miller identifies as a vestige of Romantic sensibility in modern poetry:

> True poetry must rise spontaneously, as a spring bubbles from a cleft in the rocks or as a wild flower lifts itself from the primeval earth. Once this criterion of authenticity is assumed, there appears inevitably the paradox of a progress of poetry that is at the same

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time an exhaustion of poetry. Poetry itself comes to stand as a barrier between man and what makes poetry possible.

("Progress" 413)

The force of imagination levels "progress" to bring forth the new, *to progress*, as it were, by disabling the parasitic cycle of repetition. Indeed, what concerns the speaker of *Spring and All* is *not* reproducing "the barrier" between the reader and the present moment (*SA* 3). The scenario of world-destruction provides an alternative context for the world-making of poetry to come. After lingering in the aftermath for a chapter ("Only a day is left, one miserable day, before the world comes into its own," *SA* 7), the speaker leaps ahead to a seismic shift at the beginning of "CHAPTER VI":

Now, in the imagination, all flesh, all human flesh has been dead upon the earth for ten million, billion years. . .

It is spring! but miracle of miracles a miraculous miracle has gradually taken place during these seemingly wasted eons. Through the orderly sequences of unmentionable time EVOLUTION HAS REPEATED ITSELF FROM THE BEGINNING. (8)

"Now" and "It is spring!" firmly plant the imagination in the present moment, while the grossly inexact measure of "ten million, billion years" speeds up and relativizes time. In a context so saturated with time markers ("Now," "ten million billion years," "spring," "gradually,"

"during," "eons," "orderly sequences"), the reference to "unmentionable time" is nothing if not ironic. "EVOLUTION" in all caps makes this irony unmistakable: "*Spring and All* is not only a "travesty" on formal techniques of his time, the typographic experiments that make for uneasy reading (qtd. in Cushman 59), but also mocks the operative idea of the "new" by carrying its production to the extremes of reproduction in the evolutionary scenario. In this sense, *Spring and All* puts into narrative action the paradox that Williams suggests in the more subtle mockery of "Prologue to *Kora in Hell*": "Nothing is good save the new. If a thing has novelty it stands intrinsically beside every other work of artistic excellence" (*Essays* 21). Echoing the sarcasm behind "EVOLUTION," the speaker's vocal reaction to what has happened—"Good god!"—calls attention to the enunciative act, which thus resists coalescence into narrative description. At first mention, the process of reproduction seems complete: "Every step once taken in the first advance of the human race . . . has been duplicated . . . A perfect plagiarism results. Everything is and is new" (*SA* 9). Yet the absolute identity posited in the claim "Everything is and is new" is instantly negated with a qualifying comment: "Only the imagination is undeceived." Not only is "the new" inauthentic (if only in the knowing eyes of imagination), it is not yet finished; the "process begins" again:

At this point the entire complicated and laborious process begins

to near a new day. (More of this in Chapter XIX) But for the

moment everything is fresh, perfect, recreated.

In fact now, for the first time, everything IS new. Now at last the

perfect effect is being witlessly discovered.

This aggregate of temporal markers ("At this point," "near a new day,"

"But for the moment," "In fact now," "for the first time," "Now at last")

rewinds the process to make "everything . . . new" again. The emphatic

"everything IS new" (glaring emphasis on the present) negates the earlier

statement, "everything is and is new": "In fact" it is "now, for the first

time" that "everything IS new." The speaker interrupts this repetition in a

parenthetical note "(More of this in Chapter XIX)," which recalls the

progression of the text itself, and further projects the continuation of the

process into a chapter to come in the disordered sequence. Such

continual reversals of narrative logic bring forth what "IS" in the text, an

experience of the present itself, not through any "orderly sequences" of

time.

Among the misplaced temporal markers that lead the reader

through discontinuities in time, "SPRING" repeatedly makes its

approach, serving as a continual return to the present moment. Just

when the speaker seems to indicate a threshold ("for the first time,

everything IS new"), "CHAPTER 2" announces, "It is spring: life again

begins to assume its normal appearance as of 'today'" (*SA* 10). The temporal references "again" and "'today'" place the speaker and the reader in the present moment of repetition, a return of the same. The quotation marks around "'today'" also call to mind the external construct of the present as a markedly different time. The speaker mocks this identification of time as he repeats "today" in the next paragraph, which begins a new chapter, "CHAPTER XIX": "I realize that the chapters are rather quick in their sequence and that nothing much is contained in any one of them but no one should be surprised at this today." The meta-commentary on the divisions of the chapters themselves and the allusion to time outside of the text ("today") reinforce the disruptive effect of temporal references. Yet it is on this meta-level that the text coheres as movement through time; by recalling the present progressive act of reading in spring perpetually "approaching," seasons enable a continuous experience of the present moment. Once again (for the third time in three pages), "it is spring, that is to say, it is approaching the beginning." And further down the page (see fig. 15), the speaker rewinds to "that progress of life which seems stillness itself in the mass of its movements—at last SPRING is approaching" (10-11). Through their inappropriate recurrence, seasons burst open the structures of time that they evoke to produce an experience of continuity in the present moment of reading, that is, through seasons, called to mind each time that "spring is approaching."

until he is aged and worn to a heap of skin, bones and ragged hoofs — In that majestic progress of life, that gives the exact impression of Phidias' frizze, the men and beasts of which, though they seem of the rigidity of marble are not so but move, with blinding rapidity, though we do not have the time to notice it, their legs advancing a millionth part of an inch every fifty thousand years — In that progress of life which seems stillness itself in the mass of its movements — at last SPRING is approaching.

In that colossal surge toward the finite and the capable life has now arrived for the second time at that exact moment when in the ages past the destruction of the species *Homo sapiens* occured.

Now at last that process of miraculous verisimilitude, that grate copying which evolution has followed, repeating move for move every move that it made in the past — is approaching the end.

Suddenly it is at an end. THE WORLD IS NEW.

I

By the road to the contagious hospital
under the surge of the blue
mottled clouds driven from the

Fig. 15. "By the road to the contagious hospital" on page 11 of *Spring and All.*

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Textual modes of address also enable the production of meaning as seasons shift between the temporal modes of prose and poetry. The first of these shifts occurs when the speaker declares that the process "is at an end. THE WORLD IS NEW," and the text announces a poem with a number heading ("I") in white space (see fig. 15). The poem interjects another season in the prose; it is no longer spring already, but it is approaching again, this time in sharpening visual detail:

By the road to the contagious hospital

under the surge of the blue

mottled clouds driven from the

northeast—a cold wind. Beyond the

waste of broad, muddy fields

brown with dried weeds, standing and fallen

patches of standing water

the scattering of tall trees

All along the road the reddish

purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy

stuff of bushes and small trees

with dead, brown leaves under them

leafless vines—

Lifeless in appearance, sluggish

dazed spring approaches—

They enter the new world naked,

cold, uncertain of all

save that they enter. All about them

the cold familiar wind—

Now the grass, tomorrow

the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf

One by one objects are defined—

It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf

But now the stark dignity of

entrance—Still, the profound change

has come upon then: rooted they

grip down and begin to awaken   (*SA* 11-13)

In the opening lines of the poem, the lexical fields of disease and

deadness ("contagious hospital," "mottled," "a cold wind," "waste [of

fields]," "brown [fields]," "dried weeds," "fallen [weeds]," "standing water,"

"twiggy stuff," "dead, brown leaves," "leafless vines," "lifeless") cast a

pallor over the jubilance of the preceding prose. The dramatic turn in the

enjambed couplet, "Lifeless in appearance, sluggish / dazed spring

approaches—," suspends reference in momentary confusion (is spring

"sluggish," or "they"?), modulating the movement of entities on the page

to enact the process of renewal. As Stephen Cushman notes,

enjambment in Williams' poetry "dramatizes 'the larger processes of the

imagination' as the poem disguises and reveals connections between

words and objects" (17). The jerky movement of this couplet splits

temporalities, from stagnation to new-coming life. In this nascent

movement, "They" are so new that they remain unnamed. After a brief

lull, a pause in primordiality, "Now" signals the movement taking shape.

Here, the cinematic quality of objects emphasizes the motion of the

picture: "One by one objects are defined— / It quickens: clarity, outline

of leaf." Each object is isolated as it emerges in sharp outline. The

temporal markers "Now" and "tomorrow" give each its turn; "But now" and "still" de-emphasize the developmental process to focus on happening as such. The poem ends with these unnamed objects as "they grip down and begin to awaken"; now, it is spring—again, *this time* in action.

Where the first poem ends, the next poem ("II") begins, as if picking up the action of flowers in a zoom lens (see fig. 16.). This still life is not a *nature morte,* but a picture in motion, a kaleidoscope of color-forms positioned through active descriptors:

> Pink confused with white
>
> flowers and flowers reversed
>
> take and spill the shaded flame
>
> darting it back
>
> into the lamp's horn
>
>
> petals aslant darkened with mauve
>
>
> red where in whorls
>
> petal lays its glow upon petal
>
> round flamegreen throats

petals radiant with transpiercing light

                contending

                                        above

                the leaves

                reaching up their modest green

                from the pot's rim

                and there, wholly dark, the pot

                gay with rough moss.   (*SA* 13)

The composition comes together through the interaction of parts, each

color is an action, a movement: "pink confused with white," "take and

spill the shaded flame / darting it back / into the lamp's horn," "aslant

darkened with mauve," "red where in whorls," "lays its glow," "round

flamegreen throats," "radiant with transpiercing light / contending /

above," "reaching up their modest green." Each line positions discrete

objects to build up a dynamic picture. White space "frames" the lines of

free verse, to borrow Cushman's language, which describes the

defamiliarizing effects of "typographic isolation," how words are displaced

from the contexts of "familiar associations" (60). Yet this "typographic

spacing," as Henry Sayre puts it, also serves as a "rest within a visual field" (69), effectively framing the space on the page for reading, guiding the movement of the eye. Whether the verbal or the visual is emphasized, poetic forms resist the ordering structures of rhyme and reason in an act of creation, which stands in sharp contrast to the inert description that resumes in prose: "A terrific confusion has taken place. No man knows whither to turn. There is nothing! Emptiness stares us once more in the face. Whither? To what end?" (*SA* 14). As spring is re-enacted, seasons link the poems to the prose through the self-referentiality of the text, while accentuating the contrast between the keenly visual words of the poems and the cumbersome verbiage of the prose. Seasons thus provide occasions for textual modes of address, which span the fault lines between temporalities of poetry and prose.

After a brief prose interlude describing the "confusion" of spring, a second pair of poems ("III" and "IV") interrupts the speaker's discourse, but also interlinks with the prose through a number of recurring images. I will focus on the farmer and the sky at the center of this constellation. The figure of the farmer appears in a poem ("III") as a foil to the "I" in the prose, composing "these few notes . . . in the midst of action" (*SA* 16). The lines of the poem move the line of vision from the farmer "deep in thought," to his "blank fields," to his imaginary ("the harvest already planted"), to the signs writ large across the sky, to its reflection in the mind ("leaving room for thought"), until finally zooming out from "the

artist figure of the farmer— composing—antagonist—," thereby making the comparison with the "I" explicit (16-7). The composing "I" returns in the next poem ("IV"), linking this act of creation to the preceding poem and to the surrounding prose. Here, the season and the sky converge in the stars: "The Easter stars are shining / above lights that are flashing— / coronal of the black" (17). The contrast of light and dark sets the stage for a destructive act of creation, sharpening into "pinholes." This cutting is another act of "composing":

> Thither I would carry her
>
> among the lights—
>
> Burst it asunder
>
> break through to the fifty words
>
> necessary—   (17-8)

The comparison continues to develop through imagery of light, sharpness, and artifice, culminating in the final image: "stars of tinsel / from the great end of a cornucopia / of glass" (18). Another season ("Easter"), another sky ("stars"), another act of creation in destruction ("break through") leave off in white space, only to be taken up by a new section of prose, which echoes the primary tropes in the two preceding poems:

> So long as the sky is recognized as an association

is recognized in its function of accessory to vague words whose

meaning can be nothing but mathematical certain limits of gravity

and density of air.   (19)

This discursive chunk, technically ungrammatical and spatially

disjointed, (see fig. 17), breaks the coherent flow of the text to enact its

meaning, which is, *empty* meaning: the prose resists the completion of a

logical thought that would bleed life out of any "meaning" by limiting the

sky to "an association," "its function"—rendering it "nothing but

mathematical certain limits." In the next fragment, the farmer returns as

an agent of reparation: "The farmer and the fisherman who read their

own lives there have a practical corrective for—." The prose breaks off

without naming the alternative, as if denying reality to empty meaning.

By referring to an earlier moment in the text (the reading of the sky in

the disconnected farmer poem), the text mobilizes textual modes of

address to connect stretches of experience in time through

intersubjective relations. It is in this vein that the speaker recalls the sky

as a site of resistance:

The man of imagination who turns to art for release and fulfillment

of his baby promises contends with the sky through layers of

demoded words and shapes. Demoded . . . because meanings have

been lost through laziness or changes in the form of existence

which have left words empty.   (19-20)

Imagination cuts through "layers of demoded [read: empty] words and shapes." The prose proceeds to enact this process through strategically unfinished sentences:

> Crude symbolism is to associate emotions with natural phenomena
> such as anger with lightening, flowers with love it does further and
> associates certain textures with
>
>
> Such work is empty. It is very typical of almost all that is done by
> the writers who fill the pages every month of such a paper as. (20)

The "empty" meaning creates echos in the blank space left by the hanging preposition "with." The prose refuses to name what does not deserve the value of being "put down," as the speaker relates: "What I put down of value will have this value: an escape from crude symbolism, the annihilation of strained associations, complicated ritualistic forms designed to separate the work from 'reality'— such as rhyme, meter as meter and not as the essential of the work, one of its words" (22). Here, the speaker separates what the present moment will produce in the book of imagination and what other writing has done. The prose interprets the poems (the sky, the flowers), but also self-critiques by folding back on itself or breaking off. Thought is cut short before it comes to fruition,

returning to the moment impregnated by thought, rather than the

unthinking, determinant process.

—12—

northeast — a cold wind. Beyond, the
waste of broad, muddy fields
brown with dried weeds, standing and fallen

patches of standing water
the scattering of tall trees

All along the road the reddish
purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy
stuff of bushes and small trees
with dead, brown leaves under them
leafless vines —

Lifeless in appearance, sluggish
dazed spring approaches —

They enter the new world naked,
cold, uncertain of all
save that they enter. All about them
the cold, familiar wind —

Now the grass, tomorrow
the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf

One by one objects are defined —
It quickens : clarity, outline of leaf

But now the stark dignity of
entrance — Still, the profound change

—13—

has come upon then : rooted they
grip down and begin to awaken

II

Pink confused with white
flowers and flowers reversed
take and spill the shaded flame
darting it back
into the lamp's horn

petals aslant darkened with mauve

red where in whorls
petal lays its glow upon petal
round flamegreen throats

petals radiant with transpiercing light
contending
above

the leaves
reaching up their modest green
from the pot's rim

and there, wholly dark, the pot
gay with rough moss.

Fig. 16. Poems I and II on pages 12-3 of *Spring and All.*

So long as the sky is recognised as an association

is recognised in its function of accessory to vague words whose meaning it is impossible to rediscover its value can be nothing but mathematical certain limits of gravity and density of air

The farmer and the fisherman who read their own lives there have a practical corrective for —

they rediscover or replace demoded meanings to the religious terms

Among them, without expansion of imagination, there is the residual contact between life and the imagination which is essential to freedom

The man of imagination who turns to art for release and fulfilment of his baby promises contends with the sky through layers of demoded words and shapes. Demoded, not because the essential vitality which begot them is laid waste — this cannot be so, a young man feels, since he feels it in himself

Fig. 17. Choppy prose on page 19 of *Spring and All.*

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Spring in All thus enacts the movement of imagination that it describes in the movement between prose and poetry. The poems perform the self-referentiality of the piece by punctuating the prose in a continuous space of discontinuities. The edges of these poetic images cut into the prose, presenting a sharp contrast with the "modern trend," as the speaker explains it: "the attempt is being made to separate things of the imagination from life, and obviously, by using the forms common to experience so as not to frighten the onlooker away but to invite him," (*SA* 30). At the comma, rendered nonfunctional by a paragraph break, a poem begins without a heading, signaled only by its own placement on the page (see fig. 18), where it appears seamless with the unfinished thought in prose:

> The rose is obsolete
>
> but each petal ends in
>
> an edge, the double facet
>
> cementing the grooved
>
> columns of air—The edge
>
> cuts without cutting

Here, flowers are not symbols, but things in themselves asserting their presence in world-space, differentiating themselves through the force of creation. The roses figure the poems themselves, things so sharply

delineated as separate entities that they cut their way into existence. The comparison between roses and poems is implicit, but nonetheless operative in the interpenetrating spaces of the book: "The fragility of the flower / unbruised /penetrates spaces" (32). The trope of cutting recalls the "pinholes" earlier in the text, reaching across to the spaces of poetry and prose between self-referential signposts.

—30—

out " life ", bitter to the individual, by a " vision of beauty ". It is a work of the imagination. It gives the feeling of completion by revealing the oneness of experience ; it rouses rather than stupefies the intelligence by demonstrating the importance of personality, by showing the individual, depressed before it, that his life is valuable — when completed by the imagination. And then only. Such work elucidates —

Such a realization shows us the falseness of attempting to " copy " nature. The thing is equally silly when we try to " make " pictures —

But such a picture as that of Juan Gris, though I have not seen it in color, is important as marking more clearly than any I have seen what the modern trend is : the attempt is being made to separate things of the imagination from life, and obviously, by using the forms common to experience so as not to frighten the onlooker away but to invite him,

     The rose is obsolete
     but each petal ends in
     an edge, the double facet
     cementing the grooved
     columns of air — The edge
     cuts without cutting

—31—

meets — nothing — renews
itself in metal or porcelain —

whither ? It ends —

But if it ends
the start is begun
so that to engage roses
becomes a geometry —

Sharper, neater, more cutting
figured in majolica —
the broken plate
glazed with a rose

Somewhere the sense
makes copper roses
steel roses —

The rose carried weight of love
but love is at an end — of roses

If is at the edge of the
petal that love waits

Crisp, worked to defeat
laboredness — fragile
plucked, moist, half-raised
cold, precise, touching

Fig. 18. "The rose is obsolete" poem on pages 30-31 of *Spring and All.*

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As a final illustration of how seasons enable connections to be made in the breakages between the poems and the prose, I consider "The Red Wheelbarrow" (one of Williams' most well-known poems) in its peculiar context in *Spring and All* (see fig. 19). The poem gathers objects to be encountered as things in themselves in a scene, a "nameless spectacle" devoid of sentimentalizing detail or commentary:

so much depends

upon

a red wheel

barrow

glazed with rain

water

besides the white

chickens

The fixed categories into which life is divided must always hold.

These things are normal—essential to every activity. But they

exist—but not as dead dissections.   (*SA* 74-5)

By citing the poem and its immediate prose context, I am suggesting that the speaker resumes an expository discourse to elucidate the piece. In a sense, the prose says what the poem does not do ("hold" to the "fixed categories" of "life" as to "dead dissections"). As the speaker continues, he provides a larger context for the creative act of the poem in widening the chasm between poetry and prose: "Art is the pure effect of the force upon which Science depends for its reality—Poetry" (77). Art is not a representation of reality; it is produced by the same force that animates knowledge: the force of imagination in poetry. As in the case of the "red wheel / barrow," "so much depends upon" the thing itself in "Poetry," which conducts the "living current" of imagination through objects, bringing new forms to life. Therein lies the distinction for Williams between poetry and prose: "Poetry has to do with the crystallization of the imagination—the perfection of new forms as additions to nature— Prose may follow to enlighten but poetry—" (78). The expository task of prose is cut short to privilege the creative act of imagination in poetry, which defines itself against the contrasting backdrop of the prose.

In *Spring and All,* the movement of discourse between the prose and the poems affirms the power of poetry over and against the

impotence of prose. The contrast between the empty hulk of the prose and the crisp, pithy poems is sharpened by their jagged edges, which the speaker does not smooth over with transitions. Rather, the jarring turns of address in the speaker's discourse call attention to the disruptions, calling the reader to attend to the present moment in and of itself, not in time or as a product thereof. The present is not caught up in the momentum of time as it is structured in either prose (historical logic) or poetry (metrical rhythm); the moment of address is a continuum in which subjects and objects are present in their interrelations, which are constituted by the very act of address. By continually referring to the present moment of the text through textual modes of address, the many seasons of *Spring and All* enact a special temporality, an immediacy of relations between subjects and objects in the present—in the presence of the moment, an experience in time that is not produced by convention, by cycles of reproduction.

XXI

one day in Paradise
a Gipsy

smiled
to see the blandness

of the leaves   —
so many

so lascivious
and still

XXII

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

The fixed categories into which life is divided must always hold. These things are normal — essential to every activity. But they exist — but not as dead dissections.

The curriculum of knowledge cannot but be divided into the sciences, the thousand and one groups of data, scientific, philosophic or whatnot — as many as there exist in Shakespeare — things that make him appear the university of all ages.

But this is not the thing. In the galvanic category of — The same things exist, but in a different condition when energized by the imagination.

The whole field of education is affected — There is no end of detail that is without significance.

Education would begin by placing in the mind of the student the nature of knowledge — in the dead state and the nature of the force which may energize it.

This would clarify his field at once — He would then see the use of data

But at present knowledge is placed before a man as if it were a stair at the top of which a DEGREE is obtained which is superlative.

Fig. 19 "The Red Wheelbarrow" in prose frame on pages 74-5 of *Spring and All.*

To "Hell" with Poetry

In *Une saison en enfer,* Rimbaud's "je" goes to "hell" and back to embody a plurality of subjectivity through voice beyond the limits of any one body—of flesh, of knowledge, of any one self constructed through time. In *Spring and All,* Williams relates a passage through "hell" that is more like a purgatory, a mental state of limbo:

> My whole life has been spent (so far) in seeking to place a value upon experience and the objects of experience that would satisfy my sense of inclusiveness without redundancy . . . So most of my life has been lived in hell—a hell of repression lit by flashes of inspiration, when a poem such as this or that would appear. (43)

Is there a relationship between Williams's "hell" and Rimbaud's *Saison en enfer*? If Rimbaud subjects the "je" to transformation in "hell" through the movement in prose to verse poems and on to prose poems, Williams enacts this process of subjectivity in the "hell" *between* poems in *Spring and All.* For Williams, "hell" is the interim between "flashes of inspirations," in other words, illuminations. Is there also a relationship, then, between Williams's poems and Rimbaud's *Illuminations*? Correspondence and other criticism suggest a strong one, but specifically with regard to Williams's prose poems, his "Improvisations" (Miller, "Progress" 415-6). In a letter to Williams (London, 12 September, 1920), Ezra Pound pinpoints the French redolence of these prose poems: "But

what the French real reader would say to your *Improvisations* is Voui, ç(h)a j(h)ai déjà (f)vu ç(h)a ç(h)a c'est de R(h)imb(h)aud!!" (*Letters* 160). *Spring and All* seems to respond directly to this line of criticism in a sarcastic aside: "(Thank you, I know well what I am plagiarising)" (*SA* 7-8). It is worth noting, however, that Williams does not repeat the "déjà []vu" of his prose poems in *Spring and All,* which contain only poems in free verse. *Spring and All* must necessarily break any ties of influence to carry out its production, which is breaking the cycles of reproduction perpetuated by the "THE TRADITIONALISTS OF PLAGIARISM" (*SA* 10).

Seasons enable a comparison of Rimbaud and Williams in terms of process, rather than product. My analysis of *Une saison en enfer* and *Spring and All* plays out the process of each text from their beginning in a common concern, which J. Hillis Miller locates in the cumulative product of progress: "Like Rimbaud, Williams must break down all cultural and natural forms, kill everyone, and destroy everything in order to return things to the primal chaos from which a reality without any antecedents may spring" ("Progress" 420). The seasons of *Une saison en enfer* and *Spring and All* and carry out this assault on calcified forms of time (history, among other myths and narratives) through textual modes of address, which enable alternative temporalities to arise in the process of the text. Seasons thus reveal a different intertextuality than the framework of influence.

Through the seasons of their prose poetry books, Rimbaud and Williams pit the subject in the text against ordering structures of time to valorize the present moment. In *Spring and All,* Williams situates his free verse in the discursive context of the prose to comment on the movement of modern poetry. What concerns Williams most is the shape of American poetry, which he reshapes in its orientation in time:

> To live, our poetry must send roots into the past. To live freely it – as we – must live free of time. To be free of time it must live for all time, past and future. It must have the common interlocking quality that establishes it in its environment. It must live or be capable of living from the beginning to the end.   ("America" 30)

Spring and All previews the notion of time that Williams elaborates as "measure" in his mature poetics, which resists structures of time that restrict human flourishing: "Time. The measure has to be stable to be accepted or acceptable. For otherwise it is immoral" ("Measure" 151). Rimbaud's struggle with time in *Une saison en enfer* also takes on urgent, moral dimensions; the present is rescued from the flow of time and rendered distinct in the moment. George Poulet highlights this temporal aspect of Rimbaud's project: "Faire de chaque jour, de chaque moment, l'équivalent d'une vie entière, telle est l'ambition de Rimbaud . . . Conférer à chaque moment par son acte propre une éternité particulière" (131). Rimbaud carries out this "ambition" in the movement

toward the prose poems in *Une saison en enfer,* in the turns of address through seasons. This disorderly discourse (whether or not it reflects Rimbaud's way of life, as Yves Bonnefoy insists) pushes against the ordering structures of time in language:

> it shows us the simultaneity of ideas that nothing—as in Rimbaud's life—dominates or orders in any decisive manner . . . *Une saison en enfer* is less the formulation of a thought than the reciprocal trial of an idea and the person who conceived it, a continuous battle whose fiery violence cannot at times be distinguished from the frenzy of a dance.   (*Rimbaud* 83-4)

The prose poetry book contains something of "the frenzy of a dance" for Williams, as he describes his "Improvisations": "Thus a poem is tough by no quality it borrows from a logical recital of events nor from the events themselves but solely from that attenuated power which draws perhaps many broken things into a dance giving them thus a full being" (*Essays* 14). The prose poetry also enables something of the fulfillment of a dance in *Spring in All,* in which Williams abandons the "déjà []vu" of his "Improvisations" for the form of intermingling fragments of prose and poetry.

It its the jolt of "genres in discourse," the prose colliding with the poems, that thrusts prose poetry against time in *Une saison en enfer* and *Spring and All.* Seasons interweave the prose and the poems through

textual modes of address, which foreground the ongoing process and synchronizes the acts of writing, reading, and speaking in the "dance" that is the performance of the text. With an internal reference, Williams calls attention to the jerky moves of the prose in the text at hand:

> Is what I have written prose? The only answer is that form in prose ends with the end of that which is being communicated—If the power to go on falters in the middle of a sentence—that is the end of the sentence—Or if a new phase enters at the point it is only stupidity to go on. (*SA* 78)

 The prose of *Spring and All* performs its difference from poetry to throw its action into relief. Williams enacts this very distinction as he elaborates it in prose: "Poetry has to do with the crystallization of the imagination—the perfection of new forms as additions to nature—Prose may follow to enlighten but poetry—." *Spring and All* arrives at this separation of prose and poetry through movement, through the interaction of the prose and the poems—through the process of the prose poetry book, bound by textual modes of address, which renders all of this intelligible to the acrobatically entangled reader. In *Une saison en enfer,* Rimbaud also emphasizes movement, process, interaction, using the temporal ruptures between prose and poetry to propel the speaker's discourse toward the concluding series of prose poems. In these final moments of *Une saison en enfer*, "je" revisits the opening scene in an

allusion to "beauté": "Cela s'est passé. Je sais aujourd'hui saluer la beauté" (*Saison* 36). The difference between capital "B" beauty and this beauty without nobility is an index of the transformation of the subject in the text, a transformation that yields enclosed form of the prose poems as the newfound way to "saluer la beauté."

If Williams's "hell" is the interim of occlusion between poems, which is the prose of *Spring and All*, Rimbaud's "hell" is the very source of poetry. Is this "hell" also prose in *Une saison en enfer?* Rimbaud locates the poetry in relation to "hell" in the oft-cited lines of the "lettres dites du voyant": "Je reprends: Donc le poète est vraiment voleur de feu. Il est chargé de l'humanité, des animaux mêmes; il devra faire sentir, palper, écouter ses inventions; si ce qu'il rapporte de là-bas a forme, il donne forme; si c'est informe, il donne de l'informe. Trouver une langue" (*Poésies* 203). In *Une saison en enfer,* the movement of "révolte" in the prose toward the poems—the "forme" of verse, the "informe" of prose poems?—enacts this quest and the return from "hell" through the "procès" (trial/process) of the "je" in the text.

Rimbaud charges the poet with the task of going to hell and bringing back poetry; Williams also writes of the poet's responsibility to put "a value upon experience," to struggle through "hell," in his notes from 1928 to 1930, later compiled as *The Embodiment of Knowledge* (xix). Poetry and knowledge both originate in the "word," and since "words

have all their contours best defined in poetry," the work of poets

contributes to knowledge through "the cleansing of the 'word'"

(*Knowledge* 6). Poets wield the material of knowledge, not to be wrought,

but rendered raw again: "Language is the key to the mind's escape from

bondage to the past. There are no 'truths' that can be fixed in language.

It is by the breakup of the language that the truth can be seen to exist

and that it becomes operative again" (*Knowledge* 19). Knowledge, as

Williams defines it, comes from the breaks in language, the rupture of

structures of time that fix the possible in what *is* already—already

known, consolidated in a single, dominant perspective. Therein lies the

distinction and value of knowledge for Williams: "It is knowledge that is

the universal (donator) that gives a thing value, universal

transmutability. . . Transcends time instead of layers of superimposed

and oppressive values, gives an equal value, i.e., we know, or have

known everything" (*Knowledge* 80). Williams's oppositional knowledge

may be likened to the work of the poet as Rimbaud describes it in the

"lettres dites du voyant." Here, the work of the poet is not yet "cleansing

the word"; first, the work of becoming a poet is sullying oneself to be rid

of social norms, the comforts of the known: "je m'encrapule le plus

possible . . . Je veux être poète, et je travaille à me rendre Voyant . . . Il

s'agit d'arriver à l'inconnu par le dérèglement de *tous les sens*" (*Poésies*

200). The process of becoming a poet is one of disintegrating, of

suffering, of hell, of becoming other: "JE est un autre." This is the

process of subjectivity that the reader is called to witness, to enable, in *Une saison en enfer*. J.-P. Corsetti encapsulates the process of *Une saison en enfer* in the genre-bending relations between prose and poetry, and between speaker and addressee, in the moment of address:

> La *Saison* impose un temps et un espace autres . . . Il y a contiguité entre l'expérience qu'on relate, et qui contient, inclut, les poésies anterieurs, et d'autre part, la relation même à laquelle procède l'identité neuve du 'je.' La *Saison* recouvre l'unité du je/autre, dans une voix delivrée de toute scissiparité . . . Le texte semble démonter chaque mécanisme narratif et procéder à l'éclatement des structures de genre. (Steinmetz 48-9)

The "je" depends on an "autre," on an addressee, on this approach, to pass through "hell," through the seasons, through the change in relation to time that enables fullness of experience in the moment. "JE est un autre": "je" does not follow (*suis*), but *is* without contingencies. This absolute subjectivity is the absolute state of being *moderne* that Rimbaud announces in the final moments of *Une saison en enfer*: "Il faut être absolument moderne." How might this notion of being modern relate to Williams's vision of modern verse? I recapitulate his remarks in their entirety here:

> Most current verse is dead from the point of view of art . . . Now life is above all things else at any moment subversive of life as it was the moment before—
>
> always new, irregular. Verse to be alive must have infused into it something of the same order, some tincture of disestablishment, something in the nature of an impalpable revolution, an ethereal reversal, let me say. I am speaking of modern verse. (*Letters* 23-4)

To be modern is to be in a state of constant revolt; no boundaries of genre can hold, can mediate in the present. This aligns with Todorov's observations of modern literature: "It is even considered a sign of authentic modernity in a writer if he ceases to respect the separation of genres" (13). Like the scenes that Balzac and Baudelaire placed in periodicals, the seasons of the prose poetry book combine genres in discourse; but rather than create ambiguities to blur the separation between the real and the read in a centered and temporally situated representation, Rimbaud and Williams sharpen the distinction between seasons of prose and poetry to unfold alternative temporalities, the very possibility of freedom from unitary time, which Rimbaud and Williams present as the constitutively modern struggle of subjectivity, a struggle carried out by the modern reader in the process of the text. In the next chapter, the struggle of the subject-in-process takes the very form of the text in the genre-bending works of Stéphane Mallarmé and Vladimir

Mayakovsky—from lyric poems to dramatic compositions to book projects

designed for the socially constructive performance of reading.

CHAPTER IV

SPACES: MALLARMÉ AND MAYAKOVSKY THROW THE VOICE

OF THE POETIC SUBJECT

Day slides into night in the span of four stanzas: Pieces of crepuscular sky fly across the canvas of the page, smearing red and white in a blended haze. Shiny dice streak across the landscape and mold a hilly silhouette. All of a sudden, yellow squares replace black ones, spreading light across dark rows of windows. Buildings flaunt indigo robes, streets show off gold rings, and the rest of the marketplace watches. Night materializes in the shifting shape of the city, a sequentially animated composition of colors, contours, and contrasts, mobilizing light and shadow, density and dynamism, visual effects and verbal elements. This is "Night" ("Noch'"), the Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky's first poem (Burliuk et al. 91).

Each word in the composition—color substantives, verbs of motion, directional prepositions, compound shapes—moves minimal objects through space, rubbing, articulating masses, adding texture, creating depth and dimension, painting in broad strokes. Every verbal unit performs a visual action in space, transforming basic structures through their intrinsically active relationships. By constantly shifting point of view, "Night" displaces the one subject position (Mayakovsky's "I") as the organizing center of vision and the origin of voice. Instead, the inherent

process of the text, proceeding through the movement of the eye in reading, across and down the page, from line to line, word to word, constructs the space of the poem.

In this fashion, "Night" exemplifies the materiality of text-as-space, not only in the constituent content of the poem, but also in its particular relationship to its print environment. Mayakovsky's first poem originally appears in the avant-garde book, *Slap in the Face of Public Taste* (*Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu,* 1912), where it manifests in poetry the creative program variously elaborated by fellow Cubo-Futurists in the collaborative volume.[63] By activating the circumstantiality of artistic texts as material spaces, as I have started to do here in the case of Mayakovsky's "Night," I propose to analyze the formal relations between textual compositions and print artifacts in a verbal-visual framework.

Furthermore, Mayakovsky's "Night" brings into view multiple aspects of materiality that concern me in my approach to texts as spaces: What is the relationship between the words on the page and the printed material? How does the print environment shape the artistic material? In what ways does the text incorporate or displace the frames in which it is embedded? How does the structured space of the text as a printed

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[63] I will discuss selected articles of the publication in this chapter, namely the "Slap" manifesto and David Burliuk's essay, "Cubism" ("Kubizm"). See Susan Compton's presentation of the artifact in the historical context of the Russian avant-garde (11-44).

object—the disposition of the page itself—structure the experience of reading? To explore this line of inquiry in a limited comparative scope, I focus on examples of the literary text calling attention to itself as a workable material space. In doing this, I identify *textual modes of address* as common strategies for incorporating the creative act of address into the composition, framing the text as a space of verbal-visual interactions.

Although the scope of this study is not limited to Russian Cubo-Futurism or even to the historical avant-garde, the syncretic artistic principles of such groups significantly inform my approach to texts as spaces. In *The Futurist Moment,* Marjorie Perloff identifies the avant-garde text across cultural discourses by spotlighting the page itself (from the collage to the manifesto and the artist's book) as a site of avant-garde subversion. Perloff amply demonstrates how the avant-garde text heightens the compositional impact of the printed page to "call into question the stability of genre, of the individual medium, and the barrier between artist and audience" (xviii). I will explore these transgressive effects of "the visualization of the text" in my own conceptualization of the text-as-space. Rather than focus on the page itself as a dynamic perceptual field, I attend to the ways in which the constituent content of the text furnishes a container (more pliable than genre) as verbal and visual elements coalesce in compositional space. To this end, Julia Stapanian's analysis in *Mayakovsky's Cubo-Futurist Vision* provides a

constructive verbal-visual framework. Stapanian employs a strategy that she calls "graphic scansion," extending mere painterly metaphor to the structure of the frame—or, better, the shifting frames of Mayakovsky's early poems (including "Night"). This phenomenon of "opened form," as Stapanian further explains, connects Mayakovsky's poems to the Russian Cubo-Futurist program with its emphasis on the word: "Violation of conventional frameworks attempted a special intertextuality where, in Futurist terminology, 'the word is greater than meaning' (slovo shire smysla)" (2). I will use Stapanian's interlinked concepts of the frame and opened form to expose how the space of the poem is constructed: textual modes of address draw the reader inside shifting frames, into the opened form of the composition, as an active participant in the assembly of space.

To explore variations on this formulation, I have chosen a diachronic corpus of texts that stretch the constraining bounds of genre in different formats of the page. In this regard, Mayakovsky's "Night" introduces the element of chance into the picture: the ducats released to their trajectories, scattering into dusk, echo the fateful roll of dice associated with the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé. Furthermore, this repeated gesture expresses the formal relations between spaces and subjects: both Mallarmé and Mayakovsky figuratively sacrifice the poetic subject, relinquishing the controlling center of predictable meaning, to authorize the play of the reader in the space of the poem.

In Mallarmé's famously cryptic poem, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard,* the titular phrase, "UN COUP DE DÉS . . . JAMAIS . . . N'ABOLIRA . . . LE HASARD," is suspended in dilation and disarray: separated by several page breaks and staggered layouts, the key components of the phrase converge by virtue of their identical typeface (*Œuvres complètes* 1: 367, 369, 375, 383).[64] The circular crux of the poem sparks off charged particles of language, syntactical threads and imaginal traces, which spray across eleven two-page spreads in a diagonally expanding field of interaction. Yet *Un coup de dés*, so cosmic in scope and so careful in its spacing, was first cast in the cramped parameters of periodical publishing. Like Mayakovsky's "Night," Mallarmé's *Coup de dés* originates in print as a space within a larger structure; the typographic experience of the poem initially takes place in the pages of the British magazine *Cosmopolis*, inserting a spacious unfolding of nebulous word-patterns between tight columns of commodified content. Mallarmé scholarship favors the posthumous version of *Un coup de dés* for analysis of the complete poem as a discrete text; but my purposes here are different. I propose that the poem retains the shape of its original print environment as an immersive counterpoint, which is the space of public discourse in commerce. It is generally accepted as a fact of literary history that the original version of *Un coup*

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[64] Hereafter, *OC.*

de dés appearing in the May 1897 issue of *Cosmopolis* does not reflect Mallarmé's exact or final intention: the poet's annotations of the text for its future book design (a luxury edition with illustrations by Odilon Redon) were not faithfully transcribed, but rather described among the papers that Paul Valéry, acting as custodian of Mallarmé's legacy, dutifully preserved.[65] However, as Johanna Drucker argues, this question of intentionality, surfacing with each version of the text, reinforces its "exemplary" status as an explicit performance of textual resistance to finality ("Book as Diagram" 2). By spotlighting this performance, I want to explore the intersection of indeterminacy and materiality through textual modes of address: how the text addresses the reader in the moment of encounter, in the process of materializing the virtual space of the poem.

In deploying the figure of the dice, Mallarmé and Mayakovsky enlarge spatial possibilities to contain them in the formal structures of their poems. Analogies to spatial arts (music and painting, respectively) frame these spaces, prompting the reader's behavior and structuring the process of the text. As in a "partition" for a musical composition (Mallarmé's metaphor), the spatial distribution of marks on the page in

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[65] For a detailed chronology or material history of *Un coup de dés*, see the digital edition of the poem by Michael Pierson & Ptyx (2002). To be most consistent with the aim of my project, I will be referring to the poem as it appears in the Pléiade edition of Mallarmé's *Œuvres complètes*—first in canonical form (1:361-87), followed by a facsimile of the "Édition préoriginale" in *Cosmopolis* (1: 391-401).

Un coup de dés contains the germ of a temporal production, the interplay of insoluble verbal-visual particles, suspended in fixed animation. The space of Mallarmé's poem holds infinite potential, all the mid-air possibilities of the dice, before landing determines one outcome and obliterates all others. In the end, "UN COUP DE DÉS . . . JAMAIS . . . N'ABOLIRA . . . LE HASARD," but the dilation of this phrase prolongs the act, deferring its finality long enough for the adrift reading subject to entertain multiple configurations of the material. Even if every thought did emit a roll of the dice (as the poem concludes, "Toute Pensée émet un Coup de Dés," *OC* 1: 387; 401), chance would never be abolished entirely—not even in zero-gravity, for it resides in the medium of language, in syntactical contingencies that restrict movement between words, even as they seem to float freely on the page. This tension between determinate and indeterminate meaning is held in the measured space between the fragments of *Un coup de dés*. A roll of dice opens possibilities in order to close them, but this opening-closing of space nonetheless raises the question *what if?*—in the face of necessity, in the face of the one number. In "Night," Mayakovsky animates visual permutations by entertaining the exponential possibilities of multiple dice ("handfuls of ducats," Burliuk et al. 91). His poem orchestrates verbal elements to produce visual effects as in the spatial relationships of a painting—that is, in David Burliuk's formulation of painting given in the same Cubo-Futurist anthology: "Painting is colored space" (qtd in

Bowlt 70). In this sense, the gesture of throwing dice in "Night" is a painterly one, blending the natural color of the ground with the slanted light of dusk: green borrows the gleam of golden ducats that "were thrown." In this passive construction, space is altered by objects in their interactions without the action of any one subject, without the determination of any one perspective. A roll of dice releases combinatory forms from the agency of the poet-subject, embodied in the conventional lyric "I," and unleashes figural and formal possibilities into space. Chance multiplies vision.

For Mallarmé and Mayakovsky, then, a roll of dice is a gesture of dispersal, a scattering, a suspension that multiplies creative possibilities. It is emblematic of the decentering of the traditional poetic subject, which I propose as another point of convergence—or, as I will also show, of divergence—between Mallarmé and Mayakovsky: the suppression and amplification, respectively, of the poetic subject. Indeed, both poets loom large in literary history as figures of martyrdom: Mallarmé as the progenitor of the theoretically dead author, Mayakovsky as the victim of his own revolutionary mythos. And despite their differences—in cultural tradition, in politics, and in the concerns of their poetics—both poets are *subjects* of criticism; reading Mallarmé and Mayakovsky is unavoidably grappling with textual problems of subjectivity. Although they do make for an odd couple (Mallarmé the "prince des poètes" in the sanctum of poetry, Mayakovsky the poet of revolution in the city streets), criticism

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has found much common ground. Mallarmé and Mayakovsky notoriously prefigure their own deaths in their poems, which manifest a preoccupation with self-destruction as the poet's occupation. In *Death in Quotation Marks*, Svetlana Boym follows this thread through the corpus of each poet, separately, as she unravels their critical myths. The two poets meet only for a moment in Boym's discussion, at the climax of their repeat performances of death—the monodramas of Mallarmé's *Igitur* and Mayakovsky's *Tragedy* (129). By comparing selected works by Mallarmé and Mayakovsky side by side, I suggest that the drama of the subject in their poetics drives experimentation with textual forms, with very spaces of poems. My analysis of selected works by Mallarmé and Mayakovsky focuses on iterations of the subject in spaces—both through the personal pronoun and without—to examine textual strategies for overcoming the limitations of genre and the circumstances of print.

By identifying these strategies as textual modes of address, my discussion of Mallarmé and Mayakovsky promises to shift the emphasis from the death of the author, or the martyred poet-subject, to the rise of the reader. A number of theoretical formulations expand in this direction: the figuration of throwing dice, as in Mallarmé's "Un coup de dés" and Mayakovsky's "Night," enacts the notion of writing as building spaces. In other words, the dice carry out a gesture that opens form to a game of chance, to reading as playing. Jacques Derrida's *La*

Dissemination articulates this role of the dice in determining the shape of undetermined meaning:

> L'excès aventureux d'une écriture qui n'est plus dirigée par un savoir ne s'abandonne pas à l'improvisation. Le hazard ou le coup de dés qui « ouvrent » un tel texte ne contredisent pas la nécessité rigoureuse de son agencement formel. Le jeu est ici l'unité du hazard et de la règle, du programme et de son reste ou de son surplus.   (62)

> The adventurous excess of a writing that is no longer directed by any knowledge does not abandon itself to improvisation. The accident or throw of dice that "opens" such a text does not contradict the rigorous necessity of its formal assemblage. The game here is the unity of chance and rule, of the program and its leftovers or extras.   (54)

As a "formal assemblage," both Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* and Mayakovsky's "Night" contain the proliferation of possibilities in the material space of the poems, in the momentary structure of performance, while opening form to the intermingling of verbal-visual elements in suspension. The roll of the dice, then, is also a gesture toward the reader, toward unpredictable horizons of expectation beyond the limits of genre, toward the imagination where the production of the text takes place.

If "the birth of the reader," as Roland Barthes announces it, entails "the death of the Author" (55), then the roll of the dice is also an act of tragedy, releasing the text from the grasp of any one subject. Along these lines, Gilles Deleuze casts the dice as a tragic act in his reflections on Mallarmé in *Nietzsche et la philosophie*: "Non seulement le lancer de dés est un acte déraisonnable et irrationnel, absurde et surhumain, mais il constitue la tentative tragique et la pensée tragique par excellence" (32). In a moment of self-abandon, the agentive subject gives determining agency up to chance. Therein lies the deeper connection, as Deleuze further suggests, between the gesture of the dice throw and the tragic subject of individuation: "Les dés qu'on lance une fois sont l'affirmation du hasard, la combinaison qu'ils forment en tombant est l'affirmation de la nécessité. La nécessité s'affirme du hasard, au sens exacte où l'être s'affirme du devenir et l'un du multiple" ("The dice which are thrown once are the affirmation of *chance,* the combination which they form on falling is the affirmation of *necessity.* Necessity is affirmed of chance in exactly the sense that being is affirmed of becoming and unity is affirmed of multiplicity" 29; 26). The duality of the dice throw (an affirmation of chance that inevitably affirms necessity) corresponds, in this sense, to the dialectics of being and becoming, identity and otherness, singularity and multiplicity, one and many—to a sliding scale of mutually constitutive categories. In this vein, Nietzsche posits dialectical relationships at the heart of the tragic subject of individuation in *The*

Birth of Tragedy: the history of the arts repeats the disintegration of the subject, figured in the physical dismemberment of Dionysus, in the individuation of voice from the chorus to the lyric "I" (38). To some extent, Mallarmé and Mayakovsky play out variations of this tragic plot in the development of their poetics. The troubled poet-subject at the center of Mallarmé's early poems gives way to the dice throw (more famously in *Un coup de dés*, but also in the unfinished text of *Igitur*), and the one subject—the one source of language—splinters into fragments of latent sensations on the page. The agentive objects in Mayakovsky's first poems (the ducats thrown) return in the "revolt of things" in *Vladimir Mayakovsky: A Tragedy* (*Vladimir Maiakovskii: Tragediia*); this "tragedy," as it is performed on the page and for the stage, rips the poet apart, scattering the subject into minimal features of identity, and pluralizing lyric voice into many avatars of the poet (*Tragediia* 3). These trajectories of tragedy will unfold in my analysis of selected works by Mallarmé and Mayakovsky as I draw out the terms of formal engagement between the subject and spaces: how the crisis of the subject in their poetics drives the innovation of textual forms in spaces.

This approach offers a different perspective on a nagging question: why is the subject so essential—or, for Mallarmé, so *inessential*—to the progression from rather conventional lyric to more surprising compositional forms? I insist that this is not merely a question of the poets' personalities, but of form: the dissociation of the subject from the

biographical construct (and other conventions of the lyric "I") allows

visionary voice, the intentionally creative act of address, to travel beyond

the boundaries of genre, reverberating in spaces. Rather than the self-

constituting expression of the lyric "I," textual modes of address enable

the intersubjective performance of the text in reading to "hold" the

"space" together; in these terms, I am activating Roland Barthes' account

of the text in the wake of the "death of the author":

> [L]inguistically, the author is nothing but the one who writes, just
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> as I is nothing but the one who says I: language knows a 'subject,'
>
> not a 'person,' and this subject, empty outside of the very speech-
>
> act which defines it, suffices to 'hold' language, i.e., to exhaust it . .
>
> . a text consists not of a line of words, releasing a single
>
> 'theological' meaning . . . but of a multi-dimensional space in
>
> which are married and contested several writings . . .   (51; 53)

As I will illustrate in my analysis, textual modes of address delineate

spaces in which "I" does not correspond to a singular subject, but rather

gives rise to the intersubjective relations of writing and reading. In this

post-structuralist optic, spaces emerge in the text as a site of

interminable construction. Key to this formulation is Julia Kristeva's

notion of the text as work-in-progress: "travail de la signifiance qui

traverse la structure, une certaine pratique dite littéraire met à l'œuvre

ce fonctionnement transposant et disloquant les structures du langage

communicatif" ("Semanaylse" 211). It is worth recalling here that both Barthes and Kristeva arrive at their compatible notions of the text via Mallarmé, through the spaces of his poems in which he performs the language philosophy enfolded in the prose of "Crise de vers," essentially vacating the subject in language to create "pure" spaces of poetry (*OC* 2: 211). In *La Dissemination*, Jacques Derrida elaborates further on this objective of vacancy in his speculation about the text as a place ("lieu")— or, rather, the text as nothing but a placing: "S'il n'y a rien hors du texte, cela implique, avec la transformation du concept de texte en general, que celui-ci ne soit plus le dedans calfeutré d'une intériorité ou d'une identité à soi . . . mais une autre mise en place des effets d'ouverture et de fermeture" ["If there is nothing outside the text, this implies, with the transformation of the concept of text in general, that the text is no longer the snug airtight inside of an interiority or an identity-to-itself . . . but rather a different placement of the effects of opening and closing" (42; 35-6). Playing on Mallarmé's own phrase, "Rien n'aura eu lieu que le lieu," Derrida posits that the poem, in which nothing happens but the place itself, is nothing more (or less, for that matter) than the placing of nothing outside; the presence of the poem "n'est rien d'autre que la mise en scène, le théâtre, la visibilité de rien ou de soi. Mise en scène qui *n'illustre rien*, qui *illustre le rien*, éclaire l'espace" ["nothing other than the staging, the theater, the visibility of nothing or of the self. It is a dramatization which illustrates nothing, which illustrates the nothing,

lights up a space" (236; 208). The source of this illumination is the animation of words on the page as verbal-visual elements in an operational (opening-closing) space. For Derrida, the spaces of Mallarmé's poems come to life in "suspension, the 'center of vibratory suspense,' the repercussions of words between the walls of the grotto" (210). These walls, like the infrastructure of a pinball game, correspond to my own conceptual structure of spaces, which contain the play of language within the mobile form of the text itself.

As these critical touchstones indicate, it is by emptying language of self-content that Mallarmé contributes to theories of the text as a performative space. Inversely, Mayakovsky complicates the textual boundaries of performance by filling spaces with his own self. Svetlana Boym describes Mayakovsky's practice as "a continuous performance on the stage of history, too large and too public for 'just a poet'" (124). Highlighting the "transgressive nature of his theatricality," Boym situates this performance of self in the larger context of literary history, pointing to the "doctrine of 'life-creation' elaborated by the Russian Symbolists [that] was both parodied and lived out by Mayakovsky" (125).[66] Mayakovsky's project of revolution exceeds the dimensions of the lyric "I"

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[66] For further discussion of "life-creation," the particular embodied life practices of Russian Modernist poets, see Ioffe, Dennis. "Russian and European Modernism and the Idea of Life-Creation." *Dutch Contributions to the Fourteenth International Congress of Slavists: Ohrid, September 10-16, 2008: Literature.* Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2008. 151-79. *Studies in Slavic Literature and Poetics.* Web.

as a one-man show, and seeks out spaces to extend the reach of his voice beyond the limits of genre. As Clare Cavanagh suggests, Mayakovsky's voice reaches with his whole body, which is "not even big enough for him . . . let alone for the masses he hopes to incorporate in the revolution's aftermath. The giant form he laments . . . condemns him to a self-absorbed isolation" (93). The problem of body size expresses (exaggerates) the problem of the subject in Mayakovsky's poetics: the struggle of Mayakovsky's "ya" is a struggle with the formal restrictions of the lyric poem. Cavanagh further relates how the "text" of Mayakovsky's final performance, his suicide and its interpretations, conflates the body of the poet with the body of his work in the failed attempt to overcome genre constraints on his voice: "Mayakovsky had been killed, the state concluded, by his own lyricism . . . This was not suicide, in other words, but generic assassination" (107). By this logic, Mayakovsky dies in the struggle to find an appropriate form for the voice of revolution. And in death, the legendary life of the poet bleeds into his art. For instance, Kornei Chukovsky figures Mayakovsky's performance in the spaces of his poems as a rabid metonymy: "His medium isn't paper, but his own throat" (58). Although the poet himself gives reason enough for the common biographical-poetic conflation, "step[ping] on the throat of [his] own song" (qtd in Boym 136), I assert that the constraints of the print medium enable Mayakovsky to amplify the power of voice through verbal-visual interactions on the page.

The roll of the dice serving as my initial point of comparison bookends the inverse lines of development that I want to unfold in the poetics of Mallarmé and Mayakovsky. Mallarmé's œuvre gravitates toward the dice thrown in *Igitur* and *Un coup de dés* as the lyric "I" is suppressed, and words are dispersed into self-sufficient spaces. Mayakovsky's career as a poet begins with a roll of the dice in "Night" and develops as the lyric "I" is supplemented with embodied forms of voice, spilling out into larger and more far-reaching spaces. I propose to trace out these trajectories in juxtaposed, contextualized readings of works by Mallarmé and Mayakovsky: 1) the early poems "L'Azur" and "Night" in collaborative publishing venues, *Parnasse* and *Slap*, respectively; 2) projections of poetry in the unfinished fragments of *Igitur*, the short lyrics "And Could You?" ("A vy mogli by?") and "I" ("Ia"), and the four-part saga of "A Cloud in Trousers" ("Oblako v shtanakh"); 3) the typographic dramas of *Un coup de dés* and *A Tragedy*; and, lastly, 4) the book projects envisioned by the two poets, Mallarmé's unrealized "Livre" and Mayakovsky's *For the Voice* (*Dlia golosa*), co-constructed by El Lizzitsky. From visually saturated or painterly texts, to generically unbound texts, to compositions of typefaces, to highly systematized book projects, the œuvres of Mallarmé and Mayakovsky adapt to print situations through textual modes of address, enabling the reader's play with the material of texts as spaces.

"L'Azur," "Night": Painting Spaces in the Early Poems

In his correspondence with friends and fellow poets throughout his career, Stéphane Mallarmé offers existential glimpses into his poetics, furnishing the legend that would endure as a critical framework for his work. At the time of writing his early poems, he intimates that he was already writing himself to death, lamenting his deteriorating appearance to Henri Cazalis in a letter dated January 1865: "j'ai le dégoût de moi: je recule devant les glaces . . . implacablement blanc" (*Correspondance* 1: 150).[67] Here, the poet suggests an identifying relation between subjectivity and the spaces of poetic creation; the repulsion of self-image mirrors the blankness of the page, in which the impotence of the poet stares back at him, blankly. Indeed, many of Mallarmé's first endeavors in verse feature a poet-subject—a subject striving after the ideal (the old man in "Les Fenêtres," "le sonneur," the lover in "À celle qui est tranquille," the poet in "L'Azur")—who tiringly contends with the impurities of material reality. In light of Mallarmé's generous biographical texts and crystalline critical works, the troubled relations between the poet-subject and material spaces in his early poems express the poet's anguish in the given circumstances that comprise his "milieu," which he bemoans in his correspondence with Cazalis: "un pauvre poète, qui n'est que poète—c'est-à-dire un instrument qui résonne sous les

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[67] Hereafter, *C.*

doigts de diverses sensations—est muet, quand il vit dans un milieu où rien ne l'émeut, puis ces cordes se distendent et viennent la poussière et l'oubli" (*C* 1: 151). Mallarmé's "milieu" includes everything that takes his pure attention away from poetry: the personal needs for health and happiness, the wife and child who are his dependents, the schoolchildren who are his livelihood, and the public, the readers who make commercial demands on the poet. Even his own poems encroach on the consecrated work (his "Hérodiade" in the winter, his "faune" in the summer, as he relates to Cazalis[68]) when they call him back to the exacting task of revision for publication in the 1866 volume of *Le Parnasse contemporain*[69]: "combien je perds de temps pour gagner ma vie, et que tant d'heures, que je n'aurai plus, devraient être données à l'Art! . . . Je ne m'interromprai que pour la correction de mes poèmes du Parnasse" (*C* 1: 208). In this complaint, Mallarmé pits the work of producing poetry against the work of preparing poems for print, which is a vulgar necessity of the poet's life ("pour gagner ma vie"). Rather than simply rehearse the Mallarméan drama, the tragic catharsis of subjectivity in

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[68] Mallarmé indulges Cazalis with the details of his work rhythms in a letter dated April 1866: "Quant à maintenant, je me repose . . . et, fuyant le cher supplice d'*Hérodiade,* je me remets le premier mai à mon *Faune,* tel que je l'ai conçu, vrai travail estival!" (*C* 1: 208).

[69] The first volume of *Le Parnasse contemporain* (1866), edited by Louis-Xavier de Ricard and Catulle Mendès, featured poems by Théophile Gautier, Leconte de Lisle, Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, Eugene Lefébure, Auguste Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, and Henri Cazalis, among others. In addition to "L'Azur," Mallarmé's verse in "Les Fenêtres," "Le Sonneur," "À celle qui est tranquille," Vere novo," "Les Fleurs," "Soupir," "Brise Marine," "À un pauvre," and "Épilogue" gives voice to the world-weary poet questing for his ideal (*Internet Archive*).

"pure" poetry, I want to perform a reading that spotlights the materiality of the struggle to create space in one of Mallarmé's early poems, "L'Azur."

As one of the eleven Parnasse poems, "L'Azur" unarguably bears reading in the context of Mallarmé's own strife as a poet; the striving of the poetic subject in the space of "L'Azur" mirrors the crisis of subjectivity suffered by the poet in his "milieu."[70] This claim tends to marshal biographical correspondences in the vein of this summary statement from the essay collection, *Le Sujet lyrique en question*: "La mort symbolique du sujet, mise en scène dans ces poèmes de jeunesse, correspond à une épreuve réellement vécue par Mallarmé au cours de ces années: la crise métaphysique de Tournon et Besançon (1863-1867), et dont la *Correspondance* porte les traces" (Rabaté, Serment, Vadé 144). To offer an alternative, yet nonetheless aligned approach, I will resist the tendency to read the subject in Mallarmé's poems as the "pauvre poète" himself because, as Leo Bersani delicately proposes, this tendency reduces the early works to preliminaries or "inessential" texts in which Mallarmé works out the personal issues that hamper the "Work,"

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[70] Jean-Paul Sartre points to the problem of subjectivity (the problem that Mallarmé's ideal work would overcome) in the works of predecessors and participants in the Parnasse project, detecting "la marque de leur subjectivité": "les mots semblaient encore accolés par un souffle et même, aucun d'eux ne renvoyât-il explicitement à l'auteur, la phrase marquait une direction, elle restait un geste du poète; bref, elle gardait un goût un peu trop fort de subjectif" (157).

including the burden of Baudelaire's legacy (3).[71] Mallarmé is the first to treat his early works this way, but he also provides for de-personalized readings of them, as in the correspondence cited above: the identification of the "poète, qui n'est que poète" as a mute "instrument" separates the historical identity of the poet from the subject acting in the poems, and also brings into focus the shaping of material, the elusive form rising in spaces carved out of the surrounding "milieu" (biographical, situational, material, or otherwise marked). In "L'Azur," as the color-block title suggests, this "instrument" sounds out frustration through pictorial constipation; the painterly motif of "L'Azur" pits verbal acts against unyielding visual forms. In this framework, the poem expresses through irresolvable verbal-visual tension the struggle with material reality (materiality) that shapes Mallarmé's developing poetics. By analyzing "L'Azur" as a composition of space, I foreground the emergent, yet discordant harmonies between verbal-visual elements that are essential to the language philosophy that Mallarmé refines in his verse and prose.

In "L'Azur" the sky is the limit of poetic creation, a space immovably saturated with trace elements, or unintentional impressions. Here, the poet-as-instrument expresses frustration with the imperfect medium of poetry by accentuating the materiality of language. This crude

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[71] Bersani reiterates the irrepressible paradigm as he interrogates the narrative of Mallarmé scholarship in the tripartite structure of his book, *The Death of Stephane Mallarmé*: "the man dies," "poetry is buried," "the poet writes."

reality of language use receives its most poignant and mature articulation in the well-known words of "Crise de Vers":[72] "mon sens regrette que le discours défaille à exprimer les objets par des touches y répondant en coloris ou en allure, lesquelles existent dans l'instrument de la voix" (*OC* 2: 208). "L'Azur" anticipates this less subjective "instrument de la voix" in the struggle of the poet-subject to give transcendent form to resistant material. Language remains lodged between the two states that Mallarmé memorably names in "Crise de vers," "le double état de la parole, brut et immédiat ici, là essentiel" (*OC* 2: 212). The poet-as-instrument grapples with this duality as he labors to purge spaces of the persistent azure; he tries to bend the available verbal material to his will, animating the word through voice, but he can only approximate the ideal of his vision.[73] As the desperate cries of the poet-subject sound out the impurities of language, the used currency of the poet's "milieu," textual modes of address foreground the process of the text, the process of creating space.

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[72] "Crise de vers" appears in Divagations, the 1897 collection of Mallarmé's prose, but it is acknowledged to be composed of several pieces from earlier published works: the foreword to *Traité du verbe* (1886), "Vers et musique en France" (*National Observer*, 1892), and an article in the series "Variations sur un sujet" (*La Revue blanche*, 1895).

[73] This interpretive angle aligns with biographical readings of Mallarmé's first poems, as in Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist rendering: "Mallarmé, créature de pure matière, veut produire un ordre supérieur à la matière. Son impuissance est théologique: la mort de Dieu créait au poète le devoir de le remplacer; il échoue" (154).

The voice of a poet-subject in "L'Azur" calls out (ultimately "En vain") in a battle with materiality. The first stanza embeds the figure of the "poète" in space, in expanses indifferent to his suffering:

De l'éternel azur la sereine ironie

Accable, belle indolemment comme les fleurs

Le poète impuissant qui maudit son génie

A travers un désert stérile de Douleurs.   (*OC* 1: 14)

The phrases that intervene between agent ("la sereine ironie"), verb ("Accable"), and object ("Le poète") suspend the action in space, in the atmosphere of "azur," permeated by "sereine ironie." "Le poète impuissant qui maudit son génie" appears as the effect of this pressure, floating in the affective medium of the azure, until his location on the ground is revealed: "À travers un désert stérile de Douleurs." Subject and space blend into the vast stretch of "désert," which surrounds the "poète" with "Douleurs"—in this case, the misery of being unproductive. In this manner, emotionally charged space envelops the "poète" from above and all around, reinforcing the dejected condition of the subject, subjected to external, environmental effects. This first stanza effectively frames the elaborating space of the poem as the medium of the poet's subjectivity.

Therefore, when the troubled poet-figure takes the position of speaker, appearing as the "je" in the second stanza, the subject remains

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disempowered, struggling to produce desired effects on the surrounding

space. Rather than center perspective on the poet-subject, the first

person pronoun positions the subject as the object of perception:

"Fuyant, les yeux fermés, je le sens qui regarde / Avec l'intensité d'un

remords atterrant, / Mon âme vide, Où fuir?" (*OC* 1: 14). In a curious

reversal of power relations, the "je" registers the oppressive presence of

the azure ("qui regarde") as the vulnerable object of its gaze. Moreover,

the iteration of subjective feeling ("je le sens") transmits the effects of

surrounding space without affecting it. The subject,"les yeux fermés," is

powerless, constituted by the gaze of the azure, not his own. The poem

thus confuses the normal relationship between subject and object—

between the poet and the sky; the iteration of the "je" asserts the

presence of the subject only as a speck in the perceptual field of "azur."

Yet the speaker valiantly contends with the inescapable azure,

striving for control over the space of composition through dramatic turns

of address. In an act of apostrophic desperation, the subject cedes to

syntax; the "je" disappears in the voicing of effects in the imperative, in

which the words of speech acts are empowered as actions in the process

of constructing space:

Brouillards, montez! versez vos cendres monotones

Avec de longs haillons de brume dans les cieux

Que noiera le marais livide des automnes

Et bâtissez un grand plafond silencieux!   (*OC* 1: 14)

The speaker calls objects into presence—and into position in space—with emphatic apostrophes. The gesture of this speech act moves spatial forms like a deliberate brushstroke. Textual modes of address take form in the space within the pictorial frame of the poetic composition, generating palpable friction in the process of creating space. At first, this form of voice appears empowered, free of the feelings of inadequacy that inhibit action. Yet the action nonetheless remains incomplete; the future tense construction "Que noiera" indicates that the intention of the speaker is not realized in the present moment of address, that the verbal-visual forms hang kinetically in space, in potential interaction. The despairing speech acts of "L'Azur" thus call attention to the failed process, a tragic inability to shape material.

Indeed, the relentless effort of the poet-subject, his continued and increasingly familiar use of apostrophe, only serves to underscore his defeat. Rather than overcome the obstacles of emotion by calling other agents into action, the speaker reveals the pervasiveness of his impotence. The sudden appearance of the second-person pronoun, referring to "Cher Ennui," inflects space with subjective mood, which, in the absence of the self-centering "je," spreads out across the frame of the composition:

Et toi, sors des étangs léthéens et ramasse

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En t'en venant la vase et les pâles roseaux

Cher Ennui, pour boucher d'une main jamais lasse

Les grands trous bleus que font méchamment les oiseaux.

(*OC* 1 : 14)

The familiarity of address in the apostrophe to "toi," reinforced by the term of endearment "Cher," recruits "Ennui" in the speaker's project of modifying spatial relationships. By calling out to "Ennui," a personification of mood, the speaker effectively projects a chronic condition of subjectivity into space. But again, the action remains incomplete; the construction "pour boucher" indicates that the "grands trous bleus" are entirely the work of the "oiseaux" at the present moment of address. Verbal acts carry all the trouble of subjectivity into space in the form of visual mayhem. In the absence of the "je," textual modes of address register the failure of voice, unable to transform unwieldy material.

The poet-subject in "L'Azur" proves utterly incapable of carrying out the will to action. Hence the escalating desperation of the "je: "Vers toi, j'accours! donne, ô matière / L'oubli de l'Idéal cruel et du Péché / À ce martyr" (*OC* 1: 14). In this turn of address, the "je" cedes agency to the material itself ("donne, ô matière"). As the tension mounts between material substance and insubstantiality in the next stanza, the "je" reiterates the inability to actualize desire:

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Car j'y veux, puisque enfin ma cervelle vidée

Comme le pot de fard gisant au pied d'un mur

N'a plus l'art d'attifer la sanglotante idée

Lugubrement bâiller vers un trépas obscur...

The expression of intentionality ("Car j'y veux") immediately meets the lack of means. In trailing off, the speaker resigns to a lackluster performance, to inadequate power. And indeed, in the next stanza, the poet-subject surrenders to the overpowering presence of the azure: "En vain! L'Azur triomphe, et je l'entends qui chante / Dans les cloches." Here, the "je" registers external effects ("je l'entends"), the sounds of a victory song, signaling the defeat of the subject in his battle with the overhead invasion of azure. Shortening phrases break up into the pure voicing of anguish in the last line of the poem, in which "je" stands merely as the victim of the everlasting azure: "Je suis hanté. L'Azur! L'Azur! L'Azur! L'Azur!" "L'Azur" thus materializes against the poet's will; his voice cannot filter out the unwanted sensations of the word, which, in the end, envelop the subject in azure-coated space. By reading "L'Azur" as the mark of poetic language, Barbara Johnson registers the resonances of the word in its repetition, which "can thus be read as the return of stereotyped language as a reflux, a moment when initiative is being taken by words of others"—or, in other words: "Cliché Cliché Cliché Cliché" (*Les Fleurs* 269). "L'Azur" completely fills the space of the

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composition, appearing everywhere, not only in immediate proximity to the subject (as in, *Je suis hanté par L'Azur*). Repetition piles on "L'Azur" to four times the concentration, as the definite article lends further substance, adding to its density. Space is saturated by the unwanted presence of "L'Azur," and the defeat of the poet-subject under the weight of the word, the cultural baggage of cliché. The effort to clear space in the desperate apostrophes of "L'Azur" only concentrates the impurities of materiality.

The "sereine ironie" of "L'Azur" is not confined to situation in the text; the publishing outcomes of the poem uncannily play out the conflict staged between the poetic subject and the space of composition. After all of the exhausting work of revision that Mallarmé took the pains to complete, the final, perfecting touches would not make it into print; some of the poems, "transformés pourtant par lui, n'ont pas été l'objet des modifications souhaitées" (Steinmetz 84). In the pages of *Parnasse*, Mallarmé found shadows of his work in permanent, public images of his writing that did not register the complete act, the full creative process of the text. Worse, the printing job did not come off perfectly, as Jean-Luc Steinmetz documents, rendering some of the poems "défigurés par d'impardonnables fautes d'impression." Mallarmé does not withhold emotion in his response to the faulty product, declaring to Cazalis (May 21, 1866): "Cela m'a été au cœur" (*C* 1: 216). The publication (emphasis on public from the humble poet's perspective) offended Mallarmé's purist

sensibility of absolute black and white, which allowed for no cross contamination of the ink and the blank. This material error in the edited volume undoubtedly impacted the poet's approach to mastering spaces, even moving beyond the conventional interface of the printed page in *Igitur*, "Un coup de dés," and his conception of "Le Livre."

Where Mallarmé writes the poet to death by virtual suffocation in "L'Azur," Vladmir Mayakovsky comes to poetry as a blank slate, or rather, as a blank canvas. The preponderance of visual imagery in Mayakovsky's first poems attests not to the impotence of voice, as for Mallarmé, but to the power of voice. In his own words, Mayakovsky's very first poem gives birth to the poet. He recounts the sentimental tale of how he "became a poet" the day he wrote "Night," the poem which, alongside "Morning" ("Utro"), debuts his voice in print:

> Today I wrote a poem. Or to be exact: fragments of one. Not good. Unprintable. "Night." Sretenski Boulevard. I read the poem to Burliuk. I added: written by a friend. David stopped and looked at me. "You wrote it yourself!" he exclaimed. "You're a genius!" I was happy at this marvelous and undeserved praise. And so I steeped myself in poetry. That evening, quite unexpectedly, I became a poet.   (qtd in Woroszylski 30)

This anecdote is also part of the origin story of Hylaea,[74] the group of artists organized around the painter David Burlyuk and the collective vision put forward in *Slap in the Face of Public Taste. Slap* is a slim volume of assorted prose and poetry that opens with a manifesto by the same name, articulating the purpose of the collaboration. The manifesto bears Mayakovsky's signature, and his first poem, "Night," appears toward the end of the collection. Julia Stapanian demonstrates how to read Mayakovsky's poems in *Slap* in the context of their original publication, as "counterparts in verse" to the various texts gathered in the inaugural Cubo-Futurist production, including the titular manifesto, Benedict Livshits's prose "experiment" in Cubist composition, and Burlyuk's essays on techniques of contemporary visual art (17). I will draw on Stapanian's method of "graphic scansion" (5), based on analogies between the verbal and visual arts, as I focus my analysis on object-interactions in space in Mayakovsky's poem "Night." By painting in words, "Night" provides illustration of *Slap* in action—in the action of creating "colored space" (D. Burliuk's phrase). To examine how Mayakovsky's poem enacts this content through textual modes of address, I will first collate some assertions of the opening manifesto and the closing criticism of *Slap.*

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[74] For the full story of "Hylaea," see Vladimir Markov's definitive account in *Russian Futurism: A History* (32-60). Edward Brown provides further biographical and political context in *Mayakovsky: A Poet in the Revolution* (40-6).

In its conceptual vocabulary, the *Slap* manifesto previews Mayakovsky's early poems in the spatial metaphors used to declare the intentions of the Hylaea group. Their collective voice takes a substantive form as the plural first-person pronoun "my" ("we") is positioned spatially in time: "We alone are the face of our Time. Through us the horn of time blows in the art of the word" ("Tol'ko *my—litso nashego* Vremeni. Rog" vremeni trubit' nami v" slovesnom" iskusstvie," Lawton 51; Burliuk et al. 3). The manifesto writers position themselves together in time, and also against time in the form of constraining hand-me-downs: "The past is too tight" ("Proshloe tiesno"). The tension of spatial relationships becomes productive as the manifesto writers lay out their program, beginning with their primary intention, "Word-novelty" ("Slovo—novshestvo"), which works against spatial limitations: "To enlarge the scope of the poet's vocabulary with arbitrary and derivative words" ("Na uvelichenie slovaria v ego ob"emie proizvol'nymi i proizvodnymi slovami"). Briefly, Mayakovsky's battle with space in his poems may be understood in terms of the conceptual metaphors that articulate the vision of *Slap*.

The manifesto also establishes the relationship between Mayakovsky's first poems and the other works contained in the *Slap* anthology. In its last "Word," the manifesto points to the works contained in the volume as examples of what is to come:

And if for the time being the filthy stigmas of Your "Common sense" and "good taste" are still present in our lines, these same lines for the first time already glimmer with the Summer Lightening of the New Coming Beauty of the Self-sufficient (self-centered) Word. (Lawton 52)

И если пока еще и в наших строках' остались грязныя каейма Ваших "Здраваго смысла" и "хорошаго вкуса" то все же на них уже трепещут впервые Зарницы Новой Грялушей Красоты Самоценнаго (самовитаго) Слова. (Burliuk et al. 4)

This declaration aligns the works of *Slap* with the "Word" brought to light in the work of Hylaea. In the collaborative framework of the book, Mayakovsky's poems take the word as a building block—as "self-sufficient" in form as color or line—and David Burliuk theorizes construction with minimal form in his essay, "Cubism" ("Kubizm"). As I have been suggesting, Burliuk's understanding of space provides a schema for thinking across the lines of painting and poetry in Mayakovsky's poems: "Painting is colored space. . . the simplest element of space is the point. its consequence is line. the consequence of line is surface. all spatial forms are reduced to these three elements. the direct consequence of line is plane" (qtd in Bowlt 70). In other words, the movement of a point in space creates a line; and the line further articulates its relations to space as the surface of a plane. In my reading

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of Mayakovsky's "Night," I will trace out this movement in space: each line spreads color and creates depth with the action of a brushstroke. By attending to "shifting frames," which Stapanian locates in the "opened form" of Mayakovsky's Cubo-Futurist cityscapes (12), I spotlight the de-centering of point of view, which shift along with the syntax, the operative structure of voice, rather than any one subject. In contrast to the dominance of Mayakovsky's "ia" (the larger-than-life first-person pronoun) characteristic of his later poems, textual modes of address emphasize eye movement over the embodiment of voice in "Night," organizing space by its own motion in the process of the text itself.

Each stanzaic unit of "Night" carries out a painterly gesture, not through any one subject-agent, but through a set of object-interactions. In the first four lines, a dynamic space materializes as color-forms move discretely and blend:

Red and white cast-off and crumpled,

to green were thrown ducats in handfuls,

and to black palms of run-away-together windows,

were passed out burning yellow cards.[75]

Багровый и белый отброшен и скомкан,

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[75] Translations of Mayakovsky's poems are my own where not otherwise noted.

в зеленый бросали горстями дукаты,

а черным ладоням сбежавшихся окон

раздали горящие желтые карты.   (Burliuk et al. 91)

In the first line, color substantives ("Red and white") and their modifiers ("cast-off and crumpled") present an after-image of movements: the past participles "otbroshen" and "skomkan" modify the form of the colors by indicating actions (casting off and crumpling) which have already been executed, altering objects in their relations to space. These modifiers perform movements in space in two directions, centrifugal ("cast-off" from a center) and centripetal ("crumpled" toward a center). At the first line break, the color palette turns "to green" ("v zelenyi") in another directional movement of line. "Red and white" blend into the pink of a dusk atmosphere, and the "green" below is streaked with the gold of "ducats." Stapanian notes that this "bold palette" displaces the natural interplay of colors to engage other forms of play, namely the game motif,[76] which overlays "nature's configuration" of nightfall (22). The passive verbal construct "were thrown" ("brosali") places the agency of this action on the objects themselves, the "ducats" inflecting the green portion of visual space with metallic sheen as they move along the arc of their trajectories. The plural partitive "handfuls" ("gorstiami") suggests

[76] Stapanian's discussion elucidates the Russian Futurists' veritable obsession with card games, and further unpacks this motif in "Night" (23), which is legible in the poem's red-white-black color scheme.

multiple gestures, each multiplying the game of chance with innumerable "ducats" "thrown." The next line break performs another transition of color "to black palms" ("a chernym ladoniam"). This surface stretches into space in the continuous image of "run-away-together windows." In Stapanian's reading, the windows suggest a displacement of point of view, running along with the windows (25). The reflexive verb ("sbezhavshikhsia") further decenters perspective by implying simultaneous centripetal and centrifugal movements of the windows. Continuing the game motif of the "ducats," the next line plays out the image of the "palms"; "burning yellow cards" "were passed out" "to black palms," enacting another color change. The action of spreading color is not carried out by any subject-agent, but by the modified objects themselves: the windows extend their blackness in the implicit act of the modifier "run-away-together" ("sbezhavshikhsia"), and the cards spread their fire in the passive past tense "were passed out/played out" ("razdali"). Although this final verb posits an unknown agent (an off-scene dealer), the action is in the cards, which light up the dark windows. Relationships between objects thus take place and give shape to space without any organizing center, without any iteration of the "ya." Objects are not described from a situated perspective; they are inscribed by the movement of the eye in reading through textual modes of address. The process of the text mobilizes elemental forms to act on each other in

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space, with the combined effect of making visible the nocturnal play of light in the city.

Suffusing the urbanscape with dynamism, "Night" attributes subjectivity to objects in the grammatical structure of phrases. The perspective of the poem shifts in the next stanzaic unit as parts of the city respond to its changing appearance:

> It was not strange for the boulevards and the square
>
> to see dark blue togas on the buildings.
>
> And earlier, like yellow wounds,
>
> running legs ringed with bracelets of fire.
>
> Бульварам и площади было не странно
>
> увидеть на зданиях синие тоги.
>
> И раньше бегущим, как жёлтые раны,
>
> огни обручали браслетами ноги.   (Burliuk et al. 91)

The impersonal construction "it was not strange" ("bylo ne stranno") imparts subjective feeling to the concrete masses of the "boulevards and the square," and implies that these inanimate objects have the capacity "to see" ("uvidet'"). Personified "buildings" wear clothing ("togi"), their towering figures casting "dark blue" shadows. As Stapanian observes, this "human framework" extends to the streets below, where "yellow"

runs like bodily "wounds" or "legs ringed with bracelets of fire" (28). The action of the "run-away-together" windows is reactivated here in the action of the "running legs": the participle "sbezhavshikhsia" can also mean "eloping" and the past tense verb "obruchali" refers to the exchange of wedding rings. The relationships between objects animate the city as it is seen from the perspective of the street—not from the position of someone (the lyric "I") who would bring these objects together in a located visual field. In the absence of Mayakovsky's "ia," sight is displaced onto sites, and intention belongs to the objects themselves, the word-forms on the page which enact the movement of color-forms constituting space.

Moreover, these objects are not singular and static, but in masses and in motion. The moving mass in the third stanzaic unit, the "crowd" ("Tolpa"), dynamizes space with its properties of matter, its density and forces of attraction:

The crowd—motley-coated, fleet-footed cat—

was swimming, bending, drawn by doors,

each wanted to drag even just a little bit

of largeness out of the laughter of a cast lump.

Толпа — пестрошерстая быстрая кошка —

плыла, изгибаясь, дверями влекома;

каждый хотел протащить хоть немножко

громаду из смеха отлитого кома.   (Burliuk et al. 91)

The "crowd" blends discrete bodies into one, cohering in its external relations, "swimming, bending, drawn by doors" ("plyla, izgibaias', dveriami vlekoma"). The comparison to a "cat" adds both texture ("pestrosherstaia") and movement ("bystraia") to the picture. Stapanian calls attention to idiomatic layers here: a twist on the modernist image of the "motley crowd" (*pestraya tolpa*) and a touch of frenzy from the colloquialism "like a cat on fire" (*kak ugorelaya koshka*) (30). This mass takes a subjective stance toward externality in that it "wanted" ("khotel") to interact with the space outside of it; the focus on "each" in intentionality, in actionable desire, sets spatial relationships in motion. The sound of laughter takes on physical dimensions—material, palpable, divisible, malleable, visual form. Matter moves in the action of the modifier "cast" ("otlitogo," in the sense of poured out, molded), recalling the tension between centripetal ("crumpled," "handfuls," "run-together") and centrifugal ("cast-off," "runaway," "thrown") forces operating on objects in the first stanzaic unit. Here, the tension between the forces of attraction operating on the mass and desire of "each" takes the form of the "cast lump," at once formed and formless, and the "little bit" of "largeness." Objects play out these paradoxes without any frame of

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reference other than the properties of objects in space, the material activated in the process of the text through textual modes of address.

When a first person subject finally appears in the last stanzaic unit of "Night," the picture teeters on a center. The "ia" takes position as one "feeling" object among objects:

I, feeling dresses calling paws,

dragged through a smile into their eyes, frightening

with bangs of a tin-plate, arabs hooted,

above a forehead a parrot's wing flowered.

Я, чувствуя платья зовущие лапы,

в глаза им улыбку протиснул; пугая

ударами в жесть, хохотали арапы,

над лбом расцветивши крыло попугая.

The lyric "I" takes position here as a center of happening, but not *the* center. It is a passive position, a conduit of "feeling," not "calling"; an object, not an agent. The "ia" performs a de-centering function in the form of a transmittable "smile," as pliable as the "laughter" in the previous stanzaic unit. Point of view is dispersed as the lyric "I" encounters other "eyes," "their eyes" referring either to the mass of dresses or the crowd more largely. With no fixed frame of reference, the

profusion of directional prepositions ("v glaza," "v zhest'," "nad lbom") adds to the confusion of effects, filling space with bursts of noise and color. The first-person subject becomes a center of forces in motion like any other object in the commotion. Mayakovsky's "ia" first appears as a word-form, a compositional mass with as much presence and power as a "cast lump."

Reducing the subject to an equally material form among forms in the process of the text allows for the expansion of space in "Night," unleashing the visual potencies of verbal expression. Insofar as Mayakovsky's "ia" is suppressed as the center of the poem, space is suffused with subjectivity, as in Mallarmé's "L'Azur," but without the struggle; where "L'Azur" blocks out the pure intentionality of the poet-subject in a failed creative act, "Night" exhibits the power of words in an enlarged scope of language creation. In both poems, textual modes of address diminish the poetic subject to draw the reader into the process of the text. These two early poems thus demonstrate how subjectivity is transformed into material—to be removed by Mallarmé as an imperfection, to be spread by Mayakovsky as an animating force. What happens, then, as the poetic subject disappears in Mallarmé's œuvre, and takes over the spaces of Mayakovsky's poems?

Poetry in Action: Igitur and the Mayakomorphist

The untameable skyscape in "L'Azur" reflects the sterility of self-consciousness issuing from the poetic subject's central presence in Mallarmé's early poems. The poet regretfully acknowledges this inferior quality in his *Parnasse* poems, which he separates in intention from his ideal work, the vision of *Hérodiade*, in his correspondence with Cazalis (May 1866): "aucun de ces poèmes n'ait été en réalité conçu en vue de la Beauté, mais plutôt comme autant d'intuitives révélations de mon tempérament" (*C* 1: 215). For Mallarmé, subjective intention debases the poem with tings of the personal ("mon temperament"). The ideal demands that the poet work to leave no trace but the space of the poem. Yet the rift between the ideal and the material widens, to Mallarmé's dismay, as he was striving to achieve the "Conception pure" in *Hérodiade*, while still grieving over the imperfection of his *Parnasse* poems. After this disastrous debut in print, Mallarmé devoted himself to *Hérodiade*, and from 1866 to 1867, he did not produce any new poems for publication (Bersani 25). He describes this "année effrayante" in a letter to Cazalis (May 1867), in which he claims to be "parfaitement mort," having arrived ("arrivé") at a state of "Pureté" (*C* 1: 240). This same letter contains Mallarmé's noted self-pronouncement of death: "C'est t'apprendre que je suis maintenant impersonnel et non plus Stéphane que tu as connu. — mais une aptitude qu'à l'Univers spirituel à se voir et à se développer, à travers ce qui fut moi" (*C* 1: 242). The death of Stéphane the person, so

the critical legend goes, is a condition of possibility for the impersonal subject to "se développer."

I want to argue, however, that the "ritual purification of his poems"—as Svetlana Boym apprehends Mallarmé's developmental pattern (40)—does not reach the point of separation or transcendence in poems written for publication, which remain woefully bound to the material realities of the poet's work: the financial pressure to publish, the commercial valuation of writing, the process of printing itself. As Leo Bersani suggests, the publication of the *Parnasse* poems, "a gesture of self-protection" assuring Mallarmé's status as a working poet (49), provided the necessary cover for him to pursue writing in private. It is here, in his more piecemeal writing—the labor of polishing pieces of *Hérodiade*, the letters detailing his process of purification, and other personal output (*poèmes d'occasion*, and other fragments)—that the work of de-personalization can take place. Ephemeral writing, or writing not intended expressly for publication (for print finality and publicity), serves as an outlet for purging undesirable trace elements: the material contingencies of poetry.

This idealistic and pragmatic purpose accounts for the fact that Mallarmé would accentuate the materiality of writing in various sorts of fragmentary texts that escape the closure of the published (polished) work. As Yulia Ryzhik elucidates in her study of Mallarmé's fascination

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with folds (books, fans, butterflies), the poet would often incorporate the material specificity of surfaces into the form of occasion-specific poems, gifts written on physical or virtual objects (e.g., *les eventails*, totaling twenty-two fan poems, 626). This generous practice betrays Mallarmé's preoccupation with materiality; through his intimate compositions, the poet attempted to segregate other types of work—markedly personal and formally material—from the preciously ethereal ideal. Binding the personal to the material dimension of this "other" writing aids in compartmentalizing the "pure" spaces of poems and those marked by other intentions. Mallarmé suggestively gestures toward this divide in his intimate letters, as he explains why he is writing to his friend Cazalis instead of working (Jan 1865): "J'avais voué ma soirée au travail, aussi, malgré la cruelle migraine qui me prive de ce Bonheur, ne sais-je me résoudre à entrer dans mon lit sans toucher à ma plume. Je te griffone donc quelques lignes" (*C* 1: 150). This casual remark belies a significant distinction between two antithetical acts of writing, "toucher à ma plume" and "te griffone donc quelques lignes," the latter being the consequence ("donc") of the inability to do the former, the intrusion of the poet's life circumstances into his art.

The word "donc" registers as potentially even more consequential, considering its synonymous identity with Igitur, functioning as "hence" or "therefore" in Latin, and as the name of the primordial hero in Mallarmé's discontinuous saga. Before he filled his days away from

poetry with the personal practice of writing hyper-material poems, fans

and other gift-objects, Mallarmé was producing radically immaterial

pieces of writing: the fragments gathered as the text of *Igitur ou La Folie*

d'Elbehnon (first published posthumously by the poet's son-in-law,

Edmond Bonniot, in 1925). These gestures of writing were not directed

toward publication; the fragments of Igitur were not formatted

permanently in black-on-white, but performed intimately with a

regulated voice (Steinmetz 133-40). The fragments of *Igitur* are perhaps

the most elusive of Mallarmé's projects (and the least comprehensible, as

the bewildering responses of his select audience, Catulle Mendes, his

wife Judith, and Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, suggest).[77] Moreover, it

is clear from his correspondence (to Cazalis, Nov. 14, 1869) that *Igitur*

was conceived as a decidedly personal project: "C'est un conte, par lequel

je veux terrasser le vieux monstre de l'Impuissance, son sujet, du reste,

afin de me cloîtrer dans un grand labeur déjà reétudié. S'il est fait (le

conte) je suis guéri" (*C* 1: 313). According to this statement, *Igitur* carries

out two related functions in Mallarmé's œuvre: it is a space set aside to

"terrasser le vieux monstre de l'Impuissance, son sujet," to bury a dead

subject, which is the failure of the personal or self-conscious poet-

subject; and it is a cure, purging all traces of the "vieux monstre," the

past inhibitions of self. *Igitur* thus prepares the way for the poet to enter

the sacred space that he envisions his ideal work to be—the cloister of

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[77] See Rosemary Lloyd, *Mallarmé: The Poet and his Circle*, 76.

poetry ("afin de me cloîtrer")—by providing a separate place of cleansing and burial. This cleansing was arguably even more effective in the non-place of the *Igitur* text, unspooled and unspoiled by the contingencies of the print medium prepared for publication. The process of the text defies the demands of the printed page for finality and fixity, while creating a virtual space, a situation of eternal impermanence.

To this paradoxical situation, the multiple genre identities of *Igitur* add the overall effect of unpredictable structures. Elisabeth A. Howe notes the mixed signals of genre throughout the layers of the text, from Igitur's monologic questions, to the "indications sceniques" belonging to theater, to the lyrical rhythms of the prose, to the third-person narration recalling Mallarmé's insistent "conte" label (359, 362). These interweaving structures create the overall effect of self-interrupting movement, the poetic language drawing the horizontal flow of the narration down cascading effects (Howe 364), while the elements of the scene, like stage directions, fill out the space of action, creating depth and a spectator's distance. These signals of the text in process, serving as textual modes of address, trace out an indefinable space of composition.

By calling *Igitur* "un conte," Mallarmé presses on the distinction of this unpolished work from poetry. Further, the conditional "S'il est fait" defines the work in terms of the process, rather than a finished product.

And, indeed, *Igitur* "est fait" as a collection of fragments—purposely tentative and not meant for publication. Moreover, the fragmentary structure of Igitur resists the conventions of "un conte," destabilizing narrative perspective and progression. Maurice Blanchot emphasizes the incompletion of *Igitur* as operative in Mallarmé's endeavor: "C'est plutôt par son abandon qu'*Igitur*, œuvre non pas inachevée, mais délaissée, annonce cet échec, par la retrouve son sens, échappe à la naïveté d'une entreprise réussie pour devenir la force et la hantise de l'interminable" (118). *Igitur* is composed of a variety of fragments—*Notes, Morceaux, Touches, Déchets, Ébauches, Fragments d'ébauches, Brouillon*—that seem to "replay one another," as Boym aptly points out, from different perspectives (56). Altogether, these shifting frames—sliding fragments of text with frayed edges, subject transpositions, and destabilized (multiple) genre structures—compose a space of text in process, permanently in process, and thus a space for the impermanence of writing to take place.

It is not without difficulty then, to encounter *Igitur* in Mallarmé's *Œuvres complètes*. As Mallarmé scholar Robert Green Cohn explains in a note to the preface of his insightful post-structuralist study, *Igitur*, the publishing history of Mallarmé's text—from the original version printed by Gallimard, to the Pléiade edition, to the 1976 version edited by Yves Bonnefoy (who is the source Cohn credits for this assertion)—produced no "important variants" from the manuscript. Referring to the Pléiade edition, then, Cohn categorizes the sections of the text: "After two

tentative introductory passages (*Ancienne Étude* and *4 Morceaux*), Mallarmé's sketchy text is made up of five sections, each identified by a roman numeral. The rest is variant passages called *Touches* (or *Scolies*), which I identify by the letter T." Here, parts of the text ("introductory passages," "variant passages") are labeled relative to a whole that did not exist to these parts; that is to say, the fragments of *Igitur* were not composed to be part of a finished text. Cohn's presentation of *Igitur*, while unquestionably valid and helpful, imposes a conceptual structure on the text from outside its bounds, that is, the bounds of the book or of the printed text. This structure serves the purpose of Cohn's admirable intent to elucidate the text, in the exhaustively performative style of his work, earning him the titles of "posthumous Mallarmé" (Michael Deguy) and "Mallarmé's accomplice" (Julia Kristeva); Cohn further reveals his exegetical intention here, as he nonchalantly accounts for his selective reading: "In these reworkings of the main text [the so-called *Touches*] we will occasionally skip passages that merely duplicate previous ones. But there is a great deal that is new, and some of it throws light on obscure meanings" (*Igitur* 141). Rather than attempt to reproduce the value of this reading practice and its ideology, reading taken to be a progressive movement toward continually new and increasingly less obscure

material, I want to approach the text attuned to the ways in which the text "throws light" on the meanings in process.[78]

Igitur consists of fragments filed into loosely defined containers: [Notes 1], [Notes 2], [Ébauches]. Since my purposes are not to offer a complete exegesis of an incomplete work, the fragments gathered in the first collation alone ([Notes 1] in the Pléiade version) suffice to demonstrate the operations of Mallarmé's text by examining the configuration of space in which the subject Igitur is located. These pieces of writing bear headings and subheadings highlighting their tentative, fragmentary quality: "Déchet," "Morceaux," "Peut-être morceau." Each approach to writing constitutes a subject position, a different point of access to the space in which Igitur's fateful act is bound to take place. In the first fragment (first in editorial order), third-person perspective registers the voice of Igitur –"il dit « pas encore! »"—rising to meet the "souffles de ses ancêtres" in a dark, enclosed, yet undefined space (OC 1: 838). The direct link between voice and subjectivity is established here before Igitur is even named, before the causal link ("hence") is effectively made. But it is not through voice that Igitur intends to make something of his existence; it is in the voiceless act of breathing: "Lui-même, à la fin, quand les bruits auront disparu, tirera une preuve de quelque chose de grand (pas d'astres? le hasard annulé?) de ce simple fait qu'il peut

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[78] For detailed commentary on the text, see Cohn, Igitur (65-140).

causer l'ombre en soufflant sur la lumière." By breathing on the candle, Igitur would make a testimony, a moving image of self-consciousness in the play of light and shadow, which would also be the "preuve de quelque chose de grand." The non-verbal act creates a tenuous presence in space, a flickering evocative of Mallarméan poiesis at its best, giving rise to forms floating in the blank space of the page. In the process of the *Igitur* text, however, there is no intended page—no "preuve" to be published in print, no fixed image of the virtually silent creative act; this absence of finality is the core of the *Igitur* project.

Instead of black on white, Igitur performs the act of poiesis in the play of shadows—but is it only his shadow, his self-image? In this connection, Leo Bersani suggests that *Igitur* takes the "specular securities" of Mallarmé's early poems (i.e., windows, mirrors) and "abandons [them] for shadows" in an attempt to strip the subject of the contingencies of a unified "person" (17). This reduction is carried out on the subject himself—Igitur isolated in his own thought—but also on the space in which he exists, which itself exists only in the light of a candle and in the sound of breathing. A different view of the subject in space, given at the end of *Notes 1*, elucidates, or rather, complicates the situation of the text; the fragment labeled "Ig. Déchet" modifies Igitur's initial plea by replaying it in the first person: "Écoutez, ma race, avant de souffler ma bougie—le compte que j'ai à vous rendre de ma vie—Ici: névrose, ennui, (ou Absolu?)" (*OC* 1: 842). This version reveals that

Igitur's life depends on the burning candle; when it is extinguished, there will be no record of his existence, already quivering in the candlelight. He would thus realize "quelque chose de grand" at the risk of blowing the candle completely out, thereby achieving nothing but darkness. The voice of Igitur calls out to preserve the account of his life ("le compte que j'ai vous rendre de ma vie"), which is what can be seen in the space of composition, or the scene of writing—perhaps no more than a spectacle of the self. Igitur posits an absolute identity between space and his own subjective state ("Ici: névrose, ennui"), but here, "Ici" could also be absolute; the third term "(ou Absolu?)" opens another realm of possibility, in which Igitur is not enclosed in self-consciousness. In teasing out the relationships between subject, spectacle, and space, Evlyn Gould's construct of "visual theater" is helpful. In this framework, Mallarmé stages what cannot be staged physically *virtually*, through a psychic apparatus operating on the subject in the text who is simultaneously object and spectator (142; 144). Although Gould does not include *Igitur* as a work of "Virtual Theater" (she focuses appropriately on the unstageable plays, *Hérodiade* and *L'après-midi d'un faune*), I think that the fragments exemplify "the unanchored spectacle of a kind of reified subjectivity" that is performed in the process of the *Igitur* text (164). By replaying the moment of deferred darkness, drawing out its nuances, *Igitur* multiplies voices in shifting scenes, displacing the originating center, and resisting coalescence in fixable space. The space

of the unseen text—its potential voicing in lieu of visualizing—mirrors this mobility.

The subject in *Igitur* embodies a general lack of identity based on stable constructs, and thus escapes the contingencies of the personal self into space itself. Igitur blends into shadows as his intentions are voiced through the interplay of pronouns. In the collated text, the "identities" belonging to personal pronouns become "interchangeable," as Boym argues in her analysis (26). But at other times, shifting pronouns reaffirm the contingencies of these "identities." In the first of the "Morceaux," labeled "Le Minuit," Igitur is not only both "il" and "je," but also "vous": "Sifflements dans l'escalier. «Vous avez tort» nulle émotion" (*OC* 1: 838). Here, Igitur is the object of address (of the "Sifflements") and the self-critical subject registering "nulle émotion." In a sudden turn of address, "vous" becomes the "non-moi": "Vous, mathématiciens expîrates—moi projeté absolu." The "moi" is constituted in the opposition to "vous" as the incalculable "projeté absolu." In the next utterance, the projection "moi" is further elaborated in the first person, but the "je" is abandoned, inessential to the act: "Devais finir en Infini. Simplement parole et geste." This assertion of the subject seems to come from the shadows, from space itself, but then immediately resolves again into the "je": "Quant à ce que je vous dis, pour expliquer ma vie. Rien ne restera de nous." Both "je" and "vous" are subsumed into the fleeting "nous"—a contingency of the moment, of the space precariously illuminated by the

candle. In this situation, the "je" is no more than a position for projecting voice, and no less contingent on the unpredictable act of writing than "vous" or "nous"—equally immaterial in the process of the unfinished writing, the unprinted space of the text not-for-publishing purposes.

Meta-commentary on the situation of *Igitur* adds another dimension to the text: the performative. Igitur's intentions are carried out, and his absence (darkness where there was his image in light; breath where there was his voice) is the "Preuve": "Un des actes de l'univers vient d'être commis là. Plus rien, restait le souffle, fin de parole et geste unis—souffle la bougie de l'être, par quoi tout à été. Preuve. (Creuser tout cela)" (*OC* 1: 838). It all hangs on a breath, "Plus rien." But this act of self-erasure is not the final act of *Igitur*; it is the prelude to the act of further thought: "(Creuser tout cela)." Igitur's act is not complete, for the "preuve" must be dug out, thought through the fragments. In this parenthetical turn of address, it all hangs in the balance of unfinished writing—and reading. As Robert Pickering notes in the later treatment of the frequent word "creuser" in Paul Valéry's *Cahiers*, this call to action points to the layering of the text in process, the intertwining of writing and reading in a structured space of interaction, of performative potential—the interface of the page (63). To some extent, *Igitur* is an interface without a face, without a continuous surface of page, only the edges of fragments suggesting a projected space, unfolding in the momentary performance of the text.

Textual modes of address in *Igitur* activate sites of incompletion, suspending the scenario in the possibilities of reading. *Igitur* gestures toward the act of reading in italicized commentary on the fragments:

> Ce conte s'adresse à l'Intelligence du lecteur qui met les choses en scène, elle-même.
>
> « Que, etc.
>
> Avant de sortir de la chambre—Oui, c'est là qu'en sont les choses— ma personne gêne—et le Néant est là. Je ne chercherai pas à les changer.   (*OC* 1: 839)

The reference to "ce conte" and its "lecteur" engages the "play" (or "replay") function of reading (Boym 56). But it is not any historical "lecteur" who is addressed here; it is not a reader projected outside the text, but rather the abiding ideal of "Intelligence" where "les choses" come together as a discernable scene. Here, Victor Kaufman's formulation of address in *Le Livre et ses adresses* comes to aid in understanding the relationship between the non-public text and the reader. As Kaufman explains in his study of the "nature circonstancielle" of Mallarmé's writing, "[c]haque texte . . . témoigne d'un rapport singulier à l'Autre, dans lequel se constitue 'l'identité' du lecteur . . . une possibilité contractuelle spécifique que le texte ne cesse de figurer, pour s'en autoriser en retour" (10). In the case of *Igitur*, which eschews conventional structures of reading (i.e., genre, the format of the printed

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page), textual modes of address establish the situation of the text in the ephemeral space projected by the reader. The fragments constitute signposts for the process of creating the imaginary space, in which there is at once presence ("Oui, c'est là qu'en sont les choses") and absence ("et le Néant est là"). Igitur incorporates the unifying figment of the reader into the text, but not as a subject ("vous") who would fill in the blanks of erasure. "Vous" is no less the play of shadows than Igitur himself, a phantom presence echoing the vacancy, the void of the unpublished text, to affirm the existence of the pure idea.

By repeatedly recalling the process of the text that keeps the space (and the subject) alive and flickering, *Igitur* also stages its own escape from the contingencies of print materiality. Igitur the persona is an embodiment of self-reflexive subjectivity and of syntax, an impersonal function of language—meaning "therefore" or "hence" in Latin, therefore meaning nothing but nonsense outside a particular situation in language structure (Boym 56). Hence the transitional position of *Igitur* in Mallarmé's poetics, serving as a passage from the drama of the subject to "the drama of syntax itself" (Boym 57), an inward turn that folds the text on itself. Further suggesting this transition, Igitur's second act, "Le Coup de dés," previews the syntactical performance of Mallarmé's late composition, *Un coup de dés.* Igitur must throw the dice to play the game of chance against contingency. For Igitur, to roll the dice is to "reconnaître que c'est une chance unique < contre 11 > que cela soit

arrivé ainsi" (*OC* 1: 839). The odds are stacked against the one outcome of Igitur's thought, the necessity of all that has ever been and is. *Igitur* thus presents "Le Coup de dés" as a cure of solipsism, of self-contained consciousness:

> Bref dans un acte où le hasard est en jeu, c'est toujours le hasard qui accomplit sa propre Idée en s'affirmant ou se niant. Devant son existence la négation et l'affirmation viennent échouer. Il contient l'Absurde—l'implique, mais à l'état latent et l'empêche d'exister: ce qui permet à l'Infini d'être.

By relinquishing thought to chance in the act of rolling the dice, Igitur would affirm the existence of "l'Infini" in generating possibilities in the act-in-progress, but chance would affirm the necessity of the finite in negating all other possibilities in the accomplished act. In the process of the text, the infinite play of possibilities stops on the dice: "Mais l'Acte s'accomplit. Alors son moi se manifeste par ceci qu'il reprend la Folie: admet l'acte, et, volontairement, retrouve l'Idée, en tant qu'Idée: et l'Acte (quelque [sic] soit la puissance qui l'ait guidé) ayant nié le hazard, il en conclut que l'Idée a été nécessaire" (*OC* 1: 840). The act has negated chance to affirm necessity by bracketing Igitur, the subject-as-agent. A living, breathing Igitur is no longer necessary; his death is necessary for the affirmation of the "Absolu," "sauf que mouvement (personne!) rendu à l'Infini." Igitur is already "au tombeau" when the "mouvement" of the

dice, "Le coup de dés," takes place (*OC* 1: 839). To bury Igitur is to "terrasser le vieux monstre de l'Impuissance, son sujet," such that space resonates with untold vibrations of voice: "negations différentes fait l'infini, toute une mer incohérente où la parole remue à jamais impuissante / Tandis qu'en haut la lumière" (*OC* 1: 842). Igitur writes his own removal, first by effacing his self-reflection in the specular shadows, then by conceding his life to the game of chance, and in his place, leaves an evacuated space for "pure" poetry to take place.

The analogy between the text and Text emerges from the shadows of *Igitur*: the idea is infinite, infinitely possible, until the act—rolling the one number combination, writing down the one form—determines and irreversibly fixes the outcome. However, in Mallarmé's unfinished writing, the work of *Igitur* as an unpublished text, the act is not accomplished, and "La Parole" remains the closest to equivalent to the pure form of "La Pensée." The subject is extinguished and yet the space, the absolute existence of the idea, remains.

For Mayakovsky, the poetic subject proves irrepressible, inseparable from voice. Indeed, the near-absence of the "I" in "Night" is notable because it becomes so notoriously dominant as Mayakovsky develops as a poet. The first-person pronoun comes into its celebrated

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form, the conduit of Mayakovsky's booming voice, in his short lyrics from 1913—"And Could You?" and "I," titles that betray the poet's concern with subject positions. As I unpack the operative images in these poems, I will demonstrate Mayakovsky's amplifying techniques: manipulating the form of the poetic subject as material in the process of the text to make space for voice. In these poems, the "ia" not only alters space, but also comes to assume the physical form of space, multiplying the personal self to reach the non-self—the other, the outside—through a larger-than-life voice.

In "And Could You?" the subject remains separate from space. The opening lines of the poem establish the premise of the question, the effectual lyric "I"; this poet-subject is fleshed out in iterations of the "ya," a series of actions altering spaces:

I suddenly smeared the weekday map,

splashing color from a glass;

I have shown on a dish of gelatin

the ocean's slanting cheekbones.

Я сразу смазал карту будня,

плеснувши краску из стакана;

я показал на блюде студня

косые скулы океана.   (*Sobranie sochinenii* 1: 40)[79]

These straightforward subject-verb constructions ("Ya srazu smazal," "ya pokazal") carry the force of the action from subject directly to object. In the concrete language of the lines, space materializes and transforms, from the defined area of "the weekday map" ("kartu budnia") to the palpable medium of the "dish of gelatin" ("bliudne stydne"). Accentuating this materiality, the poem foregrounds the means of manufacture in the "color" (also translatable as "paint") spilling from a container ("iz stakana") and the bone-material of the "gelatin" ("studne") molded into the shape of bone. These entities serve as ekphrastic objects lending spatiality to the arrangement of words on the page. In short, each action alters space in a metaphor for the act of creating poetry. In this frame of "work," textual modes of address entice the reader with defamiliarized pieces of a dynamic puzzle to complete, material objects to be shaped into spaces by the process of the text.

In the next composite image, the act of poetry is projected into social space, while displacing the "ia" as the sole agent: "On the scale of an iron fish / I have read the calls of new lips" ("Na cheshue zhestianoi ryby /prochel ya zovy novykh gub"). Here, a measure of space on a street sign (in the indexical shape of fish) becomes a space for poetry, for giving form to "calls." The inversion of the subject and verb ("prochel ia")

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[79] Hereafter, *SS.*

displaces the subject to privilege the act of reading and its object. But it is still the "ia" giving form to the words of "new lips," making them legible. This signboard places the act of reading in the midst of an urban environment, which thus becomes a myriad of surfaces for poetry, soundboards. The space administered by the poet-subject expands to surfaces off the page, to other materials called into action, figuratively projecting voice beyond the boundaries of the lyric poem.

In "And Could You?" the role of the lyric "I" is to reveal spaces of potential poetry. The turn of address in the final lines of the poem make the means of production, of action, available to "you":

And you,

could you

play a nocturne

on the flute of drainpipes?

А вы
ноктюрн сыграть
могли бы
на флейте водосточных труб?   (*SS* 1: 40)

The sudden turn of "And" ("A," perhaps better translated as the more abrupt "But") marks a contrast between the lyric "I"—qualified by the actions completed in the first lines—and "you" (the plural "vy"). The

separation of "you" and "could" ("mogli by") draws out the provocation of the question, which could be read as self-promotional sarcasm (*you could never do what I have done*) or as a motivational dare (*well, could you? prove it*). In any case, the question-form puts the proven actions of the lyric "I" and the potential ability of the provoked "you" in competition. The reference to urban infrastructure projects poetry into the cityscape— its instrument, materials, its auditorium, its very making; the space of the page thus extends into social space with the gesture of the lyric "I," extending the agency of the poet-subject, the transformative power of voice, to the addressee. This is an instance of Mayakovsky calling his audience into complicity, calling the reader "to action . . . using the materiality of his body and his voice as a catalyst" (Potter 10).

Mayakovsky scales up this materiality in the poem entitled "Ia," the titular lyric "I" giving form to the more famed voice of Mayakovsky, who "shouts like a thousand-throated public square" (Chukovsky 42). Already the "ia" is too confining for this voice, which spills out into social space through extensions of the poet's body. The relationship between self and what lies outside the self is one of identity through absolute metaphor:

> Along the bridge
>
> of my trodden soul
>
> the steps of the mad

twist the feet of hard phrases.

По мостовой

моей души изъезженной

шаги помешанных

вьют жестких фраз пяты.   (*SS* 1: 32)

In this image, a part of the poet, "my trodden soul," stretched out in
exaggeration, becomes a part of the city's infrastructure, a "bridge." In
his study of urban metaphorical devices, Daniel Potter precisely
describes Mayakovsky's self-figuration as "a reversal of functions of tenor
and vehicle" (16). These functions collapse in my term "absolute
metaphor"; there is no longer comparison, but complete identification
between subject and space. Leon Trotsky famously calls this the device of
"a Mayakomorphist [who] populates the squares, the streets, and the
fields of the revolution only with himself" (129). This "revolution" takes
place on the poet himself; the allusions to poetry in "feet" ("piaty") and
"phrases" ("fraz") and to the act of making ("v'iut") pit the objectified
subject against the clamor outside in the form of trampled space.[80] The
"ia" does not appear in the body of the poem, only in the title; the verb
"idu" ("walk") goes alone. The solitary walk of the urban poet-subject, as
Potter observes, displaces "unitary perspective" and blurs the line

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[80] Chukovsky claims that Mayakovsky's "only aim is to canonize his street rhythms in
spite of all the laws of prosody," hence the antagonism of "feet" against the poet's soul
as the street (51).

between "subjective interiority" and exteriority (29). The battle in the short poem "I"—the battle to be space, to embody, and to body forth—stretches to the sky in "A Cloud in Trousers." This four-part saga is not only an "expansion," but a "multiplication of the self on the street" (Potter 29).

The "Prologue" to "A Cloud in Trousers" uses absolute metaphor to do without the lyric "I," creating spaces in the bodying forth of voice. By taking substantive forms instead of the subject pronoun (for readability the "I" is given in the English translation[81]), Mayakovsky's voice registers in its earth-shaking effects on external space: "Shaking the world with my voice and grinning, / I pass you by, --handsome, / Twentytwoyearold" ("Mir ogromiv moshch'iu golosa, / idu—krasivyi, / dvadtsatidvukhletnii" *SS* 99). The verb "idu" goes alone, without the "ia." Voice is not reduced to a linguistic construct; it conquers space. As Potter explains, voice must have mass in "a poetry of the city that would have massiveness as the subject and the masses as audience" (10). The poetic subject takes a variety of spatial forms, shaping voice according to the situation of address. In the titular form of the poem, the "cloud in trousers," the speaker becomes a massive mockery of the addressee:

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[81] Since I am interested in the broad-brush images rather than the syntactical details in my reading of this poem, I am using the online translation by Andrey Kneller (*Unlikely Stories*). I will note discrepancies as they arise, especially having to do with the appearance (the non-appearance) of the first person subject in Russian.

If you wish—

I'll rage on raw meat like a vandal

Or change into hues that the sunrise arouses,

If you wish—

I can be irreproachably gentle,

Not a man—but a cloud in trousers.

Хотите—

буду от мяса бешеный

—и, как небо, меняя тона—

хотите—

буду безукоризненно нежный,

не мужчина, а — облако в штанах!　　　(*SS* 1: 99-100)

This metamorphosis—or "Mayakomorphism," to recast Trotsky's epithet—disperses voice into a gathering of particles. The "cloud" is only one of many condensed forms that the subject takes throughout the poem: an unrecognizable hulk ["You wouldn't recognize me if you knew me prior: / A bulk of sinews" ("Menia seichas uznat' ne mogli by / zhilistaia gromadina")], a "clod" ("glube")—any hard form will do:

Because for oneself it doesn't matter

Whether you're cast of copper

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Or whether the heart is cold metal.

At night, you want to wrap your clamor

In something feminine,

Gentle.

Ведь для себя не важно

и то, что бронзовый,

и то, что сердце— холодной железкою.

Ночью хочется звон свой

спрятать в мягкое,

в женское.   (*SS* 1: 100)

The "Cloud" subject, a victim of unrequited love, assumes a variety of

forms in the approach of the personal self to the pursued other, basically

taking any opposite form (the gentle cloud, the bulky flesh, or the hard

lump of metal). The contrast in properties of matter plays "the dialectical

game of the I and the non-I" that Gaston Bachelard studies in his

phenomenological poetics, in which images "give concrete evidence of the

values of inhabited space, of the non-I that protects the I" (5).

Mayakovsky's "ia" changes into an array of spatial forms—a cloud, a

clod, a cast lump—in self-defense, exposing personal vulnerabilities as

protection, but also in aggression, transforming personal vulnerabilities

into powerful arms. As Roman Jakobson relates in a tone of endearment,

"stasis" was the "primordial enemy of the poet . . . and the exact

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equivalent for this enmity would be the antimony of the 'I' and the 'not-I'"
(278-79). Mayakovsky wages this battle by charging spaces with the
vibrations of subjectivity in voice. The range of spatial embodiments in "A
Cloud in Trousers" stages the transformative process of the poetic text,
giving form to voice by melding verbal and visual forms in space.

In resisting the scope of the lyric poem with its expansive dramatic
structure, "A Cloud in Trousers" provides ample evidence of
Mayakovsky's struggle to find a form for voice, suggesting that voice
must take other spatial forms simply because the lyric "I" is never the
right size. This struggle to reach outside the self is played out against the
window:

And thus,

Enormous,

I hunch in the frame,

And with my forehead, I melt the window glass.

И вот,

громадный,

горблюсь в окне,

плавлю лбом стекло окошечное.   (*SS* 1: 101)

The spatial dimensions of the subject—too large to be at ease inside or to
pass outside—augments the tension between self and not-self. To some

extent, Mayakovsky's "I" resists the "horrible" truth of Bachelard's poetics of space: "Space is nothing but a horrible outside-inside" (218). Mayakovsky's voice overcomes the outside/inside division by identifying with space. In the first part of "A Cloud in Trousers," a crisis of subjectivity is a collapsing house: "On the ground floor, plaster was falling fast" ("Rukhnula shtukaturka v nizhnem etazhe" *SS* 1: 102). Outpourings of emotion are the flames of a burning building:

> Every word,
>
> Whether funny or crude,
>
> That he spews from his scorching mouth,
>
> Jumps like a naked prostitute
>
> From a burning brothel.

> Каждое слова,
> даже шутка,
> которые изрыгает обгорающим ртом он,
> выбрасывается, как голая проститутка
> из горящего публичного дома.   (*SS* 1: 104)

As this passage exemplifies, Mayakovsky's voice is amplified through self-identification with troubled spaces, expressing the strife of the subject, straining to reach beyond the construct of the poet as personal self.

Further, the spatiality of the "ia" in "A Cloud in Trousers" provides for the manipulation and multiplication of expressive forms. The separation of subject and voice is explicit in the judgment of the "I" as too constraining in size:

And I feel-

"I"

Is too small to fit me.

Someone inside me is getting smothered.

И чувствую—

« я »

для меня мало.

Кто-то из меня вырывается упрямо.   (*SS* 1: 103)

In this confession, Mayakovsky's voice stirs restlessly, taking on a life of its own, separate from the iterations of the "I," which are bound by the conventions of lyric form.

In the radical projection of voice, "A Cloud in Trousers" echoes Mayakovsky's *Tragedy*, in which the self is de-constructed to enable the construction of space. *A Tragedy* breaks from the lines of lyric form with typographic novelty, corresponding to the interacting visual elements and the lines delivered on stage by a motley crew of Mayakovskys. The dramatic text uses the "ia" as material for shaping, as one of many

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compositional forms in space, performing on the page what was also performed on the stage. Mayakovsky's play multiplies the one—the person, the voice of the poet—into numbers, rising up against the agency of objects. In this sense, the many roles of Mayakovsky entertain the possibility of Mallarmé's roll of the dice: what happens if words on the page take initiative?

Scattering into Spaces: *Un Coup de dés* and *A Tragedy*

In *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, Stéphane Mallarmé scatters simultaneously verbal and visual particles of language—bearing phonemic, semantic, graphical, and syntactical valences—across the white expanse of several pages. I say *several* because the original *Cosmopolis* version of the poem only comprises nine single pages, whereas the more final and critically authoritative version, following the indications of Mallarmé's last intention closely, yet incompletely (since Mallarmé was revising for the deluxe book edition at the time of his death) contains eleven pages in tandem, such that the two sides laid open across the fold count as one page spread.[82] As Robert Greer Cohn

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[82] Robert Greer Cohn's exegesis of *Un coup de dés* makes a case for the pivotal significance of the page sequence in a page-by-page analysis, mapping out the development of the sciences and arts: "metaphysics (or epistemology; also overtones of astronomy) Pages 1 and 2; the physical sciences, Page 3; the biological sciences, Page 4; the social sciences, Page 5; early art and ritual, Page 6; drama (public art), Page 7; poetry (private art), Page 8; synthesis of all the arts, Page 9. After this comes the return to empty ocean, Page 10, and lonely space, Page 11, with a single constellation as the last dying cluster of reality, multiplicity returning to the One from which it emerged" (*Exegesis* 11). See also Cohn, *Mallarmé's Masterwork: New Findings* (1966).

explains in a note to his exegesis of the poem, the original version of *Un coup de dés* in *Cosmopolis* "was printed in normal page-sequence and therefore did not render Mallarmé's full and final intentions" (*Exegesis* 3). Cohn then dismisses the version as "of little interest" on these grounds of intentionality and finality. But the original version of "Un coup de dés" holds greater interest for my purpose here, which is to incorporate the material dimension of the poem's "difficulty" (to modify Malcolm Bowie's term) into my presentation of the text.

For one, Mallarme did intend, albeit under specific, limiting material circumstances, for the poem to appear as it did in *Cosmopolis*. Here is Paul Valéry quoting Mallarmé in the act of sharing his revisions for publication in the magazine:

> Le 30 mars 1897, me donnant les épreuves corrigées du texte que devait publier Cosmopolis, il me dit avec un admirable sourire, ornement du plus pur orgueil inspiré à un homme par son sentiment de l'univers: "Ne trouvez-vous pas que c'est un acte de démence?" (16)

As this anecdote confirms, Mallarmé adapted the text of "Un coup de dés" expressly for publication in *Cosmopoli*s; it is this version of the text that he presents to Valéry as "un acte de démence." Is the poem itself the "act of démence" or the act of publishing it—*this* version of the text, the packaging of his cosmic intention for commercial publication in

Cosmopolis (or in any periodical, for that matter)? Mallarme acknowledges the incongruity of the venue, if not the regrettable inadequacy of publishing in general, in a letter to André Gide discussing the typographic setting of the piece:

> Le poème, écrit-il, s'imprime, en ce moment, tel que je l'ai conçu quant à la pagination, où est tout l'effet. Tel mot en gros caractères à lui seul demande toute une page de blanc, et je crois être sur de l'effet . . . La constellation y affectera, d'après des lois exactes, et autant qu'il est permis à un texte imprimé, fatalement une allure de constellation. Le vaisseau y donne de la bande, du haut d'une page au bas de l'autre, etc.; car, et c'est là tout le point de vue, (qu'il me fallut omettre dans un périodique), le rythme d'une phrase au sujet d'un acte, ou même d'un objet, n'a de sens que s'il les imite, et figuré sur le papier, reprise par la lecture à l'estampe originelle, n'en sait rendre, malgré tout, quelque chose.
>
> (qtd in Valéry 19)

Mallarmé clarifies his intention here exactly as it was not feasible in *Cosmopolis*: the pagination spreading over the fold, allowing space for the isolate words of greatest density and for the constellating figure to emerge in full bloom (in full-page spreads). He does not fail to mention, in parentheses, the omission required by the publishing venue as a necessary loss of "tout le point de vue" of the poem: the transversal page

format that structures the flow of the text-as-space ("du haut d'une page au bas de l'autre"). The page would be an interface displaying the figure of the process itself, "le rythme" of the interaction, giving continual rise to "quelque chose" in reading. With such a meticulous design in mind, and given Mallarme's extreme perfectionism (remember his pain over the *Parnasse* misprint of his poems), why would he agree to publish *Un coup de dés* in *Cosmopolis*? It is obvious how the initial printing reduces the poem, but I want to speculate about how the specific print environment also enriches Mallarmé's work: in the fashion of Mallarmé's *poèmes d'occasion*, publishing in constraining circumstances is a working out of such material contingencies.

From the more situated standpoint of reading, "Un coup de dés" becomes a public intervention in the periodical, where it interrupts the easy exchange of currency. As Jacques Rancière explains in *L'espace des mots*, the spatial organization of *Un coup de dés* orients the reader to "[l]'esthétique comme forme d'économie," its diagonal length canvassing "l'espace horizontale de l'échange marchand, communicationnel et démocratique" and "l'espace verticale d'une grandeur commune" as in a firework display or an ever-present constellation (17-8). This textual intersection expands the core duality of "Crise de vers": "le double état de la parole, brut et immédiat ici, là essentiel" (*OC* 2: 212). In this regard, the unorthodox structure of the reading experience in *Un coup de dés* inserts a space of creative processing into commoditized discourse, a

space in which Mallarmé already had his hand as editor and content-producer of his own magazine, *La Dernière mode*.[83]

By placing the poem in the periodical context, I want to consider how the appearance of the text in this print environment initiates the imaginative process of *Un coup de dés*. Jean-Luc Steinmetz provides this serviceable description of the poem as it appeared in the May 1897 issue of *Cosmopolis*: "le numéro de la revue internationale *Cosmopolis* où les lecteurs, entre autres singularités, peuvent découvrir de la page 417 à la page 428, juste après un texte d'Anatole France (de l'Académie Française), un curieux dispositif typographique éclairé par un titre aux allures de proverb" (447). Steinmetz sets up an encounter with a surprising, even out-of-place find, a curiosity with the uncanny ring of common experience ("aux allures de proverb"), yet decidedly unusual and unexpected; indeed, the poem comes as an editorial counter to the "old school" reputation of the publication (note the mention of Anatole France's Académie credentials). Steinmetz also makes an intriguing suggestion in going so far as to link the title of the magazine to the poem's ambitious content: "Un long text, donc, peut-être inspiré par le titre même de la revue où il doit figurer: *Cosmopolis.* Confrontation avec le cosmos ou la cosmogonie de l'esprit" (441). The irony of this connection is that *Cosmopolis* solicited Mallarmé's contribution (via his

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[83] See P. N. Furbank and Alex Cain, eds. *Mallarmé on Fashion: A Translation of the Fashion Magazine, La Dernière mode, With Commentary* (2004).

friend Edmund Gosse in London) to show its readers that it could be more cosmopolitan, that it did have the pulse of the literary scene (Mus 3). In response to this proposition, as David Mus puts it in the preface to his facsimile edition, "Le maître releva le défi, en acceptant que son poème paraisse sous la forme que voici, en mai 1897." Did Mallarmé accept the invitation, the marketing outreach, as a challenge somehow suiting his defiant text? His playful air about the "act de démence" in Valéry's account is certainly suggestive in this regard.

To turn this question into a more productive inquiry, I want to demonstrate how the text is equipped to respond to the challenge: how the form of the text structures the production of meaning. Even as a stand-alone text, *Un coup de dés* unfolds as a space apart from the marketplace; in the magazine, the poem pivots inside the space of commercial discourse, neutralizing the conventional reading practices activated by this space with its bewildering interface. As Valéry elucidates, each page of the poem imposes a "unité visuelle":

> une page, dans son système, doit, s'adressant au coup d'oeil qui
>
> précède et enveloppe la lecture, "intimer" le mouvement de la
>
> composition; faire pressentir, par une sorte d'intuition matérielle,
>
> par une harmonie préétablie entre nos divers modes de perception,
>
> ou entre les différences de marche de nos sens, —ce qui va se
>
> produire à l'intelligence. Il introduit une lecture superficielle, qu'il

enchaine à la lecture linéaire; c'était enrichir le domaine littéraire

d'une deuxième dimension.   (18-9)

To lay my own emphasis on Valéry's phrase, the text addresses the eye

as a unified space ("une page … s'adressant au coup d'oeil") to initiate

the process nested within it. Each page contains the forward momentum

that moves the interaction of reading through the space created in the

process of the poem, a multi-dimensional space emerging through

multitudinous layers of language material and multiple levels of reading.

Un coup de dés thus enables plurality and productivity through textual

modes of address, indicating the process of the text through space.

By pointing out ways in which the poem calls attention to itself as

a text in process, my approach to *Un coup de dés* does not intend to

perform a reading, but rather to highlight the structured conditions

enabling the performance of reading. First, *Un coup de dés* eschews the

anchors of subject positions to remain open to plural points of entry and

unrestricted mobility. Indeed, the poem does not feature a single

instance of the "je," but rather suggests other unifying structures of

meaning in place of the poet-as-personal-subject. The poem begins with

an act of agency without an agent: "UN COUP DE DÉS" (*OC* 1: 367; 419).

In the later version of the text, this nominal phrase appears in isolation

on the first page (see fig. 20), such that the thrown dice are suspended

indefinitely, separate from any origin (throwing subject) or situation. The

ascendant potentiality of the thrown dice sinks to the bottom of the next page (see fig. 21), as the movement is pulled down into the field of restrictive clauses: "JAMAIS / QUAND BIEN MÊME LANCÉ DANS DES CIRCONSTANCES / ÉTERNELLES / DU FOND D'UN NAUFRAGE" (*OC* 1: 369). The act of the dice throw, still suspended here in the circumstances of some timeless accident, remains incomplete and yet already never to be completed in the intention posited by the negative ("JAMAIS"). But since the intentionality of the act is withheld, the unpredictable possibilities inherent in the dice can be entertained—thrown, even in the face of negation. In the *Cosmopolis* text, the clustering effect takes place in a more compact space, but the compression of the spacing to a single page (see fig. 22), to a vertical separation in one image, creates the immediate impact of succession, where deferral in the diagonal movement of the text would allow for the momentary release of the dice into generative play. The scarcity of space in the periodical affirms the value of space in the less materially compromised typographic setting.

In the absence of an intentional center, an authorial subject whose voice is thrown from a particular position in the text, reminders of conditionality in *Un coup de dés* serve as textual modes of address, animating this absence of authority in the production of meaning.
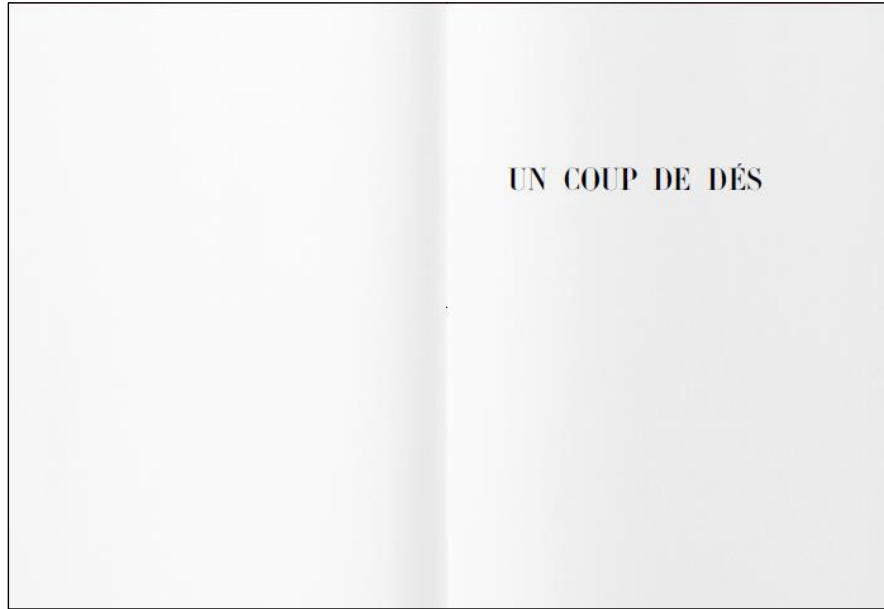
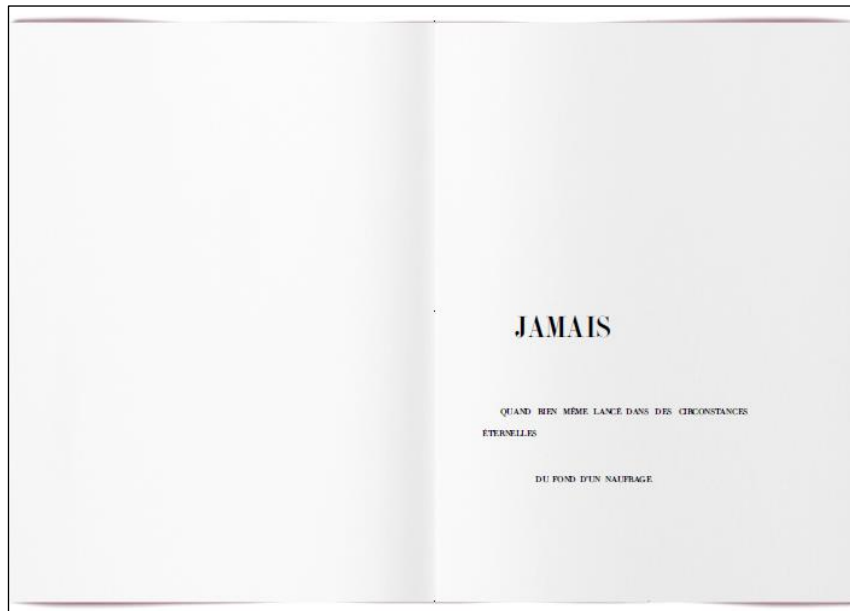Fig. 20. Page 1 of *Un coup de dés* (Pierson & Pytx).

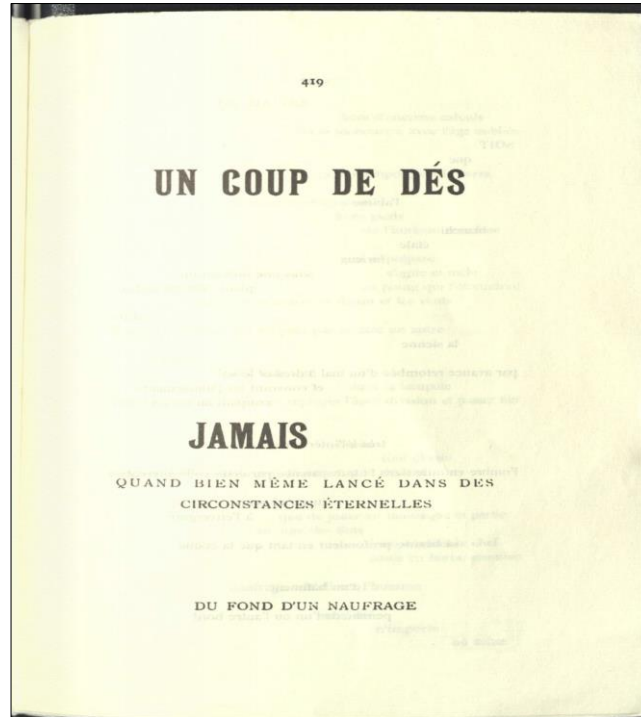Fig. 21. Page 2 of *Un coup de dés* (Pierson & Pytx).

Fig. 22. Condensed titular phrase on page 1 of *Cosmopolis* text.

Here, in the middle of the later, more spacious version of the poem, it is "COMME SI" the text becomes an image of itself, or of reading as the movement of consciousness toward possibility:

> COMME SI / Une insinuation / simple / au silence / enroulée
>
> avec ironie / ou / le mystère / précipité / hurlé / dans quelque
>
> proche / tourbillon d'hilarité et d'horreur /voltige / autour du
>
> gouffre / sans de joncher / ni fuir / et en berce le vierge indice /
>
> COMME SI   (*OC* 1: 376-7)

The conditional fragments "COMME SI" reassert the situation of the text as suspension, and extend the swath of printed material in both directions to create the reflection of this tenuous situation in the disposition of the page itself (see fig. 23). The semantic content of this spread evokes agency in the absence of a controlling subject: like a mobile of scattered objects, the words impart their cohesive charges, while the multiple choices of combinatory images (e.g., "ou," "et," "avec," "sans") give rise to a profusion of kinetic pathways. While the many elements of suggestion ("Une insinuation," "le mystère," "le vièrge indice") create formless gaps, the fragments come together in this movement of thought across the fold through interactions contained in the words themselves ("enroulée," "précipité," "hurlé," "tourbillon," "voltige autour du gouffre," "en berce"). The text thus enacts its own unfolding, whatever simultaneous shape it takes in the mind of the reader in reading. The impossibility of this self-reflective image of the text in *Cosmopolis* affirms its meaning. Where the later version of the poem achieves symmetry in the placement of the "COMME SI" bookends, effectively hanging thought in a conditional state over the non-division of the page, the *Cosmopolis* version renders this moment in one quarter of a page (see fig. 24):

COMME SI / Une simple insinuation / d'ironie / enroulée à tout le silence / ou / précipité / hurlé / dans quelque proche tourbillon d'hilarité et d'horreur / voltige / autour du gouffre / sans se

joncher ni fuir / et en berce le vièrge indice / COMME SI

(*OC* 1: 397)

Here, the evidence of Mallarmé's revision process, which would change the syntactical order and spacing of these units, betrays the higher order of signification in the disposition of the page itself, since the suggestive power of the component images is not contingent upon the relational structures of language that would be altered in the later version. Notably, the active participles lending locomotive energy to the group of elements ("enroulée," "précipité," "hurlé," "tourbillon," "voltige autour du gouffre," "en berce") remain unchanged. The higher level of image-making, however, is drastically truncated, such that the body of consciousness cannot yet take flight—its wings folded into a static block of printed words.

As early as the *Cosmopolis* version of *Un coup de dés*, the typographic variation of phrases enhances the play of reading, adding to the range of meaning registered in the movement of thought. The difference between the two versions lies in the spacing, in the range of motion, restricted to the vertical of a single page in the periodical, while spread over the horizontal, over what had been a dividing fold, in the later editions. Regardless of the typographic setting, the titular phrase "UN COUP DE DÉS / JAMAIS / N'ABOLIRA / LE HAZARD" appears in the largest font size. As the main thread running through the whole

composition, the volume of this incremental phrase provides a unifying structure to the piece. Other phrases emerge whole from the wreckage, standing out in all caps (see fig. 25): "RIEN / N'AURA LIEU / QUE LE LIEU" (OC 1: 384-85; 400). This self-referential phrase points to what is taking place in the text, the formation of space as place, a place of pure happening. When the phrase resurfaces on the next page (see fig. 26), the continuation changes its potential meaning: "EXCEPTÉ / PEUT-ÊTRE / UNE CONSTELLATION" (*OC* 1: 386-87; 401). The caps indicate continuity, directing the reader to join these phrases into one. Space organizes into place ("LE LIEU") and pattern ("UNE CONSTELLATION") as the reader looks for the exception to the chaos—the meaning that arises in the movement of thought in reading, in navigating the disorder on the surface to give rise to deeper orders. This approach to Mallarmé's text as a space of structured chaos aligns with Malcolm Bowie's framework in *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult*: the "dramatic hiatus" of *Un coup de dés* displaces any center, and the "syntactic ambiguity" of fragments grants autonomy to the words—each becoming a "gravitational center around which possible meanings . . . gather" (8). Shifting frames also grant agency to the reader in "the task of re-establishing order" in the absence of the ordering consciousness of the author-subject (Bowie 132). The space of *Un coup de dés* enables recombinations of thought as words come together, separate, "blend," and resurface in their "verbal surroundings" (139). Through textual modes of address, the

discontinuities of *Un coup de dés* become continuities in an animated

space of composition, the process of co-positioning through the interface
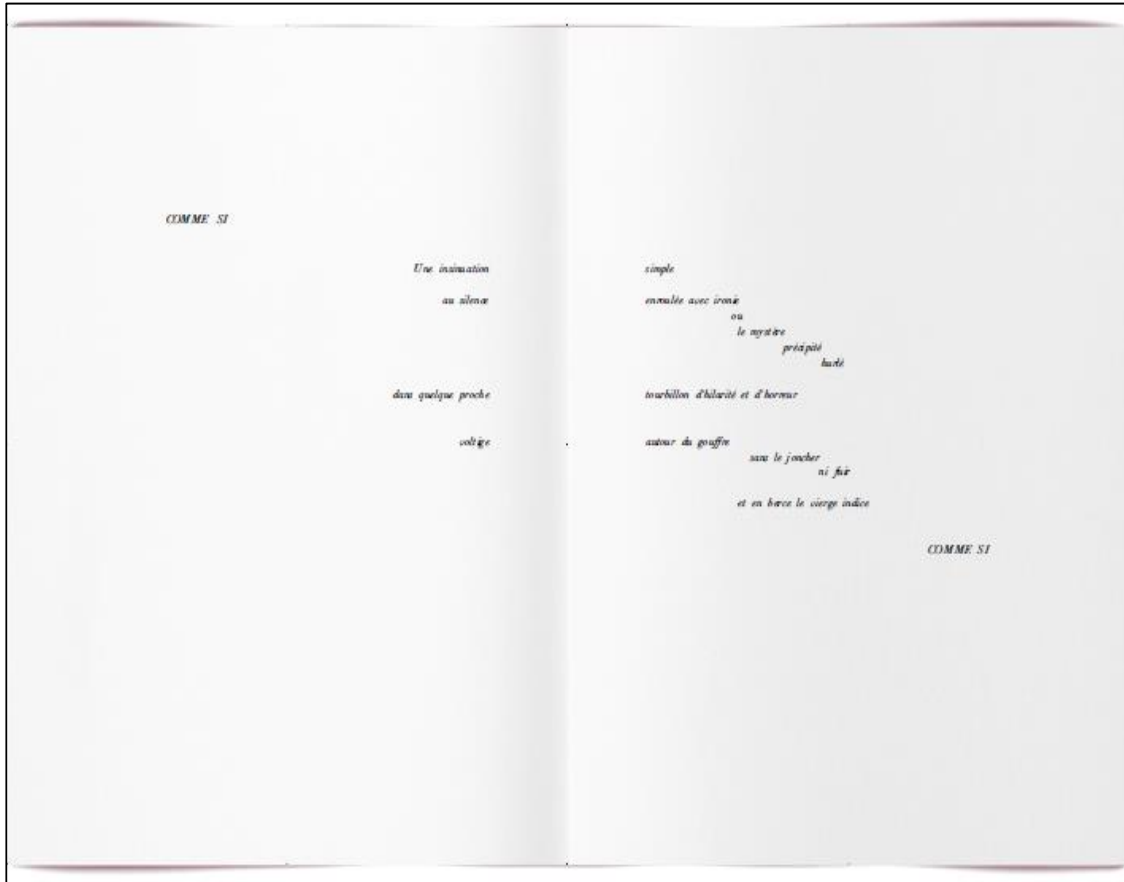
of structured space.

Fig. 23. "Comme si" spread on page 6 of *Un coup de dés* (Pierson & Pytx).

COMME SI

Une simple insinuation

d'ironie

enroulée à tout le silence

ou

précipité

hurlé

dans quelque proche tourbillon d'hilarité et d'horreur

voltige

autour du gouffre

sans le joncher

ni fuir

et en berce le vierge indice

COMME SI

plume solitaire éperdue

sauf

que la rencontre ou l'effleure une toque de minuit

et immobilise

au velours chiffonné par un esclaffement sombre

cette rigide blancheur

dérisoire

en opposition au ciel

trop

pour ne pas marquer

exigüment

quiconque

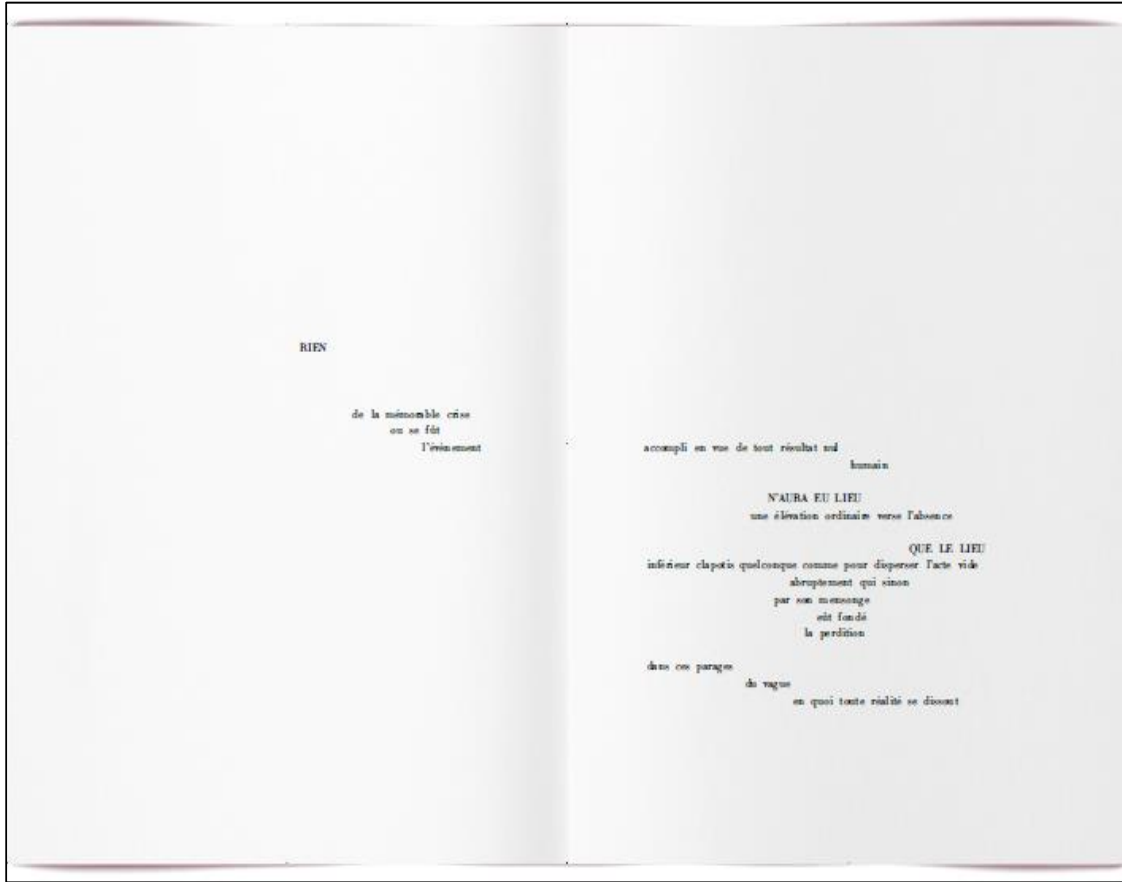Fig. 24. "Comme si" on page 5 of *Cosmopolis* text.

Fig. 25. "Rien n'aura eu lieu que le lieu" on page 10 of *Un coup de dés* (Pierson & Pytx).
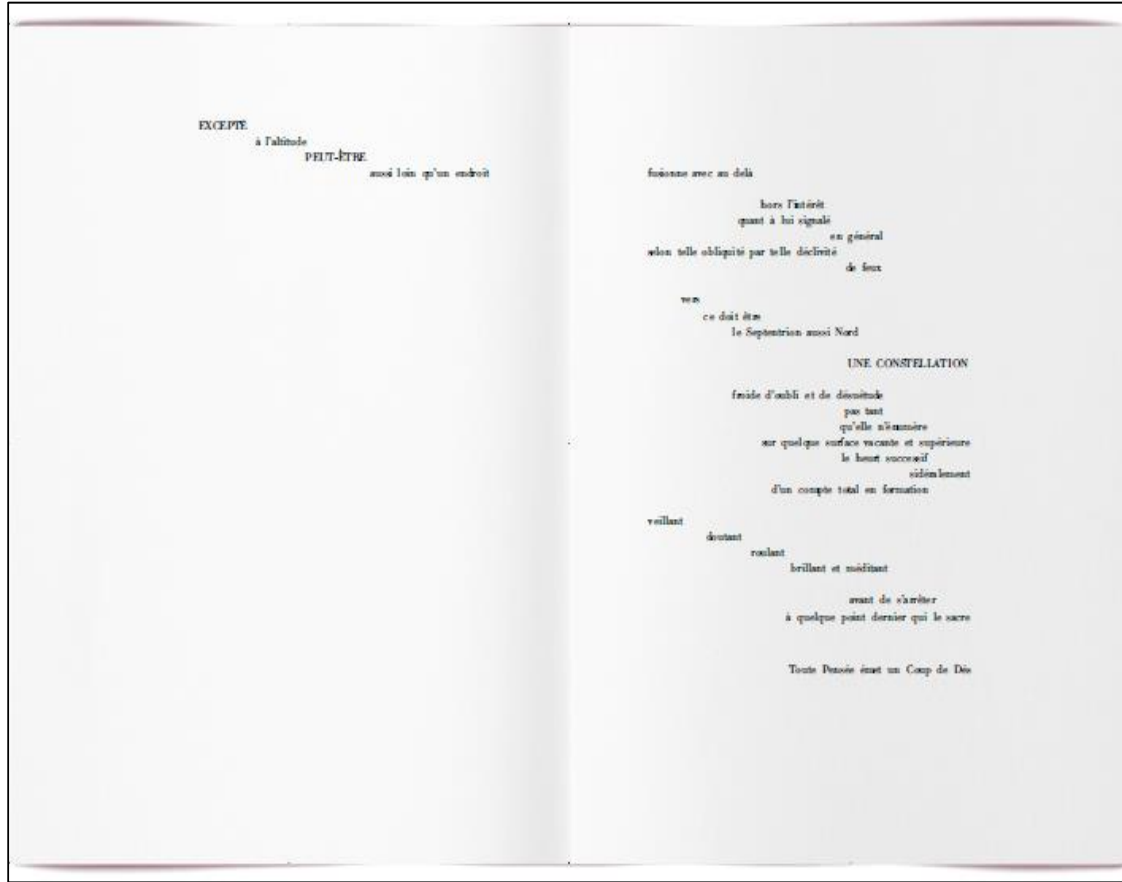
Fig. 26. "Excepté peut-être une constellation" on page 11 of *Un coup de dés* (Pierson & Pytx).

In this manner, *Un coup de dés* enables plural and productive reading by disabling conventional reading. This aspect of the "difficulty" of Mallarmé's text violates "many of the tacit agreements upon which the act of reading rests" (Bowie 118). At the same time, the text throws out buoying structures that momentarily stabilize its movement, such that it

"never becomes an asyntactic haze: it is organized in such a way that the reader is given guidance in his connection-making by a strong framework of recurrent analogies and oppositions" (12). For instance, at first glance, the shape of the word-constellation, by pictorial suggestion, activates simultaneously cosmic and man-made structures of chaos: a star system, a debris field, a shipwreck, an algorithmic distribution. Any one of these mental models explains what appears on the surface to be chaos, a disruption of the orders of syntax and a more sweeping destruction of the space of the printed page. Yet if these graspable patterns are (mis)taken for the deeper structure of the text, reading goes too far astray into the over-determined territories of totalizing myth, metaphor, or explanation.[84] As Leo Bersani formulates this risk, the cosmic analogies in *Un coup de dés* "introduce[] a corrupting structural visibility into [Mallarmé's] relational esthetic" (77). The key to unlocking the potential of the text is to continue moving beyond the "perceptible designs" toward a space beyond perception, an imaginative space rising from the surface of the page in the process of reading.

Mallarmé offers this key to his readers in what is now often referred to as the preface of *Un coup de dés*. Here, the poet lays out a very explicit frame of reading, drawing out an analogy to the spatio-temporal art of musical composition. As in a "partition," the material

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[84] To demonstrate this point, Robert Greer Cohn cites Claude Roulet's biblical reading and Charles Mauron's psychoanalytic approach (*Exegesis* 4-5).

space of the poem (the printed pages) contains an entire world of possibilities, all of its potential variations, outcomes, expansions—all of the performances in which verbal and visual elements are tightly orchestrated as follows:

> Le papier intervient chaque fois qu'une image, d'elle-même, cesse ou rentre, acceptant la succession d'autres et, comme il ne s'agit pas, ainsi que toujours, de traits sonores réguliers ou vers—plutôt, de subdivisions prismatiques de l'Idée, l'instant de paraître et que dure leur concours, dans quelque mise en scène spirituelle exacte, c'est à des places variables, près ou loin du fil conducteur latent, en raison de la vraisemblance, que s'impose le texte. L'avantage, si j'ai droit à le dire, littéraire, de cette distance copiée qui mentalement sépare des groupes de mots ou les mots entre eux, semble d'accélérer tantôt et de ralentir le mouvement, le scandant, l'intimant même selon une vision simultanée de la Page: celle-ci prise pour unité comme l'est autre part le Vers ou ligne parfaite. La fiction affleurera et se dissipera, vite, d'après la mobilité de l'écrit, autour des arrêts fragmentaires d'une phrase capitale dès le titre introduite et continuée. Tout se passe, par raccourci, en hypothèse; on évite le récit. Ajouter que de cet emploi à nu de la pensée avec retraits, prolongement, fuites, ou son dessin même, résulte, pour qui veut lire à haute voix, une partition. (*OC* 1: 391)

In this dense passage, Mallarmé indicates how the paper itself functions in the process of the poem, serving as the substrate in a chain of interactions. The surface of reading intervenes in the process of orchestrating the space of the poem, which varies with the performance, with the movement of the eye and the creative consciousness. In this production, images rise in an ephemeral dance as the elements of the poem, the printed characters and the unprinted areas, interact in the flow of the text. The ink negatively forms the white space as much as the white space enables the printed characters to come into animation. Moreover, the performance of the text creates another space ("une vision simultanée de la Page") as images rise with the rhythm of reading. This rhythm is measured in the "distance copiée" between words (like the notes arranged in "une partition"), yet the sequence of images varies with each reading ("mise en scène spirituelle exacte, c'est à des places variables"). In short, *Un coup de dés* comes with instructions for assembly; it is the reader's task to follow links in the text to display thought in action.

Although this preface has been appended to later editions (first by Bonniot with a judicious editorial note), Mallarmé did not intend to preface the poem. He added his "Observation relative au poème" exclusively for readers of *Cosmopolis*. As David Mus insists, "[q]u'il fut écrit exprès pour les lecteurs de *Cosmopolis*, la note de Bonniot le remarque; le confirme celle de la revue a ajoutée en bas de page, pour

justifier sa propre audace" (2). The editorial note to which Mus refers here (see fig. 27) insists on the analogy to the musical composition, and highlights the novelty of the project as a reflection of daring editorial vision: "Dans cette œuvre d'un caractère entièrement nouveau, le poète s'est efforcé de faire de la musique avec des mots" (Mus 5). The tone set by Mallarmé's opening remarks contrast with the heavy-handed editorial gesture; his "Observation relative au poème" begins, "J'aimerais qu'on ne lût pas cette Note ou que parcourue, meme on l'oubliât; elle apprend, au Lecteur habile, peu de chose situé outre sa pénétration." As these editorial interventions make clear, the print environment imprints its material conditions on the formal mechanisms of the poem itself, leaving behind the valuable articulation of Mallarmé's "intentions du moment" (Mus 1).

His "intentions du moment" being to publish in the periodical, Mallarmé reduced his system to the given parameters, retaining the minimal functionality of page format. In his letter to André Gide (same as cited above) about his experience with *Cosmopolis*, he nonchalantly acknowledges, "je n'ai pu lui présenter la chose qu'à moitié, déjà étant, pour lui, tout risquer." Mallarmé does not mean literally half the poem in terms of pages, but rather half of the conception, the system approximated in the constraining material conditions of the periodical without the full powers of extension. The performance, the "acting out,"

as Virginia La Charité spins it in her study, *The Dynamics of Space*,

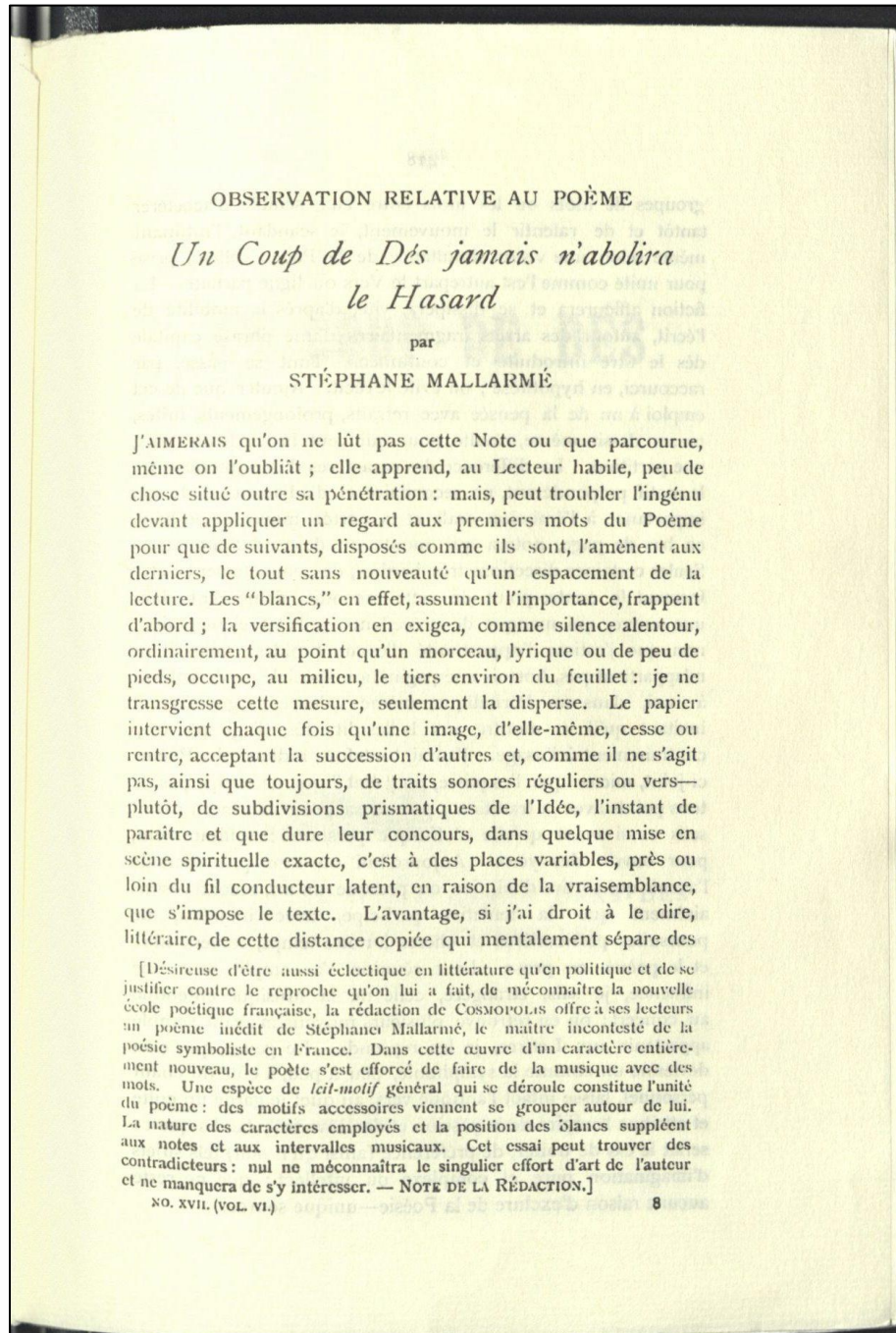continues the production of the text (26).

Fig. 27. Editorial note in *Cosmopolis* text. David Mus.

The other half ("moitié") of the text missing in the *Cosmopolis*

version is the vision of the book, the ultimate form enabling the "mobile

spatial act of reading" (La Charité 26). This unrealized book design is

palpably present in the margins of the text as a phantom of its full

expression. There is no full stop when the poem closes: "Toute Pensée

émet un Coup de Dés"; there is no receptacle to catch the scintillating

flecks, the reverberations of thought in perpetual motion.

The form of the book captures the kinetic relationship between the

page and the performance in the typographic tension of Mayakovsky's

Tragedy. Here, scattered parts of the poet-subject take animate form in

the action of reading, in the act of voicing taking place. Put simply, the

struggle of the poet-subject is transposed onto spatial relationships on

the page. To focus on these relationships in the material space of the

text, I am bracketing the historical performance of *A Tragedy*, the 1913

production at Luna Park in St. Petersburg.[85] But I am nonetheless

interested in how the page directs its transposition onto the space of the

stage, which is analogous to social space in Mayakovsky's Cubo-Futurist

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[85] Marjorie Perloff provides a detailed account of the production, including the costumes, canvas stretched over cardboard frames, and the choreography of body movement and speech into a unified, moving image (151-52). See Robert Leach and Guy Daniels for discussion of *A Tragedy* in the context of Cubo-Futurist productions and Mayakovsky's politically engaged theater, respectively.

play. In this discussion of *A Tragedy*, I am drawing on Marjorie Perloff's approach to the page as "a visual unit"; by disrupting the conventional structures of language and genre, the page format unifies the visual impact of verbal elements—the line, the word, the phoneme (157). These object-interactions in the space of the page enact the "revolt of things" announced in Mayakovsky's original title of the piece.

Mayakovsky's typographic experiment in *A Tragedy* is based on the foundational conception of language as material in Russian Cubo-Futurism. As fellow poets Vladimir Kleibnikov and Alexei Kruchenykh articulate in the 1913 manifesto "The Letter as Such," "a word written in one hand or set in one typeface is completely unlike the same word in a different inscription" (Lawton 63). Shifting the focus from "the word as such," the glorified object of preceding book projects [*Slap* and *The Word as Such* (*Slovo kak takovoe*, 1913)] to "the letter as such" activates the circumstantially material character of letters as the minimal or indivisible units of composition. Marjorie Perloff's commentary reveals the subversive power of this turn toward "the letter as such": "Such foregrounding of the visual element in poetic discourse, the emphasis on the actual disposition of the words on the page, inevitably erodes the nineteenth-century concept of the poem as something that has already been written and that will be read the same way no matter where it may appear in print" (125). In this regard, the elemental approach to language in Cubo-Futurist poetics echoes Mallarmé's *Coup de dés* in its

authorization of the reader's play, such that the text is read the way it is

encountered. By taking typographic variation to the extreme of rupture,

Mayakovsky's *Tragedy* illustrates how words escape their iterability, as

Derrida usefully describes the potential for repetition that is necessary

for communication in "Signature, Event, Context." The "tragedy" of

Mayakovsky lies in the phenomenon of words taking on a life of their own

as the poet's voice is dispersed into the permutations of the anonymous

masses. My reading of *A Tragedy* will focus on how the printed page

contains the performance of the text on the stage, regulating the

production of voice through textual modes of address. The material

traces of the poet, the "signature" of Vladimir Mayakovsky, exceeds the

print context as a performative event.

Mayakovsky's *Tragedy* subverts the organizing principle of the lyric

genre by splitting the one poet-subject into many, and transposes the

drama of this tragic disintegration into the space of the text, in which

atomized verbal and visual forms commingle in typographic disharmony.

Before the action begins, the stage is set in the header of the text, which

already plays with the poet's identity by deconstructing Mayakovsky into

a cast of characters (*A Tragedy* 418; *T* 3).[86] The biographical construct of

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[86] I am turning to the English translation of Mayakovsky's Tragedy in *50: A Celebration of Sun & Moon Classics*. This version of the play reproduces the typographic effects of the original at the visual level, but not without losing the implications on some of the verbal forms, including the first person subject pronoun, "ya." Subsequent citations of this text will be given as T50.

the poet is the first among these characters: "Vladimir Mayakovsky poet 20-25 years old" ("Vladimir Vladimirovich Maiakovskii poet 20-25 let"). Other faces appear as variations on a base identity, "man" ("chelovek") "with" ("c") or "without" ("bez") a single trait: "A man with one ear" ("Chelovek bez ykha"), "A man with no head" ("Chelovek bez golovy"), "A man with a long face" ("Chelovek s rastianutym litsom"). This pattern calls attention to both the presence and absence of minimal features that define a person, an entity, distinguishing it from others with that feature. By reducing identity to the mark of difference, this list of characters (caricatures) disperses the singular subject into signifiers, verbal-visual forms interacting in space, as in a sort of structuralist drama. The format of the text supports the leading role of voice, bringing each of the characters to life as parts of the whole: when the names of individuals appear in the stage directions to indicate who is speaking, this tiny, marginal print is visibly subordinate to the speech itself (Perloff 157). The characters are merely an arrangement of characters on the page corresponding to spatial forms on the stage.

The "Prologue" of *A Tragedy* illustrates how typographic manipulation enacts the thematic content of the play (the "tragedy" of Mayakovsky, the splitting of the poet-self, and, alternatively, "the revolt of things") on the levels of the printed line and character. Words in different fonts are interspersed throughout the page, and the varying typeface (plain, bold, italic) creates tension within the line, within single

words ("площадей," "слезою"); this visual disruption calls attention to the uneven reading surface of the text as material in the process of creating space (see fig. 28). Individual characters also become sites of transgression through the variation of font size. When the letter "T" of "POET" ("E" of "ALONE" in the translation) crosses the boundaries of the line below, it breaks off from the unity of the word. This rupture signals the formal attributes of words as compositional forms over and against their arbitrary meanings as verbal (linguistic) constructs.

A Tragedy also incorporates visual art pieces into the dramatic text, including a number of hand-drawings by David Burliuk. A "portrait" suggests the compositional relations between verbal and visual forms on the page (see fig. 29); the eyes of this face are composed of an ear shape and a quarter-portion of another visage, echoing the cast of characters: the "man with one ear," "man with no head," and the "man with a long face." The mouth of the face resembles the arch of Mayakovsky's name, visualizing the function of letters as compositional units. Verbal forms are also visual forms, detached from fixed signification or value in language, and thus have meaning in relation to the other parts of the whole.

Вам ли понять почему я **спокой-
ный**

Насмешек грозою

Душу на блюде несу к обеду
идущих лет

С небритой **щеки** площадей

Стекая ненужной **слезою**

Я быть может **послѣдній** **поэ**Т

ЗАМЕЧАЛИ ВЫ как кач**а**ется
в каменных **аллеях**

Полосатое лицо **повешенной
скуки**

А у мчащихся **рек** на взмы-
ленных шеях

— 5 —

Fig. 28. "Prologue" beginning with Mayakovsky speaking.

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Fig. 29. Drawing by David Burliuk.

In the verbal-visual environment of A Tragedy, the lyric "I" no longer stands for the poet alone, becoming, at times, one compositional form among many. The "ia" makes many appearances and disappearances to position the voice of Mayakovsky as the voice of many.

The play begins with Mayakovsky speaking (see fig. 28 for the stage directions), giving spatial form to voice through iterations of the "ia": "My soul is a filament, stretched like the nerves of / a wire: / I'm the king of street light land!" ("I s dushoi natianutoi kak nervy / provoda / Ia tsar' lamp" *T*[50] 422; *T* 6). Here, the "ia" belongs to an absolute metaphor (the poet as king of lights), figured in the stretched-out metonymy of the poet's soul (part of the poet is part of the city). By relinquishing the "ia," Mayakovsky (the character) assumes spatial form, offering his soul to be altered: "Ladies and Gentlemen / Sew up my soul" ("Milostivye Gosudari / Zashtopaite mne dushu" *T*[50] 243; *T* 8). Through this act of voice in the imperative, the poet approaches his audience as a modest object, a piece of cloth needing mending, rather than an all-powerful "I," above and beyond the reach of those he wants to reach with his voice. At the same time, without the "ia" to shape his voice, Mayakovsky will spill out into space unless he is contained, sewn up in some form. The "I" of the poet-subject also becomes other as the other faces of Mayakovsky speak through it. Here, it is the "old man with cats" who expresses his anxieties through the "ia": "ia tysiacheletnii starik" ("I'm an old old man, I'm a thousand years old" *T*[50] 426; *T* 11). In the old man's self-iteration, Mayakovsky the poet is transformed into pure voice, a martyr's cry: "I see what you are / You're a cry of anguish crucified upon a cross of laughs" ("i vizhu v tebe na kreste iz cmexa" *T*[50] 427; *T* 11). Mayakovsky's voice thus takes a variety of forms, both with and without the "ya," to expand

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its range beyond conventional lyric—or the self-expression of the "I" as poet-subject—and to amplify its volume and reverberate in every corner of social space.

The staging of Mayakovsky's many forms plays into the larger plot of the dramatic text, the "revolt of things." The old man with cats pronounces the crisis quite plainly: "In the world of cities, things run the show. / And things have no souls, they want to wipe us out" ("v zemle gorodov nareklis go-spodami / I lezut steret' nas bezdushnyia veshchi") (T^{50} 428; T 11). The stage directions indicate how the spatial relationships on the stage are to illustrate this crisis. "Act One" opens with a mise-en-scène of advertisements: "A tin herring from a sign. A huge gold bagel. Big pieces of yellow velvet" ("zheleznago sel'bia s vyveski zolotoi ogromnyi kalach sklabki zheltago barkhata" (T^{50} 423; T 8). The indexical signs of storefronts mingle with the metonymical signs of Mayakovsky, the pieces of his infamous yellow sweater. The description of action in the stage directions further confuses the distinction between subjects and objects: "The scene slowly begins to fill with people. Enter the Man with One Ear, the Man without a Head, etc. They move like doped up druggies in a daze. Everything's a mess. Everybody keeps on eating" ("Stsena postepenno napolniaetsia. Chelovek bez uxa Chelovek bez golovy i dr. Tupye. Stali bezporiadkom ediat dal'she" T^{50} 426; T 10). Distinguished only by their single identifying feature, individual subjects emerge from the "mess" as discrete objects. The movement of the men

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suggests no more subjective consciousness than objects. And the continued act of eating blends subjects and objects in a process of assimilation. The appearance of the page, which gives prominence to the visual forms of the words animated by voice, gives an impression of the appearance of the stage, filled with people and things with little to distinguish them.

The formatting of the page highlights the "ia" as it becomes an object, animated only by voice, in its relative position in space. Moreover, the first person pronoun is like any other part of speech, scattered about the page in varying typefaces. On one page spread, "Я" appears as the visual echo of a word-ending, "Ю" (see fig. 30). This arrangement gives spatial utterance to Chukovsky's pronouncement of Mayakovsky's poetics: "Each of his letters is a hyperbole" (53). The "Я" exaggerates its presence in the area it occupies in the space of the page, but it also raises the grammatical inflection "Ю" to equal status—equally material in the process of the text.

In Mayakovsky's *Tragedy* the lyric "I" dissociates from the poet-subject to become one form among many in the composition of spaces. Mayakovsky affirms this leveling of distinction between subject and object in terms of spaces: "I am a poet and I've wiped out the spaces / between my own face and other people's faces" ("ia poet raznitsu ster / Mezhdu litsami svoikh i chuzhikh" T^{50} 436; T 19).

Злобой не мажьте сердец концы

Вас как детей моих

Буду учить непреклонно и строго

Ведь все вы люди лишь бубенцы

На колпаке у

Я-**Ж** с ногой **распухшей** от
исканій:

Обошел и вашу *сушу*

И еще какія то другія страны

В домино и маске темноты

Я искал ее **невиданную** душу

Чтобы в губы раны

Положить ея целящіе цветы

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Пауза

И **опять** как раб в кровавом поте

Тело безуміем **кача Ю**

Впрочем

Раз нашел ее

Душу

Вышла в голубом капоте

Говорит садитесь я давно вас
ждала

Не **хотите** ли стаканчик чаю

Пауза

Я поэт разницу стер

Между лицами своих и *чужих*

В гное **моргов** искал сестер

Целовал узорно больных

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Fig. 30. Personal pronoun as character in irregular typeface.

Here, Mayakovsky echoes the list of characters at the beginning of the
play, blurring the lines between his "own face and other people's faces."
To enable this transfiguration of one into many, Mayakovsky constructs
space as a playing field of voice, which unifies the fragments of

characters in the performance of the text, both the letters breaking off of words and lines, to the pieces of Mayakovsky himself scattered about the page and the stage.

The construction of the page in Mayakovsky's *Tragedy* and in Mallarmé's *Coup de dés* is a projection of imaginative space: the self-destructing space of future society and a primordial space of pure creation, respectively. The text itself establishes the reader's implicated relationship to this space through textual modes of address: the manipulation of dimensions, the typeface and the page itself, modulates the performance of reading. The visual impact of space in the moment of reading provides the unifying structure as verbal forms—phrases, words, characters—are expressed compositionally, released from the ordering operations of logic (syntactical, narrative) into a space of dramatic suspension. Mallarmé's *Coup de dés* and Mayakovsky's *Tragedy* thus embody in the spaces of the text the movement of modern poetics from the "death of the author" to "the birth of the reader." But what kind of reader is enabled by Mallarmé's and Mayakovsky's texts, and what does the act of reading entail if it is not to resurrect the author?

The Book as Instrument for the Voice

Mallarmé and Mayakovsky develop spaces "for the voice" by scattering the poetic subject, and this dispersal ultimately leads to coalescence in the form of the book. Both poets turn toward idealistic

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visions of book construction in their later endeavors, valorizing the materiality of spaces and the performance of reading. Mallarmé's design of "Le Livre" and Mayakovsky's collaborative work *For the Voice* complicate the relationship between the material and the act of creating in their emphasis on the form of the book, which reveals the undergirding values of reading in their poetics: both poets enable reading as a social act crossing the divide between public and private.

While there are many concrete examples of Mallarmé's engagement with book design in illustrated editions of his works,[87] I want to concentrate first on the nonexistent book, the ideal "Livre," in its impossibility. As Eric Benoit suggests in *Mallarmé et le mystère du Livre*, the fact that the book does not exist is part and parcel of its meaning, a mystery, fundamentally ungraspable in its scope.[88] Indeed, Mallarmé describes the project in terms of what it would be—not as it will be completed—in a letter to Paul Verlaine, dated 1885:

> un livre, tout bonnement, en maints tomes, un livre qui soit un
> livre, architectural et prémédité, et non un recueil des inspirations
> de hasard [sic], fussent-elles merveilleuses . . . L'explication

[87] See Katherine Shingler, "Framing the Text: Mallarmé's Un Coup de dés and the Arts of the Book" for discussion of Mallarmés engagement with "visual framing" and Anna Sigrídur Arnar, *The Book as Instrument: Stéphane Mallarmé, The Artist's Book, and the Transformation of Print Culture* for a cultural history of the object in Mallarmé's career.

[88] See also L. J. Austin, *Mallarmé et le rêve du 'Livre'*; Vincent Kaufman, *Le livre et ses adresses;* Bertrand Marchal, *La Religion de Mallarmé*, Daniel Moutote, *Maîtres livres de notre temps: Postérité du Livre de Mallarmé.*

orphique de la Terre, qui est le seul devoir du poëte et le jeu

littéraire par excellence: car le rythme même du livre, alors

impersonnel et vivant, jusque dans sa pagination, se juxtapose aux

équations de ce rêve, ou Ode.   (*C* 3: 301)

Mallarmé glorifies the form of the book for its architectural design, its

functionality as a space. This structure of spatial experience is what

distinguishes the book from other publishing formats, such as the poetry

anthology or the periodical; Mallarmé's essay "Le Livre, Instrument

spirituel" affirms this distinction, as he defines the book against the foil

of the newspaper. As Yulia Ryznik points out, "his critique seems always

to turn on *le pli,* the fold and the issue of folding" (626). This privileging

of the book reflects the value of material space, the phenomenon of

encountering the object in its impressive particularity. The importance of

le pli is also functional: folding multiplies the possibilities of page

orientations. Indeed, another defining feature of Mallarmé's "Livre" is

mobility: through the permutations of moving parts, the book would be

exhaustive of all possible meanings. These readings would give rise to

meanings through the rhythm built into the book as an interactive

object.

Although the object itself does not exist, Jacques Scherer's

compilation of Mallarmé's notes includes the design and instructions for

use, the reading procedures prescribed by the poet. Scherer elucidates

Mallarmé's calculated layout of the "feuillets mobiles" of the book, emphasizing the page as a generatively material unit: "Chaque feuillet est, dans sa matérialité, un élément constant; le papier dont il est fait n'est point modifié si on le change de place; mais les mots inscrits sur ce papier peuvent prendre des valeurs nouvelles par de nouveaux voisinages" (85). The book would be a structure of limitless mobility and thus of infinite possibility in the hands of the (ideal) reader. It would be a print environment that surpassses the conventional bounds of genre through textual modes of address, the disposition of the object itself communicates the reader's task as an active, activating relationship.

This meticulous design raises the question: who would be the reader of Mallarmé's book? According to his notes, the book would reach the widest possible demographic of readers and a select few, a professional elite who would present the book to an audience of readers. The material object was only half the book, for it was primarily a performance: a cheaply produced book with a readership comparable to the Bible and a carefully orchestrated ritual performance of the text. This double reading plays out the binary in Mallarmé's poetics between the immaterial and the material, the writing and the body, and also makes clear the undercurrent of performing arts detectible in the likes of *Igitur* and *Un coup de dés* (Shaw 4-5). Mary Lewis Shaw points to Mallarmé's "affirmation that writing must ultimately be transposed into speech before an audience immediately suggests that poetry is itself, for him,

necessarily a performing art" (8). As the pinnacle performance of the text,
Mallarmé's "Livre" formalizes his transgression of the bounds of the print
medium to sacralize the creative act in its place in the world.

Whereas Mallarmé's "Livre" remains ideal because incomplete, a
virtual or imaginable object, Mayakovsky's book *For the Voice*
accentuates its material form for maximum functionality in its
relationship to the reader. As the book's co-constuctor, El Lissitzky
explains, the visual elements of the design, including graphic
counterparts to Mayakovsky's poems, add "cement and concrete" to
Mayakovsky's "picture[s]" in words (Bowlt, ed. 156); as the "architect of
the page," El Lisssitsky designs spaces for Mayakovsky's poems using
"industrial tools (pieces of type, rules, bars, bullets)" to set the two-
dimensional word, at once a functional unit of time and space (Railing,
ed. 46, 134). The user-oriented design of *For the Voice* "enabl[es] the
reader to locate the individual poems quickly" by means of a graphic
"thumb index" (qtd in Railing, ed. 35). The book mobilizes the voices of
many by transposing Mayakovsky's poems—including the explicit call to
poetry, "And Could You?" (see fig. 31)—into a social structure. As Barry
Seldes elegantly argues in his analysis of the verbal-visual interactions in
For the Voice, the diagrammatic structure of the page expresses

dynamism along the diagonal, "violating the field" in a spatial metaphor for social progress, agitating into action: "The smashing of the grid thus symbolizes the step necessary for the socialization of sites and spaces, be these the typographer's page, the artist's frame, street and building walls, the theatrical stage, the factory shop floor and the assembly line, the apartment floor or the town layout—all, of course, Soviet avant-garde projects for a new society" (147). In this material metaphor and agitational action, Mayakovsky's development of spaces seems antithetical to Mallarmé's vision, which removes the act of creation from circumstance through the ritual of performance, through the careful setting and staging of the words in self-contained spaces, the places of pure poetry.

In terms of the act of reading, however, the poetics of Mayakovsky and Mallarmé converge on the social power of poetry to inspire and transform the public. Where Mallarmé's book uses materiality to give potential form to all creation, most powerfully in its potentiality, Mayakovsky makes the material of the book work in the process of enrolling readers into the post-revolutionary project of building a new social reality. Although Mayakovsky's poetic project turns explicitly political, Mallarmé's vision for the book is no less social in its conception of reading: by empowering readers through their texts, both poets bridge private and public spaces in creating occasions for the act of reading.
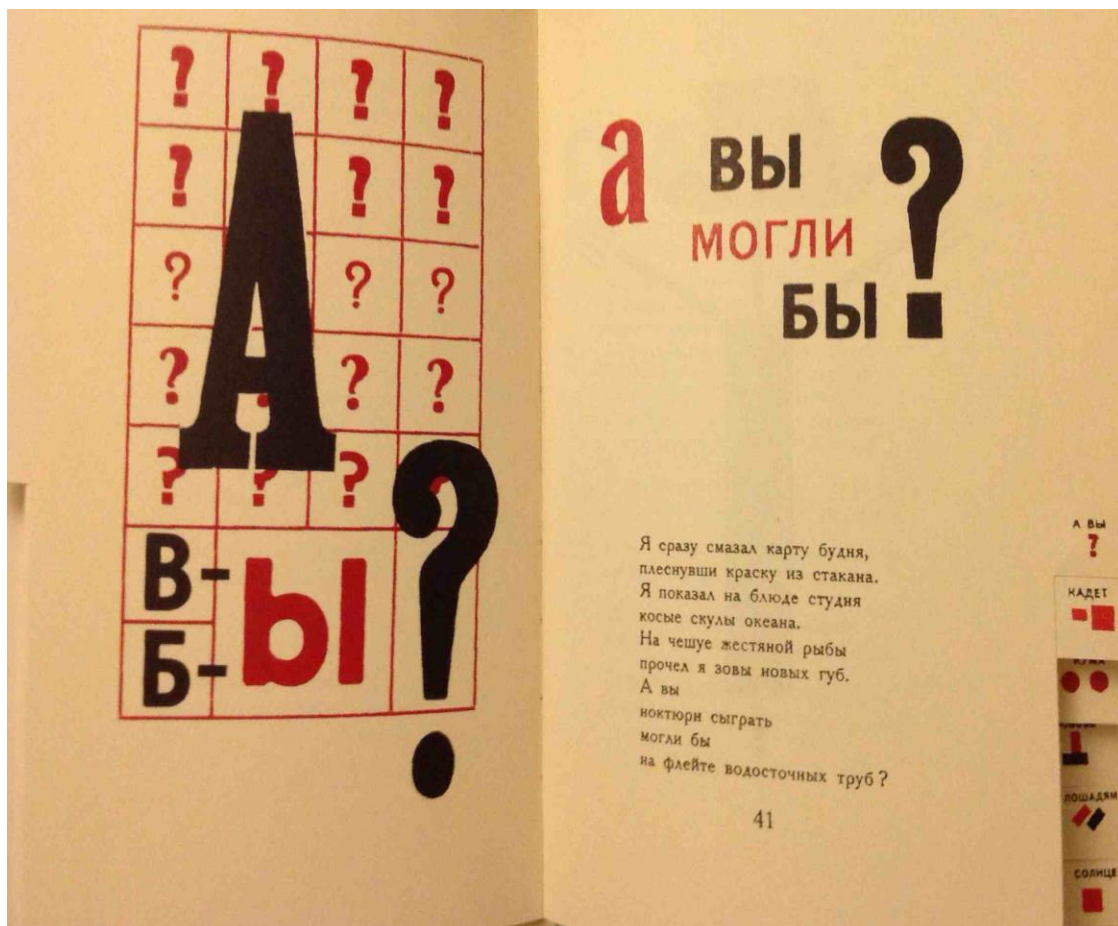
Fig. 31. "And Could You?" ("A vy mogli by?") with graphic design by El Lizzitsky.

By engaging with spatial forms on the page, Mallarmé and Mayakovsky release poetry from the constraints of genre, placing the power of voice in the reader's hands, rather than in the sole possession of the lyric "I." Like Rimbaud, Mallarmé and Mayakovsky enact the disintegration of the conventional unitary poet-subject to open the spaces of their poems to embodied possibilities, embodied through the animating voicing of

reading. Through formal innovation, their works activate compositional features –the symmetry, sequencing, and shifting frames of verbal and visual elements—to make the contents available to the reader, such that the words carry meanings in their creative display expressed through the process of reading, through the reader's interactions with the text.

Textual modes of address in the spaces of Mallarmé's and Mayakovsky's poems are a call to action culminating in the instrument of voice in the book. Yet this action, to recall the title of Mallarmé's essay on the book, is *restrained* – not only by the physical and temporal parameters of the book, but by the conditions of possibility for the reader to come to the text as summoned. The social possibilities of the book rely on a reader to come, to respond as called to the act of creation in the margins (the Levinasian shadows) of the real.

CHAPTER V

SIMULATIONS: TEXTUAL MODES OF ADDRESS IN DIGITAL MEDIA

It is updated now. A single page displays above the fold as a continuous scroll. Limitless windows click open, cascading out into space, an illusion of depth on a flat surface. Anterior to every page is a series of linear characters, hidden scaffolding, invisible to the reader who is visiting the site, scanning, clicking and swiping, making simulations flit across a screen. Levels of writing and reading—at once simultaneous and staggered, public and private, mechanical and meandering—create the phenomenon of user experience.

Here (and now), nothing is as black and white as Mallarmé conceives of the page in "L'Action Restreinte": "on n'écrit pas, lumineusement, sur champ obscur, l'alphabet des astres, seul, ainsi s'indique, ébauché ou interrompu ; l'homme poursuit noir sur blanc" (*OC* 2: 215). In the primarily seamless, polychromatic environments of programming, writing *does* materialize somewhat luminously ("lumineusement"), coded for seemingly immediate reading on an illuminated display, as if the page surfaces from the infinitely and invisibly expanding constellation of the web. Below its surface, the binary alphabet configures the interface, the restrained action enabled by the execution of the code. Black on white remains the face of print in digital media, to a certain extent, conveying a vintage feel in the contrast.

Technological changes in the nature of textual forms have thus

transformed Mallarmé's metaphor, but the page remains a restricted field

of action: material conditions specific to digital media—as *media*—

continue to intervene in the process of production, even in (because of)

the absence of the physical page. In the continual flux of digital media,

the material forms of texts—from the underlying structures representing

intentions to machines, to the tactile platforms enabling coextensive

social interactions—are virtual, "immaterial prox[ies] for the material"

(Friedberg 8), and yet they are nonetheless material (contingent,

embedded, embodied). In this sense, digital infrastructures of new media

accentuate the duality of the text already at work in the black and white

of old media when it was new. The materiality of textual forms as media–

print and digital alike–supports the production of virtuality.

In *Writing Machines.* N. Katherine Hayles poses the line of inquiry,

"What would it mean to talk about materiality in an era in which

simulations are everywhere around us?" (21). This is essentially what I

have been doing in this dissertation, in so many words: creating a

document between hand-scribbled notes and an increasingly unwieldy

word processing file, approaching a corpus of original textual forms in

mostly digital versions, talking about materiality through the optic of the

media I inhabit. My own particular methods of scholarship demonstrate

how the materiality of print informs animating notions of textuality

through digital media, as new configurations of text are made available—

both digital versions of print artifacts and born-digital productions. The varied conception of materiality that I have developed through my analysis of textual modes of address speaks to Hayle's inquiry in terms of media-specificity: how do textual forms adapt to address the reader in emergent reading environments?

By suggesting analogous adaptations, I want to point up the continuity between print and digital forms of texts: materiality emerges as textual strategies establish media-specific relations with the reader; among these, textual modes of address that interpolate the reader into the process of production. In digital media, textual modes of address call the reader to action: the reader-as-user exerts agency *through* simulations *upon* simulations, not only eliding the difference between the real and its referent, as Baudrillard defines the "precession" of simulations (2), but erasing the originary need for the real in the "merging" of the immediate and the mediated (54), or the naturalization of media. If textual modes of address resist the hegemony of the printed book, what alternative positions and forms of subjectivity will emerge through the strategically structured practices of digital media?

To explore this question further through textual modes of address, I turn to Hayles's formulations of "double address" in *How We Became Posthuman.* Hayles lays bare the problem of address in digital media in a comparison to traditional, print-based signifying practices, in which she

marks the emergence of "new models of signification" by shifting Lacan's formulation of "floating signifiers" to "flickering signifiers" (*Posthuman* 30). In a later interview, Hayles clarifies the implications of this shift in terms of the materiality of address—the "double address" of the screen:

> [I]f we're working at the level of code, the addresses are dual, humans and intelligent machines. Programmers and software engineers have, of course, evolved a number of ways to handle this double address…[T]he linguistic, material form is not stable…[It] is a surface manifestation of what is fundamentally processual. The surface manifestation always depends on processes… Flickering is meant to indicate that the apparent stability of a screen image is underlain by a profoundly processual apparatus operating at vastly different timescales than the apparent stability of the surface image would indicate. (qtd. in Piper 327)

This formulation links surface virtuality with processual (precessual) layers of materiality—the conditions of production for web and software development and design—which include the strategic manipulation of language material. Then there is the material form of the interface—the physical machine enabling and shaping the encounter with the text. Additionally, the screen is embedded in embodied practices of the everyday, the human processing contingent upon the situation of reading the screen. By keeping materiality and simulations together in view through the "double address" of "flickering signifiers," "[b]y adopting a

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double vision that looks *simultaneously* at the power of simulation and at the materialities that produce it," Hayles connects the technology of media and the subjectivity of the reader in the production of meaning through the feedback loops of "functionalities":

> When narrative functionalities change, a new kind of reader is produced by the text. The material effects of flickering signification ripple outward because readers are trained to read through different functionalities, which can affect how they interpret any text, including texts written before computers were invented.
>
> (*Posthuman* 47-8)

Through "complex feedback loops," changes in textual forms produce changes in reading subjects as they interface with texts (*Posthuman* 30). Hayles's concept of embodiment thus extends the reach of materiality to account for the process of producing meaning and, moreover, the productivity of the subject in reading. By highlighting the interactivity of this process, textual modes of address uncover this embodied productivity of textual processes, focusing on the strategies made available to readers as producers through the specific, embedded materiality of texts, such that the form of the text presents itself as an interface enabling certain interactions and practices of subjectivity (which are inherently embodied) to be engaged in the process of the text's production.

Moreover, textual modes of address identify the materiality of textual forms as it is informed by print and digital media—an intermedial construction. Recent scholarship points to the fedundity of such crossings between print and digital modalities. In *How the Page Matters,* Bonnie Mak observes, "[t]he page is now ubiquitous—we flip absently through the pages on our laptops, PDAs, or mobile phones—but this ubiquity has led to present day assumptions about the page and its operation" (Mak 3). *How the Page Matters* exposes the page to media-specific analysis in a wide-ranging corpus ("medieval manuscript, printed book, and computational device"). Taking a similar approach in *Book Was There,* Andrew Piper declares, "Now is the time to understand the rich history of what we have thought books have done for us and what we think digital texts might do differently" (xi). *Book Was There* focuses on the page as a foundational intersection shaping textual forms that address the reader:

> It is the text's architecture, its structural details, that play as much a role in shaping our reading experiences as the underlying material profile of the book or screen. Only when we reconceptualize the page as the basic unit of reading are we truly entering into new conceptual terrain. (48)

This emphasis on the continuity of the page in print and digital media brings the deeper structures of form into focus, as well as the media-specificity of conditions of subject formation in reading. In this spirit,

textual scholar Roger Chartier recognizes the need for the "backward glance" "to fully appreciate the new possibilities created by the digitalization of texts" (*Forms and Meanings* 5). *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* calls attention to the difference in reading practices engendered by changes in how textual forms address the reader in print and digital media:

> The printed object imposes its form, structure, and layout without in any way presupposing the reader's participation . . . The distinction that is highly visible in the printed book between writing and reading, between the author of the text and the reader of the book, will disappear in the face of an altogether different reality: one in which the reader becomes an actor of multivocal composition or, at the very least, is in a position to create new texts from fragments that have been freely spliced and reassembled....one can intervene in those texts at any moment, modifying them, rewriting them, making them one's own. (20)

Chartier lays bare the new participatory possibilities enabled by digital media through the comparison to print, specifically how textual modes of address regulate the relationships involved between subjects in the production of the text.

While the conventions of print continue to titrate down into textual forms in digital media, digital practices also refracts back through our

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understanding of print culture. As Peter Krapp notes in the case of hypertext,

> More than constituting an extension of annotation and gloss, hypertext draws on processes of subverting, inverting, and exploding the apparent linearity of the page, in self-referential ways modern literature has already exploited … as hypertext is hyped, much of what it supposedly superseded turns into hypertext *avant la lettre.*   (Chun and Keegan 359-60)

In this configuration, which points up the functional features of textual forms, hypertext becomes what it always already was, revealing new laters of the materiality of print in its very absence, in the virtual object of hypertext.

The retrospective value of recent technologies in unveiling features of book-bound textuality has become rudimentary in media studies. As George Landow puts it simply in *Hypertext 3.0,* "Hypertext, which is a fundamentally intertextual system, has the capacity to emphasize intertextuality in a way that page-bound texts in books cannot" (55). Further, hypertext relativizes textual forms as historically bound technology, displacing traditional notions of textuality formulated and perpetuated by print artifacts:

> many of our most cherished, most commonplace, ideas and attitudes toward literature and literary production turn out to be

the result of that particular form of information technology and technology of cultural memory that has provided the setting for them. This technology—that of the printed book and its close relations, which include the typed or printed page—engenders certain notions of authorial property, authorial uniqueness, and a physically isolated text that hypertext makes untenable. The evidence of hypertext, in other words, historicizes many of our most commonplace assumptions, thereby forcing them to descend from the ethereality of abstraction and appear as corollary to a particular technology rooted in specific times and places.   (52)

In other words, digital technologies enable us to historicize texts with regard to media-specificity. I would further emphasize that hypertext is one of the endless digital extensions (online publishing, web-based networks, mobile devices, etc.) that elucidate operations already at play in classically modern texts, textual strategies thrown up in response to circulation in commercial print culture.

In this dissertation, I have approached self-reflexive examples of print as "a particular technology rooted in specific times and places" by breaking the traditional configurations of the author and speaking subject, emblematized by the Baudelaire-Rimbaud-Mallarmé triumvirate, to focus on textual modes of address. These examples of works re-textualized in their materiality—including Baudelaire's poems in prose

posing as perusable news in *Le Figaro,* William Carlos Williams's works

of free verse dialectically set in the prose poetry book, or Mayakovsky's

lyric urbanscape emerging against the backdrop of Cubo-Futurist

experimentation—furnish parallels to the structures of the user

experience in digital media that respond to and inevitably shape reading

environments and practices. This critical perspective offers a

counterpoint to configurations of intermedial dialogue that approach

either print or digital as primary. What I want to suggest is that the

subject-object relations and practices often attributed to digitally-

enhanced interactions are, at their most basic, products of materiality:

media-specific strategies already emergent in adaptive textual forms of

print.

Among the notions of textuality that digital media exposes for

analysis are the assumptions surrounding the reader and the act of

reading, which as Roger Chartier explains in "The Text Between the Voice

and the Book," are based on the finality of print; these besieged

institutional values and practices include: "the identification of the text

with a writing that is fixed, stabilized, and manipulable because of its

permanence," the ideal of the solitary reader as the intended audience of

the work, and "the characterization of reading as a quest for meaning, as

a work of interpretation, a search for signification" (58). While the digital

insurrection of print has certainly brought these constructs to the

surface as such, historically modern literature provides ample examples

of self-reflexive texts, texts whose *modus operandi* is to expose the process of their own construction, prompting the reader to interrogate the fixity of writing, the reified subjectivity of author and reader, and the ideology of reading as a single transmission of content.

In response to the fragmentation of experience and its representations, textual modes of address prepare the way for the random path of the reader to forge unifying links. The scenes in which Balzac and Baudelaire stage the act of reading the city enable—and, in the case of Baudelaire's poems in prose, explicitly encourage—composing movements of subjectivity in the discontinuous reading process. In their original setting in commercial spaces of print, in the Parisian periodical, scenes address the reader in the act of consuming–filtering, selecting, sorting, connecting simultaneous bits of content as one whole digest. In particular, Baudelaire's proposition to the reader of his poems in prose to cut the text into recombinatory units ("Nous pouvons couper où nous voulons . . . Enlevez une vertèbre, et les deux morceaux de cette tortueuse fantaisie se rejoindront sans peine. Hachez-la en nombreux fragments, et vous verrez que chacun peut exister à part") licenses and even formalizes reading practices of divided attention. The form of the text, atomizing yet coalescing in the fragmentary construction of daily reality in the *journal*, reflects this scattering of subjective energy. Analogously, the media-specific relationship between textual form and practices of reading has come to define hypertext in the digital age:

"Hypertext has at minimum three characteristics of multiple reading paths, chunked text, and some kind of linking mechanism to connect the chunks" (*Writing Machines* 26). As in Baudelaire's poems in prose set in local newsprint, hypertext empowers the online reader's production of a coherent representation through the movement of subjectivity in a particular, formally responsive medium. These reproductions diversify into personalized, yet public spatial representations—new platforms for filtering and searching, collecting and curating—as new "strategies emerge for coping" with an overabundance of information and a scarcity of attention (Gleick 410). In the situation of new media, time constrains the space in which the process of the text takes place, stripping content of context to yield up the most expedient forms for circulation in nonstop traffic. What are the consequences of these textual adaptations for the formation of subjectivity? For the production of knowledge? Instead of scrutinizing digital technologies from the foreshortened perspective of habitual new media, approaching these topical questions from the defamiliarizing perspective of emergent print environments illuminates their media-specific implications.

By calling attention to the form of time constructed in the text, textual modes of address disrupt the easy flow of temporality to involve the reader in the process of production. Williams and Rimbaud turn against time in the seasons of the prose poetry book, fields of inter-action in which the movement of subjectivity resists synching with linear cycles

of repetition that reproduce the already-knowns of categories of experience. Springing up in disruptive reprisals, "SPRING" and all that it entails in Williams's book – progress, renewal, beginning, life, temporality –situates the reader in the present moment of the process of the text. Textual modes of address expose the construction of the text in temporal sequences. As Lori Emerson documents in *Reading Writing Interfaces: From the Digital to the Bookbound,* intentional errors in programming take reading to this meta-level, rendering opaque the transparency of media, the invisibly conventional structures that support the process of the text; in digital media as in modern print venues, artistic productions expose the intervention of the apparatus in practices of subjectivity by creating experiences of uneasy reading. But to what extent can these difficult texts be effectual in the age of user experience?

For the prose poetry book, difficulty is functional; by mobilizing the specificity of publishing format, the prose poetry book enables a dialectical process of subject formation in the friction between prose and poetry. Conversely, electronic texts and digital displays remove the text from the contingencies of form with a seamless transparency that hides layers of machine writing and reading involved in the process of production—supporting, intervening, invisibly shaping subject-formative interactions. Webpages hide their messy histories and show only the freshest face, projecting the semblance of unidirectional time, while at the same time, opening to future change through user interactivity.

These editing, commenting, and updating functions of online publishing make for the "provisional nature" of web-based productions (Carr 107). As Nicholas Carr further explains, comparing the digital version to the print original, "[e]lectronic text is impermanent, in the digital marketplace, publication becomes an ongoing process rather than a discrete event" (107). Like the transgressive text in the prose poetry book, electronic text in a widening variety of forms resists coalescence in a progressive orientation in time. Once text is made computer readable, the "container" of interactions seems dispensable (Shillingsburg, "Electronic Texts" 30), as obsolete as print itself, but the digital comes in a variety of "containers" that structure encounters with specificity. Acknowledging this materiality of textual forms, the dialectical relations between adaptations and environments, is the key to approaching these questions as answerable: How does web-based temporality change the value of the process of the text? What happens to the plurality of perspectives in this uni-dimensional interface, where history and difference leave no trace? The break down of print temporality provides some insight into the dimensions of time in the boundless space of the web.

By throwing the voice of the poetic subject, the spaces of Mallarmé and Mayakovsky's poetics provide containers of textual forms to enable the reader's play with the text. By relinquishing the center of authorial control, Mayakovsky enables the momentum of each line, the centripetal and centrifugal forces of images to paint the composition of "Night" object

by object, by the action of its transformation inherent within it. This kinetic performativity of the text rehearses the forms of object-oriented programming that use graphical mechanisms to coordinate with the reader's interactions—the movements of the eye and cursor in the process of reading the interface. Johanna Drucker emphasizes how the graphical user interface or GUI combines simulations of objects seamlessly, presenting a "reified image or menu of options" to the reader positioned as the subject-agent ("Reading Interface" 213). Drucker's work demystifies this illusory surface by reconceptualizing interface as "a space that constitutes reading as an activity"; further, an activity that is a process of subject formation specific to media: "Our constitution as subjects is integral to use; we are in constant formation in relation to interface" (216). With the growing normativity of service apps ("An Uber for x"), subject formation happens on demand through action eliding the "boundary space" of the interface, the separation between physical and online worlds, the real and the representation. By attending to the materiality of media, the specific, adaptive relations, the dualities of interactivity and "interpassivity" (borrowing Simon Perry's term), consumer and producer, user and agent, IRL and URL, become accessible for examination; materiality is the key to behind and beyond the screen access.

The conditions of subjectivity in the "virtualization of the page" remain the materialization of strategies – for restrained action (Manovich

13). Whether the action of the reader is more restrained by the screen remains to be seen—is agency any more illusory in the language of new media? Is the text any more scaffolded by the author– the novelist, the journalist, the poet, the programmer? Is the relationship with the reader that is made possible through the immersive, imagination-driven process of reading a tenable project in the micro-spaces, the surface images, the searchable data – where nothing exists outside of the all-encompassing network? The starting and ending point of this line of inquiry are literary texts as they are and have always been: simulations.

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