
THE
PATAPHYSICIAN'S
LIBRARY

An exploration of
Alfred Jarry's *livres pairs*



BEN FISHER

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*For Otto
(it's a cat thing)*

*Wer suchet, dem wird aufgetan
Der Ceylonlöwe ist kein Schwan
(Cabaret Voltaire)*

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Abbreviations

One abbreviation will be in constant use: *OCBP*, indicating the three-volume *Œuvres Complètes* of Alfred Jarry in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade series. Within footnotes, *CCP* indicates *Cahiers du Collège de 'Pataphysique*. Notations for other works cited within the text will be introduced at the relevant points. Where italics or other forms of emphasis are shown within quotations, they follow the original author.

Introduction

It is now widely recognised that Alfred Jarry (1873–1907) was a great deal more than the literary hooligan responsible for staging *Ubu Roi*. A growing number of readers in recent decades have discovered and explored the highly varied delights of his work, which includes proto-absurdist theatre, comic libretti, engagingly facetious journalism, and a prose style frequently tending towards an incomprehensibility which, depending on the reader, either blurs or enhances the effect of Jarry's distinctive confrontations with emotional, metaphysical and artistic truths.¹ His work appeals to many – and can discourage others – by virtue of its unusual integration of an infectious sense of humour with an ambitious approach to the profundities of the universe, a combination which unnerved his contemporaries and is still something of an acquired taste.

There is no denying that, as an author, Jarry is *different*; certainly it was this quality that first attracted me to his work. It is understandable that writing on Jarry has tended to concentrate on his status as a literary and personal individualist. As the Jarry cult has grown, many of his contemporaries, both major and minor, have slipped into obscurity, and for some it is now Jarry who stands as one of the pre-eminent authors of the Parisian avant-garde at the turn of the century. Conveniently, he fits the Bohemian model of the starving eccentric extrovert that has become almost a stereotype of the period. Whatever the poetic justice in the status Jarry now enjoys, it gives a distorted view, and can only contribute to the strange lack of reading and understanding in modern study of his period. The *Belle Époque* is only a century behind us, and is widely regarded as one of the great flowerings of French culture. Yet its literature has relatively few dedicated followers; many of the most distinctive and curious works of the period are long out of print, though it is often through these works that we can develop a fuller understanding of the creative literature of the time.

This study is an attempt to redress the balance, to reconstitute partial readings of *Belle Époque* literature that would make sense to Jarry and his

¹ See Henri Béhar, *Les Cultures de Jarry*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988, pp.5–6, for an account of how Jarry's style can baffle students.

contemporaries, and which are based to a significant extent on period assessments of period texts. It is not intended as a general study of Jarry's life and work, of which there are a number of excellent examples (see the notes on Jarry publications and studies that precede my bibliography); rather, it is an attempt to put Jarry in context, using evidence from his own work about his relationship with the literature of his time. Jarry is widely regarded as a reticent personality despite the many extravagant, often dangerous gestures of his life (those involving firearms are particularly notorious), which in fact form part of a mask, together with his public adoption of the persona of Père Ubu. However, his writing includes an unusually rich set of records of his tastes in literature and art, which repay the effort of location and investigation, and have a great deal more than is often acknowledged to tell us about his work, and about the literature that surrounded and nurtured him. This may be explained to some extent by the fact that some of his preferred authors remain very well known indeed – for instance Poe, Coleridge, Lautréamont, Mallarmé and Rimbaud – but others have become at best footnotes in literary history, and are obscure to most modern readers. Examples who will be dealt with at some length in this study include Léon Bloy, Georges Darien, Max Elskamp, Gustave Kahn, Catulle Mendès, Joséphin Péladan, Rachilde, Henri de Régnier and Marcel Schwob. I suggest that the exercise of relating Jarry's reading to his own work makes little sense if we ignore texts he admired by authors who happen not to be fashionable today. It is no coincidence that the authors noted above were Jarry's contemporaries, and in some cases personal friends.

The literary environment we are dealing with is late Symbolism – the product of a loose grouping whose ongoing *réception* is not helped by the simple fact that its members could, perhaps, have chosen a title that said more about what was truly distinctive in their work. It may be argued that Symbolism in its later years, tinged with the world-weary influence of the Decadents, represented something not far short of a desecration of the heady, suggestive powers of the symbol in Gautier and Baudelaire, or of the lofty cosmic vistas of Rimbaud or Lautréamont. However, the label of Symbolism is used throughout this study, simply because it is the label chosen by the writers themselves; as a result, not too much weight should be read into the term 'Symbolism' in these pages beyond its function of defining a recognised group of writers and artists.

Of all French literary schools, Symbolism is among the most incestuous (or close-knit), tied to Paris and more specifically the Latin Quarter and Montparnasse – excepting of course the *rive droite* Holy of Holies, Mallarmé's *mardis* in the rue de Rome. Other focuses were the

Symbolist reviews, most importantly the *Revue Blanche* and the *Mercure de France*. Having arrived in Paris as a schoolboy in 1891, Jarry established himself as a figure of some notoriety, through his personal affectations and more particularly through the scandal caused by the staging of *Ubu Roi* at the end of 1896. By 1898 – the significance of the date will become clear – he was a recognised member of the significant Symbolist circles, that of the *Mercure* being a particular focus even though its publishing house no longer printed his unsaleable work. It has been suggested that Jarry may have acted as an anonymous contributor to the journal,¹ and an area in which this could have been the case is the *Mercure*'s copious review section; thus it is possible that certain of the reviews that we shall encounter signed by Jarry's great friend Rachilde (novelist wife of Alfred Vallette, editor of the *Mercure*) could in fact owe something to Jarry, as contributor of a reader's report at the very least.

The year 1898 is important because it was the year in which Jarry completed the best known and most idiosyncratic of his novels, *Gestes et Opinions du Docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien*.² Its fame derives mainly from its definitions of Jarry's pseudo-science of pataphysics, perhaps first glimpsed in a recognisable form in the 1897 novel *Les Jours et les nuits*, though the term 'la pataphysique' certainly dates back to Jarry's childhood, and may not be of his own invention.³ The question of what the science of pataphysics represents is either very simple or almost impossible to define; some have found it convenient to state what it is *not*, rather than what it is. Today it is intimately associated with the estimable Collège de 'Pataphysique (the reader is referred to *Faustroll* for an explanation of the apostrophe, OCBP I, p.668). Founded in 1948, this body promotes an interpretation of pataphysics as an interface between the serious and the frivolous, and cultivates the aura of a post-Surrealist mock secret society with an off-beat and engaging collective sense of humour. Although Jarry was the *point de départ* both for the Collège's philosophy and for the *calendrier pataphysique* by which most of its

¹ Noël Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry: d'Ubu Roi au Docteur Faustroll*, Paris: La Table Ronde, 1974, p.381.

² Riewert Ehrich notes the resemblance of the title to that of Sterne's *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, and to titles of works by Defoe and Carlyle. See Riewert Ehrich, *Individuation und Okkultismus im Romanwerk Alfred Jarrys*, Munich: Pöschel, 1988, p.51.

³ See Keith Beaumont, *Alfred Jarry: A Critical and Biographical Study*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984, pp.188–89. The word's origins lie in the pool of schoolboy humour at the Lycée de Rennes that also gave rise to *Ubu Roi* and the various forms of *Ubu Cocu*, and Jarry's continued use of it is an example of a 'meaning' gradually adapted to an existing term.

publications have been dated,¹ the Collège always intended to move beyond this inspiration and apply pataphysics to other pastures. It also sought pataphysical inspiration in other authors, such as Julien Torma, before its third *Vice-Curateur* instigated a move away from directly literary inspiration in the 1960s.² As a result, its version of pataphysics has taken on a life of its own and continues to attract interest. However, it is no longer quite synonymous with pataphysics as first delineated by Jarry – which is not in any way meant as a denigration of the Collège's unique contribution to the culture of recent decades. The Collège spent the period between 1975 and 2000 in a state of self-imposed occultation, during which its affairs were ably handled by the Cymbalum Pataphysicum.

Within this study, discussion of pataphysics is in terms of the science as laid out in *Faustroll*, and embodied in this and other works by Jarry. The basic definition is well known:

DEFINITION: *La pataphysique est la science des solutions imaginaires, qui accorde symboliquement aux linéaments les propriétés des objets décrits par leur virtualité.* (OCBP I, p.669)

What Jarry puts forward is primarily a way of seeing and understanding, in which the dimensions of the imagination – which encapsulate literature and art – are more significant than the apparently real world. There are many more nuances to it, some of which I hope to clarify in the course of this study, in particular regarding metaphysical aspects, and the status of hero figures within pataphysical universes and similar dimensions conjured up by other late Symbolist authors.

While *Faustroll* is widely recognised for its definition of pataphysics, its presentation of Jarry's tastes in literature (as opposed to his extensive scientific reading) is not quite so well understood. This is surprising, as it is obvious from an early stage that this novel follows contemporary manners by eulogising its literary peer group – at length, and in considerable if oblique detail. It is this aspect of *Faustroll* that provides the impetus for my study, and a means of investigating 1890s literary thinking. It should also become clear that this aspect of the novel, and of Jarry's work in general, is by no means at odds with the visionary, pataphysical elements.

¹ The *Ere Pataphysique* (E.P.) of this calendar started at Jarry's birth, 8 September 1873. Its elegant intricacies are detailed in Ruy Launoir's *Clefs pour la 'Pataphysique*, Paris: Seghers, 1969, pp.119–27. The Cymbalum Pataphysicum abandoned the *calendrier pataphysique* in the mid-1980s, but its use has resumed since.

² See Collège de 'Pataphysique, *Les très riches heures du Collège de 'Pataphysique*, Paris: Fayard, 2000, p.60.

The practice of mutual admiration in print is a hallmark of incestuous literature, and in the 1890s was promulgated by collections such as the *Portraits du Prochain Siècle* and Remy de Gourmont's *Livres des masques*, a series of complimentary assessments – extended thumbnail sketches, as it were – of authors both established and emerging, illustrated by Félix Vallotton and first published in serial form by the *Mercure*. Jarry was not included, although in the wake of *Ubu Roi* he was very arguably a more interesting character than some of those chosen. Gourmont had been Jarry's mentor in the early stages of his career, but a strong alienation had arisen between them over a farcical set of events involving Gourmont's mistress, Berthe Courrière.¹ Thus Jarry did not get a *masque*, but in *Faustroll* he attempted to out-*masque* Gourmont with complex metaphorical portraits of artistic friends and their work, including painters and the composer Claude Terrasse as well as writers. These portraits form the liquid islands visited in Livre III of the novel, 'De Paris à Paris par mer, ou le Robinson belge'. Dr Faustroll, in part a personification of art with his eyes of ink and habit of bathing in a work of art each day (OCBP I, p.659), leaves his dwelling at '100 bis, rue Richer'² in a curious boat, and undertakes a stylised voyage around Paris by dry land in the company of the bailiff Panmuphle – the instrument of Faustroll's eviction, and the figure to whom the marvels of the pataphysician's parallel universe are revealed. The party is completed by a large monkey named Bosse-de-Nage, in part a cruel portrait of Jarry's ex-lover, the Belgian writer Christian Beck.

While *Faustroll* as a whole remained unpublished until 1911, some of these hyper-*masques*, the parts of the navigation apostrophising Jarry's contemporaries, were published in the *Mercure de France* in May 1898 – this whole section of the novel is dedicated to Alfred Vallette, emphasising the role of his review as an artistic melting-pot. At this stage Jarry did not publish *Faustroll*'s other major expression of artistic debts, a catalogue made by Panmuphle of the pataphysician's library. From Chapter IV, 'Des livres pairs du Docteur':

Dans une propriété ci-dessus dénommée, et après ouverture faite par M. LOURDEAU, serrurier à Paris, n° 205, rue Nicolas Flamel, réserves faites de

¹ Beaumont, *Alfred Jarry*, pp.49–50.

² The rue Richer is an unremarkable street in the 9th arrondissement of Paris, and is home to the Folies Bergère. It is much too short to have a no.100. Noël Arnaud (*Alfred Jarry*, p.94) argues that the reference is to the *vidangeurs* from the Richer company with whom Jarry is known to have socialised. The old French use of 100 as the indication of a toilet makes this a persuasive argument.

[...] vingt-sept volumes dépareillés, tant brochés que reliés, dont les noms suivent:

1. BAUDELAIRE, un tome d'EDGAR POE, traduction.
2. BERGERAC, *Œuvres*, tome II, contenant *l'Histoire des Etats et Empires du Soleil*, et *l'Histoire des Oiseaux*.
3. L'Évangile de SAINT LUC, en grec.
4. BLOY, *Le Mendiant ingrat*.
5. COLERIDGE, *The Rime of the ancient Mariner*.
6. DARIEN, *Le Voleur*.
7. DESBORDES-VALMORE, *Le Serment des petits hommes*.
8. ELSKAMP, *Enluminures*.
9. Un volume dépareillé du *Théâtre* de FLORIAN.
10. Un volume dépareillé des *Mille et Une Nuits*, traduction GALLAND.
11. GRABBE, Scherz, *Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung*, comédie en trois actes.
12. KAHN, *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*.
13. LAUTREAMONT, *Les Chants de Maldoror*.
14. MAETERLINCK, *Aglavaine et Sélysette*.
15. MALLARME, *Vers et prose*.
16. MENDES, *Gog*.
17. *L'Odyssée*, édition Teubner.
18. PELADAN, *Babylone*.
19. RABELAIS.
20. JEAN DE CHILRA, *L'Heure sexuelle*.
21. HENRI DE REGNIER, *La Canne de jaspe*.
22. RIMBAUD, *Les Illuminations*.
23. SCHWOB, *La Croisade des enfants*.
24. *Ubu Roi*.
25. VERLAINE, *Sagesse*.
26. VERHAEREN, *Les Campagnes hallucinées*.
27. VERNE, *Le Voyage au Centre de la terre*.

Plus trois gravures pendues à la muraille, une affiche de TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, *Jane Avril*; une de BONNARD, *La Revue Blanche*; un portrait du sieur Faustroll, par AUBREY BEARDSLEY, et une vieille image, laquelle nous a paru sans valeur, *saint Cado*, de l'imprimerie Oberthür de Rennes. (OCBP I, pp.660–61)

This curious list is the meat of this study. It is not a gratuitous enumeration of the books that happened to be on Jarry's shelves when writing his novel. It is certainly not the precise number of books owned by Jarry; there was a bibliophile streak in his family,¹ and various accounts of Jarry's quarters in

¹ At his death in 1894, Jarry's maternal grandfather, Charles Jean-Baptiste Quernest, owned no fewer than 577 books (Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, p.111).

the rue Cassette, notably that of André Salmon, report a large and chaotic library including books presented by others in the *Mercure* circle.¹ Jarry's last known letter, written six days before his death, mentions the relative comfort of being bed-ridden 'au milieu des livres et des paperasses' (OCBP III, p.695). Also, the list was carefully revised between the two manuscripts of *Faustroll*, known as the Lormel and Fasquelle manuscripts;² the version given above is the definitive Fasquelle version, whose list of *livres pairs* differs from the earlier Lormel manuscript in seven cases, bringing the total number of books to thirty-four. The changes involved the works chosen, not the authors.

Jarry demonstrates further care and close knowledge of the texts in Chapter VII, 'Du petit nombre des élus', in which Dr Faustroll makes a precise extrapolation from each book to be taken along on the voyage in Faustroll's *as* (skiff):

A travers l'espace feuilleté des vingt-sept pairs, Faustroll évoqua vers la troisième dimension:
 De Baudelaire, le Silence d'Edgar Poe, en ayant soin de retraduire en grec la traduction de Baudelaire.
 De Bergerac, l'arbre précieux auquel se métamorphosèrent, au pays du Soleil, le rossignol-roi et ses sujets.
 De Luc, le Calomniateur qui porta le Christ sur un lieu élevé.
 De Bloy, les cochons noirs de la Mort, cortège de la Fiancée.
 De Coleridge, l'arbalète du vieux marin et le squelette flottant du vaisseau, qui, déposé dans l'as, fut crible sur crible.
 De Darien, les couronnes de diamant des perforatrices du Saint-Gothard.
 De Desbordes-Valmore, le canard que déposa le bûcheron aux pieds des enfants, et les cinquante-trois arbres marqués à l'écorce.
 D'Elskamp, les lièvres qui, courant sur les draps, devinrent des mains rondes et portèrent l'univers sphérique comme un fruit.
 De Florian, le billet de loterie de Scapin.
 Des *Mille et Une Nuits*, l'œil crevé par la queue du cheval volant du troisième Kalender, fils de roi.
 De Grabbe, les treize compagnons tailleurs que massacra, à l'aurore, le baron

¹ Quoted in Henri Bordillon, *Gestes et Opinions d'Alfred Jarry, écrivain*, Laval: Siloé, 1986, pp.63–64. However, Apollinaire (quoted p.64) later found only a 'réduction de Bibliothèque' – Jarry may have sold his books to support himself.

² The extracts in the *Mercure* were drawn from the Lormel manuscript. Paul Gayot has disproved a longstanding supposition that Jarry used the chapters from the *Mercure*, together with manuscript material, to create a private edition for friends (Paul Gayot, 'Les Problèmes du *Faustroll*', in *Colloque de Cerisy, Jarry*, Paris: Belfond, 1985, pp.103–10). It thus appears that only one such copy was made, forming the Fasquelle manuscript.

Tual par l'ordre du chevalier de l'ordre pontifical du Mérite civil, et la serviette qu'il se noua préalablement autour du cou.
De Kahn, un des timbres d'or des célestes orfèvreries.
De Lautréamont, le scarabée, beau comme le tremblement des mains dans l'alcoolisme, qui disparaissait à l'horizon.
De Maeterlinck, les lumières qu'entendit la première sœur aveugle.
De Mallarmé, le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui.
De Mendès, le vent du nord qui, soufflant sur la verte mer, mêlait à son sel la sueur du forçat qui rama jusqu'à cent vingt ans.
De *L'Odyssee*, la marche joyeuse de l'irréprochable fils de Pélée, par la prairie d'asphodèles.
De Péladan, le reflet, au miroir du bouclier étamé de la cendre des ancêtres, du sacrilège massacre des sept planètes.
De Rabelais, les sonnettes auxquelles dansèrent les diables pendant la tempête.
De Rachilde, Cléopâtre.
De Régnier, la plaine saure où le centaure moderne s'ébroua.
De Rimbaud, les glaçons jetés par le vent de Dieu aux mares.
De Schwob, les bêtes écailleuses que mimait la blancheur des mains du lépreux.
D'*Ubu Roi*, la cinquième lettre du premier mot du premier acte.
De Verhaeren, la croix faite par la bêche aux quatre fronts de l'horizon.
De Verlaine, des voix asymptotes à la mort.
De Verne, les deux lieues et demie d'écorce terrestre. (OCBP I, pp.665–67)

The above is the version of this list from the Fasquelle manuscript, which includes a number of alterations from the entries in the Lormel manuscript; but as we shall find in due course, these changes pose a number of questions that do not have straightforward answers.

A further indication that the selection of the *livres pairs* is not a random process lies in the precise use of the number twenty-seven. Noël Arnaud and Henri Bordillon point out that this is the number of canonical works acknowledged by the Church,¹ and it is also the number of people to whom chapters of *Faustroll* are dedicated.

Even granted Jarry's care in remodelling the list, why should Faustroll's library be of importance? Viewed dispassionately it appears to be a major mystification, both by its apparently gratuitous presence and by its contents. There is also the undeniable charge that many of the authors are Jarry's friends (though other writer friends of his are not honoured with a *livre pair*), and many of the works their latest publications. In addition, the sheer bulk of material alluded to tends to deter, and it determines the unusual structure of this study. However, the global investigation of the

¹ Notes to the Poésie/Gallimard edition of *Faustroll*, Paris: Gallimard, 1980, p.181.

livres pairs that forms the first part of my survey will show that there are many points that reduce, if not totally remove, the charge of sycophancy. But more importantly, the *livres pairs* give us a precise, if inherently selective, account of the reading of a young writer subject to the various influences of Symbolism at a particular point. Jarry was a keen observer and interpreter of his times, as his journalism and criticism show, and the fact that most, if not quite all, the contemporary authors included were his friends reflects the highly introverted world of Symbolism. In such a world there was a good case for indirectness, as it could be hard to speak one's mind:

[...] nous ne disséquons point les auteurs vivants. Même s'ils sont plus grands que des morts, laissons-les s'ajouter cette autre grandeur de n'avoir point fini. Et quand ils ont parachevé ce qui pour l'être vivant serait l'apothéose, peut-être alors seulement ils *démarrent*? (OCBP II, p.433)

These sentiments show two things. Firstly, there is the danger of alienating friends by criticising them – the favourite pastime of *auteur pair* Léon Bloy, and surely less attractive for the younger and more vulnerable Jarry. Secondly, there is the artistic dilemma set out in the opening 'Linteau' to Jarry's first published volume, the *Minutes de sable mémorial*:

De par ceci qu'on écrit l'œuvre, active supériorité sur l'audition passive. Tous les sens qu'y trouvera le lecteur sont prévus, et jamais il ne les trouvera tous; et l'auteur lui en peut indiquer, colin-maillard cérébral, d'inattendus, postérieurs et contradictoires. (OCBP I, p.172)

We can interpret this either as a simple statement that the reader will never fully grasp an imaginative work, and therefore should not comment on it, or as a hint of intellectual arrogance on Jarry's part – a trait that might easily cause offence. Both readings strengthen the case for an oblique approach to sympathetic fellow writers who were also personal friends.

Given that over a century now lies between *Faustroll* and today's reader, we can attempt to dissect Jarry's contemporaries (following his image) without offending any sensibilities. However, dissection is not quite the right image, as it distances us from an impression of the living whole. Thus the means used for our investigation of the *livres pairs* and their environment will be drawn as often as possible from period sources, concentrating on Jarry and the cross-section of 1890s tastes that his *livres pairs* offer. The aim is to treat 1898, the year of *Faustroll*, as a moment in the mechanical sense, a notional point where forces in motion may be examined. In this case progress is frozen in manuscript by the designation of the *livres pairs*, and analysis of the books and of related information – in

other words the indicated artistic data – allows us to recreate a picture of the artistic forces at work at that given moment. While the books in Faustroll's library follow no single coherent pattern, taken globally they offer perspectives on various contemporary literary trends. A number of these form the basis of the second part of this book, and stress the significance of Jarry – not only because his selection of books provides a source of textual material in which these themes may be sought and illustrated, but also because they are trends into which Jarry's own work fits. By relating his work to his reading, a perspective emerges in which his work often shows a conscious synthesis of contemporary practice, a synthesis that I shall seek to demonstrate in conjunction with the practice of other, associated authors of the period.

Thus Jarry pushes the frontiers of literature forwards, as has long been recognised, but at the same time he tacitly acknowledges his position as part of a movement. The movement in question does not exactly have a set of specific thematic or stylistic principles that bind it together; and although it has a number of theoreticians (for instance Paul Adam or Gustave Kahn), they are not prescriptive in their approach. Rather, the Symbolists are united by a cult of novelty and experiment whose results can often appear gratuitous, and which often seems dedicated to mystification and the confusion of the reader. In the course of this study the reader may perhaps gain a more sympathetic view of these aspects of the work of the late Symbolists, which do have valid explanations and which often have identifiable purposes at both textual and conceptual levels. It is also my intention to stimulate the reader's interest in various authors of the time who can be hard to appreciate if approached 'cold'.

Outside the text of *Faustroll*, Jarry provides various other indications of his attitudes towards contemporary writers and artists, mainly in his critical and journalistic writing. However, quite the most engaging example was written only a short time after *Faustroll*, and features in the first *Almanach du Père Ubu* (1899). Père Ubu and his companion Athanor le Fourneau ('*personnage d'hiver*') come across a crowd:

LE FOURNEAU: Quel est ce grand peuple en rumeur?

PERE UBU: Ce n'est rien, c'est le Balzac de Rodin qui monte sur un banc pour faire un discours, mais il est manifeste à tout le monde qu'il est servilement copié de celui de Falguière.

LE FOURNEAU: Dénombrez-moi, s'il vous plaît, homériquement ce peuple, Père Ubu.

PERE UBU:

Carrière celui qui vaporise

Bergerat	–	va-t-en guerre
Bagès	–	chante mondainement
Pierre Louÿs	–	Aphrodite [...] (OCBP I, pp.559–60)

Père Ubu's list extends to no fewer than 136 names (among whom Alexandre and Thadée Natanson are 'ceux qui Revuent Blanche'). Although it only includes four *auteurs pairs*, and one of the artists whose work hangs on Faustroll's walls, we shall find that their designations in this list are relevant to their appearances in the *Gestes et Opinions*.

The division of this study into two parts has a dual purpose. In the first instance the division is governed by the nature of the subject, which requires an introduction to a collection of books covering various unfamiliar titles and indeed some unfamiliar authors. As much of the study is based on interpretation of neglected material, a general account of the *livres pairs* is a necessary part of the process. However, the first section should not be regarded as an overlong introduction to the second; the intention is that Part I should reflect the immediate importance of individual *livres pairs* to Alfred Jarry, and that Part II should examine some of the wider artistic tendencies into which Jarry and other Symbolists fit, using Faustroll's library as a sample that locates specific aspects of contemporary practice and experiment of which Jarry was particularly aware, aspects that feature prominently in his own work and in that of authors with whom he was familiar.

The *livres pairs* and Jarry's approach to them help us to determine specific areas of literary practice that interested Jarry, adding a dimension of conscious reference to the creation of Faustroll's library that is ultimately of far greater importance than the simple confection of a list of books that an individual happens to like. Thus Part II seeks to examine aspects of the state of Symbolist literature around the time of *Faustroll*, with the benefits of both hindsight and the insights offered to us through texts by various authors of the time. A further motive for the division of the study is to offer interpretations that are not restricted to Jarry, but which seek to place him in the literary context that critics have all too often denied him. In the process, I shall attempt to breathe some life into important or at the very least interesting texts and authors from this literary context, and thereby to offer a more authentic impression of both Jarry and his time than is often found in modern critical writing. It should become clear that although Jarry is *different*, he is not quite as different as he may appear to a modern reader who has not delved into Jarry's literary environment.

PART I

FAUSTROLL'S LIBRARY

The Pictures

Jarry was active in the world of pictorial art, and he goes to the trouble of specifying the images on Faustroll's wall. Thus they merit brief recognition here. It is reasonable to suggest that they were present in Jarry's unusual apartment at 7, rue Cassette – the 'Grande Chasublerie'.¹

Panmuphle first notes 'trois gravures pendues à la muraille', and his punctuation (see full quotation in the Introduction above) causes doubt as to whether these are three un-named engravings, or whether the 'trois gravures' are in apposition with the following three (out of four) pictures. The distinction is significant in the case of Beardsley.

Let us now consider the pictures individually.

Une affiche de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril*

Jarry made the acquaintance of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, surely the most widely recognised figure of the *Belle Époque*, during his time with the Théâtre de l'Œuvre; Toulouse-Lautrec was one of the artists responsible for the set of *Ubu Roi*. Personal acquaintance may well play a part in the choice of this particular work, as with many of the *livres pairs*. However, we have no means of knowing the exact poster we are dealing with, as Toulouse-Lautrec produced several designs featuring Jane Avril, the star singer/dancer of the Moulin Rouge, most of them very familiar images to the modern eye. It is not surprising that in the 1899 *Almanach*, he is 'celui qui affiche' (OCBP I, p.561). Jarry met Jane Avril as well as the artist through the Œuvre, where she was briefly lured to play (predictably) Anitra in *Peer Gynt*. Her name appears immediately above Jarry's on Edvard Munch's poster for the production.² Much later, she surfaces

¹ The apartment had been divided horizontally as well as vertically, and while Jarry was short enough – just – to stand upright, few visitors were. This part of the building no longer exists, but photographs appear in Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, plates 37–40.

² Reproduced in Jean Cassou, *Encyclopédie du Symbolisme*, Paris: Somogy, 1979, p.24. Jarry is credited with the part of a troll courtier, but is reputed to have played the Mountain King; see Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, pp.187–88.

ephemerally in Jarry's *Le Moutardier du Pape*, where Sir John of Eggs, looking for his wife Jane, lets slip the punning Jane Avril slogan:

Où il a d'la Jane
Y a du plaisir!
(OCBP III, p.157)

Whether there is any real compliment to Avril in the choice of the poster is uncertain. Jarry was known as a misogynist, but this does not mean that there were no women he valued; the warmth of his relationship with Rachilde and (at times) his sister is a matter of record.

Une de Bonnard, *La Revue Blanche*

Pierre Bonnard was already among the more prominent avant-garde painters of the time, and he was another of Jarry's acquaintances; and like Toulouse-Lautrec, he was involved in design for the Théâtre de l'Œuvre. However, it is possible that he and Jarry had met beforehand; certainly Jarry was familiar with Bonnard's work by early 1894, when he reviewed the artist's *Baigneuse* (OCBP I, p.1015). Their friendship was prolonged and productive; Bonnard illustrated Jarry's *Almanachs du Père Ubu*, and he also made puppets for a production of *Ubu Roi*. He was related by marriage to Claude Terrasse, the composer whose patronage was later to become Jarry's main, if meagre, means of support. A chapter of *Faustroll* is dedicated to Bonnard as an afterthought in the Fasquelle manuscript (OCBP I, pp.710–12), but contains no more references to Bonnard than to Sérusier, to whom it was originally dedicated.

Jarry only decided upon *La Revue Blanche* in the second manuscript of *Faustroll*. In the first he hesitated between *L'Estampe et l'Affiche* and *Peintres Graveurs* and finally chose the latter – possibly choosing between two prints hanging on the same wall. *La Revue Blanche* is an advertising poster (1894) for the avant-garde review to which Jarry would later become a contributor. Resembling Aubrey Beardsley's prospectus cover for *The Yellow Book* (also 1894), the poster shows an elegantly dressed lady purchasing the magazine and being pointed at by a street urchin, and is the type of elegant yet informal visual projection of the era that popular memory has retained.¹ The reference to the *Revue Blanche* provides a neat balance to the dedication of a substantial section of *Faustroll* to Alfred

¹ Reproduced in Cassou, *Encyclopédie*, p.276.

Vallette, editor of the *Mercure de France*; the two periodicals were perhaps the most important organs of the French literary avant-garde in 1898, although the *Revue Blanche* would only survive for another five years.

Un portrait du sieur Faustroll, par Aubrey Beardsley

This picture is much more of a mystery. Again, the artist was a friend of Jarry, who represented his work in one of the islands visited by Faustroll, in the chapter 'Du Pays des Dentelles' (OCBP I, pp.677–78). Surprisingly, there is no allusion to Beardsley's death on 16 March 1898 in either manuscript. Beardsley's portrait of Faustroll is unknown. It has long been assumed that it is a lost portrait of either Jarry or his self-projection Dr Faustroll, and a fetching attempt at re-creating the latter subject after the manner of Beardsley appears in the *Cymbalum Pataphysicum* edition of the novel.¹ If an original did exist, Jarry could have destroyed it, as he gradually did his portrait by Henri Rousseau,² but it is odd that no other record of it survives. However, the possible apposition with 'trois gravures' tends to suggest that Jarry is appropriating an existing Beardsley print to stand as a portrait of Faustroll. Jill Fell makes an intriguing and persuasive case for Beardsley's 1896 drawing of the dwarf Alberich from *Das Rheingold*,³ which suggests a fresh and interesting approach to visualisation of both Dr Faustroll and his creator.

Une vieille image, laquelle nous a paru sans valeur, saint Cado, de l'imprimerie Oberthür de Rennes

The final picture is very different from the contemporary images discussed above, which pay a compliment to personal friends; however, there are still personal considerations in its inclusion. Jarry is conspicuously specific in its identification.

This is a primitive print crudely tinted in primary colours, more basic

¹ *Cymbalum Faustroll*, p.8, signed 'Gil, Rt.'. A 1974 board game by the same artist, based on *Faustroll*, is illustrated in Collège de 'Pataphysique, *Les très riches heures*, p.119 (*Le Strobile Jeu de Ha Ha*).

² Beaumont, *Alfred Jarry*, p.44.

³ Jill Fell, 'The Deceptive Images of Alfred Jarry: Lost, Found and Invented Portraits by Beardsley, Rousseau and Rippl-Ronai', *Word & Image*, 15(2) (April–June 1999), 190–98, p.192.

than the *Images d'Epinal* for which Jarry had a penchant.¹ The mention of Rennes in the text of the *Gestes et Opinions* inevitably recalls the years Jarry spent there in his adolescence, of which the picture is probably a memento, and it also recalls the noble Breton ancestry which Jarry rather dubiously claimed for himself.

The print was made by Oberthür for the publisher Charles Pierret fils, also of Rennes, in 1863. It is only to be expected that it is extremely rare today, but fortunately two copies are held by the Iconothèque of the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires, Paris: one is in a poor state and appears in the Cymbalum Pataphysicum's *Faustroll*;² the other copy is in prime condition, and is reproduced as the Frontispiece to this book, with thanks to its curators. Within a surround of an unrelated 'Cantique sur la Passion' *Saint Cado* depicts the legend of the joining of a small island at Belz (Morbihan) to the mainland by the Devil, with the first living soul to cross his bridge (in reality a causeway) as the price for the construction work. The Devil hoped thereby to win the soul of Cado; the latter sent across the cat he holds in his left hand in the illustration. The legend fits into the international (and mainly Celtic) tradition of diabolical bridge-building, of which the best known French case is a much later one, that of the Pont Valentré at Cahors. The tale of the trick played upon the Devil is also told elsewhere; for instance, his reward for building Pontarfynach (Devil's Bridge) in Mid-Wales was reputedly a dog.

Cado, or more conventionally Cadoc (born Cadfael or Cathmail, also known as Cadou, Catwg and a variety of other forms), is one of the more important and better documented Celtic saints. He lived between roughly 497 and 577 AD (martyred in Wales by Saxon troops³), and was the son of Gwynllyw, a king in South Wales. A number of magical exploits are attributed to him, most being familiar from accounts of other Celtic saints. He is also remembered as a founder of monastic settlements, notably Llanccarfan in Glamorgan.

¹ See Henri Béhar, 'Jarry et l'imagerie populaire', *L'Esprit Créateur*, XXIV(4) (Winter 1984), 36–47.

² Jarry, *Gestes et Opinions du Docteur Faustroll, Pataphysicien, roman néo-scientifique*, Paris: Cymbalum Pataphysicum, 1985, p.59.

³ Some accounts make dubious assumptions about the place of Cadoc's martyrdom on the strength of its being given as *Beneventum*; certainly not Benevento in Italy, nor indeed Weedon in Northamptonshire (Latin name *Benevenna*), as Sabine Baring-Gould and John Fisher demonstrate conclusively that the place was no great distance from his monastery at Llanccarfan (S. Baring-Gould and John Fisher, *Lives of the British Saints*, 4 vols, London: Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion/Clark, 1908, II, pp.32–37). This work's account of Cadoc (II, pp.14–42) remains as authoritative as any account of a Celtic saint can be.

Cadoc travelled throughout the Celtic world, in addition to pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Rome; his travels are no doubt responsible for suggestions that the Welsh, Scottish and Breton saints bearing identical or similar names are separate figures.¹ Cadoc's period of reclusion at Belz is dated from 547 to 551, and was almost certainly motivated by the outbreak of the Yellow Plague in Wales. The Oberthür print makes an easy slip in dating his presence to the fifth century.

Jarry may well have known Belz and the Ile de S. Cado, as they are close to Ste-Anne d'Auray (18 km as the crow flies, on the almost landlocked Etel estuary near Lorient); in his novel *Les Jours et les nuits*, a childhood visit to the shrine at Ste-Anne is described through the eyes of the hero Sengle (OCBP I, pp.797–99); Jarry's Breton Catholic upbringing and the status of Sengle as a self-projection combine to suggest that the account draws on a visit by the young Jarry. The tale of Cadoc and the Devil has no obvious associations with Sengle's conceptions of religion as expressed in this section of the novel, but, as we shall see, it can be associated with a number of the *livres pairs*.

At Belz there is a chapel dedicated to Cadoc on the island, where Jarry could have found a rough stone 'Lit de S. Cadou' (with an opening through which 'whispers' were heard, in fact the sound of the sea) and four seventeenth-century paintings captioned thus:

1. Anglais de nation, prince de Clamorgant, Puis abbé, vient, débarque, et réside céans.
2. Les jugements de Dieu sans cesse méditant, C'est ainsi, pèlerins, qu'il a vécu, céans.
3. Aux pirates pervers en ce lieu l'assillant, Il dit: Je suis sans bien, solitaire céans.
4. Oratoire, mon œuvre, adieu! dit il pleurant. Belz, t'oublierai-je? Non. Il cingla de céans.²

The origin of the legend shown in the Oberthür print is unknown. The stone causeway at Belz is indeed attributed to Cadoc, as is a miraculous restoration of the structure after it collapsed, but the Devil does not feature in the known Lives of Cadoc; however, a dubious collection of Breton ballads published in 1839, *Barzas-Breis*, does feature an odd dispute on the bridge between Cadoc and St Gildas. This legend appeared again,

¹ David Hugh Farmer maintains this view (*The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 2nd edn, Oxford: OUP, 1987, p.67).

² See also CCP, 22-23 (23 Palotin 83 E.P., i.e. May 1957), pp.14–15. The imperfect *Saint Cado* is reproduced in their notes, along with a version of the captions from Belz.

this time in prose, in the Vicomte de la Villemarqué's *La Légende celtique* four years before the Oberthür print was published. The dispute was over whether or not Virgil had been saved from pagan damnation.

If Jarry knew Belz, he may have been familiar with the captions quoted above – and thus with the fact that Cadoc was a voyager. Specifically, the account of this figure's arrival on and departure from an island ('vient, débarque [...] adieu! dit-il pleurant') relates directly to the narrative structure of *Faustroll*, in which the pataphysician and his companions pay visits to a number of islands. Thus, unlike the other known pictures found at 100 bis, rue Richer, *Saint Cado* may have a perceptible link with the text of the novel in which it is mentioned, and thus rewards an investigation of its subject matter. Exactly how much Jarry knew about Cadoc we cannot say, as this is his only allusion to him, but when we reach the eleventh *livre pair* we shall find some evidence of a wider interest in Celtic hagiography than the apparently gratuitous inclusion of a childhood memento may suggest. But, at the very least, *Saint Cado* shows that there can be substance behind the apparent mystification of Panmuphle's list, substance that will become far more considerable as we look at the pataphysician's bookshelves.

The Books

It is worth stating in advance that the process of relating the *livres pairs* to Jarry's own work, and to the tendencies of the time, will show that some volumes from Faustroll's library are considerably more important than others. The notion of calling these books *livres pairs* suggests not only excellence but also parity, and is, to put it bluntly, bogus. The notion is simply not carried through, either in the *Gestes et Opinions* or elsewhere in Jarry; references to several *auteurs pairs* (for instance Desbordes-Valmore and Verhaeren) are very scarce or absent, in contrast to the relative wealth of references to other figures such as Rachilde or Régnier. I shall generally follow this implicit guidance that Jarry gives as to his preferences among his chosen authors. Another group of nineteenth-century *auteurs pairs* such as Rimbaud and Lautréamont are so universally recognised today that they do not need a detailed introduction for the modern reader, which is not true in the cases of several of Jarry's close contemporaries; however, it will be useful to clarify, to some extent, how 1890s readers viewed figures such as Rimbaud and Lautréamont. Subsequent chapters of this book will examine trends that emerge from several of these works, and which form identifiable links between the writings of Jarry and those of his influences.

The function of this section is to provide an overview of Dr Faustroll's entire library, both noting the presence of works that will probably be familiar to the reader, and introducing other works that are less well known. Naturally in the space available only relatively brief accounts of these less familiar works are possible, but a fuller picture of several of the more significant works will develop in subsequent chapters; we shall find that very often it is the neglected literature of the *Belle Epoque* that indicates the authentic intellectual character of the period. The later stages of the nineteenth century are characterised in today's literary criticism by tunnel vision – there is a great deal of work published, but it concentrates on a small number of authors to the almost total exclusion of figures whom contemporaries considered equally seminal. There is no better contemporary illustration of a writer's appreciation of his literary environment than Jarry's list of his *livres pairs*, despite the insertions of the peripheral oddities that we should expect from such a maverick intellect.

As a group of texts, the *livres pairs* as a group have not been studied in any depth before, and in certain cases there is a paucity of work on individual texts. Much of the previous work on the *livres pairs* as a group is summarised in the notes included in the critical editions: OCBP says relatively little about the books; the Poésie/Gallimard edition of *Faustroll* (1980) goes further and locates some of Jarry's extrapolations, but is unreliable in places; the best work is the least accessible, i.e. the critical apparatus of the Cymbalum Pataphysicum's privately circulated *Faustroll* (1985). Much of the material dates back to issue 22–23 of the *Cahiers du Collège de 'Pataphysique*, published in the 1950s. The notes on the books are sound as far as they go, but as with much of the Collège/Cymbalum work on Jarry's influences, the lacunae can be as significant as the statements. Outside critical editions, the only author to refer at length to the *livres pairs* is Patrick Besnier in his 1990 *Alfred Jarry*, a volume that offers some absorbing approaches to the enigma of Jarry but does not actually tell us much about the *livres pairs* themselves. Each book merits its own heading, but these in fact lead to interesting tangential observations on Jarry. Besnier opens his conclusion by stating that 'il n'est pas très sûr que le portrait soit mieux visible après l'examen de ces vingt-sept pièces du puzzle'.¹ I disagree. Approached with an open mind as to the value of the texts and to Jarry's attitudes towards them, the *livres pairs* can help us to see Jarry in relation to his contemporaries, using his own preferences as our guide, and thereby to enhance our understanding of Jarry and the atmosphere in which he worked. The two are more intimately linked than we may at first suppose, and our images of both will benefit from the exercise.

This survey is intended to introduce and characterise the books, and to show likely reasons for their presence on Faustroll's shelves – in other words, for Jarry's interest in them. The extrapolations of *Faustroll's* Chapter VII, 'Du petit nombre des élus', are also discussed, as they often suggest Jarry's attitude towards an author and his or her work, and where an *auteur pair* is visited in a later chapter of *Faustroll's* voyage, this will also be discussed. The lists of editions of *livres pairs* given in notes are intended to be useful rather than exhaustive, although some are complete to date. An edition will usually be specified for reference within the text, and in some cases an abbreviation is given for this edition. The main criterion in selecting an edition has been to choose a reliable text that should be reasonably easy for the reader to find. However, a number of works only offer a single edition, and in certain cases these are rare. For the sake of economy, it may be taken that all imprints given are Parisian unless otherwise indicated.

¹ Patrick Besnier, *Alfred Jarry*, Paris: Plon, 1990, p.169.

1. Baudelaire, un tome d'Edgar Poe, traduction

At the very start of the *livres pairs*, Jarry states admiration for major past influences on the avant-garde – arguably the two most pervasive influences of all, conveniently combined in one volume and placed, by a neat alphabetical coincidence, at the head of the list.

The influence of Poe was stronger in France than perhaps anywhere else in the nineteenth century, and is well documented; here we may note in particular that a 1920s study of Poe's influence in France made specific cases for his influence on no fewer than nine *auteurs pairs*.¹ We know that Jarry's reading of Poe extended beyond the single volume found on Faustroll's shelves; the article 'Edgar Poe en action', for instance, makes reference to Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym* (OCBP II, pp.284–86).

Baudelaire's translations of Poe are by common consent among the classics of translation into French, and would thus have a particular technical appeal for Jarry as an aspiring translator – he translated works into French from English, German and modern Greek. Baudelaire's translations can in fact read more easily than the original, as he substitutes a more fluid style for the often awkward delivery of Poe's English; however, to lose the awkwardness altogether is unfortunate, as it forms a parallel to the psychological awkwardness of Poe's tales. Of the several volumes of Poe published by Baudelaire, the extrapolation chosen by Jarry as the first of the 'petit nombre des élus' shows that the volume in question is the *Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires par Edgar Poe*.² The edition used here is vol. VII (1933) of the nineteen-volume *Œuvres Complètes* of Baudelaire published by Conard, 1923–53 (abbreviation 'Baudelaire OC VII').

The *Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires* are a representative selection of Poe tales, including a number of the most celebrated ones (*Le Cœur révélateur*, *La Chute de la Maison Usher*, *Le Puits et le Pendule*, *Le Masque de la Mort rouge*, etc.). The volume also includes three of Poe's dialogue pieces (*Puissance de la Parole*, *Colloque entre Monos et Una* and *Conversation d'Eiros avec Charmion*), which find an echo in the use of dialogue form between similarly disembodied minds in the later stages of *Faustroll* (e.g. the chapter 'Selon Ibicrate le géomètre', OCBP I, pp.729–30). All the familiar elements of Poe's world are to be found in the volume – horror, the grotesque, self-glorifying anguish, and of course mystery, both within

¹ Célestin Pierre Cambiaire, *Influence of Edgar Allan Poe in France*, New York: Stechert, 1927; discusses Baudelaire, Maeterlinck, Mallarmé, Mendès, Rachilde, Régnier, Schwob, Verlaine and Verne.

² First published by Michel Lévy in 1857, with numerous editions since.

plots and in the literary technique of the author. The mystery is governed by perversity, which lies near the hearts of both Poe and Jarry; on our journey through the *livres pairs* we are to be at the mercy of an intellect of disturbing capriciousness. This passage from Poe's *Le Démon de la Perversité*, the first of the *Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires* and thus the opening of the *livres pairs* as a whole, could well serve as an apology in advance:

Il n'existe pas d'homme, par exemple, qui à un certain moment n'ait été dévoré d'un ardent désir de torturer son auditeur par des circonlocutions. Celui qui parle sait bien qu'il déplaît; il a la meilleure intention de plaire; il est habituellement bref, précis et clair; le langage le plus laconique et le plus lumineux s'agite et se débat sur sa langue; ce n'est qu'avec peine qu'il se contraint lui-même à lui refuser le passage; il redoute et conjure la mauvaise humeur de celui auquel il s'adresse. (Baudelaire OC VII, p.4)

The selection of this first volume is particularly important, as it implicitly states that the *livres pairs* are to be more than an enumeration of personal allegiances. The invocation of Poe and Baudelaire declares an intention to present a library composed not merely of contemporary Symbolism, but also of generative influences upon the development of Symbolist practice. We shall see that some of the influences suggested by Jarry are highly idiosyncratic, but the significance of Baudelaire and Poe would hardly have been controversial among Jarry's intended public.

As noted earlier, Chapter VII of *Faustroll* lists essences from each of the seized *livres pairs*, brought forth to accompany the navigators on their strange *périple*. The first of these extrapolations is:

De Baudelaire, le Silence d'Edgar Poe, en ayant soin de retraduire en grec la traduction de Baudelaire.

Silence (Baudelaire OC VII, pp.285–89) is Baudelaire's translation of one of Poe's less well known pieces, 'Silence: A Fable'. Jarry's choice of it as an accompaniment to Faustroll's *périple* is the indicator that the 'tome d'Edgar Poe' is the *Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires*. *Silence* is a short and frightening piece, unnerving for the reader both for its content and its technique – withheld narrative information, opening *in medias res*. The piece is narrated by a man in his tomb (the location is only revealed at the conclusion) who is being told a tale by 'le Démon', about a 'contrée lugubre en Libye, sur les bords de la rivière Zaïre'; a place where there is no rest or silence. Within this landscape there is a man with 'les traits d'une divinité', who is able to resist the curse of desolation that he is under. When the Demon changes the curse to one of silence, the man flees in

terror. The narrator concludes the tale by stating that ‘comme il est vrai qu’Allah est vivant’, the Demon’s fable is superior to all the marvels contained in ‘les livres des Mages’ – the first mention of magi, a recurring type within the *livres pairs*.

Jarry’s insistence on re-translating Baudelaire’s translation from the Greek is mock pedantry, and refers to a citation from Alcman at the opening of *Silence*. In Poe’s version both Greek and English are given, but Baudelaire gives only French. The only reason to object to the latter version is Baudelaire’s mild translator’s licence in replacing plurals with singulars:

Literal translation:

Les faites des montagnes sommeillent; les vallées, les cavernes et les rochers sont silencieux. (notes, Baudelaire OC VII, p.494)

Baudelaire’s translation:

La crête des montagnes sommeille; la vallée, le rocher et la caverne sont muets. (Baudelaire OC VII, p.285)

Jarry also demonstrates that he has read Poe in the original, and so reinforces the compliment to Baudelaire of choosing his translation, with the implication that Baudelaire’s work is of such quality that it deserves inclusion even though technically superfluous; there is thus justification for listing the volume under B rather than P. Through the choice of a relatively obscure Poe tale, Jarry implicitly encourages the investigative reader to appreciate this first *auteur pair* in depth – an approach that should be borne in mind as we encounter real obscurities in subsequent *livres pairs*, and which may have as great a function in the selection of *Silence* as the content or technique of this mysterious tale.

By an odd coincidence, *Silence* with a capital S appears again much later in the *livres pairs*; Hunter, the demonic lover of Rachilde’s *La Princesse des ténèbres*, has a fearsome hound named Silence. I would not go so far as to suggest any connection.

2. Bergerac, *Œuvres*, tome II, contenant *l’Histoire des Etats et Empires du Soleil*, et *l’Histoire des Oiseaux*

Cyrano de Bergerac was a poorly understood quantity in Jarry’s time, best known and in the process vulgarised through Edmond Rostand’s *Cyrano de Bergerac*, one of the theatrical hits of 1897. As in the case of Poe, Jarry was

familiar with aspects of the author's work outside the chosen *livre pair*, expressing admiration for Cyrano's theatre when answering a questionnaire on drama, rhetorically assuming general knowledge of it 'comme on sait' (OCBP I, p.410) when in fact no such thing could be assumed at the end of the nineteenth century; unless, of course, Jarry was implying a barbed comment about Rostand.

Jarry is curiously specific in the title he gives for this *livre pair*, all the more so as it is far from evident which edition he means in what looks rather like direct quotation of a title page. The publication history of *Cyrano* is a complex one, full of mangled and censored texts, and I have fared little better than Noël Arnaud and Henri Bordillon in making a precise identification of the edition concerned.¹ Jarry might conceivably have consulted the first known reasonably complete manuscript of the *Soleil*, deposited at the Bibliothèque Nationale (where he often worked) in 1890.² *L'Histoire des Oiseaux* is a section of the *Soleil*, and not a work in its own right. The best edition, to be used here, is *Cyrano de Bergerac, Œuvres Complètes*, Belin, 1977 ('Cyrano OC'). This edition and my quotations follow the erratic use of accents by Cyrano and his printers.

Again, Jarry presents us with an influence from before his own time – in this case, two-and-a-half centuries before. This is one of the cases in which he is stating an influence on which there would have been no consensus of opinion, given Cyrano's relative obscurity as an author in the period, an obscurity accentuated by the popular myth-making of Rostand. This is a perverse selection (recalling the principle introduced in Poe), provoking the reader to investigate and learn – or, by the same token, rebuffing the reader who seeks easily recognisable texts in Panmuphle's list (in 1898 as much as today, though the relative familiarity of texts within the list has changed with time). Thus even if Jarry perhaps saw Cyrano as a progenitor of the Symbolist aesthetic – into which his emphasis on

¹ Notes to the *Poésie/Gallimard Faustroll*, p.181. Most recorded editions of Cyrano, unlike that evoked by Jarry, reserve a complete volume for the whole of *L'Autre Monde*. Although the two-volume edition published by the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1897 (*Œuvres Comiques: Voyage dans la Lune, Histoire des Etats et Empires du Soleil, Histoire des Oiseaux*) seems a likely candidate for Jarry's choice, it poses more questions than it answers. In particular, the *Soleil* starts in the first volume (Jarry specifies a second volume containing the *Soleil*, presumably as a whole), and Jarry's title is not quite a verbatim quotation of the second volume's title page, which is identical to that of the first.

² Jacques Prévot, *Cyrano de Bergerac Romancier*, Paris: Belin, 1977, p.7. At the time of the manuscript's accession, Jarry's mentor Remy de Gourmont was employed at the Bibliothèque Nationale. No reasonably complete edition of the *Soleil* was published until 1910.

wisdom, mystery and strange wonders neatly fits – the deliberately idiosyncratic quality of the selection prevents us from insisting on any particular influence of *Cyrano* on *fin-de-siècle* authors apart from his admirer Jarry. Nonetheless, it can be demonstrated that there is real relevance in this *livre pair*, as it offers a number of points of comparison with the *Gestes et Opinions*, being one of the few literary works of remotely comparable tone and intention.

The *Etats et Empires du Soleil* is the second half of *Cyrano's L'Autre Monde*, much prized in the history of science fiction and tales of fantastic voyages, a tradition of relevance to *Faustroll*. It is however a very different work from the better known *Etats et Empires de la Lune*, changing from its satirical slant to a more philosophical, indeed cerebral perspective as the Sun's landscape becomes an organic one based on the inside of the human mind, with springs named after the five senses flowing into rivers named *la Mémoire*, *l'Imagination* and *le Jugement* (*Cyrano OC*, p.498). Such a world-view (applied to the particular world in question) would surely appeal to Jarry as an early parallel to Dr Faustroll's revelation of an alternative Universe to be created, contained and grasped within the intellect. And just as Faustroll approaches and measures God at the end of his voyage, *Cyrano* attempts to characterise the processes of thought by giving them a physical existence. Equally appealing in the *Faustroll* context would be the effect of reading the *Soleil* out of sequence, without the *Lune*; before launching into a rather incoherent early section of lightweight adventures set around Toulouse, the novel opens with the appearance of an 'homme tombé du ciel' (*Cyrano OC*, p.424) – the narrator Dyrcona returning from the Moon. This entrance is not unlike the arrival on Earth of Faustroll, born 'en Circassie, en 1898 (le XX^e siècle avait [-2] ans), et à l'âge de soixante-trois ans' (*OCBP I*, p.658).

L'Histoire des Oiseaux exemplifies the intense pantheism that pervades the *Soleil*. It is an episode relating Dyrcona's adventures among the birds who have flown from the Earth to the Sun and there formed an organised state. *Cyrano* treats the birds as sympathetic, sentient humanised beings (thereby introducing elements of satire on humanity), much as he does with trees (*Cyrano OC*, pp.477–88). One suspects that Jarry's specific inclusion of *L'Histoire des Oiseaux* is not deliberate, but reflects the title page of the edition he was using; the delivery, if not the conception, of the episode lacks the surreal touch that is often a point of attraction for him, and which is reflected in his extrapolation from the *Soleil*. We should note, however, that Noël Arnaud has demonstrated the massive debt of *L'Histoire des Oiseaux* to esoteric authors, indeed that it often quotes them

almost verbatim.¹ Esotericism is a major force in 1890s writing, as we shall see in due course, and Arnaud points out in particular two of Cyrano's esoteric themes familiar to Jarry: androgyny, which features in *Haldernablou* and less explicitly in *Les Jours et les nuits*; and alchemy, in the guise of the transmutability of matter and living beings (Cyrano OC, p.475, where Dyrcona, condemned to death, is told by a bird that he will be transformed rather than simply killed). This process is a prominent feature of *Faustroll*: real people can be transmuted into the complex entities of Livre III, and Faustroll's intellect can function after his physical demise, moved into another dimension.

Jarry's extrapolation involves birds, but falls outside *L'Histoire des Oiseaux*:

De Bergerac, l'arbre précieux auquel se métamorphosent, au pays du Soleil, le rossignol-roi et ses sujets.

This tree appears while Dyrcona is asleep, not long after his arrival on the Sun, and has the appearance of being made of gold and precious stones. A nightingale sits in the tree, which turns out to be made of 'petits Hommes voyans, sentans et marchans, lesquels comme pour celebrer le jour de leur naissance au moment de leur naissance même, se mirent à danser à l'entour de moy' (Cyrano OC, p.457). The people can together mimic any shape they choose – echoing and expanding the theme of transmutation found in *L'Histoire des Oiseaux* and elsewhere in the *Soleil*. In order to talk with Dyrcona they make themselves into 'un grand collosse à jour'.² The lives of these strange creatures are taken up with constant travel and observation on the Sun. The nightingale travelling with them is a real one, and has fallen in love with the King of the amorphous people, who had previously assumed the form of a nightingale ('le rossignol-roi'). The creation of the tree is an attempt to demonstrate to the bird that his beloved is not a real bird, and the nightingale seems ready to fly away. Viewed psychologically the tree is thus a symbol of disillusioned passion; but in an alternative, more artistic perspective, the image of the tree can be appreciated as a complex and innovatory illustration of a fundamental principle for Jarry and many of his contemporaries: that things are rarely what they seem.

¹ Noël Arnaud, 'Apostilles en vue d'un Commentaire éSotérique [sic.] de *L'Histoire des Oiseaux*', CCP, 22–23 (May 1957), 23–26.

² W.H. Van Vledder argues convincingly that this humanoid figure is a perfect representation of the Rosicrucian understanding of man as 'un microcosme à l'image du macrocosme' (*Cyrano de Bergerac, 1619–1655, Philosophe Esotérique*, Amsterdam: Holland Universiteits Pers, 1976, pp.23, 27).

3. L'Évangile de Saint Luc, en grec

Luke's was the last of the Synoptic Gospels to be written, and builds upon the earlier accounts of the Incarnation. There are two particular aspects of Luke that may commend it to Jarry over and above its counterparts: it is the only complete account of the life and career of Christ; and it is written in better Greek than the other Gospels.

In selecting the Bible (Luke's alphabetical position in the *livres pairs* implies the word 'Bible') Jarry seems to make a profession of faith, and simultaneously a reference to contemporary trends. Jarry's period saw a limited religious revival in literature, a phenomenon to which he will draw our attention on more than one occasion through Faustroll's library. However, the particular choice of Luke – why choose one Gospel and not the entire Bible? – has personal motivations.

Jarry's faith was deep-rooted but unconventional, and will feature in more detail in Part II. His Breton upbringing brought a taste for religious iconography, often of a primitive type (for instance *Saint Cado*), expanded in his reviews *L'Ymagier* and *Perhindérion*. In adult life he could not have been said to be conventionally pious, but in his work there is a constant yearning to approach God, a palpable presence in *César-Antechrist* and of course in *Faustroll*, where the pataphysician makes a mathematical attempt to measure God and thereby to strengthen and define his own relationship with him.

Also, Jarry's writing shows evidence of a pronounced Christ complex. The self-projections that form the heroes of his novels submit themselves to their own personal Passions, usually with identifiable roots in Jarry's own life.¹ The creation of a sacrificial character named Emmanuel Dieu (in *L'Amour Absolu*) is as clear an indication of the complex as one could wish for, and the imagery of the Crucifixion is conjured up at the death of André Marcueil, *Le Surmâle* (OCBP II, p.268). In the examination of the Symbolist hero which follows in Part II we shall observe the care with which Jarry's central figures are imbued with certain characteristics of Christ, which thus reflect back upon the author who creates them in his own image. Furthermore, Jarry shows an occasional preoccupation with the age of Christ at the time of the Passion (and the age of the astral body in certain branches of esoteric thought), traditionally between 30 and 33 years. We may note, for instance, that Marcueil is in this age group at the

¹ See the standard works on Jarry, and particularly Arnaud's biography, for amplification of this.

time of his miraculous exertions and ultimate sacrifice (OCBP II, p.190), and more particularly we should note that Jarry seems to have misquoted his own age in such a way that his own death appeared to occur at 33 – he was in fact 34.¹ As he spent periods of his later life in prolonged states of delirium, it is possible that he was genuinely mistaken when, dictating his own *faire-part de décès* in May 1906, he claimed to be in his thirty-second year rather than his thirty-third.² But it is certain that at the time of his death one of his closest remaining friends, Alfred Vallette, was convinced that Jarry was only 33; his *faire-part* written after Jarry's death in November 1907 stated this quite clearly.³

The personal Christ complex helps to explain Jarry's choice of Luke rather than, say, the more mystical and poetic John. Such a preoccupation makes it natural to seek a complete account of Christ's incarnation, and Luke is the only one; the other three Gospels omit either the early or final stages of the story, which are reflected in the careers of all Jarry's Christ figures except Dr Faustroll (born at the age of 63); Jarry's versions dwell in particular on childhood, echoing the narrative of Luke 2.

The purity of Luke's Greek may also have appealed to Jarry, as an accomplished student of ancient Greek (and later he would work also with modern Greek, translating Rhöides's *La Papesse Jeanne*⁴); he is most specific about choosing the Gospel in its original language, just as he prefers to leave Poe's quotation from Alcman in the original Greek. For amplification the reader is referred to Joseph A. Fitzmyer's analysis of Luke's language,⁵ which discusses Luke's radical reduction of the semitisms of the other Evangelists and his general stylistic merit; even in translation Luke has a narrative strength and tautness of style that sets it apart.

The extrapolation from Luke is uncomplicated:

De Luc, le Calomniateur qui porta le Christ sur un lieu élevé.

¹ Jarry's famous letter to Rachilde of May 1906, written a few months before his thirty-third birthday, shows a contented resignation to impending death, despite its postscript – 'le Dr. vient de venir et croit me sauver' (OCBP III, p.617).

² Reproduced in facsimile in Henri Bordillon, *Gestes et Opinions d'Alfred Jarry, écrivain*, Laval: Siloé, 1986, p.182. It is odd that Jarry's sister, to whom he was dictating, did not correct the mistake.

³ Léon Bloy, *Journal*, 4 vols, Paris: Mercure de France, 1956–63, III, p.23.

⁴ The translation was done in collaboration with Jarry's benefactor Dr Saltas; however, Jarry's letters relating to the translation (in OCBP III) suggest that the vast majority of the work was his alone.

⁵ *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, annotated by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Anchor Bible, 28–28a, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981, p.107.

This is of course the Temptation (Luke 4). Reference to this incident (which is not, of course, unique to Luke) shows an awareness of the powers of darkness, already brought to the fore by Jarry in *César-Antechrist*, and ties in with Jarry's familiarity with darker biblical texts, including the Apocrypha (see Part II). As in *César-Antechrist*, the force opposed to Christ is a test rather than a negation of messianic qualities, and should be interpreted in this positive light, as should the parallel vexations and destructions encountered by Jarry's representatives in his work. The Temptation is also paralleled by the legend of *Saint Cado* shown in the Oberthür print specified by Jarry, in which the Saint barter his soul with the Devil, only to outwit him subsequently.

The fourth work in Faustroll's library underwent a change between the two manuscripts of Jarry's novel. In the earlier, Lormel manuscript the selection was:

4. Bloy, *Le Désespéré*

Léon Bloy (1846–1917) is remembered as a pamphleteer, novelist and polemicist. He is characterised by obsession and an unwillingness to compromise on the matters that obsessed him, such as Napoléon I, the Naundorff claimant, the German mystic Anna Katharina Emmerich, the Jewish question and, perhaps most persistently of all, the miracle of La Salette. More fundamental than these obsessions were two factors: the first was Bloy's religious faith, highly rigorous but odd in that he professed Roman Catholicism while being vehemently anti-clerical and incorporating certain heretical elements into his beliefs. Interest in Bloy has often had religion as its *point de départ*; for instance, Rayner Heppenstall's lucid short study of Bloy proceeds from an impression that Bloy may be a 'possible true prophet'.¹ The second factor is Bloy's personal asceticism, fuelled by a constant frustration with virtually everybody and most particularly his intellectual peers, a frustration which gives rise to the accentuated satire of *Le Désespéré*. The effects of this character trait on the *rentabilité* of his writing led Bloy into deep poverty and reliance on benefactors, whom he generally discouraged before too long. His thought is a clamorous and above all violent blend of self-mortification, acidic vilification of his contemporaries, and spiritual enlightenment – a

¹ Rayner Heppenstall, *Léon Bloy*, Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, 1953, p.22.

combination which has assured him a perceptible place in literary history.¹

He is the first of the several *auteurs pairs* known personally to Jarry, being a distant member of the *Mercure* circle around which Jarry's social life revolved. He is also the first of the contemporary authors to whom Jarry dedicated a chapter of *Faustroll*: 'Du Grand escalier de marbre noir', which transposes Bloy into a fiery, regal figure seen in charge of a spectacular wayside shrine:

A la pointe mousse de l'impraticable pyramide de marbre obscur [...] la tête du roi géant se carbonisait devant la fournaise de la lune. Il empoignait un tigre par l'extensibilité de la peau de son cou, et forçait le peuple de la mer d'Habundes à une ascension à genoux. (OCBP I, pp.680–81)

The chapter contains an overt reference to *Le Désespéré*, as the pyramid has black (marble) steps – this alludes to Marchenoir, the hero of Bloy's *roman à clef*. Jarry's portrayal of Marchenoir's creator helps to define his interest in Bloy and thus a reason for his status as an *auteur pair*; he is emphasising the sheer violent force of Bloy's writing, which was closely related to the power of Bloy's vitriolic personality, and could be taken as an indication of links between life and art in parallel with those existing between Jarry and the pataphysician Dr Faustroll.

Le Désespéré was quite a rare volume in 1898;² of the various editions published since, the most accessible (and that referred to here) is 10/18, 1983 ('Fins de siècle' series, 1548).

Le Désespéré is Bloy's most widely read novel, and draws on the author's life. He appears as Marie-Joseph-Caïn Marchenoir, in a novel featuring thinly disguised and mainly ungenerous portraits of other writers prominent in the mid-1880s. The memorable figure of Marchenoir will be discussed in more detail in Part II. The section of the hero's life featured in this novel runs from the death of his father, through literary and personal rejection, a stay at the Grande-Chartreuse, and a highly emotional affair with Véronique, whom he rescues from prostitution and who becomes even more devout than Marchenoir; she has visions and ultimately arranges a form of martyrdom through self-mutilation, as she loses her sanity. The novel ends with vitriolic personal misery as Marchenoir lies on his deathbed enumerating the world's iniquities towards him. Whether he

¹ See Jacques Petit's study of Bloy's technique of literary violence, 'L'Expression de la violence chez Léon Bloy', in Michel Malicet (ed.), *Hommages à Jacques Petit*, Paris: Belles Lettres, 1985, pp.339–89.

² First published by Soirat in 1887, the only intervening edition was an unauthorised one by Stock, 1893. A letter by Bloy concerning this edition will be found in his journal (*Le Mendiant ingrat*, see the second Bloy *livre pair*), dated 6 March 1893.

actually dies is ambiguous (*Le Désespéré*, pp.438–39); Bloy resuscitated him for a quasi-sequel, *La Femme pauvre* (1897).

Le Désespéré has elements in common with the picaresque tradition, but stands apart because of Marchennoir's unwillingness to learn (or to be seen to learn) from experience. The portrait is intended to evoke Bloy in his most virulent period, demonstrating his deliberate self-isolation above all else, as he distances himself from his family, society and artistic environment. In the course of this study we will come to recognise that individualism, in art as much as in personality, is among the fundamental tenets of later French Symbolism. The *livres pairs* offer a particularly clear demonstration of this principle, given the great variety of writers and writing that Jarry is able to call upon from a relatively close-knit artistic world; Jarry, a notorious literary individualist, is by no means the only such author in 1890s circles (though he stands out for the extremism of his style), and paradoxically fits in with contemporary trends by his very adoption of idiosyncrasy. By a different route, Bloy and his reflection in Marchennoir attain the same status.

Even if he was a hard person to get on with, Bloy was admired by the Symbolists for his forthright stance and lack of sycophancy; the best examples of this admiration are to be found in Rachilde's fulsome reviews of *La Femme pauvre* and *Le Mendiant ingrat* (see below) in the *Mercur de France*. *Le Désespéré*, being Bloy's most intemperate work to date when Jarry was composing the first Faustroll manuscript, would be appreciated for such aspects as well as for the appeal of its satire, its religious dimension and its importance in the development of the figure of the hero.

Although Jarry stresses the violent potency of Bloy in 'Du grand escalier de marbre noir', his extrapolation from the novel seems, at first sight, to be a reference to the satire of *Le Désespéré*:

De Bloy, l'archet de Paganini et la gueule inhiante d'Albert Wolf. [sic] (OCBP I, p.1222)

Jarry refers to passages of Bloy's journalism included towards the end of *Le Désespéré*. In 1885 Bloy published a weekly review entitled *Le Pal*, a polemical pamphlet that only ran to four issues, with a fifth remaining unpublished until 1935.¹ Marchennoir, in parallel, creates *Le Carcan*, and the articles from it that appear in *Le Désespéré* are unpublished *Pal* material, referring to real people without the thin veil of the names Bloy creates for them in the body of the novel. In these particular cases there is no

¹ See the bibliography of Daniel Habrekorn's edition of *Le Pal*, Vanves: Thot, 1979, pp.157–58.

evidence to suggest that Jarry holds anything against the two minor 1880s figures cited; the images determine the value of this extrapolation.

The images selected by Jarry are easily located and are intended to shock, and thus it is all the more curious that there seem to have been no previous attempts to interpret their presence fully. Their obscenity tends to reinforce the impression that Jarry's admiration for Bloy has much to do with the latter's unabashed irreverence. The first image comes from an article entitled 'Le Péché irrémissible', in which Bloy attacks various writers, 'le défilé des médiocres et des abjects que le fromage de notre décadence a spontanément enfantés pour l'inexorable dévoration du sens esthétique'.¹ Among these figures, all accused by Bloy of unpleasant personal habits in their writing, is Paul Bonnetain, author of the onanistic novel *Charlot s'amuse*. He features in *Le Désespéré* under a suitable name: 'Hilaire Dupoignet'.

Puis, une sale tourbe: Bonnetain, le Paganini des solitudes dont la main frénetique a su faire écumer l'archet [...] (*Le Désespéré*, p.401)

The accusation of masturbation is neatly concealed by Jarry's wording in *Faustroll*, but Bloy's text shows that the actual object he wishes to take on the pataphysician's *périple*, the *archet*, is a penis. Without even considering his undoubted homosexuality, there is no mistaking Jarry's preoccupation with masculine endowments. Note for instance the death of the heroine of his *Messaline*, who sees the assassin's sword as a phallic deity ('Emporte-moi, Phalès! L'apothéose!', OCBP II, p.138), and the disturbing physical precocity of the young *Surmâle*, André Marcueil (OCBP II, p.201). When a lady visitor queried Jarry about a large phallic sculpture kept in his lodgings in the rue Cassette, asking if it was a moulding from life, he replied 'Non, Madame, c'est une réduction.'² Even Dr Faustroll is 'homme plus qu'il n'est de bienséance' (OCBP I, p.659) .

The second image comes from the article 'L'Hermaphrodite prussien Albert Wolff', vilifying a contributor to *Le Figaro*. Some unusual vocabulary in the attack is taken up in *Faustroll* (again, it is odd that such precise echoes seem to have escaped previous note) in the creation of Bosse-de-Nage, 'un singe papion, moins cyno- qu'hydrocéphale' (OCBP I, p.672). Bloy states that Wolff 'a eu son Plutarque en M. Toudouze, romancier

¹ The items highlighted by Jarry featured in a pre-publication sample of *Le Désespéré* circulated by Bloy in 1887. The resulting uproar caused the initial publisher Stock to cancel the book in mid-production; see Maurice Bardèche, *Léon Bloy*, Paris: La Table Ronde, 1989, pp.208–209.

² Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, p.394.

cynocéphale' (*Le Désespéré*, p.404), and that Wolff's face is 'entièrement glabre, comme celle d'un Annamite ou d'un singe papion' (*Le Désespéré*, pp.407–408). I would suggest that Bloy's description of Wolff can also help us to visualise the repulsive Bosse-de-Nage, as Jarry's intention was to make the monkey as revolting as possible, thereby insulting his former lover Christian Beck, on whom Bosse-de-Nage is based. Bloy is at his most merciless when describing Wolff's mouth:

La bouche est inénarrable de bestialité, de gouaillerie populacière, de monstrueuse perversité supposable.

C'est un rictus, c'est un vagin, c'est une gueule, c'est un suçoir, c'est un hiatus immonde. On ne peut dire ce que c'est...

Les images les plus infâmes se présentent seules à l'esprit. (*Le Désespéré*, p.408)

For the provisions of Faustroll's voyage, there is a neat touch in the association of the two items chosen by Jarry; having extracted a penis and a vagina from *Le Désespéré*,¹ symbolic means are available to re-create the human race eradicated by Faustroll in Chapter XXVIII of the *Gestes et Opinions* (OCBP I, pp.702–703).

In the Fasquelle manuscript of *Faustroll*, the fourth *livre pair* was changed to:

4. Bloy, *Le Mendiant ingrat*

Le Mendiant ingrat is the first section of Bloy's published journal, covering the years 1892–95.² The edition used here is in the four-volume *Journal de Léon Bloy*, Mercure de France, 1956–63, though I shall give references by date where possible to facilitate use of other editions.

Even more than *Le Désespéré*, *Le Mendiant ingrat* lays its author bare; in fact studies of the original journals (now published) from which the volume was prepared have shown Bloy carefully editing his own material to heighten the effect of his vituperative, ascetic image (see Joseph Bollery's notes to the *Journal de Léon Bloy*). The Bloy of the period is much

¹ John Coombes sees mouth and vagina as constant parallels in the novel ('Léon Bloy: Language, Reason and Violence', *French Studies*, XLII[4] [Oct. 1988], 443–57, p.449).

² First published in Brussels by Edmond Deman in 1898, notable subsequent editions are: Mercure de France, 1908 and 1923 (the latter edition in two volumes); in *Œuvres Complètes*, 8 vols, Bernouard, 1947–50 (uses the title *Le Mendiant ingrat* for all volumes of Bloy's journal); and of course the 1956–63 edition referred to here.

changed, having married and become a father, but the impression of poverty as not so much a circumstance as an attitude to life is even stronger. There are places where the mask slips; for instance when Bloy announces having given the *femme de ménage* her notice (22 September 1895), the fact that she was employed at all suggests that the poverty was not total. There are other examples of probable distortion, notably in Bloy's growing disquiet concerning wet-nurses. Bloy's infant son Pierre was placed with a *nourrice* while his wife was seriously ill, and died while in her care, away from Paris in the Nièvre (notes, *Journal I*, pp.422–23¹); this harrowing event in December 1895, which concludes *Le Mendiant ingrat*, throws into sharp relief a tirade against wet-nurses and the associated risk of demonic possession, supposedly written some months earlier (20 August 1895). Such suspicions scarcely detract from the appeal of *Le Mendiant ingrat*, which is a forceful, passionate text quite unlike more conventional literary journals in the Goncourt mode.

The most frequent occurrence related in *Le Mendiant ingrat* is Bloy's loss of a friend or a benefactor, through either their hesitation or his arrogant mis-blend of demands for money and insistence on his associates' emotional dependence upon him – something about which Bloy is constantly and deliberately mistaken. The letters to 'lâcheurs' printed in the journal are the strongest illustrations of this odd attitude. One product of this attitude is the inclusion of acerbic comments about people known to Jarry, some of which would certainly appeal to him. If Bloy's cruel comments about Laurent Tailhade's injuries from an anarchist bomb would be alien to Jarry, who praised Tailhade with Chapter XXII of *Fauströll* (OCBP I, pp.689–91), his unkind comments about Jarry's erstwhile mentor Remy de Gourmont (2 November 1894) would strike a chord, as they pour scorn on a lady who is plainly Berthe (de) Courrière (she adopted the particule without apparent justification), who was responsible for Jarry's break with Gourmont, and became the 'Vieille Dame' of *L'Amour en visites*. Inspired by a machination by Rachilde and Jean de Tinan, Courrière was convinced that Jarry was wildly in love with her, and by including the ludicrous verses she sent him in *L'Amour en visites*, Jarry nearly found himself in jail.² Noël Arnaud suggests that she may also be the 'Grande Dame' of *L'Amour en visites*, an interpretation that puts a rather different complexion on Jarry's claims to have resisted her advances.³

¹ See also Bardèche, *Léon Bloy*, p.294.

² See Rachilde's *Alfred Jarry ou le Surmâle de lettres*, Paris: Grasset, 1928, pp.43–66.

³ Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, pp.174–75.

Bloy claimed, neglecting the novel *La Femme pauvre*, that *Le Mendiant ingrat* was the continuation of *Le Désespéré* (*Journal I*, p.13), suggesting an equation of life and art that would undoubtedly appeal to Jarry, a creator of self-projections and a man whose life has been interpreted as a complex literary gesture. *Le Mendiant ingrat*'s general appeal to the Symbolist community was demonstrated by a six-page review by Rachilde in the *Mercure*, praising Bloy's soul, purity (not such a clear point in *Le Désespéré*) and language, which she compared to that of Scripture. But above all Rachilde was struck by the personal force of *Le Mendiant ingrat*, which is indeed far clearer and hence stronger than in *Le Désespéré*, where it is blurred by satire and the imposition of a semi-fictional plot. Granted this quality of *Le Mendiant ingrat*, Jarry's change from *Le Désespéré* seems to involve something more mature than the blind adoption of an author's latest work, and can represent a more definite statement of interest in certain aspects of the earlier work that would appeal to Jarry, such as the equation of art and life and the general tone of irreverence, which in the journal has an occasional specificity to Jarry's circle – and which is also, of course, more up to date.

The extrapolation from *Le Mendiant ingrat* does not come from the journal as such – perhaps a difficult type of text to use as a source of pure images – but from one of the literary pieces featured within it:

De Bloy, les cochons noirs de la Mort, cortège de la Fiancée.

Jarry is referring to a difficult prose poem, 'Le Cortège de la Fiancée', inserted into the journal when Bloy was in a funereal (if not necessarily mournful) mood between the assassination and Panthéon funeral of President Sadi Carnot (30 June 1894). The poem deals, obliquely, with the decay of the Church in Bloy's eyes. He disguises it as a young woman descending to prostitution in its desire to align itself with secular fashions. The decay goes so far that the Church effectively excommunicates itself, and becomes the enemy of God:

On te nomme, exactement, *la Jeune Fille du monde*, de ce 'monde' pour qui le Sauveur a déclaré qu'il 'ne priaît pas' (*non pro mundo rogo*).

This view of the Church will find a parallel in the sixteenth *livre pair*, Mendès's novel *Gog*. There are no 'cochons' in the poem, but Jarry's introduction of the word is perfectly in order, as Bloy often uses it to stand for anyone opposed to him (as in *Léon Bloy devant les cochons*), or even a place; for the title of his journal from 1900–1904, Bloy transformed Lagny (Seine et Marne) into 'Cochons-sur-Marne' (*Journal II*, p.409). The

association with the Church, and the indication of black, implies that the 'cochons' in this case are the clergy, polluting the pure Church of Bloy's ideal.

One seemingly insignificant detail of the poem finds an unacknowledged use in Jarry – the tears of the Fiancée:

[...] cette Madeleine des incendies, dont les larmes sont aussi 'dures' que les cristaux de l'Enfer.

The image is later echoed in Jarry's novel *Le Surmâle*, with the death of the hero when introduced to the *Machine-à-inspirer-l'amour*, whose glass helmet melts into scorching teardrops; Ellen Elson, sexual partner of the Supermale, has one of these set in a ring (OCBP II, p.271).

5. Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

Having noted Jarry's linguistic skills in discussion of St Luke, we should not be surprised to find further non-French *livres pairs*. In this case Jarry had prepared a French translation of the text. He certainly knew *The Ancient Mariner* in his adolescence; the *Ontogénie* (Jarry's juvenilia collected in OCBP I) includes his poem 'L'Albatros', written in 1887 and effectively an *exercice de style* based on Coleridge's text (OCBP I, pp.81–83). When first attempting to gain acceptance at the *Mercure de France*, one of the texts Jarry proposed to Vallette was a translation of *The Ancient Mariner*, which Vallette wisely refused; it is substandard work, and furthermore Thieri Foulc has demonstrated that most of it is plagiarised from an earlier published translation.¹

Plainly Vallette's rejection was not enough to dampen Jarry's enthusiasm for Coleridge, and *The Ancient Mariner* became a *livre pair*. The poem is so widely known that there is little to be said about it here; like *Cyrano* it offers the reader a fantastic voyage, but one whose fantasy comes from the same forbidding realms as the visions of Poe. For the brief references required here, the edition used is Coleridge's *Poems*, 2nd edn, Everyman's Library, London and Melbourne: Dent, 1974, using the second version of the poem from *Sibylline Leaves* – the version 'translated' by Jarry.

The hallucinatory qualities of the poem (owing much to Coleridge's use of laudanum) find parallels in Jarry, who also created literature from

¹ Thieri Foulc, 'Jarry et le cinquième livre pair', *Subsidia Pataphysica*, 22 (22 Sable 101, i.e. 1974), 15–28. The essential points of Foulc's analysis are included in the notes to *La Ballade du vieux marin* in OCBP II.

his own impressions of drugged states. The most notable examples are *L'Opium* (OCBP I, pp.195–98) and a hashish-inspired chapter of *Les Jours et les nuits*, 'Les propos des assassins' (OCBP I, pp.821–29). Certainly Faustroll's extrapolation from *The Ancient Mariner* has the qualities of a ghastly, involuntary hallucination, but within the poem's narrative its effects are all too real. This interface between imaginary and real-life events highlights *The Ancient Mariner* as a precursor of the ethereal world of the Symbolist imagination; we shall later find a similar example of the horrific repercussions of the imaginary upon the physical world, in Jarry's extrapolation from the twenty-first *livre pair*, Régnier's *La Canne de jaspe*. Although Jarry was certainly overstating the case when trying to persuade Vallette that Coleridge was 'un poète anglais trop inconnu aujourd'hui et à qui doivent tout E. Poe et Baudelaire' (OCBP I, p.1035), there is enough common ground between Coleridge and the Symbolists to justify his presence in Faustroll's library.

In the extrapolation Jarry selects items from both the physical and supernatural worlds:

De Coleridge, l'arbalète du vieux marin et le squelette du vaisseau, qui, déposé dans l'as, fut crible sur crible.

Jarry is referring to two sections of the poem. The first is the deed for which the second is retribution:

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus! –
Why look'st thou so?' – With my cross-bow
I shot the ALBATROSS. (*Poems*, p.175)

The killing of the albatross takes away the ship's good luck, and the instrument of revenge is the skeletal ship of 'The Nightmare LIFE-IN-DEATH', who casts dice with Death to decide the fate of the Mariner's ship. Her victory is played out with the sudden death of all aboard except the Ancient Mariner, whose shipmates later practise life in death by manning the ship, although dead, still cursing him with their eyes for the death of the albatross. Jarry included the crossbow, a ship, the winged spectre of the Nightmare and the sun whose disc, traversed by her ship, gave the impression of a ship's skeleton (*Poems*, p.178), in an engraving at the head of his translation (OCBP II, p.2). He would allude to the Nightmare again in *Albert Samain (Souvenirs)*, as 'un fantôme singulier, une femme spectre qui n'est ni l'existence ni le tombeau, *Vie-en-la-mort*' (OCBP III, p.537).

Jarry makes quite unexpected use of these images elsewhere, demonstrating a productive aspect of these essences from the *livres pairs*. Within *Faustroll*, he links the images in the creation of the *as*, the boat (built upon the most improved scientific principles) used for the voyage by dry land around Paris. The scientific principles are those of Charles Vernon Boys concerning surface tension. The *as*, rather like the ship of the Jumblies, is a sieve, made of copper mesh and able to float by exploiting surface tension effects; thus it is a skeletal vessel of a sort, recalling the ship that wreaks revenge on the Ancient Mariner. It is not Faustroll's only boat:

– J'ai aussi un plus bel *as*, poursuivit le docteur, en fil de quartz étiré à l'arbalète [...] Cet *as* a toutes les apparences d'une grande toile d'araignée véritable, et prend les mouches avec la même facilité. (OCBP I, pp.664–65)

While thread made from quartz may seem unlikely, it had been produced experimentally. Very much the modern man, Faustroll wears a shirt made from it (OCBP I, p.659). The crossbow was Boys's standard method of producing quartz thread; so for the investigative reader, Jarry neatly demonstrates how, in his 'roman néo-scientifique', current scientific advances and his artistic advances can go hand in hand.

There is a modernised allusion to *The Ancient Mariner* in *Le Surmâle* – and another reference which does not seem to have been associated with the *livres pairs* in the past. The Mariner's undead crew are transformed by Jarry into Jewey Jacobs, a member of the cycle team attempting to outrun a locomotive in the 'Course des dix mille milles'. Jacobs is locked in a mechanical linkage with his team-mates on the cycle, but dies in the course of the race. His corpse is pushed on by their efforts, overcoming rigor mortis, and begins to pedal again even though dead. Mechanically his effect is that of a flywheel (OCBP II, p.224), but in terms of literary allusion he is doing much the same as the dead crew in *The Ancient Mariner* – an illustration of the strange and unexpected uses to which Jarry puts the inspiration he finds in his *livres pairs*.

The sixth *livre pair* is another case where Jarry changed his mind between the two manuscripts of *Faustroll*. The choice in the Lormel manuscript is:

6. Darien, *Biribi*

It is hard to escape the impression that a conspiracy of silence surrounds Georges Darien (pseudonym of Georges-Hippolyte Adrien, 1862–1921).

He is a novelist of sophisticated expression and genuine relevance, particularly to the history of political literature, and the bulk of his work is freely available in paperback; yet the corpus of Darien criticism remains very small. What may discourage some is the degree to which Darien resists assimilation, remaining an intelligent and above all highly articulate subversive. Where the Symbolists frequently expounded subversive views, Darien, who was at best a fellow traveller by virtue of his individualism, was actively involved in political organisation, and later published numerous radical pamphlets.

Darien had virtually no contact with literary *milieux* (although Bloy was among the few figures with whom he was personally acquainted),¹ and Patrick Besnier has pointed out that Darien and Jarry are unlikely to have met – a major factor being that Darien lived away from Paris (mainly in London) between 1894 and 1905.² Although he lived outside the incestuous social sets responsible for most *Belle Époque* writing, the Symbolists admired Darien, and his name featured prominently in the *Mercur*e at the start of the 1890s. However, it should be noted that the Symbolists' interpretations of Darien tended to oversimplify him, categorising him simply as an anarchist.

The novel *Biribi* was first published in 1890,³ and references here are to the 1978 10/18 edition. Like *Le Désespéré*, *Biribi* is a novel intended to shock, and is drawn from the author's life. The experiences it draws on are Darien's harrowing years in army disciplinary companies in Tunisia, and the enumeration of these through the hero/narrator, Jean Froissard, creates one of the foremost novels of French anti-militarism (an obvious comparison being with Lucien Descaves's *Sous-Offs*) and at the same time assures Darien of his first and greatest notoriety. Darien attempted to present *Biribi* as a non-political novel:

Je constate les effets, je ne recherche pas les causes. *Biribi* n'est pas un roman à thèse, c'est l'étude sincère d'un morceau de vie, d'un lambeau saignant d'existence. Ce n'est pas non plus – et ce serait commettre une grossière erreur que de le croire – un roman militaire. (*Biribi*, pp.39–40)

However, the effect of the revelation of the inhumanity the novel exposes is inevitable, and makes *Biribi* anything but a simple *tranche de vie*. The

¹ Auriant, *Darien et l'inhumaine comédie*, Brussels: Ambassade du Livre, n.d. [1966], p.150.

² Patrick Besnier, 'Jarry et Darien', *L'Étoile-Absinthe*, 33–34 (1987), 7–12, p.9.

³ First edition by Savine, with further editions by Stock (1897, 1900, 1905), Jérôme Martineau (1966), and separate 10/18 editions dating from 1970 and 1978. An adaptation of *Biribi* was staged at the Théâtre Libre in 1906.

novel is brutal against its targets but humane in its understanding of the people caught up in the system (though the most sensitive passages – in all senses – concerning homosexuality in the army were omitted until 1966, and not known to Jarry), and for a full account of *Biribi* I can do no better than to refer the reader to Walter Redfern's analysis.¹ The novel's influence on Jarry and thus its claim to *livre pair* status is easily quantified: *Biribi* provides an example of how to write about unwillingness to conform, a factor only too evident in Jarry's own work, and an example of writing opposed to the contemporary French military system. Before completing *Faustroll* Jarry had written and published just such a novel, *Les Jours et les nuits* (1897), which, like *Biribi*, is drawn from his personal if very different experiences, and is opposed to conscription and to the brute ignorance Jarry saw around him during his military service. However, for Jarry the army is less threatening than for Darien, and the younger author applies much dry humour to it, not just in *Les Jours et les nuits* but in numerous later articles collected in *La Chandelle Verte*. The concession of humour is not granted to the army in *Biribi*.

The extrapolation from this novel draws the reader's attention initially to army brutality:

De Darien, la compagnie de disciplinaires qui au commandement: baïonnette... on, pas de gymnastique, obéit comme si elle avait entendu: position du tireur... debout, sur le capitaine, feu rapide. (OCBP I, p.1223)

Here we have a free adaptation of a tense episode during a march (*Biribi*, pp.167–68), in which a soldier (Palet) collapses and is ordered to continue by an enraged captain. The order quoted by Jarry is given, but another soldier (Acajou) shouts 'Pas gymnastique sur place!' and the company follows his version of the instruction rather than the captain's. The officer, 'tout pâle', orders the sergeants guarding the disciplinary company to shoot the offenders, but the situation is defused by Lieutenant Dusaule and the men's aim is achieved: Palet is allowed to ride on a mule. Jarry's fanciful adaptation offers a clear perspective on the incident, one based on the pleasures of successful insubordination, the type practised by Sengle, the hero of *Les Jours et les nuits*. Such moments are rare in the far blacker and more worldly *Biribi*, so Jarry is in effect suggesting a slightly distorted reading which attunes Darien's novel to his own in this respect.

¹ Walter Redfern, *Georges Darien: Robbery and Private Enterprise*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1985, pp.39–62.

In the Fasquelle manuscript, Dr Faustroll's preference had changed to a more recent novel:

6. Darien, *Le Voleur*

Le Voleur is Darien's masterpiece, and perhaps the only *livre pair* to have become more widely known for having been included in Jarry's list; interest in the novel was generated by the Collège de 'Pataphysique's *Expojarrysition* in 1953, when all the *livres pairs* were physically brought together, and this interest was responsible for its re-publication by Pauvert.¹ References here are to the 1987 Gallimard paperback (Folio series 1798). Although *Le Voleur* appeared in December 1897 and was reviewed in the literary press early in 1898, Jarry does not seem to have read it until after the Lormel manuscript was complete. This novel includes major advances upon *Biribi*, in the fields of use of character, structure and political stance. The structural improvements, with a neatly cyclical plot and a strong *cadre*, result from the fact that this novel, unlike its predecessor, is entirely fictional. However, it may not have been clear to Jarry that it is pure fiction – not, of course, that he would necessarily have cared one way or the other. In 1898 Darien was an absent, rather mysterious figure, living in London (where much of the novel is set). The details of burglars' techniques in the novel have such a ring of authenticity about them that confusion between Darien and his hero Georges Randal is inevitable – in fact Darien positively cultivates it.² So we cannot exclude the possibility that in Jarry's eyes the novel may have appeared even more subversive than it actually is.

The *cadre* suits the political stance, as it is one in which 'Georges Darien' finds in his hotel room a manuscript which forms the bulk of the novel – it is not his property. He declares it to be so extraordinary that his mock-bourgeois sensibilities have not allowed him to edit it – apart from adding melodramatic headings to the chapters, such as 'Où court-il?', and 'Enfin seuls!' So the discoverer steals; the supposed author (Randal) steals as a way of life; his uncle steals most of his inheritance from him; Randal ultimately steals it back from him, with interest; businessmen steal by fraud; Randal steals from them; men steal women's virtue; the women exploit them, and help Randal to steal; even a priest, Abbé Lamargelle,

¹ First published by Stock in 1897, and subsequently by Pauvert (1955, 1972), 10/18 (1971, 1978), and in the Gallimard edition used here.

² Redfern, *Georges Darien*, p.132.

helps him to steal. Randal rejects both socialism and anarchism as such; the *chic* criminals among whom the hero moves are the élite of a world whose organisation is changing through the medium of theft, and rapidly leaving simple capitalism behind. In the words of the money-changer Paternoster, modifying Proudhon:

La propriété n'est pas le vol; c'est bien pis; c'est l'immobilisation des forces. Le peu d'élasticité dont elle jouit, elle le doit aux fripons. Le voleur a articulé la propriété, et l'honnête homme est son bâtard. (*Le Voleur*, p.148)

Darien makes the case all the more convincing by relating it through a figure who retains the air of mystery inherent in his profession, but is at the same time emotional and sympathetic. His weaker, more human side is at its most prominent in his drawn-out love affair with his cousin Charlotte, climaxing in the traumatic events surrounding the death of their child, after Randal has inadvertently killed Paternoster when trying to get money to pay a certain Dr Scoundrel to examine the child on Christmas Eve (*Le Voleur*, pp.361–66). Along with Froissard, the figure of Randal will be discussed later.

The influence of *Le Voleur* on Jarry is rather different from that of *Biribi*. Jarry shows interest in the incisive political analysis of *Le Voleur*, but as one might expect from such a maverick author, this interest is at its plainest in a most unexpected place: *Ubu Enchaîné*, the sequel to *Ubu Roi*, written in 1899, the year after the completion of *Faustroll*.

Darien's social analysis is based on a division between ruling figures (*bourreaux*) and slaves, and much of the character interest of the novel lies in observing figures shifting between the two camps – for instance Randal moves from being an oppressed adolescent to the *bourreau par excellence*, while his uncle makes the reverse journey, finally being utterly humiliated by Randal and Lamargelle's machinations over his inheritance, performed as he lies on his deathbed. Just the same is true of Père Ubu as he appears in *Ubu Enchaîné*, only in reverse: having been a king and a literal *bourreau* to the unfortunate population of Poland, he reverses his terms of reference and declares himself a slave in the 'Pays libre', i.e. France. It is no fault of Darien's that by the end of the play Ubu is once again very much in charge, and the free are clamouring to become slaves. However, the appeal of *Le Voleur* for Jarry cannot be confined to the world of Ubu, and the interpretation of the novel's selection given by Jean-Hugues Sainmont puts the general case very neatly: 'il y a peu de livres où un auteur tente de se placer au-delà de tout. C'est ce que, pour sa part, Jarry a toujours visé. Dans *Le Voleur*, Darien y arrive.'¹

¹ Quoted in the Cymbalum *Faustroll*, p.42.

Freed of all literary allegiances and constraints, *Le Voleur* and its hero, Randal, mark one of the high points of 1890s writing, not least in the development of hero figures, as the independent spirit of Randal makes a perceptible contribution to the emergence of a truly Symbolist hero; full discussion of this aspect of the novel, one of those through which Darien specifically aims to place himself 'au-delà de tout', is reserved for the later stages of this study.

The extrapolation from *Le Voleur* is a surprisingly rich visual image from a mostly very worldly novel:

De Darien, les couronnes de diamant des perforatrices du Saint-Gothard.

The image arises from a spoof contribution Randal makes by invitation (for the contribution, not the spoof) to the ludicrous but highly successful *Revue Pénitentiaire*, which has support in high places and specious social concerns. Exploiting his cover as a civil engineer and touched by the irony of a thief being asked to write for the magazine (indeed the request comes from a character whose family Randal has robbed), he composes 'De l'influence des tunnels sur la moralité publique', discussing the 'action heureuse' of the sudden passage from light to dark. Sadly *Le Voleur* does not present the text of the article, but cites points concerning the beneficial effect on the crime rate of London's Metropolitan Railway (partly underground), and the relationship between Switzerland's much tunnelled mountains and that nation's high moral standards (*Le Voleur*, pp.242–44) – all glorious hokum, swallowed whole by the credulous readership. The precise image used by Jarry expands on the illustration using Switzerland, and comes from a reflection by Randal on his relations with women, engendered by light catching a tiara worn by one of his occasional lovers, a successful kept woman named Margot:

Elles étincelaient aussi du feu des pierres précieuses, ces perforatrices à couronnes de diamant qui tuèrent tant d'hommes lors des travaux du Saint-Gothard, mais grâce auxquelles on parvint à percer la montagne! (*Le Voleur*, p.255)

What to make of this linking of ideas by Jarry? In Randal's narrative its purpose is uncomplicated, characterising his constant attraction to women despite the problems they can bring; the application of such an attitude is unexpected in Jarry, whose inclinations were quite different, but the slightly surreal image (in his wording, where the richness of the diamonds is less important than their cutting powers) sits comfortably in Faustroll's boat with the other oddities extracted from the *livres pairs*; and in the same way that the two items from *Le Désespéré* could serve a purpose

when combined, reference ahead to the extrapolation from the last *livre pair*, Verne's *Voyage au Centre de la Terre*, will reveal a possible use for heavy-duty tunnelling equipment.

7. Desbordes-Valmore, *Le Serment des petits hommes*

This is perhaps the most curious choice of all the *livres pairs*, as it appears more bizarre than usual for Jarry to select a very obscure work by an author distant from his own artistic views. Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1786–1859) was an actress and a poet, whose writing has occasionally been fashionable. Her verse attracted a surprising range of prominent nineteenth-century authors, including Sainte-Beuve, Baudelaire, the Parnassians, and Verlaine, who made her one of his *Poètes maudits*.¹ In Verlaine's later years, when it is probable that Jarry made his acquaintance (see discussion of *Sagesse* as the twenty-fifth *livre pair*), he composed two poems singing her praises.²

Jarry's selection is a tale in fact called *Le Serment des petits Polonais* in Marceline's *Contes et scènes de la vie de famille, dédiés aux enfants*,³ and is now most easily found in a 1989 edition of Marceline's *Contes* published by Presses Universitaires de Lyon (the edition used here; it does not keep the tales in the same order as earlier editions). The suggestion has been made that the anomaly in the title may be because Jarry knew the work in the form of a prize book of some type received in his youth.⁴ I believe there is a simpler explanation, involving characteristic Jarryesque logic.

In earlier discussion of Poe we encountered the concept of perversity in the *livres pairs*, and in *Cyrano* we saw its potential use in encouraging the reader to investigate a text of value; here we see the reverse of the coin, as the capriciousness of Jarry's mind leads the determined investigator to a text of no merit whatsoever, other than that it is bad enough to be funny. We should never lose sight of the fact that the *livres pairs* are an intellectual game; while being educated and at times perplexed by the guided tour Jarry provides through its volumes, the reader may also be diverted and entertained. If we imagine the *livres pairs* as a hand of playing

¹ Paul Verlaine, *Les Poètes maudits*, introduction et notes par Michel Décaudin, Paris: CDU-SEDES, 1982, pp.51–62.

² Verlaine, *Œuvres Poétiques Complètes*, Pléiade 47, Paris: Gallimard, 1962, pp.640–42.

³ Published in 2 vols by Garnier Frères in 1865 (with printings until at least 1890). The text also appears in the twenty-fourth *Cahier du Collège de 'Pataphysique*. Desbordes-Valmore is often referred to as 'Marceline' in literary criticism.

⁴ Cymbalum *Faustroll*, p.42. If there was such an edition, it eluded the *dépôt légal*.

cards, we should not be at all surprised to find jokers in the pack – and this is one of them.

The *Contes et scènes* are a collection concocted from pieces unpublished at Marceline's death, several being unfinished. The first volume is made up of short pieces detailing good or bad infant behaviour, many of which could be taken as unintentional demonstrations of how to behave badly in order to achieve maximum effect. An idea of their tone can be gained from a selection of titles: *Gilbert le Sans-Soin*, *La petite Amateur de crème*, *Le petit Incendiaire*, and so on. The second contains longer pieces, including *Le Serment des petits Polonais*. Their popularity is doubtful; allusions to this section of Marceline's work outside Jarry's writing seem all but absent. One thus suspects that admirers of Marceline's poetry were unaware of the tales' existence, or that, if they did know of them, they chose to keep quiet. However, the promotion of Marceline as a children's writer was by no means confined to these tales; for instance the three-volume *Œuvres Poétiques de Marceline Desbordes-Valmore* published by Lemerre in 1887 reserved the entire third volume, *Les Enfants et les Mères*, for material the editors considered best suited to the nursery.

There is one potential redeeming feature of the *Contes et scènes* from Jarry's point of view, namely their constant emphasis on maternal love. Jarry owed most of his upbringing to his mother after his parents' separation, became a devoted son in his way,¹ and was deeply affected by her death in May 1893 shortly after she had nursed him back to health. His last novel, *La Dragonne*, is dedicated to her (OCBP III, p.419), and immediately after *Faustroll* he completed *L'Amour absolu*, a complex novel involving religion and the role of the mother. For the reader of *L'Amour absolu*, the following lines from Marceline are not without relevance:

AUX ENFANTS

Dieu, lorsqu'il eut fait les hommes, chercha un adoucissement à leurs peines: il mit au monde l'amour maternel.

Depuis ce temps, les enfants sont heureux, ils ont des mères pour veiller sur eux, et pour les embrasser [...] (*Contes*, p.348)

SIMPLE PRIERE

– Venez dire votre prière, mon amour.

Ne jouez pas avec vos mains jointes.

Ne cherchez pas à vous enfuir, ni à sortir de mes genoux; car vous êtes devant

Dieu quand vous priez avec moi.

Allons: il vous écoute.

¹ See Beaumont, *Alfred Jarry*, pp.5–6.

'Mon Dieu! étendez votre main sur ma mère, afin qu'elle me conduise où vous voulez que j'aïlle [...]' (*Contes*, p.38)

The tale indicated by Jarry is one of the longest in the collection, and perhaps the least awful. It is in three sections. The first finds vague echoes in Marcel Schwob's *La Croisade des enfants* (the twenty-third *livre pair*) in its tale of the confusion of four families in the Polish town of Podhaitzy at the disappearance of their children. The second relates the return of one of the children, Léonard Rettel, only to be punished by his family by their pretending not to recognise him – insofar as the story has a moral, it is that children should always tell someone where they are going. The third section relates the children's nocturnal adventures in a wood five leagues from the town, and is the source of Jarry's extrapolation:

De Desbordes-Valmore, le canard que déposa le bûcheron aux pieds des enfants, et les cinquante-trois arbres marqués à l'écorce.

The children's excursion is inspired by a picture in their schoolroom of 'le Serment des trois Suisses' and a wish to see Poland freed. They go to the woods to take an oath in the manner of the painting, but the self-appointed leader, Roudolf, notices certain minor problems:

– C'est, leur dit-il, que nous avons oublié deux choses. Quand les Suisses ont fait leur serment, ils étaient trois, et nous sommes quatre; puis, chacun d'eux avait amené dix hommes qui les suivaient comme témoins et comme une armée représentant la Suisse; nous n'avons pas de témoins ni d'armée; comment faire? [...] tous décidèrent que les arbres leur serviraient de témoins et figureraient des hommes, se trouvant là naturellement rangés en bataille. Ils en marquèrent cinquante-trois à l'écorce qui devaient garder pour toujours une lettre de leur serment, ainsi composé par Roudolf: 'A la liberté des enfants polonais; à la délivrance de leurs pères!' (*Contes*, p.259)

The children then have other rousing patriotic ideas, vainly calling on the wind to carry the oath heavenwards, and they fall asleep. While they sleep, a poor, benighted woodcutter passes by and sees them:

Toutes les légendes, tous les contes de fées dont sa mémoire était pleine, lui rapprirent leurs thèmes et chantèrent en lui. Il crut voir des anges passagers, ou des petits lutins fatigués d'avoir dansé leur ronde. [...] Il lui parut même prudent de désarmer leur malice, s'ils étaient méchants, ou de mériter leur gratitude, s'ils étaient bons. Dans ce dessein, revenant à pas de loup jusqu'au rond magique formé par les dormeurs, il posa un canard sauvage tout plumé sur le flanc de Roudolf, afin que son poids l'avertit, en se réveillant, qu'un brave homme était passé par là. Ce canard sauvage se faisait depuis deux jours au fond de son sac, réservé au festin dont il tâchait parfois de réjouir sa chaumière. (*Contes*, p.261)

After the children have woken, they cook and eat the duck. The wood-cutter returns and is kind to the children, even after realising they are in no sense supernatural. The children in return are innocently patronising towards him, and before leaving for home tell him about the marked trees as a place of safety when war comes.

The reference to Polish loyalism in the extrapolation inevitably suggests links between *Le Serment* and *Ubu Roi*. The play contains no perceptible references to the tale, however, and this must lead us to doubt whether Jarry did in fact know Desbordes-Valmore's tales in his youth; given the number of private jokes and allusions in the play, it would be reasonable to expect references to something as curious as *Le Serment*, had Jarry known it at the time of the composition/adaptation of *Ubu Roi*. However, the two works can still be associated, as to read *Le Serment* through the filter of *Ubu Roi* – as a Jarryist inevitably will – is to make a joke out of the nationalism that Marceline intends to be serious. Extension of this joke may provide an explanation for the anomaly in the title given by Jarry. In his introductory speech to *Ubu Roi*, Jarry stated that the action would take place 'en Pologne, c'est-à-dire Nulle Part' (OCBP I, p.401); and Père Ubu, escaping from his Polish adventures at the end of the play, claims that 'S'il n'y avait pas de Pologne il n'y aurait pas de Polonais!' (OCBP I, p.398). In 1898 there was no state of Poland – therefore the 'petits Polonais', in the rigorous contortions of Ubuesque logic, can be no more than 'petits hommes'. As for the wild duck, we may perhaps choose to see a vague reference to the play by Ibsen, an author Jarry admired and promoted. More practically, we may see the food value of the duck as a useful provision for Faustroll's boat. None of these interpretations offers the slightest grounds for taking the text seriously, emphasising that this *livre pair* is by no means equal in depth to texts with productive extrapolations, such as *Le Désespéré* or *The Ancient Mariner*.

There are no completely gratuitous entries in the *livres pairs*, but some are playful almost to the point of being flippant. Wholly bad literature could have been selected from any bookstall, or targets for castigation taken from the work of a writer Jarry actively detested (for instance Pierre Loti), but the intention behind choosing this particular piece of bad literature is surely to catch the reader off balance, assuming he or she has deigned to investigate Faustroll's books. The diversion, after the often harrowing intensity of Bloy or Darien, into a work that it is all but impossible to take seriously, should make the reader grateful for the light relief rather than infuriated at the oddity of the choice. It also serves to highlight the very heterogeneous character of Faustroll's library, which

cannot be regarded as an anomaly within either Jarry's own notoriously eclectic work, or within the breadth of practice grouped under the umbrella of the avant-garde of the period – a breadth that will be illustrated still further as we discover yet more unexpected aspects of *livres pairs* lower down the alphabetical list. In this environment, anomalies are the order of the day and become an almost redundant concept. In addition, this choice introduces a new strand within the *livres pairs*, as the list includes a small number of works which, in various ways, evoke the innocence and simplicity of childhood. The next choice to be discussed is one of these.

In the case of the eighth *livre pair*, Jarry again changed his mind between manuscripts. In the Lormel manuscript he chose:

8. Elskamp, *Salutations, dont d'angéliques*

The poet Max Elskamp (1862–1931) is the first representative of Belgian Symbolism in Faustroll's library. Belgium was a major stronghold of Symbolism, and Elskamp was regarded at the time as a considerably more important figure than the rarity of his work and the paucity of criticism devoted to him may suggest today. Like Desbordes-Valmore, he has tended to enjoy the status of a poet's poet, as is indicated by Jean Cocteau's statement of his own interest in Elskamp, and his suggestion of Elskamp's influence on Apollinaire.¹ In the period leading up to *Faustroll*, Elskamp was in correspondence with Mallarmé, whose admiration for his work undoubtedly promoted Elskamp among the French Symbolists. Unlike a number of Belgian Symbolists, Elskamp resisted the appeal of Paris, and, after some years at sea in the 1880s, resided in his native Antwerp. There is no record of his having met Jarry, though the possibility cannot be excluded; however, parts of their correspondence have survived and provide the only known documentation of Jarry's acquisition of a *livre pair*. Elskamp sent Jarry a copy of *Salutations, dont d'angéliques* on 14 October 1894, in return for Jarry's *Minutes de sable mémorial*.² The surviving correspondence conveys an impression that it was Jarry who cultivated Elskamp's friendship rather than vice versa.

¹ Summarised by Paul Gorceix in 'Réalités Flamandes et Symbolisme: Max Elskamp (1862–1931)', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 87 (1987), 733–44, p.733.

² The letter is reproduced in CCP, 22–23 (May 1957), p.27. See also Philippe Vanden Broeck, 'De Bruxelles à Bruxelles par mer ou le Robinson français', *Europe*, 623/4 (March/April 1981), 172–81.

Salutations first appeared in 1893.¹ The edition used here is Max Elskamp, *Œuvres Complètes*, Seghers, 1967 ('Elskamp OC').

As the title suggests, the poems of *Salutations* have a religious bias, in common with most of Elskamp's early work. The collection is a variegated devotion to the Madonna, drawing its imagery from aspects of the Flemish landscape and the sea. Everything revolves around Mary, and everything and everybody is imbued with her spirit – for instance the passing day, the populace, and the towns, always focused in Elskamp upon their churches:

Or, en aujourd'hui et mes heures,
 Marie du temps quotidien
 Pour le travail et le pain
 Des vies qui rient, des vies qui pleurent,
 Je vous salue, Marie-aux-heures;

Et vous salue, Marie-au-peuple,
 Mon peuple bon de chrétienté,
 Et si patient d'équité
 Depuis des temps d'éternité,
 Et vous salue, Marie-au-peuple.

Or les villes, Marie-aux-cloches,
 Mes villes d'hiver et d'été
 Et de tout près, et d'à-côté,
 Mes villes de bois ou de roche
 Bien vous saluent, Marie-aux-cloches [...]
 (Elskamp OC, p.32)

Elskamp's rhythms are soothing, governed by simple rhyme schemes and vocabulary, and work with a use of repetition that promotes the impression of a non-specific variety of sacred chant, though in poems such as that above an impression of the *Ave Maria* is inevitable. Elskamp's poetry in this collection is consciously naïve in outlook, and as such serves as relief from the intensities of much nineteenth-century verse; it would be very difficult to find grounds for actively disliking Elskamp, superficially unambitious though he can appear, and Remy de Gourmont summed up his appeal neatly in the second *Livre des masques*, using imagery drawn from *Salutations*:

Max Elskamp est le poète de la Flandre heureuse. Sa Flandre est heureuse, parce qu'il y a une étoile à la pointe de ses mâts et de ses cloches, comme il y

¹ Elskamp published the first edition, with a cover design by Henry van de Velde, from his Antwerp home; he was a printing enthusiast and assembled an impressive array of machinery. *Salutations* reappeared in *La Louange de la Vie*, Mercure de France, 1898.

avait une étoile sur la maison de Bethléem. Sa Poésie est charmante et purificatrice.¹

The selection of Elskamp, and particularly of *Salutations*, is a provocative one, as it emphasises and expands the religious reference of the *livres pairs* already suggested by the choice of St Luke and Léon Bloy. Catholic faith is inescapable in the poems, constant to a degree where the merits of Elskamp's technique have to be regarded as a secondary factor. We are drawn back towards a primitive but honest perspective on faith which is not that of Bloy, and indeed not exactly that of St Luke, but rather that of the print *Saint Cado*. The implications of Jarry's allusions to such an anachronistic approach to faith will feature in discussion of the religious aspects of his and other *Belle Époque* literature in the second part of this study.

The extrapolation from *Salutations* makes reasonably precise reference to two poems from the collection:

D'Elskamp, les lièvres qui, courant sur les draps, devinrent des mains rondes et portèrent l'univers sphérique comme un fruit.

The first reference is to the third section of 'Consolatrice des affligés', where the unwell poet's wanderlust conjures up images of the Mediterranean, of cold countries he has visited, and of the occasional debauches of the seagoing life:

Et dans ma tête, loin, il brûle
Les vieux étés de canicule [...]

Or, j'ai le goût de mer aux lèvres
Comme une ranceur de genièvre

Bu pour la très mauvaise orgie
Des départs dans les tabagies;

Puis ce pays encore me vient:
Un pays de neiges sans fin...;

Marie des bonnes couvertures,
Faites-y la neige moins dure
Et courir moins, comme des lièvres,
Mes mains sur mes draps blancs de fièvre.
(Elskamp OC, pp.46–47)

The appeal of this section to Jarry is hard to gauge; certainly he was no great traveller, and the debauches of his own lifestyle were pursued without

¹ Remy de Gourmont, *Le II^{me} Livre des masques*, 12th edn, Paris: Mercure de France, 1924, p.117.

the excuse of a 'départ pour les tabagies'. There may be a degree of sympathy drawn from the fits of delirious illness Jarry had already experienced, but there are no firm links to be drawn from this poem on its own. The Cymbalum Pataphysicum note that Jarry has inverted the metamorphosis of 'lièvres' and 'mains' as it appears in Elskamp.¹ However, the reference gains interest when this invocation to the Madonna is linked by Jarry to his other reference, to one of the cruciform stanzas of the third sequence of 'Pleine de grâces' (Elskamp OC, pp.40–44; these extracts p.42):

Et Jésus en rose,
Et la Terre en bleu,
Marie des Grâces, c'est en vos mains rondes
Ainsi que deux fruits: Jésus et le Monde,
Et Jésus en rose,
Et la Terre en bleu.

By linking the images Jarry creates a fresh devotional image, of going hand in hand (poet's hands in the first reference, the Virgin's in the second) with the Madonna. Not merely a devotional image, as it also relates to *L'Amour absolu*, where the hero, Emmanuel Dieu, goes beyond holding hands and has an incestuous relationship with his mother Varia, a figure based on the Virgin Mary (though characters are uncertain, shifting commodities within the novel) in the Breton family group, overtly based on the Holy Family, around which *L'Amour absolu* revolves. In this context, the Cymbalum are justified in noting that the next stanza of Elskamp's poem could almost have been tailor-made to suit Jarry, down to the allusion to his native Brittany:²

Et Jésus, Marie,
Et Joséph l'époux,
C'est depuis longtemps ma bonne alliance
A la mode de Bretagne et d'enfance,
Et Joséph l'époux,
Jésus et Marie.

Thus the extrapolation focuses on the Virgin Mary – indeed it would be hard to do otherwise in *Salutations* – and states interest in Elskamp's religious dimension. It is in this context that we shall encounter his work in a later chapter.

The reference to 'l'univers sphérique comme un fruit' is a variation on Elskamp's image of the world (as opposed to the universe) as a fruit, and hints

¹ Cymbalum *Faustroll*, p.80.

² *Ibid.*

vaguely at references to spheres in Jarry's own imagery, which range from Ubu's all-consuming *gidouille*, which (borrowing from Rabelais) becomes almost its own world in the first Act of *Ubu Cocu* (OCBP I, p.491), to aspects of the geometry found in 'Etre et Vivre' (OCBP I, pp.341–44) and of course the latter chapters of *Faustroll*. There is also a certain resemblance between Elskamp's image of Jesus and the world and Sengle's concept of Saint Anne as an 'astre double' in Jarry's *Les Jours et les nuits* (OCBP I, p.798).

As in previous cases, the change in the Fasquelle manuscript was to a more recent publication:

8. Elskamp, *Enluminures*

Enluminures was published in Brussels in 1898,¹ at the same time that Elskamp's previous collections (including *Salutations*) were appearing in Paris as *La Louange de la Vie*. Pierre Quillard reviewed both volumes in the *Mercur* for May 1898, the issue which included several chapters of *Faustroll*, and he delivered an extensive eulogy of Elskamp's verse, comparing it with Laforgue and Verlaine.² *Enluminures* is a sequence of verses closely related to *Salutations*, and many of my comments on the earlier poems apply to it equally well. Although the title suggests an allusion to Rimbaud's *Illuminations* (the twenty-second *livre pair*), *Enluminures* bears no particular resemblance to its illustrious forebear. Its subjects are again impressions of faith and of Flanders, and the Madonna continues as an important figure, though not used as a fulcrum for the entire work as before. *Enluminures* is nominally divided into five sections (*Paysages*, *Heures*, *Vies*, *Chansons* and *Grotesques*), but is particularly striking for the rhythm that Elskamp forces upon the collection as a whole, by the device (used to a limited extent in *Salutations*) of beginning stanzas and poems with conjunctions, stressing links in tone and metre between poems where thematic links may be tenuous or absent. The total effect, particularly when reading aloud, is to encourage a reading of *Enluminures* at a single sitting. Note, for instance, the opening lines of four consecutive poems from the *Paysages*: 'Alors c'est un pays d'en haut', 'Mais alors ici de ville en villages', 'Puis la mer monte', and 'Et lors en gris, et lors en noir'.

¹ First published by Paul Lacomblez, with woodcuts by the author. In addition to Elskamp OC, the collection can be found in *Chansons et Enluminures*, Passé Présent series, Brussels: Jacques Antoine, 1980.

² *Mercur de France*, XXVI (April–June 1898), 538–40, p.538.

This is a more ambitious collection than *Salutations*, with added notions of movement. The vision of Flanders is allowed movement in the fourth dimension, for instance in ‘Et Marie lit un évangile’ (Elskamp OC, pp.94–95), where as Marie forgets ‘les heures sonnées/avec le temps et les années’, the poem similarly forgets them and shifts back to observe the building of the towns of Flanders in the medieval world of an *enluminure*, an illuminated design. Elskamp also moves his viewpoint to that of birds in the sky (Elskamp OC, p.95), to the worlds of work, play and prayer, or to a variety of other perspectives intended to complete the portrait of his idealised Flanders:

Or c’est ma vie rêver ainsi,
devant un peu d’espérance,
mains aux genoux comme l’on pense
à la mode de mon pays [...]

(Elskamp OC, p.112)

There is also complex movement concerning the poetic persona, which begins as ‘un vieil homme de cent ans/qui dit, selon la chair, Flandre et le sang’ (Elskamp OC, p.91), and can then slip into whatever guise best suits its immediate purpose; an all-seeing eye for the *Paysages*, a poor sacristan for the *Heures*, or a singer for the *Chansons*:

l’homme qui dit là
des mots pour chanter,
c’est moi pour la joie
des miens tout en paix.

(Elskamp OC, p.107)

There is further expansion in the religious aspects of *Enluminures*. *Salutations* centred on the Madonna, with Christ serving only as an incidental figure, as in ‘Pleine de grâces’; in *Enluminures* Christ becomes incarnate in Elskamp’s native landscape. In a less liturgical collection than *Salutations*, he adopts a secular disguise:

Et c’est Lui, comme un matelot,
et c’est lui, qu’on n’attendait plus,
et c’est lui, comme un matelot,
qui s’en revient les bras tendus

pour baiser ceux qu’il a connus,
rire à ceux qu’il n’a jamais vus,
et c’est lui, comme un matelot,
qui s’en revient le sac au dos.

(Elskamp OC, p.101)

The subtle movement from 'Lui' to 'lui' is paralleled by the image of the returning sailor – Elskamp had been a sailor himself, and seems to be suggesting a subtle transfer of the return of Christ onto himself. The transfer is never made fully explicit, but throughout *Enluminures* the poetic persona is shown to be a necessary and superior complement to the common people, and thus serves much the same function as Christ does in the simple, pastoral faith of the collection. The poet can be the 'joueur d'orgue' required to complete a *kermesse* (Elskamp OC, p.107), or the humble sacristan of the *Heures*, praying for 'mes bonnes villes familières/ où chacun a joie de sa pierre,/de sa maison et de ses saints' (Elskamp OC, p.99). The figure of the sacristan is only introduced at the conclusion of the *Heures*, yet serves as the poetic persona for the whole of the section from its opening poem 'Dormez-vous encore, paroissiens?' This leads to a conscious ambiguity in the *Heures*, intended to transfer onto the poet the protective religious role of the sacristan figure.

In discussion of St Luke I have noted Jarry's Christ complex, and it will feature again in later chapters of this study. In the parts played by Christ and his local representative (the sacristan) in the fluid poetic persona of *Enluminures*, we may see a definite appeal of the collection for Jarry and a possible motive for abandoning *Salutations*, over and above the desire to pay a personal compliment to Elskamp by including his most recent work. The matter of Jarry and Elskamp's friendship should not let us see the inclusion of Elskamp's superficially naïve poems as in any way forced. For Jarry, this rustic simplicity could certainly be regarded as an attribute, as in a substantial section of his work, for instance when writing libretti for Claude Terrasse's music, he distances himself from the complications of his novels and shows a non-cynical joy in song, dance and simple pleasures. The best illustration of this is his libretto for *Pantagruel*, of which more in due course.

Taken as a whole, *Enluminures* is a collection of considerable interest, for its combination of reactionary subject matter, the soothing effect common in Elskamp, and its structural curiosity. The word *enluminure* can indicate the act of creating an illuminated design as well as the design itself, and the collection is characterised by the translation of the process into poetry, interweaving perspectives and movements that do not ordinarily mix into a unified two-dimensional product on a page. In the eye of a medieval illuminator they mix because three-dimensional perspective had not been invented, and Elskamp's skill lies in making such a product appealing to a more modern viewpoint; to that of his contemporaries at least, even if he has been unfairly neglected in recent times.

Oddly, Faustroll's extrapolation in the chapter 'Du petit nombre des élus' is unchanged from the Lormel manuscript, and thus refers explicitly to *Salutations* rather than *Enluminures*. The later collection is not short of rich and suggestive imagery; perhaps Jarry was so attached to his choice that he did not wish to change it, or equally he may simply have forgotten to do so.

9. Un volume dépareillé du *Théâtre* de Florian

Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian (1755–1794) was an occasional soldier, translator of Cervantes (another author referred to by Jarry, most prominently in *Les Jours et les nuits*), and an author of fables, novellas and simple plays. He could hardly be regarded as a central figure for the late nineteenth-century reader, and having encountered Desbordes-Valmore, we should be prepared for Jarry to introduce another mischievous choice as a *livre pair*. This is another text whose simplicity suggests a link with childhood; and in this case there are grounds to suggest that Jarry did know it in his youth, where the clues we might have expected were absent in the case of Desbordes-Valmore.

Apart from stating that this is a 'volume dépareillé', Jarry gives no overt clues as to an edition, so none is specified here; there are many and various editions of Florian's theatre, most published before 1820. The only recent printing is aimed at children and features three of his harlequinades, though not the one highlighted by Jarry: *Théâtre de Florian*, Cinq Diamants, 1985.

This second joker in the pack has little or nothing to do with the complex world of the *Gestes et Opinions*, or with any broader strands of Symbolist writing. The links between Florian and Jarry are in fact to do with the formative stages of the *Ubu* plays, and are also identifiable in other parts of Jarry's juvenilia which were to remain undeveloped. In particular, Florian's understanding of the character of Harlequin has a role in the wildly oscillating character of Père Ubu. I refer readers interested in pursuing this aspect to an article in which I have explored it further.¹ A taste of the relevance of Florian to Père Ubu may be gained from the following extract from Florian's *Avant-Propos* to his theatre,² in which he highlights several character traits that are also prominent in Ubu:

¹ Ben Fisher, 'Jarry and Florian: Ubu's Debt to Harlequin', *Nottingham French Studies*, 27(2) (Nov. 1988), 32–39.

² This text appears immediately before *Les Deux Billets*, to which Jarry alludes, in each of the several early editions of Florian's theatre I have consulted.

Ce caractère [Harlequin] est le seul peut-être qui rassemble l'esprit et la naïveté, la finesse et la balourdise. Arlequin, toujours bon, toujours facile à tromper, croit tout ce qu'on lui dit, donne dans tous les pièges qu'on lui tend: rien ne l'étonne, tout l'embarasse; il n'a point de raison, il n'a que de la sensibilité; il se fâche, s'apaise, s'afflige, se console dans le même instant: sa joie et sa douleur sont également plaisantes.

There is also peripheral interest in that the credentials given to Florian in certain early editions are adapted and extended by Jarry to make Ubu a 'capitaine de dragons, officier de confiance du roi Venceslas, décoré de l'ordre de l'Aigle Rouge de Pologne et ancien roi d'Aragon' (OCBP I, p.353); Florian is a mere 'Capitaine de dragons, et gentilhomme de S.A.S. Mgr. le Duc de Penthièvre, de l'académie de Madrid, etc.'. Again, this suggests that Jarry was familiar with Florian in the formative stages of the Ubu material, before he moved to Paris.

While the inclusion of Florian provides an interesting sideline to a study of Jarry's dramas, its relevance to *Faustroll* and exploration of Symbolist writing is limited to its status as another illustration of the principles of perversity and heterogeneity. Apart from the harlequinades, it is known that Jarry was acquainted with at least one of Florian's fables, *La Guenon, le singe et la noix*, as he quotes from it briefly in *L'Amour absolu* (OCBP I, p.953) and *Le Surmâle* (OCBP II, p.249); neither reference gives any further clue regarding Jarry's interest in Florian.

The extrapolation from Florian is a very simple one, appropriately so in view of the uncomplicated nature of his plays:

De Florian, le billet de loterie de Scapin.

This is a reference to *Les Deux Billets*, the first of Florian's harlequinades, built around stock characters. The simple plot involves Arlequin's winning lottery ticket, a *billet doux* from his beloved Argentine, and attempts by Scapin to usurp his good fortune. The ticket is not Scapin's by rights, and is returned to Arlequin by the end of the play. As a device it is as deliberately insubstantial as the rest of the play, and like Desbordes-Valmore's wild duck, has no apparent hidden pataphysical depths; and in the same way, it is perhaps best regarded as a simple but potentially entertaining diversion.

10. Un volume dépareillé des *Mille et Une Nuits*, traduction Galland

Antoine Galland (1646–1715) published the first translation of the *Nuits* into a European language in several volumes between 1704 and 1717, and there had been so many editions by 1898 that it is futile to try to locate that used by Jarry. References here are to the Galland *Mille et Une Nuits* published in three volumes by Classiques Garnier in 1960.

Jarry goes against the all too common tendency for the *Mille et Une Nuits* (*Arabian Nights' Entertainment* or other titles in English) to remain a text that is known of, rather than known in depth. It is not his only Islamic reading matter; Michel Arrivé points out that Jarry's *L'Autre Alceste* has its origins in the Koran (notes, OCBP I, p.1254). The *Nuits* comprise a large number of lengthy tales within the *cadre* of stories told to the sultan Schahriar by his wife Scheherazade (Galland's transliterations) to avoid being killed, as the sultan's wives are wont to be once he tires of their tales. The stories are characterised by magic, marvels, heroism and good plots, generally tinged with a benevolent and often bawdy sense of humour.

Jarry's knowledge of the *Nuits* is extensive and includes other translations; Marcel Schwob introduced him to English translations by Burton and Payne (OCBP II, p.626), but Jarry's real chance to demonstrate his knowledge came with his reviews in later years of the new translation by his friend Dr Joseph-Charles Mardrus (published 1898–1904), included among the *Textes critiques et divers* in OCBP II. In 1903 Jarry would state that 'le roman scientifique remonte, en ligne directe, aux *Mille et Une Nuits*, dont beaucoup des contes sont alchimiques' (OCBP II, p.519); an interesting assertion given that he had selected it for *Faustroll*, subtitled 'Roman néo-scientifique' (OCBP I, p.655).

Also – and it is surprising that this seems to have escaped previous attention – the *Nuits* include the source of the main plot of Jarry's *Pantagruel*, in the version in which it was performed in 1911 (there are various earlier redactions, with greater textual debts to Rabelais). Jarry weaves his plot around a princess and her three royal suitors (Quaresmeprenant, Bringuénarilles and Petault), who are sent on a quest for marvels to decide who will marry the princess, but who are subsequently outshone by an apparently more humble suitor (Pantagruel) who wins the princess's heart while in disguise. This plot has nothing to do with Rabelais, but is drawn from the tale of Princess Nur

al-Nihar and the Jinniyah.¹ By coincidence, Douglas Fairbanks Senior used the same plot from the *Nuits* in his 1924 film *The Thief of Baghdad*.

The extrapolation from the *Nuits* relates to one of the most fantastic of all the tales:

Des *Mille et Une Nuits*, l'œil crevé par la queue du cheval volant du troisième Kalender, fils de roi.

As in the case of Florian, Jarry's extrapolation gives the lie to the notion of a random 'volume dépareillé'. It also provides a clue to interests that may lead to its selection for Faustroll's library.

The tales of the three kalandars (a kind of beggar) usually appear early in the collection, in the first volume of most editions. It is part of a cycle of tales told in a Baghdad house to a company including (in disguise) the Caliph Haroun al-Raschid, a pivotal figure in the *Nuits*, and three kalandars, all blinded in the left eye and all, as it transpires, of royal blood. Each has a strange tale to tell, the strangest being that of the third, who is a king named Agib, son of Casib. His story has a strong dream-like quality in its surreal imagery, linked with a thread of fatal inevitability; in the fantastic adventures he relates (to detail them would simply be to retell his story) he is often told that all will be well unless he does a particular thing; in each case he ultimately does it, either by neglect or, in the case that leads to his blinding, through curiosity.

Agib has been left in charge of an enchanted palace where he has spent a pleasurable year with forty ladies, who leave him with instructions not to open a certain golden door. His curiosity overcomes him, and beyond the door he finds a fine horse. Leading it out into daylight, he angers it; it spreads its wings and flies off, pulling him behind. On setting him down, the horse blinds Agib's eye with its tail.² He finds he is back in a palace he had previously visited, with ten one-eyed nobles who had warned him not to embark on the adventure, which they had all experienced beforehand (*Nuits* I, pp.146–52).

The image thus alludes to human frailty of spirit, and to the potential consequences of curiosity – forbidden fruit will always be eaten. There is forbidden fruit within the tale in the form of a homosexual relationship between the prince and a young boy he seeks out, by curiosity, in the cave

¹ Jarry's 1902 review of the volume of the Mardrus translation including this 'Histoire de la princesse Nourennahar et de la belle Gennia' makes no direct reference to this particular tale (OCBP II, pp.648–49).

² Mardrus offers some nuances of translation in this tale, including the detail that it is the horse's wing rather than its tail that does the damage.

where he has been hidden – to avoid the death prophesied for him at the hands of Agib, who ultimately kills him, quite by accident. Mardrus, always keen to play upon the licentious passages of the *Nuits* (indeed to lengthen them), makes much of this relationship, and even in the reserved style of Galland the nature of the relationship can be read between the lines:

Après le repas, j’inventai un jeu pour nous désennuyer, non seulement ce jour-là, mais encore les suivants [...] Nous soupâmes et nous nous couchâmes comme le jour précédent. Nous eûmes le temps de contracter amitié ensemble. Je m’aperçus qu’il avait de l’inclination pour moi; et, de mon côté, j’avais conçu une si forte pour lui, que je me disais souvent à moi-même que les astrologues qui avaient prédit au père que son fils serait tué par mes mains étaient des imposteurs, et qu’il n’était pas possible que je pusse commettre une si méchante action. (*Nuits* I, p.136)

So it is possible that through this extrapolation Jarry may be making an oblique reference to his own sexual orientation, though the availability of such a reference is surely not the sole reason for selecting the *Nuits*. Like *The Ancient Mariner*, this volume’s presence should be attributed mainly to the reserves of fantastic stories and characters that it contains, and in no small measure to the exoticism of the setting; a taste for the more curious corners of the Middle East had been an aspect of 1880s Decadence, carried over into the Symbolist period by authors such as Péladan (the eighteenth *auteur pair*) and Rachilde (notably in *L’Heure sexuelle*, discussed below), and underlines the fact that the *Nuits* were a quite conventional text for a *fin-de-siècle* author to admire. The extent of Jarry’s interest, however, is less conventional, and illustrates still further his ongoing interest in previous literature suited to his own aesthetic (and in the case of the extrapolation, to personal aspects), and an interest complementary to his tastes in contemporary writing.

11. Grabbe, *Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung*, comédie en trois actes

This is a further non-French work, a comedy by the German dramatist Christian Dietrich Grabbe (1801–1836), who is known mainly for his historical tragedies. He is the ‘auteur ivrogne célèbre en Allemagne’ in whom Jarry tried to interest Lugué-Poe (letter, OCBP I, p.1045); in fact Jarry went so far as to translate this play into French, and it is fair to see an element of optimistic self-promotion in the choice of this *livre pair*. Jarry is

known to have studied other drama in German, including that of the Austrian Franz Grillparzer. *Scherz* was first published in 1827;¹ references in these pages are to *Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung und Dramen*, Berlin: Elsnerdruck, 1977. In parallel with quotations from the German I shall give the French of Jarry's translation, which is faithful in these particular instances.

Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung ('Fun, Satire, Irony and Deeper – or Deepish – Meaning') is an awkward title for a play, so Jarry found a simpler one for it in French, rendering its various elements through a concise Rabelaisian reference, as *Les Silènes*.² He made various attempts to promote his translation, though ultimately its only performance was with puppets at Claude Terrasse's Théâtre des Pantins (see the *Conférence sur les pantins*, OCBP I, pp.420–23). The complete translation has only been available since the publication of OCBP II, whose notes are thorough enough to shorten the discussion needed here.

Scherz is a farce quite unlike anything else Grabbe published, and like *Ubu Roi* it is clearly a precursor of the Theatre of the Absurd. Not that it has any prior influence on *Ubu*; the lack of echoes of Grabbe in the highly allusive *Ubu Roi* strongly suggests that Jarry only encountered *Scherz* after his arrival in Paris, possibly through his German friend Albert Haas, or through Marcel Schwob, who was proficient in several languages and familiar with much of their literature. Nonetheless, *Scherz* was an obscure play, virtually unknown even to readers in Germany. In fact, Jarry's performance with puppets seems to have been its first public production anywhere; its German première was in 1907, though there had been a private performance in Vienna in 1876. Like Florian, Grabbe has little to do with the ethereal dimensions of *Faustroll*, but this is a choice through which Jarry, with a subtle humility, acknowledges a past author who has either influenced him directly or whom he finds sympathetic; Jarry thus tempers his image as an uncompromising artistic individualist, and allows us to distance him, to some extent, from the image of him that would develop after his death.

¹ The play first appeared in Grabbe's *Dramatische Dichtungen*, 2 vols, Frankfurt am Main: Kettembeil, 1827. Of the various editions and collections since, the most substantial is Grabbe's *Werke und Briefe*, 6 vols, Emsdetten: Lechte, 1960–1973, but this standard edition unfortunately chooses to modernise Grabbe's distinctive language, hence my choice of an edition that does not do so.

² Rabelais, *Œuvres Complètes*, 2 vols, Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1962, I, pp.5–6: 'Silènes estoient jadis petites boites, telles que voyons de présent es boutique des apothecaires [...]'.

The plot of *Scherz*, or rather the burlesque that passes for one, revolves around the Devil, making his third explicit appearance in our survey; we have met him in *Saint Cado* and in the Bible, and he will feature again when we reach *Rachilde*. After arriving in rural Germany, he acts as a comic *deus ex machina* in the lives of a variety of characters, having passed himself off as a papal knight. His machinations centre on the problems faced by the various suitors of Liddy, the local Baron's daughter; however, he cannot stand in the way of true love between her and the spectacularly ugly Mollfels, and he is eventually taken back to Hell by his young and elegant grandmother. The play concludes with the arrival of Grabbe on the stage, despite the resistance of the schoolmaster; comic schoolmasters are of course a type dear to Jarry from the *Ontogénie* onwards, with figures such as Bidasse as well as 'le P.H.', model for Ubu. The play is meant to be ridiculous, and is extremely funny; however, it is hard for a modern reader to react with the 'Lachen der Verzweiflung' (laughter of despair or confusion) that Grabbe sought,¹ as the concept is now so widely accepted within mainstream humour.

The intervention of the author in the work is a common point between Grabbe and Jarry, with the latter's integration of the Ubu persona into his everyday life, and with his creation of self-projections as central figures for his novels. The case of Jarry is well expressed by André Breton in his *Anthologie de l'humour noir*:

La littérature, à partir de Jarry, se déplace dangereusement, en terrain miné. L'auteur s'impose en marge de l'œuvre [...] il est impossible de chasser de la maison terminée cet ouvrier qui s'est mis en tête de planter le drapeau noir. Nous disons qu'à partir de Jarry [...] la différenciation tenue longtemps pour nécessaire entre l'art et la vie va se trouver contestée, pour finir anéantie dans son principe.²

The same volume features Grabbe, undoubtedly as a result of Breton's reading of Jarry, and helps to give Grabbe the place he deserves in the development of modern humour.³ Many of the views on Jarry's outlook set out by Breton in the *Anthologie* are, very arguably, better suited to the melancholy Grabbe.

In this bizarre play, Jarry locates bizarre items for his extrapolation:

De Grabbe, les treize compagnons tailleurs que massacra, à l'aurore, le baron Tual par l'ordre du chevalier de l'ordre pontifical du Mérite civil, et la serviette qu'il se noua préalablement autour du cou.

¹ Letter of 28 December 1827 to Grabbe's publisher Kettembeil, *Werke und Briefe*, V, p.195.

² André Breton, *Anthologie de l'humour noir*, Paris: Sagittaire, 1940, p.169.

³ Breton, *Anthologie*, pp.48–55.

Jarry is adopting two of the most outlandish episodes of *Scherz*, the first of which he demonstrated with puppets in a 1902 lecture (OCBP I, p.421). The papal knight is of course 'Herr Canonicus Theophil Teufel', the Devil, who offers to procure Liddy for the aggressive Freiherr von Mordax, who becomes 'le Margrave Tual' in *Les Silènes*.

Not only does the use of this name in *Faustroll* suggest Jarry's ambitions for his translation, but it creates a possible link with the pataphysician's picture of *Saint Cado*. 'Tual' is the Breton name of the Celtic Saint known in Welsh as Tudwal and in French as Tugdual, whose relics are claimed by Laval, the town of Jarry's birth. Coincidence, reference, or mystification?

The Devil agrees to procure Liddy for Mordax/Tual on two conditions: that he makes his son study philosophy; and that he kills thirteen tailor's apprentices (the most innocent of innocents). They haggle:

FREIHERR: Hören Sie, Herr, ich will neun – elf – ja zwölf umbringen; nur den dreizehnten erlassen Sie mir; das wäre über die grade Zahl hinaus!

TEUFEL: Gut, damit bin ich zufrieden, wenn Sie nämlich dem dreizehnten doch wenigstens einige Rippen zerbrechen wollen. (*Scherz*, p.36)

LE MARGRAVE: Ecoutez, monsieur, j'en égorgerai neuf – onze – même douze; laissez-moi seulement le treizième; ça dépasserait la juste douzaine!

LE DIABLE: Soit, je me contente du chiffre, si tout au moins, pour le treizième, vous voulez bien lui casser quelques côtes. (OCBP II, p.34)

Mordax has very childish (indeed rather Ubuesque) worries about getting blood on his new clothes, but accepts the suggestion of wearing a napkin. The outcome is particularly sad for the thirteenth apprentice:

ZWEITE SZENE (*Eine Wiese. Tagesanbruch.*) (*Der Freiherr Mordax geht spazieren, ihm begegnen dreizehn Schneidergesellen, er macht sich die Serviette vor und schlägt sie sämtlich todt.*) (*Scherz*, p.66)

[SCENE II]

Une prairie. A l'aube.

Scène muette.

LE MARGRAVE TUAL *va se promener. Il rencontre TREIZE COMPAGNONS TAILLEURS, il se met la serviette au cou et les massacre tous.* (OCBP II, p.41)

Even in an absurd play this is a supremely ridiculous set of events, and as Roger A. Nicholls has pointed out, far beyond the most outlandish conventions of behaviour on or off stage, with the impassioned bargaining over an absurd demand that somehow seems to register with a human character (Mordax).¹ The momentary Ubuesque touches of Mordax's

¹ Roger A. Nicholls, *The Dramas of Christian Dietrich Grabbe*, The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1969, p.78.

petty concern for his cleanliness and of the gratuitous massacre serve to relate *Scherz* to the *Ubu* plays, recalling the element of self-promotion in the choice of this *livre pair*.

The twelfth item in Faustroll's library offers a further example of Jarry's revision of his manuscript. In the Lormel manuscript he chose:

12. Kahn, *Le Livre d'images*

This is a volume of poetry by Gustave Kahn (1859–1936), who seems to be remembered for his criticism as much as for his verse. Celebrated (to a significant degree by himself) as the inventor of the *vers libre*, a title to which he has a strong if incomplete claim, Kahn was regarded as a major author among his contemporaries, and mixed with Mallarmé and the *Mercure* circle. However, by 1898 he was a less familiar sight in literary gatherings than he had been a few years previously. Jarry was on friendly terms with him, spending a holiday at the Kahns' retreat at Sint Anna on the Belgian coast in 1896.¹

Le Livre d'images, the only edition of which was published by the Société du Mercure de France in 1897, is a collection of typical Kahn verse, concentrating on the *vers libre*, and unconsciously finding it a rather tired form; the implications of this poetic fatigue may be a factor in Jarry's amended choice for the Fasquelle manuscript. The subjects of *Le Livre d'images* are deliberately simple, and are intended to dwell upon the past, using expression rather than invention:

Dans la Bibliothèque où le Coran dialogue
avec la Bible, table de marbre du décalogue [...]
un vieux livre d'images, poussiéreux est couché
par terre, car il est énorme et que son parchemin
a déjà couru, aux dos des colporteurs, tous les chemins
et que ce qu'il contient, c'est rien, ou tout comme:
les larmes de Tannhauser retour de Rome
l'infortune commentée de Pyrame et Thisbé
et Juliette au balcon, le mouchoir d'Othello
et des gens passés au gril par les bourreaux,
bref tout ce qu'il y a de moins nouveau
sous ce ciel [...] (*Le Livre d'images*, p.263)

¹ André Lebois claimed that it was during this stay at Sint Anna that Jarry adopted 'le parler Ubu' for daily use (other accounts claim different dates for this event); quoted in Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, p.214.

Such an approach is a dangerous one for a poet, as it inherently demands a truly distinctive expression, and Kahn does not quite achieve it in this relatively weighty collection. Individual poems within it have their own merit (particularly the *Image* group), but as an ensemble *Le Livre d'images* does not make a strong impression when compared with Kahn's other collections published over the previous decade; it represents the point where the particular mode of expression he had been using since *Les Palais nomades* (1887) loses its verve. Kahn had long since hitched his star to the cause of the *vers libre*, and he remains faithful to it in this collection. However, *Le Livre d'images* shows evidence of at least a lack of the constant regeneration necessary for the *vers libre* to remain a true branch of the avant-garde. After ten years working in the genre, we should expect to find Kahn produce something more indicative of a maturing genre than this:

Le feu trille;
des doigts longs montent comme des vrilles
subites, en l'air noir;
le feu danse,
dans sa nappe large se creusent comme des anses.
L'azur et l'or se poursuivent et se terrassent
dans une course vive.
Le feu rit
d'un large grésillement dans la poutre qu'il ronge
longtemps, puis triomphe d'un élan.
Le feu rougeoie,
fête des feux de joie sur l'amas blanc
de neige des plaisirs de songe.
Le feu trille, le feu crie
parmi des débris.
C'est un collier d'or jeté dans l'air noir.
(from 'Le Feu', *Le Livre d'images*, p.91)

Kahn succeeds in creating rhythm, and it must be admitted that this is a primary intention in this poem; the wild mix of rhyme, assonance, internal rhyme and blank verse is presumably intended to convey the haphazard course of the fire, and we can concede the poem's quality in this respect; but it has little other substance, and could almost be mistaken for an adolescent *exercice de style*. The most exciting experimental aspect is the layout on the page, reproduced above. 'Le Feu', along with the accompanying poems describing the other three elements, is an extreme example, but is indicative of a certain poetic malaise one detects in Kahn's verse of the late 1890s. The constant demonstration of originality of form is all well

and good, but there is little commensurate sense of adventure in other aspects; the *vers libre* is failing to produce truly memorable collections of the scale of Rimbaud's *Illuminations* (itself a *livre pair*, and one in whose publication Kahn played a major part), the collection that marks the real origin of the *vers libre* with the poems 'Marine' and 'Mouvement'. Changes in the character of Kahn's work published soon after this collection (but some of it possibly written earlier) suggest an awareness of a need for change, and show a renewed taste for experiments in form, exemplified in the work that replaces *Le Livre d'images* in the Fasquelle manuscript.

Of all the first choices abandoned by Jarry when amending Faustroll's library, this is perhaps the one with least apparent appeal. It is a tired and rarely inspiring volume written in a style that may have been excitingly experimental in the mid-1880s, but which had lost its edge by the late 1890s. In short, it is hard to offer more substantial grounds for its inclusion than those of personal compliment to a friend and of recognition of Kahn's importance as a figure in the literary world that Jarry inhabited. However, we should not dismiss Kahn out of hand for this one volume, as other elements of his work in the 1890s have a great deal to offer.

The extrapolations from Kahn are confused, for no very apparent reason. We could easily forgive Jarry for imprecise references, as Kahn's imagery is highly interchangeable between his various works. The choice from *Le Livre d'images* is:

De Kahn, une barque pleine de mains jointes. (OCBP I, p.1223)

Ships and hands are frequent images in *Le Livre d'images*. For instance, it would be easy to be distracted into locating the image in a poem such as 'Le beau navire':

Le Château-Joyeux est un beau bâtiment;
des rondes sur le pont, des sourires sur la mer,
la gaieté des marins glisse vers l'aube des ferres
et le soleil pour lui prend un masque plus blanc [...]
(*Le Livre d'images*, p.223)

However, I am indebted to the Cymbalum Pataphysicum for locating the precise reference, which comes from the poem 'Marine' in Kahn's *La Pluie et le beau temps*, published by Vanier in 1896.¹ Here is the complete poem:

¹ Cymbalum *Faustroll*, p.83. The Poésie/Gallimard *Faustroll* erroneously locates this extrapolation in the poem 'Image' (notes, p.187).

La mer, cotte vert sombre
La mer, rubans bien blancs,
Coquète sous l'ombre
D'un ciel menaçant.

Des nues noires poursuivent
Les gais flocons blancs.
Une lune massive
Indique son masque blanc.

Des neiges se colorent
Encore d'un sourire blanc
Au ciel que dévorent
Des monstres géants.

La mer féline
Se penche et câline
Les barques noirâtres
Aux voilures grisâtres,

Les voiles bleues du ciel,
Les voiles blanches du ciel
Filent à tire-d-aile.

Les frêles hirondelles
Rasent les ravines
Près la mer féline

Brusque gronde la voix
Par-dessus l'arboie
Du rauque tonnerre
Soudain à l'éclair.

Et la mer féline,
La mer en cotte verte
Un instant coquète
Sourit et câline.

Puis déchaîne sa tourmente blême
Autour des barques qu'elle aime
Qu'elle aime disjointes
Pleines de mains jointes.¹

If a notion of parity is indeed implied by the term *livres pairs*, then perhaps it is fair to extend it slightly to include other, here very similar, writing by an author; or we may just be dealing with a slip. This particular poem is

¹ Gustave Kahn, *La Pluie et le beau temps*, Paris: Léon Vanier, 1896, pp.43–45.

representative of Kahn's descriptive verse, but is a relatively tame example of Kahn's *vers libriste* techniques. It is perhaps the subject matter that determines Jarry's choice; the combination in the extrapolation of Kahn and the sea suggests a compliment for the hospitality received by Jarry at Sint Anna in 1896, which is also reflected in the chapter of the novel which apostrophises Kahn, 'Du Château-Errant, qui est une jonque' (OCBP I, pp.684–85: the title seems to refer to 'Le Château-Joyeux' as well as *Les Palais nomades*), which evokes Kahn's property on the Belgian coast. The emphasis on the final lines of Kahn's poem continues the set of references to hands that started with Jarry's reference to Elskamp, where hands are linked, just as they are in this case; however, the number of hands is greatly multiplied in the reference to *Le Livre d'images*.

In the Fasquelle manuscript, Jarry replaced *Le Livre d'images* with a very different work:

12. Kahn, *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*

This is another work which offers only a single edition: Mercure de France, 1898. The first section of the book had appeared in *La Société nouvelle* in 1896.

If *Le Livre d'images* leaves something to be desired, *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* is for me the lost jewel of the *livres pairs*, and certainly worthy of rehabilitation for modern readers of *Belle Epoque* literature. It will serve as an illustration for many of the arguments of this study.

A major principle in 1890s literature is that virtually anything is permissible, and Kahn here promotes individualism by writing a Symbolist Grail Romance, no less. *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* was in print at the time of the Lormel manuscript's composition, and was Jarry's initial choice; it was crossed out in favour of *Le Livre d'images*, only to return in the Fasquelle manuscript. *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* is a dense, daunting work that has been little appreciated since its own time, being all too often taken as an example of highly ornamental Symbolist style without other substance¹ – thereby missing a central point concerning late Symbolist writing, that substance is often less important than expression and elegance. It is interesting, given my aim of trying to discuss these texts in terms that

¹ This is very much the impression conveyed by Marcel Schneider in his notes on the work's status within fantastic literature (*Histoire de la littérature fantastique en France*, Paris: Fayard, 1985, p.302).

would have made sense to Jarry and his contemporaries, to compare different views of this text. Take, for example, the Collège de 'Pataphysique's comments:

Cette prose est un des modèles du genre. Tous les atours du symbolisme sont là rassemblés, avec des thèmes mystico-philosophico-sociaux et antisociaux, et de la Poésie à pleins bords. Il faut une certaine force pour déchiffrer. Et le style est admirable, au pire sens du mot.¹

I suggest that Rachilde's comments at the time of publication actually tell us far more about how we may approach *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* equitably:

Ce livre est lourd comme un évangile, très profond, très savant, trop savant et tellement fleuri de pierres précieuses, qu'il éblouit un peu à première vue comme une chasuble constellée.

La chasuble, comme tous les vêtements sacrés, n'est point au hasard constellée de gemmes, chaque hiéroglyphe a sa signification et chaque joyau doit illuminer tel coin d'ombre. Cette œuvre est patiente, belle et forte: elle vivra mais pas pour les profanes, et j'avoue, humblement, n'en pas toujours comprendre toute la portée [...] aussi est-ce par son mystère qu'elle me plaît le plus.²

The designation *conte* is satisfactory, particularly in view of the occasional theme of storytelling within *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*, but for practical purposes the work can be regarded as a novel. It is in three sections. The first is set in the legendary land of Saba (Sheba) shortly after the Passion of Christ;³ the second in the late Middle Ages, in an impressive city in or near the Rhineland; and the third combines both settings. Two main characters move between these environments: the Wandering Jew (Ahasverus) and the magus king Balthazar, by tradition the bearer of myrrh in the Bible. Their names change to Maître Asverus and Maître Ezra in the medieval episode.

At the start of the book the Holy Grail is brought by Joseph of Arimathea to Balthazar's Sheban castle surrounded by mirages; the Grail is a coarse wooden vessel, 'simple comme le vrai' (*Conte*, p.36). Within the world of reflection and recollection of the castle, the familiar legends

¹ CCP, 10 (15 Clinamen 80 E.P., i.e. 1954), p.18.

² *Mercur de France*, XXVII (July–September 1898), 228–29.

³ J.C. Ireson suggests that this portion at least may have been written prior to *Le Roi fou*, Kahn's first published novel, less aloof in character than *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* and thought to have been written in 1892–93 (*L'Œuvre poétique de Gustave Kahn*, Paris: Nizet, 1962, p.359).

and even biblical episodes with which the plot associates itself are subtly altered, a bold device which will be discussed in a later chapter. Flexibility of understanding and belief are to the fore, in line with the constant flexibility of character and narration; for instance there is deliberate uncertainty concerning the tales Balthazar relates, which may be events from his own experience or merely literature held in his own archives, created after the manner of the Caliph Haroun al-Raschid in the *Mille et Une Nuits*. Joseph of Arimathea leaves with the Grail on board the 'barque de Salomon', a direct borrowing from Arthurian literature used as a link between the sections of *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*. Balthazar obeys a voice and travels with Joseph, promising to return to die in his palace (*Conte*, p.154).

In the second section gold is the ruling force, as opposed to the culture of silence in Sheba – Kahn never deigns to quote the saying from which his title is drawn. Balthazar is now Ezra, the respected doctor and source of calm within the bustling city newly freed from 'l'interrègne du malin', i.e. the plague (*Conte*, p.160). He is first presented treating Samuel, who has relapsed into illness while reading a pot-pourri of Arthurian legend (*Le Livre de Lancelot*, text presented *Conte*, pp.166–74). Samuel often meets and communes with Ezra and Asverus, and is the modern figure most sympathetic to these perpetuated figures. He is contrasted with Laurent Télice, a mysterious but dashing alchemist whose enthusiasm for the cult of gold is epitomised by the allegorical clock he builds for the Cathedral, exalting the metal's heroic status. This finds the limits of the local sensibilities and is decried as blasphemous. The paranoid Emperor, however, is obsessed with gold and vainly tries to force Télice to make him some; later he imprisons Ezra for criticising his covetousness. Ezra and Télice disappear mysteriously from their cell, ultimately to be found at the former's home, with the Grail. Before disappearing on the Ship of Solomon, Ezra discourses on his long, fruitless search for a new guardian for the Grail (*Conte*, pp.325–26).

The third section relates Asverus's return to the city some years later, where in a silent spot he comes upon Samuel with his soul mate Rizpah. Samuel, tired in old age, is taken with Rizpah to Sheba (the term *périple* is used, as in *Faustroll*) where the magus is asked to take them in, 'puisqu'ils n'ont pu trouver leur terre en ce monde' (*Conte*, p.354). They rediscover a vision of youth, and fuse with legend images from Balthazar's archives in a conclusion almost worthy of Hermann Hesse. Ahasverus leaves for the world of men, and Balthazar, in the infinite silence he represents, asks to be allowed to die. Clarity comes for him with the end of the narrative:

Le Graal se ralluma, et le vieillard Joseph le tenait entre ses mains [...]

Oui, se dit Balthazar, ce sont elles, les ombres d'auparavant. Je ne vois ni Asverus, ni Samuel, ni Rizpah, eux de la vie étaient les vrais fantômes. Voici les personnages de mon âme qui renaissent, nous allons vivre.

Et les appelant d'un geste, à sa suite, il s'enfonça dans l'intérieur du Palais.

La Nuit s'étendait sur le monde et le pâle disque de la lune se démaillottait de ses nuées. Le Silence était éternel. (*Conte*, pp.372–73)

Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence is a rich and complicated text which demands close reading, and only the simplest outline of it can be given here. Various aspects of it that are of relevance to Jarry and to the period feature in later chapters, such as its adaptation of legend and the status of its adaptable characters. In addition its approach to form is quite bold, and it is clearly from the hand of a poet; as Suzanne Bernard puts it, 'Kahn fait alterner avec virtuosité prose, vers et prose rythmée',¹ an assessment which conveys the fluidity that Kahn achieves in the final mixture and gives a valid insight into Kahn's strategy of combining modes of writing. The innovatory aspects of this book's transitional status add to its claim for literary respect; though as the judgments by Rachilde and the Collège de 'Pataphysique cited earlier suggest, it does not make the easiest of reading.

These various facets of *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* are governed by an approach to writing that will be familiar to the Jarryist, one in which the reader is expected to work hard to appreciate the book – in other words to play a more active part in the literary experience than may normally be expected in a prose work of (in this case) almost four hundred pages. This is a work where many strands of the Symbolist aesthetic are drawn together, and as such it parallels Jarry's own work. Therefore its selection for the *livres pairs* is easily justified, and its presence gives a fairer impression of Kahn's talents than *Le Livre d'images* alone; the balance of the two shows Kahn as he was, an essentially minor author with occasional flashes of genuine creative genius.

The extrapolation from *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* is even less clear in its reference and purpose than that from *Le Livre d'images*:

De Kahn, un des timbres d'or des célestes orfèvreries.

There are points where the imagery of *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* approaches the terms of this image, notably in a dream where Samuel imagines precious metals and stones being brought up from 'la trappe' to make a crown for a man challenged to climb a mountain strongly resembling Dante's

¹ Suzanne Bernard, *Le Poème en prose de Baudelaire jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris: Nizet, 1959, p.411.

Mount Purgatory.¹ However, the reference is in fact to two poems by Kahn. One is the *dédicace* of *Le Livre d'images*, addressed to Catulle Mendès:

J'aime vos vers, Catulle Mendès,
 aussi ceux du bon Adenez
 le roi des ménétriers
 et ceux de tous qui, tel Corneille,
 abbatirent, plein des corbeilles
 les belles noix d'or bien triées [...]
 Pour qu'il y eût des vers frappés
 aux forges du soleil vous avez travaillé
 et fûtes le bon orfèvre [...] (*Le Livre d'images*, pp.3–4)

The other poem comes from Kahn's first collection, *Les Palais nomades*. The collection was certainly familiar to Jarry – his designation of Kahn among the figures listening to Rodin's Balzac in the first *Almanach du Père Ubu* is 'celui qui voyage en palais' (OCBP I, p.561).

Timbres oubliés, Timbres morts perdus,
 Pas d'une autre glissant à la rue,
 Chansons d'amour et vols de grues
 Dans d'improbables firmaments,

 Les futurs sont à vous, puisque le vent emporte
 Vers des cieux, et des lunes, et des flores
 Vos petits frissons que nul ne peut clore
 Votre âme a glissé sous les lourdes portes
 Vers d'imaginaires Lahores.

 Timbres oubliés des charmants jardins,
 Timbres argentins des Thulés lointains,
 Timbres violets des voix consolantes
 Epandant graves les bénédictions,
 Timbres bleus des péris aux féeries,
 Timbres d'or des mongoles orfèvres
 Et vieil or des vieilles nations! ...²

Kahn plays on as many meanings of *timbre* as possible, widening the field of Jarry's reference, within which a personal reference may also be discerned, again relating to Faustroll's visit to Sint Anna. Within the palace on the island apostrophising Kahn, Panmuphle notes that 'les heures

¹ The Cymbalum *Faustroll* (p.83) reminds us that there is also a *trappe* in *Ubu Roi* – however, Kahn's bears no resemblance to it.

² *Premiers Poèmes*, Paris: Mercure de France, 1897; or in *Les Palais nomades*, Paris: Tresse et Stock, 1887, pp.54–55.

étaient sonnées par des timbres de tous les métaux': a reference that has no relation to Kahn's writing other than to the above poem; it is possible that there may be a reference to a detail of Sint Anna, although it has not been possible to corroborate this. The choice of the *dédicace* to Mendès, however, is no less puzzling – unless Jarry is merely seeking to compound the compliment of *auteur pair* status, which he grants Mendès further on in the pataphysician's list.

13. Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*

Although Lautréamont is universally appreciated today, in 1898 his cult was still in a relatively early stage, and was closely linked to the *Mercure* and its leading lights – most particularly Remy de Gourmont, whose seminal article 'La Littérature Maldoror' was published by the *Mercure* in February 1891; he also included Lautréamont in the first *Livre des masques*, with a rakish artist's impression by Félix Vallotton.¹ Gourmont played upon the mystery of Lautréamont, who (paradoxically) was an even more obscure figure to his near-contemporaries than to the modern reader. The almost Gothic aspects of Lautréamont's obscurity appealed to Gourmont and his contemporaries perhaps almost as much as the text; indeed Vallotton's drawing has something of Lord Byron about it. Insofar as Jarry retained any desire to compliment his former friend Gourmont, it is expressed by the selection of this *livre pair*.

The destructive aspects of the *Chants*, in terms of their style and abandonment of literary convention as much as of the violence of the text, bring to mind the popularity of anarchist thought among the later Symbolists. Despite being a work of deconstruction,² the *Chants* also find more positive inspirational uses in Jarry, particularly in his earlier work. There is a stylistic debt to Lautréamont in *Haldernablou*, the emotive and obscure drama usually associated with Jarry's rupture with Léon-Paul Fargue. The text also recalls particular episodes from the *Chants* – for instance the murder of Lohengrin, Maldoror's relationships with Mario (third Canto, first strophe) and Mervyn (sixth Canto).³ In Jarry's *César-Antechrist*, the Templar's 'NE FAIS PAS DE PAREILS BONDS' to

¹ *Le Livre des masques*, pp.137–49.

² On the methods of the deconstruction, see Robin Lydenberg, 'Metaphor and Metamorphosis in the Chants de Maldoror', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 18(4) (Winter 1978), 3–14.

³ Beaumont, *Alfred Jarry*, pp.53–54.

the Bâton-à-physique (OCBP I, p.289) has long been recognised as a direct borrowing from God's address, in the third Canto, to a hair left in a brothel (see notes, OCBP I, p.1133).

The extrapolation selected from Lautréamont shows a precise textual knowledge of the *Chants*:

De Lautréamont, le scarabée, beau comme le tremblement des mains dans l'alcoolisme, qui disparaissait à l'horizon.

This is another instance in which hands are mentioned in the selected image, though they are not as central to it as in previous cases. The reference is an almost verbatim quotation from the second strophe of the fifth Canto. Maldoror has been observing a giant beetle rolling a ball of excrement, which in fact turns out to be a woman who has been made into a 'polyèdre amorphe' (cf. *Ubu Cocu*) after making two human brothers into the beetle and a man with a pelican's head, who also features in Maldoror's observations. The theme of misogyny may determine Jarry's choice, and the Breton tale of an unfaithful wife subtly killed by her sailor husband that Lautréamont inserts into the episode may, by its origin, add to the appeal of this bizarre section of a bizarre work, in the same way that we observed Jarry's reading of an Elskamp poem alluding to his native Brittany. And, of course, the allusion to alcoholism ties in with Jarry's own lifestyle, although in 1898 he had not yet descended to the depths that he would in his last years.

For the fourteenth *livre pair*, Jarry had another change of heart between manuscripts. His original choice was:

14. Maeterlinck, *Pelléas et Mélisande*

Maurice Maeterlinck (1862–1949), the Belgian poet and playwright, achieved the greatest and most widespread acclaim of any of the younger Symbolist authors. He was shy of literary circles, but Jarry would in all probability have met him through the Théâtre de l'Œuvre, where several of Maeterlinck's plays were produced and where Jarry worked during 1896, his only regular employment. Jarry placed Maeterlinck among the leading lights of Symbolist writing in *Albert Samain (souvenirs)* (OCBP III, p.533), though in the crowd around Rodin's Balzac it is Debussy who, for his music, appears as 'celui qui Pelle (et as et Mélisande)' (OCBP I, p.561). Yet there is a certain lack of specificity in Jarry's various references to

Maeterlinck (indexed in OCBP III, p.1080), which may raise doubt as to how well Jarry actually knew these plays.

First published in Brussels by Paul Lacomblez in 1892 (there are numerous subsequent editions without any one being standard, so references will be given here by Act and Scene), *Pelléas et Mélisande* is a 'drame lyrique' in five acts, and a play of great importance to the Symbolist movement; its performance in Paris in March 1893 (when Jarry was gravely ill; he is unlikely to have seen it¹) and its subsequent foreign tour paved the way for the creation of the experimental and highly influential Théâtre de l'Œuvre, vehicle for many innovatory productions – not least that of *Ubu Roi* in December 1896.² Jarry owes the play a personal debt in this respect, simply in that it marked a step towards the opportunity that gave him his greatest fame.

The play is a tragedy based on a love triangle. Prince Golaud marries Mélisande, a vulnerable young woman he finds weeping in a wood. She then falls in love with his brother Pelléas, and ultimately Golaud kills Pelléas, wounds Mélisande and fails to kill himself. Mélisande finally dies after giving birth to a sickly child; Golaud's remorse cannot save her. With its non-historical characters, semi-abstract setting and neglect of the classic *bienséances*, the play falls into the Shakespearean rather than the Racinian or Cornelian tradition (indeed Maeterlinck was acclaimed as the Belgian Shakespeare by Octave Mirbeau as early as 1890; *Pelléas* is dedicated to Mirbeau); the atmosphere of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is pervasive throughout Maeterlinck, and in *Pelléas et Mélisande* the opening scene featuring the castle porter has strong echoes of *Macbeth*.

Maeterlinck's play fits into the general pattern of the *livres pairs* by virtue of its individuality; it is far from unusual when taken in the context of long-term theatrical history, but its reactionary use of a traditional form linked to its place within experimental avant-garde theatre, along with its great success, makes it a notable text in Jarry's literary environment, and a demonstration of the fact that in these particular surroundings, almost any type of literature could be valued within the broad church of the avant-garde. In terms of more specific links with Jarry, hindsight allows us to see that, although the experimental stagecraft of *Pelléas* appears diametrically

¹ Even if Jarry did not attend, by 1898 he had good friends who had reviewed the play (Vallette, Henri de Régnier). During his employment by the Théâtre de l'Œuvre in 1896 he had worked with members of the original cast, Lugné-Poe (Golaud) and Louise France (La Servante in *Pelléas*, Mère Ubu in *Ubu Roi*). See Jacques Robichez, *Le Symbolisme au théâtre: Lugné-Poe et les débuts de l'Œuvre*, Paris: L'Arche, 1957, p.502.

² Robichez, *Le Symbolisme*, p.172.

opposed to that of *Ubu Roi* (where the audience is exposed to uproar rather than the use of silence), it does share one of the central aims of Jarry's play, namely to introduce the audience to an unexpected type of drama. Audience reactions, of course, need not be the same for the comparison to remain valid.

Faustroll's extrapolation from *Pelléas et Mélisande* is easily located, and not as resonant as many of the others:

De Maeterlinck, les lumières qu'entendit la première sœur aveugle.

The source is a song sung by Mélisande in Act III, Scene 2.¹ Three blind sisters are climbing a tower, carrying golden lamps:

Ah! dit la première.
(Espérons encore),
Ah! dit la première,
J'entends nos lumières.

Ah! dit la seconde,
(Elles, vous et nous).
Ah! dit la seconde,
C'est le roi qui monte.

Non, dit la plus sainte,
(Espérons encore).
Non, dit la plus sainte,
Elles se sont éteintes...

This song also appears as the fifth of the *Douze Chansons* (later expanded to *Quinze Chansons*) usually found at the end of Maeterlinck's *Serres Chaudes*. The author regarded these songs as nothing more than 'une manière de jouer avec des mots harmonieux', though his mistress Georgette Leblanc claimed that she later tried to illustrate non-existent symbols in the songs to audiences – 'la vérité aurait fait trop de peine aux vieilles demoiselles anglaises'.² Jarry's allusion is curiously hollow; there is little if anything to distinguish what is heard by the first sister. There is no need for concern about the apparent paradox of the blind carrying lamps; within Symbolism there is no reason to expect images and associations to be rational or literal, indeed quite the opposite. But there is less association between this extrapolation and the text from which it comes than

¹ Its inclusion was an amendment a year after the play's first publication, replacing a song written specifically for *Pelléas et Mélisande*; see Marcel Postic, *Maeterlinck et le Symbolisme*, Paris: Nizet, 1976, p.214.

² Georgette Leblanc, *Souvenirs (1885–1918)*, Paris: Grasset, 1931, p.10.

we have seen in most previous *livres pairs* (though we may note in passing that the setting of Act II is the 'fontaine des aveugles'), making it hard to offer definite judgments on Jarry's precise attitude to the text of the play, or indeed *Pelléas* in performance, since he does not, as it transpires, allude to any significant part of it. Having noted a possible non-textual, personal allusion in the extrapolation from *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*, it is of course possible that we are dealing with another, more elusive one here.

In the Fasquelle manuscript, Jarry again opted for a more recent work by a chosen author, though in this case the revised choice was in print well before the composition of the Lormel manuscript:

14. Maeterlinck, *Aglavaine et Sélysette*

This is another five-act tragedy, the first edition being *Mercur de France*, 1896;¹ as with *Pelléas et Mélisande*, references here will be by Act and Scene in the absence of any particularly authoritative edition.

Aglavaine et Sélysette was written to provide a leading role (Aglavaine) for Georgette Leblanc. Maeterlinck was dissatisfied with the play,² and as a result it was not performed until 1906 – so in this case we can be completely certain that Jarry had not seen it on the stage when he chose it for Faustroll's library. It did not approach the popularity of *Pelléas*, but it is notable as an illustration of how Maeterlinck's gift for sensitivity, which Jarry called his 'vision de poète qui perce les infinis',³ can reach even greater heights than in *Pelléas*, and thus emphasise still further the individuality of his work. The play involves another love triangle (Sélysette is married to Méléandre, who in turn also comes to love the newcomer Aglavaine) with a tragic *dénouement*, the death of Sélysette from injuries received in a fall. The violence is tempered by the sensitive leave-taking of Act V, Scene 2, where Sélysette is on her death-bed, and in general the play shows development from *Pelléas* in the use of non-physical action. The three protagonists, instead of forming a triangle of revenge and deceit, display mutual love and reconciliation, but come to realise that this arrangement is no less dangerous than any other kind. Aglavaine conjugates the problem thus in Act III, Scene 3:

¹ A letter of 29 July 1896 from Jarry to Lugué-Poe records Vallette's receipt of the play, presumably for its publication (OCBP I, p.1049).

² Letter, reproduced in Leblanc, *Souvenirs*, p.91.

³ In a review of one of Maeterlinck's essays on insects, *La Vie des abeilles*, OCBP II, p.619.

Mais n'est-ce pas étrange, Sélysette? je t'aime, j'aime Méléandre, Méléandre m'aime, il t'aime aussi, tu nous aimes l'un et l'autre, et cependant nous ne pourrions pas vivre heureux parce que l'heure n'est pas encore venue où des êtres humains puissent s'unir ainsi...

This paradox makes the tragedy all the more poignant, and marks *Aglavaine et Sélysette* as a modification and hence a renewal of the tragic genre. The device was not peculiar to Maeterlinck; Jethro Bithell points out that the German Naturalist dramatist Gerhart Hauptmann uses very similar characters and situations in his cerebral tragedy *Einsame Menschen*, another play that Jarry admired (as *Ames solitaires*) and reviewed in glowing terms for *L'Art littéraire* in 1894 (OCBP I, pp.1003–1006).¹ *Aglavaine* bears comparison with the work of such authors as Hauptmann and Chekhov as an attempt to revive the theatre as an art, rather than as simple entertainment, by the revival of tragedy. The selection of Maeterlinck as an *auteur pair* suggests an awareness of the importance of the statement Maeterlinck makes through his art, which allows us to see Jarry as a figure with a broader sense of theatrical history than may be suggested by his frontal assault on theatrical sensibilities with *Ubu Roi* in 1896. It nonetheless remains curious that he chooses plays that he either might not or could not have seen in performance, and that his references to them appear so vague when compared with those to most other *livres pairs*.

As in the case of *Pelléas*, the extrapolation from *Aglavaine* is not directly helpful in assessing Jarry's personal attitude to the play – indeed even less so as it is unchanged from the Lormel manuscript, and thus does not refer textually to *Aglavaine et Sélysette* at all. However, if the omission is not deliberate it may perhaps be fortuitous, as the interchangeability of senses that features in the song is reflected in aspects of the sensitivity of this later play. Except through imagination, we cannot hear the lights in the song, as the blind sisters can; no more can our eyes actually speak as *Aglavaine* believes *Sélysette's* do in Act III, Scene 3:

Et quand je plonge ainsi avec toutes mes craintes, que je n'ose pas dire, dans l'eau pure de tes yeux, il semble que c'est eux qui m'interrogent et me disent en tremblant: 'Qu'y lis-tu?'

Nor can our words become anything but a figurative part of the dawn, as *Aglavaine* imagines at the opening of Act IV:

¹ Jethro Bithell, *Life and Writings of Maurice Maeterlinck*, London: Walter Scott, n.d., pp.97–98. Bithell also points out (p.72) links between Maeterlinck and Grillparzer, the Austrian dramatist in whom Jarry took some interest (see above under Grabbe). The setting of *Aglavaine* is highly reminiscent of that of Grillparzer's *Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen*.

Ne te semble-t-il pas que l'on soit seule au monde dans la fraîcheur et dans le silence transparent de l'aurore et que tout ce qu'on dit participe de l'aurore?

Maeterlinck's semi-abstract theatre attempts to bring these gestures of the imagination to the stage, transmitted by *dramatis personae* who can communicate with each other without the intermediary of a speech to the audience (there is no conception of *gloire* to be maintained by so doing), for instance in the kiss as discussed on stage at the end of Act II, Scene 2. This is, in its way, as ambitious a modification of the actor/audience relationship as anything *Ubu Roi* can offer, and like much Symbolist writing, it represents a challenge to the consumer to value imagination over literal fact.

Yet another revision occurred in the case of the fifteenth *livre pair*, but for rather different reasons from the previous instances. The initial choice was:

15. Mallarmé, *Divagations*

We have already noted the status of Mallarmé among the later Symbolists, many of whom saw him as the father figure of the movement as it existed in the 1890s. Jarry and Fargue penetrated the *mardis* held by the poet in the rue de Rome some time in 1894, perhaps aided by the fact that Mallarmé had been Fargue's English teacher at the Collège Rollin.¹ Noël Arnaud suggests that Jarry was not a particularly assiduous *mardiste*, but this seems hard to reconcile with the spirit of Albert Haas's account of an occasion when he and Jarry remained listening to the great man long after the other guests had left.² The best known of the complex metaphorical portraits of Livre III of *Faustroll* is a representation of Mallarmé: 'De l'Île de Ptyx' (OCBP I, pp.685–86). Five letters from Mallarmé to Jarry are known and published, the last of which is relevant to the *Gestes et Opinions*; the letters from Jarry to which they are responses do not seem to have survived.

The prose collection *Divagations* was the last publication supervised by Mallarmé, published by Charpentier in 1897. References in these pages are to the 1976 Poésie/Gallimard volume containing *Igitur*, *Divagations* and *Un Coup de dés*.³

¹ Henri Mondor, *Vie de Mallarmé*, 14th edn, Paris: Gallimard, 1941, p.562.

² Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, p.240.

³ The critical material in Mallarmé's *Œuvres Complètes*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 65, Paris: Gallimard, 1951, is of great value for individual pieces in particular, but sensibly makes no attempt to present Mallarmé's work in the overlapping collections in which he published it.

Divagations is basically a reflective portrait of the ‘exquise crise, fondamentale’ (*Igitur*, p.239) perceived by Mallarmé in the Arts; this *crise* is of course the environment of Jarry and his contemporaries. Most of the pieces included are very familiar to the modern reader and have been very thoroughly analysed, so here we only need to note one important point of relevance in Jarry’s choice, and it relates to his status as a *mardiste*: the style and delivery of many of the *Divagations* have been described as close to those used by Mallarmé in conversation,¹ so the choice of this volume may reflect a desire to take a personal as well as a literary memento of the poet on Faustroll’s voyage. However, this is another case where Jarry’s extrapolation is less than helpful for our investigation of his relationship with the text of a *livre pair*:

De Mallarmé, le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd’hui.

It is difficult to be sure if the extrapolations from this central section of the list of *livres pairs* (from Kahn to Mendès) are intended to be particularly abstruse, or whether their selection is just an uncharacteristically slack process on Jarry’s part. The above choice is the first line of Mallarmé’s famous swan sonnet, on which many excellent commentaries exist (noting in particular those by Malcolm Bowie² and Jean-Pierre Richard³); but the poem does not appear in *Divagations*. A tentative explanation of its presence would be that the description given by the opening line of the sonnet could be intended as a description of Mallarmé himself, but the inaccuracy of the reference remains curious.

In the Fasquelle manuscript, Jarry abandoned *Divagations*, but not in favour of a more recent publication:

15. Mallarmé, *Vers et prose*

This is the only case where Jarry changed his mind in favour of an earlier work by an *auteur pair*, and there is every reason to believe that his motivation for doing so was Mallarmé’s unexpected death at Valvins (his country residence) on 9 September 1898; this date is one of the clues to the date of the Fasquelle manuscript’s composition, and is also indicated

¹ Wallace Fowlie, *Mallarmé*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1953, p.16.

² Malcolm Bowie, *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp.10–13.

³ Jean-Pierre Richard, *L’Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé*, Paris: Seuil, 1961, pp.251–52.

by a brief manuscript alteration to 'De l'Île de Ptyx' in the printed sheets from the *Mercure* included in the Fasquelle manuscript (OCBP I, p.686, and notes, p.1228). Jarry, who borrowed a pair of yellow shoes from Rachilde specially for the funeral, received one of the last letters Mallarmé wrote, dated 16 May 1898 and showing the poet as a reader of *Faustroll* – or part of it, at least.¹ Mallarmé's letter expresses his admiration for the chapters of *Faustroll* published in the *Mercure* for May 1898, including 'De l'Île de Ptyx' – his comments, which flatter Jarry's sensibilities by comparing the younger author to Rabelais, were later reworked by Jarry into the additions that transform the chapter into his 'Nécrologie' for Mallarmé included in the first *Almanach du Père Ubu*:

Mon cher Jarry,

La suite d'estampes est surprenante, du Rabelais, dira-t-on, mais ce que ce divin eût écrit originellement tout à l'heure: je ne me suis jamais, moi, sur un décor de plus significative beauté, levé du fauteuil basculant que, cette fois, pour vous presser la main.

S.M.

And in the *Almanach*:

Mallarmé se réjouit de lire le périple et se leva une dernière fois, la main vers le docteur, du fauteuil à bascule dans le décor de suggestive beauté. (OCBP I, p.565)

The impossibility of any further new works from Mallarmé (though of course *Igitur* and *Un Coup de dés* remained to be published) surely governs the selection of a representative section of his entire work rather than simply of his prose. *Vers et prose* (Perrin, 1892, corrected edition 1893; references here are to the 1977 Garnier-Flammarion edition, for similar reasons to the choice of edition of *Divagations*) is Mallarmé's 'Florilège ou très modeste anthologie de ses écrits' (*Vers et prose*, p.44), divided into the two sections that its title indicates. The division of the anthology will prove to be of some relevance later in this study, particularly regarding the presence of translations of poems by Edgar Allan Poe in the prose section. *Vers et prose* includes much of Mallarmé's best known and least difficult work, and shares a number of pieces with other collections, including *Divagations*.

Jarry's extrapolation from Mallarmé is unchanged from the Lormel manuscript, but this is perfectly in order as the swan sonnet appears in *Vers*

¹ Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, 11 vols, Paris: Gallimard, 1959–1985, X (1984), pp.190–91.

et prose (p.61), along with the almost equally well known ‘sonnet en –yx’ (‘Ses purs ongles très haut dédiant leur onyx’, p.63), source of the word ‘ptyx’, the substance from which Jarry constructs Mallarmé’s island. However, the repetition from the earlier version does compound the interpretative problem raised by its earlier appearance, as we cannot state categorically that Jarry intends to draw fresh attention to this poem. The sonnet is written in a long tradition; Mallarmé’s version of a swan poem owes a particular debt of lineage to Gautier and Baudelaire, and further back lies the Pythagorean notion of the soul of the good poet passing into a swan,¹ particularly appropriate in a reference made so soon after Mallarmé’s death even if the allusion may not be intentional.

16. Mendès, Gog

Catulle Mendès (1841–1909) is perhaps the least understood late-nineteenth-century French author of substance, a copious writer in many genres and one on whom very little critical research has been done. He is generally remembered as one of the founders of the Parnassian grouping, but his writing is almost entirely neglected; it comprises many dozens of volumes containing not only verse, but also theatre, libretti, fairy tales, short stories and novels. While not a great or even a consistently good writer (for instance his work is often handicapped by lapses into rather lame erotica), he is certainly an interesting one, individual points of interest being accentuated by the sense of discovery that goes with any reading of Mendès today. As a critic he was an important arbiter of taste, and in no small way responsible for bringing the avant-garde into vogue in the *Belle Epoque*. He sat on the panels of judges at the *Echo de Paris*, which awarded prizes to Jarry for his earliest publications and later championed *Ubu Roi* in the press. Although Mendès did not frequent the rather Bohemian circles in which Jarry moved, through such contacts as Rachilde and Mallarmé he could certainly be regarded as a friend of a friend.

Posterity has not been at all kind to Mendès’s work, and he is often categorised as nothing but a literary hack; this view would have seemed strange to many contemporaries who saw him as the heir to Victor Hugo’s exalted status in French literature.² As an illustration of the respect he

¹ See Rosemary Lloyd, *Mallarmé: Poésies*, London: Grant & Cutler, 1984, p.75.

² The often repeated comparison originated with Barbey d’Aurevilly’s comments on *La Vie et la mort d’un clown*; see his *Le Roman contemporain*, Paris: Lemerre, 1902, p.260.

commanded, we may note that shortly after the turn of the century he was commissioned to write an official report on the state of French poetry, following in the footsteps of his erstwhile father-in-law, Théophile Gautier. While his fame scarcely survived his death in a railway accident, everything about Mendès, from his physical presence to his vast literary output, suggests a writer of stature; it was almost superfluous for Jarry to note that 'il devient bien universel, M. Mendès' (OCBP I, p.554).

Gog is a long, flamboyant novel of altogether unexpected character. Its only edition (which ran to several thousand copies) was published, in two volumes, by Charpentier in 1896. Writing in Mendès's lifetime, Adrien Bertrand suggested that the novel combined Rabelaisian verve with the content of Zola's *Germinal*.¹ *Gog* forms the second of a pair of Mendès novels with *Zo'har* (1886), both having the course of their action determined by a mythical figure. In *Zo'har*, Mendès's most popular novel, it is a theatrical representation of an omnipotent 'prince de Baal roi d'Iavhé' that greatly moves Léopold, the hero of the novel, and implicitly guides his future actions.² In *Gog* the controlling influence is the figure of the giant Gog of Ezekiel 38 and 39, brought from Babel by the magus Métatron; in the opening section of the novel the latter reveals to one Robert de la Harche that he will become king (in a tone that gives another echo of *Macbeth*, the play that *Ubu Roi* savages so thoroughly), and that God did not win the primeval battle with Lucifer. The result is that the two have been inverted ever since: Jehovah in Hell, 'Iblis qu'on nomme Lucifer' in Heaven.³ Thus the Devil created the world (*Gog* I, p.11) and Christ was Lucifer incarnate. However, Métatron concedes that Satan may have become confused about his identity; so Gog has been imprisoned by Satan rather than God, and being a servant of Satan according to Revelations 20, he may now be interpreted as a servant of God. Presaging Gog's imminent release, the magus shows Robert de la Harche the royal lineage that will descend from him down the centuries, in a parade not unlike that of Bougrellas's ancestors in *Ubu Roi* (OCBP I, pp.365–66). Robert recognises himself in Gog – who never actually appears in the main body of the novel, remaining an implicit influence:

¹ Adrien Bertrand, *Catulle Mendès*, 2nd edn, Paris: Sansot, 1908, p.34. It must be admitted that this is a strange reading of either *Gog* or *Germinal*.

² Catulle Mendès, *Zo'har, roman contemporain*, Paris: Charpentier, 1886, pp.110–20.

³ Reviewing *Gog*, Rachilde found this device an 'idée géniale', and heaped further praise upon Mendès by suggesting that only Villiers de l'Isle-Adam could have made such sustained use of it (*Mercure de France*, XVIII [April–June 1896], 283–85).

[...] et ce gigantesque héros, très pur, semblait ériger le précis et suprême accomplissement, en l'Espoir, de tous les futurs de la chaotique apparition. (Gog I, p.24)

The remainder of the novel concerns the end of the royal line in modern times; *Gog* is one of Mendès's several *romans contemporains*. And if the neat, logical conundrums above were not enough, *Gog* shows individuality and originality in its setting of 'la Nation, nombril du monde' (*Gog* I, p.21). This country is an alternative France, recognisable but with altered geography and two capitals, quite close to each other. One, 'La Grande Ville', is the commercial and social centre, and 'La Ville Ancienne' (roughly a combination of Versailles and the Ile de la Cité) is the former ecclesiastical and royal capital, in neglect now that the country has become a republic.¹ The last king, Robert V, is in voluntary exile in an alternative Germany, in a country house named Wehesfeld ('Plaine de la Douleur, plaine de la Plainte, plaine de l'Hélas!', *Gog* I, p.201), and the novel's chaotic plot centres on attempts to effect a restoration of 'Trône et Eglise' to replace the lethargic, apathetic republic.

It is through this plot that *Gog*, on the surface a humorous mass-market novel, shows its political teeth. An anti-royalist stance is set out in Mendès's preface (*Gog* I, pp.1–2), and the celestial inversion is used to discredit the Church and Crown movement by simple logic:² the giant *Gog* is in fact a servant of God, therefore so is the royal family which is distantly and unconsciously inspired by his image; whereas the Church worships the occupier of Heaven, who unbeknown to them is Satan. Thus Church and Crown are the definitive unholy alliance. The impression is reinforced by the motley crew who promote the royalist cause. The most prominent churchmen are Monseigneur Tordoya, an incarnation of muscular Christianity at its most muscular and least Christian, his incompetent sidekick Abbé Clipot, head of a disastrous orphanage, and a sincere but naïve monk named Père Primice, who becomes far too tangled up in the plot for his emotional capabilities. Animating the campaign are Cassamèje, editor of the royalist newspaper *Le Lazarille*, and a retired high-class whore named Caroline Majade, but universally known as 'La Savate' ('puisque'elle est plate comme une semelle, et qu'on y entre comme on veut', *Gog* I,

¹ The alternative setting has invited interpretation of *Gog* as a *roman à clef*; this is the approach of Marie-Louise Aulard's 'Mendès c'est la France', CCP, 22–23 (May 1957), 35–37.

² The fact that by 1896 the power of the Church and Crown movement was a past issue, and that the Vatican was actively dissociating itself from it, causes one to wonder if *Gog* was not in fact written some considerable time before its publication.

p.38) who finances much of the campaign and marries a dissolute member of the royal house of Haubour.

Clipot provides the vital spark to set the campaign rolling: a miracle, bogus if need be, to act as a celestial sign and to raise money. The examples of Lourdes and La Salette are cited, and the 'miracle' used closely resembles the latter. It is sad that Bloy, who pilloried Mendès (under the name of Properce Beauvivièr) in *Le Désespéré*, leaves no record of having read *Gog*; it would surely have provoked a fine vitriolic response. Ultimately the strange fits and voices of young Noèle Gambardès, instrument of the 'miracle', prove to have been a blackout in reaction to being molested by the Marquis d'Hauteluys, Père Primice's uncle: 'la face du monde sera changée parce que j'ai levé une jupe!' (*Gog* II, p.174).

Primice eventually accompanies Noèle to see the king, and in the course of the journey she develops a love for the monk that is far from chaste, and troubles him severely. After becoming the unwilling subject of a large-scale 'universel pèlerinage vers l'exil du Roi', Robert V returns to La Ville Ancienne, and deliberates on whether or not to rule. Deciding that he supports *liberté, égalité et fraternité* (but not himself making the connection between the three) he returns quietly to Wehesfeld, and there falls ill. A number of 'pèlerins vers l'auguste agonie' arrive to disturb his peace, not least La Savate, who insists on being allowed in 'puisque j'ai payé!' Making moving speeches, the ex-king dies slowly, fulfilling Robert de la Harche's vision of the end of the direct line of his house of Haubour.

At the end of the novel some characters (Tordoya, Clipot) are in prison, and others gravitate to the 'Quartier de la Misère' of La Grande Ville, where La Savate now runs a disreputable hotel. Finally two occasional characters arrive: Ratier, one of Clipot's orphans and so named for his habit of squashing and eating rats with his gruesome double jaw; and Serge Léiloff, a terrorist whose ethics parallel the theology of *Gog* – and who, in his own words, 'accomplit ce que vous appelez le Mal pour ce qui est vraiment le Bien' (*Gog* II, p.39). He blows up the three buildings that mark the edges of the quarter, 'Caserne, Eglise et Tribunal', and the novel ends with him observing the three palls of smoke and muttering 'Commencement' (*Gog* II, p.346). It is surely no coincidence that Mendès, ever keen to assume the mantle of Victor Hugo, should end his novel with the same utterance as Hugo's 'Ce que dit la bouche d'ombre':

Les douleurs finiront dans toute l'ombre; un ange
Cria: Commencement!¹

¹ Victor Hugo, *Œuvres poétiques*, 3 vols, Paris: Gallimard, 1964–74, II, p.822.

The perspective on royalty shown in *Gog* could well appeal to Jarry, who lampooned kingship in the figure of Ubu. Moreover, the perspective on royalty in Jarry is expanded in *César-Antechrist*, and the celestial aspects of Ubu's reign that it adds are not all that distant from the workings of *Gog*; thus we have a rare example of another contemporary author echoing themes from Jarry, even if the echo is coincidental. The desire to pay a compliment to Mendès for his support for *Ubu Roi* (see letter from Jarry to Mendès, OCBP I, p.1060) and for his general patronage of the avant-garde would be strong motives for Jarry to give him *auteur pair* status. The selection of a figure such as Mendès also indicates a conciliatory attitude towards the literary establishment, suggesting that Jarry, in 1898, may have had ambitions outside the world of the *Mercure* circle. Having decided to honour Mendès, his novels form the corpus from which Jarry would be most likely to make his choice; Mendès's poetry, so closely associated with the faded Parnassian vogue, might be inappropriate, and Mendès's theatre is precisely the kind of bland, moralising work against which Jarry's dramas are a reaction. The existence of such a curious piece as *Gog* within Mendès's often staid *œuvre* makes it an obvious candidate for a pataphysical library.

However, no such conclusions can be drawn about Faustroll's extrapolation for the journey in the *as*:

De Mendès, le vent du nord qui, soufflant sur la verte mer, mêlait à son sel la sueur du forçat qui rama jusqu'à cent vingt ans.

This selection is the only one that has to date resisted identification by Jarry scholars, and certainly does not come from *Gog*. The only tentative published suggestion, made by Arnaud and Bordillon, is incorrect.¹

The problem of identification is twofold. Firstly, as with Kahn, Mendès's imagery flows freely between books; and secondly, the sheer number of his publications makes the search a daunting one, which I have pursued nonetheless. The closest match I have located is almost but not quite close enough to suit, namely the descriptions of the palace overlooking Hardangerfjord in Norway where the last seventy pages of *Zo'har* are set;² also vaguely similar are the Norse setting of the *poème dramatique* entitled *Le Soleil de minuit*, and the description of the bleakness of the

¹ Notes to the Poésie/Gallimard *Faustroll*, p.187. Their first reference (*Gog* I, p.195) is to the only sea voyage in *Gog*, that of Père Primice from the island home of his ascetic order, their second (*Gog* II, p.40) to one of Léiloff's diatribes against an unjust society.

² Introductory description in *Zo'har*, pp.243–47.

garrison of Alderney in the short story *L'Homme orchestre*.¹ *Forçats* only appear in *Gog* in a peripheral tale about a plump Haubour ancestor (who vaguely recalls Ubu in his more munificent moods) who preferred his galley slaves to his other subjects (*Gog* I, p.145). However, the terms of Jarry's extrapolation do not appear.² The word order of 'verte mer' suggests a poem (and *Gog* is anything but a lyrical text, being aimed at a less cultivated public than many other *livres pairs*), and specifically recalls Mendès's habit of placing colour adjectives before nouns in his poetry; it is particularly suggestive of the tenth poem of the *Sérénades* cycle, in which he alludes to 'la noire mer';³ however, a search through Mendès's collected verse has failed to locate the extrapolation. The only aspect for which any new interpretation can be offered here is the wind that Jarry mentions, which recalls the first two stanzas of Mendès's poem 'Octobre', from the *Soirs moroses*:

Les morts couchés d'hier dans leurs funèbres crèches,
 Nouveau-nés de l'éternité,
 Sous le frémissement berceur des feuilles sèches
 Rêvent d'un songe regretté.

D'où vient le vent? Du nord; mais les brises plus fraîches
 Se souviennent d'avoir été,
 Sur la grappe mûrie et la rondeur des pêches,
 Le baiser brûlant de l'été.⁴

In this perspective the wind evokes notions of mortality, and there is also a hint of life beyond death in the first stanza with its 'Nouveau-nés de l'éternité'; not only does this recall the images chosen from *The Ancient Mariner*, but it also relates to the end of *Faustroll*, in which the pataphysician's intellect survives in another dimension. A complete explanation of Jarry's choice from Mendès remains elusive, however.

¹ Catulle Mendès, *L'Homme orchestre*, Paris: Ollendorff, 1896, pp.7–14.

² *Forçats* would however feature in Jarry's work soon after *Faustroll*, in *Ubu Enchaîné*, and also in the 1899 *Almanach*: 'M. Pierre Quillard est l'un de nos plus grands poètes [...] Il rama pendant trois jours comme forçat avec nous-même sur l'Yonne et la Seine pour suivre les poissons frayants' (OCBP I, p.540).

³ Catulle Mendès, *Poésies*, 3 vols, Paris: Charpentier, 1892, I, p.136.

⁴ *Poésies*, I, p.216.

17. *L'Odyssee*, édition Teubner

In contrast to the several *livres pairs* with the printer's ink scarcely dry, the seventeenth selection is one of the very oldest texts known. The choice reflects Jarry's education; he had real ability in the classical languages,¹ and his knowledge of Greek has already come to the fore in our examination of Baudelaire and St Luke, cases in which we have seen an almost pedantic insistence on use of the language. The version of the *Odyssey* seized by Panmuphle is entitled *Homeri Odyssea*² – a standard nineteenth-century edition in Greek with a Latin gloss, part of the monumental *Bibliotheca Teubneriana*; references here, for the sake of universal comprehensibility, are to the Penguin Classics edition of the *Odyssey*, translated by E.V. Rieu. Jarry's omission of the name of Homer reflects the conviction of many nineteenth-century scholars that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were composed by several hands.

The *Odyssey* is a fertile source for the composition of *Faustroll*, not least as the origin of the voyage structure. Book XI, *The Book of the Dead*, is of particular relevance. Jarry's transformation of the boulevard St-Germain into 'le fleuve Océan' for Faustroll's visit to Rachilde (OCBP I, p.693) refers to the setting of Book XI in the 'deep-flowing River of Ocean and the frontiers of the world, where the fog-bound Cimmerians live in the City of Perpetual Mist' (*Odyssey*, p.171). As Faustroll's boat voyages by dry land, it is only logical that a road should become a river, just as the islands visited are liquid. In the visits to these islands, encountering stylised versions of artists and their work, Jarry creates his own *Book of the Dead* – a peculiarity of Faustroll's universe being that those visited do not have to be dead: 'la Mort n'est que pour les médiocres' (OCBP I, p.724).

Faustroll's extrapolation makes a further reference to *The Book of the Dead*:

De *L'Odyssee*, la marche joyeuse de l'irréprochable fils de Pélée, par la prairie d'asphodèles.

Jarry refers to Odysseus's meeting with the shade of Achilles (son of Peleus), now a great prince among the dead. Odysseus cheers him with news of his son Neoptemus, and Achilles leaves 'with great strides down the meadow of asphodel, rejoicing in the news I had given him of his son's renown' (*Odyssey*, p.185). The image is in surprising contrast to the pain that

¹ See Beaumont, *Alfred Jarry*, p.29.

² Published in Leipzig by B.G. Teubner – see full Latin details in the Bibliography.

characterises this section of the *Odyssey*, and is thematically in harmony with *Faustroll*, as it demonstrates the ease of communication between the quick and the dead, as do Dr Faustroll's telepathic letters sent to Lord Kelvin after the pataphysician has passed into the 'inconnue dimension'.

There are also two curious cross-references to the texts of other *livres pairs*. The *Cymbalum Pataphysicum* note the presence of the asphodel in Rabelais, at the conclusion of Chapter XIII of *Gargantua* when the young giant has been describing his use of a goose as a *torchecul*.¹ Quite different is the reference in the *Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires par Edgar Poe* to a great rock able to resist anything but the touch of 'la fleur nommée asphodèle' (Baudelaire OC VII, p.83, in *Bérénice*); in conjunction with this image, the idea of a whole meadow of asphodel becomes somewhat disquieting.

18. Péladan, *Babylone*

Joséphin Péladan (1858–1918) was the most extravagant figure in Jarry's literary environment. Author of the vast *Ethopée* of novels entitled *La Décadence latine* and unique in his use of a pseudo-mystic guiding astrology based on the seven known planets as seven Babylonian gods, most of Péladan's writings, supposedly based on promoting and reconstituting 'la magie kaldéenne', are in fact attempts to promote his own ideal of a society of educated, pious aesthetes. At the end of the 1890s he was at the end of his most flamboyant period; indeed in 1897 he had declared the 'reentrée en sommeil' of the 'Ordre de la Rose ✠ Croix Catholique' for which he was almost solely responsible.² Commonly known as 'le Sâr', as he had decided he was descended from the rulers of ancient Babylon, Péladan cannot be regarded as an unsuccessful author, and still retains a limited vogue. His wider promotion of the Arts was also significant, with the creation of the *Salons de la Rose ✠ Croix*³ – and it was for one of these events, akin to a modern arts festival, that *Babylone* was staged. Records of personal contacts between Jarry and Péladan are lacking, but the Sâr was hardly a figure who could be ignored on the Parisian scene. At the time of *Faustroll*'s composition, Péladan was travelling in the Middle East.

¹ *Cymbalum Faustroll*, p.86.

² Christophe Beaufile, *Le Sâr Péladan (1858–1918): biographie critique*, Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1986, p.110.

³ On the *Salons* see both Beaufile, *Le Sâr Péladan*, and Robert Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France: Joséphin Péladan and the Salons de la Rose-Croix*, New York and London: Garland, 1976.

Babylone (Chamuel, 1895) is a four-act tragedy in verse, introduced as a 'Tragédie Wagnérienne'; Péladan idolised Wagner, for *Parsifal* in particular. In 1894 he published a translation of Wagner's operas, in which he dated the inspiration of *Babylone* to his visit to Bayreuth in 1888.¹ *Babylone* more immediately recalls Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*, published in Paris in February 1893, just a month before *Babylone*'s first performance. If suspicions of mild plagiarism have any foundation, it is hard to say in which direction the deed would have been done; certainly Péladan was writing his play, under the working title *Le Sâr Mérodack*, during 1892. Both plays depict the presaging of Christ, and they share an inbuilt potential for wooden and/or over-melodramatic performance when staged. This is not to say that *Babylone* is without genuinely powerful and moving moments, but as in all Péladan's writing there is ground to cover between their appearances. *Babylone* presages the coming and crucifixion of the Messiah, and does so, most unusually, through the medium of the fall of Babylon. Aesthetically, *Babylone* is intended to reconquer the theatre in the name of 'la Pensée et la Beauté', as a reaction against vulgarity (*Babylone*, p.81), and represents a more flamboyant statement of certain ideals also found in the theatre of Maeterlinck.

The protagonist of *Babylone* is Sâr Mérodack Baladan, the Chaldean priest-king from whom Péladan chose to be descended, the other major characters being the magus Nakhounta and his daughter Samsina. She reveals the 'Oracle d'Ilou' in Act I, presaging the end of Babylon and the ultimate arrival of a new force whose identity is transparent:

Ce qui s'est élevé de terre retombera inerte,
 mais l'œuvre de l'esprit vivra!
 Les palais, les temples crouleront.
 La pensée toujours planera sur le monde,
 jusqu'à l'aube où mon fils naîtra.
 Il naîtra sans avoir un père,
 il mourra sans avoir un temple [...]
 Le cœur des hommes enfante un sentiment nouveau.
 Le Tau change de forme: c'est l'avènement de l'Agneau.
 (*Babylone*, p.16)

The city falls to invading armies, and the central characters flee into the desert. A union of the Sâr and Samsina occurs, described as a merging of the races of Sârs and magi as well as a marriage. Péladan's frequent preoccupation with androgyny also comes to the fore, as the Sâr's love for a member

¹ Péladan, *Le Théâtre complet de Wagner*, Geneva: Slatkine, 1981, p.xii.

of the opposite sex develops into an inner self-recognition as 'l'époux des vérités', and the Sâr reverts to a near-virginal state, dissociating himself from the physical world. The ultimate impetus for his new sense of purpose and awareness is the dying Nakhounta's vision of a future crucifixion. At this point the Tau cross on stage changes into the familiar Christian version:

Stupeur... ce même Tau change de forme!
 Cet homme est si juste... prophète!
 Admirable visage voilé de sang!
 Comme on l'a torturé: Mérodack, voici l'heure du glaive!
 Saisis l'épée... Défends ce héros méconnu, ce Mage sans pareil!
 (*Babylone*, p.78)

The play ends with the death of Nakhounta, and the sentiments it inspires in Mérodack and Samsina. Péladan's own thought intrudes, thought supposedly derived from the wisdom of 'Babilou' (the name for Babylon used familiarly in the play), but combined with Christian piety. Thus, despite its apparent exoticism, *Babylone* ends with the familiar literary and exegetical technique of presaging and confirming Christ through ancient events:

SAMSINA
 Mon père est mort!
 SAR
 Le mystère est sauvé!
 SAMSINA
 Mon père!
 SAR
 Il entre dans la gloire infinie.
 Par la vertu du Tau, l'œuvre des Kaldéens vivra,
 et la pensée de Babilou toujours planera sur le monde.
 (*Babylone*, p.80)

Babylone, mixing Christianity, ancient 'wisdom' and an ornamental style, forms a microcosm of Péladan and his peculiar world, and as such is a highly appropriate choice when we also consider Jarry's later comments when reviewing Péladan's novel *Pereat!*:

Un livre de M. Péladan est toujours un beau livre, et ni le nombre de ses œuvres ni leur valeur harmonieusement égale ne serait une excuse à les accueillir sans déférence. (*OCBP* II, p.635)

The sword of parity – the notion recalls the term *livres pairs* – is here double-edged; Jarry omits to say if he considers Péladan exactly good or bad, and certainly parts of Péladan's work exhibit clumsiness. However, such a view

of Péladan makes *Babylone* an attractive choice, simply because it contains most of Péladan's central characteristics in concentrated form. The hero is Péladan's adoptive ancestor; he becomes a virtual androgyne, an obsession of the author's that runs through so much of his writing, both literary and theoretical;¹ also, Mérodack Baladan is a Babylonian, and therefore located at the heart of the curious and largely non-historical theories around which Péladan built his philosophy. His name is that of a Chaldean god; the figure of Mérodack appears in one form or another in many of Péladan's works, and serves as his main self-projection into his writing (of which more later). Furthermore, the theme of the play, the presaging of Christ, forms a precise condensation of Péladan's mystic-cum-Catholic theology.

Of no lesser importance are the circumstances of *Babylone*'s production. Understandably refused by the Comédie-Française, evening performances of the *wagnérie* were arranged for the 1893 Salon de la Rose & Croix, in the vast Dôme du Champ-de-Mars erected for the 1889 *Exposition universelle*; Péladan elected to call it the 'Palais du Champ-de-Mars'.² Thus *Babylone* evokes Péladan's contribution to the wider promotion of the Arts. Péladan directed with gusto, often angering his actors; at one point there was a walk-out when he insisted that the actress playing Samsina should appear nude.³ The play attracted sizeable audiences but little press coverage, and what there was had been in part stimulated by Péladan's wish for a *querelle*; he launched this by printing his rejection letter from Jules Clarétie of the Comédie-Française in the programme. It is included in the published *Babylone* of 1895, together with all the press reviews. The reviews were generally warm, and some flatter Péladan's sensibilities by making the inevitable comparisons with Wagner.

Babylone was produced again for the 1894 Salon (a less grand affair), in two matinées at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu on 21 and 28 May, with a performance in Brussels on 30 May. Its last performance, for the noted occultist Lady Caithness in July of the same year, apparently bored its private audience to distraction.⁴ This fact, along with the florid qualities of the quotations given above, suggests a partly fair impression that *Babylone* is an unintentional comedy; certainly this is the angle that various accounts of the play in subsequent criticism have taken, and the notes

¹ Péladan wrote further on the Chaldean androgyne in a chapter of *De l'Androgyne* (1910), but offered no real information of use in the interpretation of Sâr Mérodack Baladan: *De l'Androgyne: théorie plastique*, Puiseux: Pardès, 1988, pp.19–20.

² Christophe Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan (1858–1918): Essai sur une maladie du lyrisme*, Grenoble: Millon, 1993, p.262.

³ Beaufils, *Biographie critique*, p.99.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.105.

above are intended to seek out the positive qualities that make the play's *livre pair* status far more than a satirical point.

The inclusion of *Babylone* in the *livres pairs* is all the more striking for the fact that Jarry almost certainly did not see the play. In March 1893, at the time of that year's Salon, he was gravely ill, being nursed by his mother – who was shortly to expire herself. In May 1894 he was in Laval, where his uncle Julien was ill, his presence there during the Salon being demonstrated by a letter of 27 May to Vallette (OCBP I, pp.1036–37). However, it has been proved that the production at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu was seen by numerous members of Jarry's social circles (including Rachilde, Vallette, Mallarmé, Henri de Régnier and Lugné-Poe), who would no doubt have been able to provide Jarry with a graphic account¹ – if, that is, he had not risen from his sickbed in time to see the play the year before. If he did not, then the compliment to Péladan is all the greater.

The extrapolation from *Babylone* is as follows:

De Péladan, le reflet, au miroir du bouclier étamé de la cendre des ancêtres,
du sacrilège massacre des sept planètes.

This is a highly visual and not entirely textual interpretation of Act II, Scene 3, a violent soliloquy in which the despairing Sâr visits the tomb of his ancestors and considers the fate of Babylon. He pours their ashes from urns (made, in 1893, from pie dishes²): 'et je remplis mon bouclier de la cendre des Sârs, mes ancêtres' (*Babylone*, p.33). Confronted by idols of the seven gods of Babylon, the seven planets that form Péladan's cosmology, the Sâr is moved to strike them down:

Au néant! Dieux de Babilou, au néant!
Nergal, Dieu lâche; Adar, Dieu d'imbécillité; Istar, prostituée;
toi! Nébo, l'imposteur; Sin, astre fou; Samas, splendide brute;
toi-même, Mérodack, père que je renie!
au néant! au néant! au néant! (*Babylone*, p.35)

Thematically the scene is important for its place in the emergence of a proto-Christianity in the Sâr's mind, but it attracted far more attention for its noise and violence; so much so that the workmen outside the building, occupied in remodelling the Champ-de-Mars, reputedly begged admission for this single scene, asking 'Est-ce que c'est bientôt qu'on chamberde les dieux?'³

¹ Beaufils, *Essai sur une maladie du lyrisme*, pp.283–85, using evidence from the *feuilles de location de théâtre* preserved at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, and with specific reference to the 21 May performance before a selected audience of subscribers and journalists.

² Cymbalum Faustroll, p.88.

³ Beaufils, *Biographie critique*, p.101.

Certainly it is one of the most memorable (and indeed least cerebral) moments of the play, and its selection shows awareness of the theatrical as well as the thematic aspects of this very individual play.

19. Rabelais

Rabelais is the single most persistent and pervasive influence upon Jarry, the precise identification of all the latter's references being such a mammoth task that it could easily occupy several hundred pages. His presence in the *livres pairs* will hardly surprise any serious reader of Jarry, and his case is the only one in which Jarry implies that he is selecting the whole of an author's work. The edition to which reference will be made is the two-volume *Œuvres Complètes* of Rabelais published in the Classiques Garnier series in 1962 ('Rabelais OC'). Apollinaire recorded that one of the few books Jarry possessed towards the end of his life was 'une édition populaire de Rabelais'.¹

The sincerity of Jarry's interest is neatly illustrated by the fact that he bestows Rabelais's first name on Père Ubu (OCBP I, p.444); the lifelong influence extends from the teenage Jarry's replacement of allusions to Le Sage in the proto-*Ubu* material with extra Rabelais,² to echoes of the Picrocholine war in *La Dragonne*. Jarry remarked that the scatology of *Ubu Roi* had invited comparisons with Rabelais (OCBP I, p.415), but whatever the influence of Rabelais upon such material, Jarry's further use of his master demonstrated the depth and scope of his reading. Structurally, Rabelais appears most prominently in the *Almanachs du Père Ubu*, whose creation of comic almanacs derives from the *Pantagrueline Prognostication*, and Rabelais also comes to the fore in the narrative structure of *Faustroll*.

While the voyage format used by Jarry has its earliest origins in the *Odyssey*, it comes to Jarry through the optic of Rabelais's *Quart Livre* and *Cinquième Livre*, with their accounts of visits to islands; Jarry makes no reference to the dubious authenticity of the latter book, accepting it as part of the corpus from his schooldays onwards.³ The most evident debt to

¹ Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Feu Alfred Jarry', *Les Marges*, XXIII(91) (15 Jan. 1922), 21–27, p.22.

² Charles Chassé, *Dans les coulisses de la gloire: d'Ubu-Roi au Douanier Rousseau*, Paris: Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1947, pp.32–33.

³ For instance the monosyllabic interrogation of the *palotin* Merdanpot by 'le P.H.' in *Onésime* mimics Chapter XXVII of the *Cinquième Livre*, Panurge's conversation with a 'frère Fredon' (Rabelais OC II, pp.383–89).

the voyage of Pantagruel and his companions is the succession of islands visited by Faustroll's *as*. One, 'L'Île sonnante' (OCBP I, pp.691–93, dedicated to Claude Terrasse), even uses a Rabelaisian title, though the contents are entirely different. An occasional taste for lists inserted with the same abandon as in Rabelais also manifests itself in Jarry, most notably in the *Almanachs* with their *calendriers* and the list of the figures listening to Rodin's Balzac. It is of course also relevant to the insertion of the list of *livres pairs* into the text of *Faustroll*.

Linguistically, Rabelais is a constant presence. François Caradec has published lists of distinctive Rabelaisian words that appear in Jarry (see the Bibliography), and this work leads to a simple conclusion, namely that Rabelais is everywhere in Jarry; curios from Rabelais's vocabulary appear in Jarry's work without apparent deference to the literary genre or subject matter involved. His conscious linguistic awareness of Rabelais is demonstrated by the learned understatement of Jarry's unfavourable review of a modern French translation of Rabelais; he quotes original and modern side by side, allowing Rabelais to speak for himself (OCBP II, pp.682–84).

Why should the appeal of Rabelais be so considerable for Jarry? Obscenity, erudition and the use of the French language at its richest and most sonorous are Rabelaisian elements which Jarry endeavoured to put into his own writing, but there is also a simple governing consideration, according to which Rabelais is the all-purpose model for Jarry's literary career: he is an author who was a great success in his own lifetime and even more so thereafter, yet who obeys no single set of literary conventions. This is the spirit in which Jarry produced his own eclectic *œuvre*, the spirit that convinced him that even such a variegated and strange novel as *L'Amour en visites* was a sure money-spinner, and the spirit that condemned him to poverty. The missing link was that Rabelais was writing in a period when he could freely mix the literary conventions of the ancient world with those of more recent times, without the constraints of the market economy in which Jarry was obliged to try to make a living.

All the more appropriate, then, that the work on which Jarry counted for some years to bring him financial security should have been an *Opéra-bouffe* written for Claude Terrasse's music and entitled *Pantagruel*. Eugène Demolder is credited as co-author, though quite what contribution he made in view of his failing health is far from clear. The gestation period of *Pantagruel* was long and difficult,¹ and the number of abortive

¹ Jean-Hugues Sainmont, 'Dix ans de la vie de Jarry: l'interminable histoire du *Pantagruel*', CCP, 15 (April 1955), 19–37.

versions of the libretto seems to grow year by year with study of the manuscript dossier, which runs to over two thousand sheets.

Without delving into all this work, an idea of the changes wrought by Jarry and Demolder can be gained by comparing the finished text in OCBP III and its plot derived from the *Mille et Une Nuits* with the plan published in the first *Almanach*, very faithful to Rabelais and potentially difficult to stage, even with puppets as first intended (OCBP I, pp.569–71). Jarry again refers to the *Cinquième Livre* by choosing ‘le pays de Satin’ as the main setting for his version. This island is one of the *jeux d’esprit* characteristic of the *Cinquième Livre*, and is a tapestry into which the nominally three-dimensional voyagers are translated (Rabelais OC II, pp.392–98), travelling like Faustroll into an ‘univers supplémentaire à celui-ci’ (OCBP I, p.668). The lightweight character of Jarry’s libretto, which has caused Patricia Murphy to call *Pantagruel* ‘a burlesque parody of a burlesque parody’,¹ is no disadvantage. Even if the characterisation of the final version often seems to owe as much to Gustave Doré’s illustrations as to Rabelais’s texts,² its simple celebratory vein is appropriate to many respectable critiques of Rabelais, notably that of Mikhail Bakhtin.³ When produced in Lyon in 1911, *Pantagruel* proved a greater commercial success than had any of Jarry’s works up to that point. Although Jarry had been dead for over three years when *Pantagruel* was finally brought to the stage, it formed the final repayment of his debt to Rabelais.

Rather like Faustroll’s selection from *Pelléas et Mélisande*, the extrapolation from Rabelais conjures up an image where the metaphorical is literalised:

De Rabelais, les sonnettes auxquelles dansèrent les diables pendant la tempête.

The reference is drawn from the storm in the *Quart Livre*, an episode echoed in massively compressed form in Act V of *Ubu Roi*, and which also features in Jarry’s *Pantagruel* (OCBP III, pp.361–63). Malcolm Screech argues convincingly that the storm’s purpose in Rabelais’s narrative is theological,⁴ but on the surface its primary interest lies in the comic fear

¹ Patricia Murphy, ‘Rabelais and Alfred Jarry’, *French Review*, 51 (1977), 29–36, p.31.

² The costumes of the 1911 production also owe a certain debt to Doré’s illustrations – see the photographs in Louis Schneider, ‘Grand-Théâtre de Lyon: *Pantagruel*’, *Le Théâtre*, 293 (March 1911), 11–16. Some pictures appear in Henri Béhar’s *Jarry Dramaturge*, Paris: Nizet, 1980.

³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1968. Bakhtin’s approach hinges on the folkloric aspects of Rabelais.

⁴ M.A. Screech, *Rabelais*, London: Duckworth, 1979, pp.341–50.

and supplications of Panurge, the character whose variable emotions are frequently recalled by Ubu's erratic changes between bravery and cowardice. Panurge is unwilling to help save the ship, despite the diabolical invocations (saints being unsuited to the situation) of the stoic Frère Jean:

– Vien, pendu au Diable, dist frere Jan, icy nous ayder, de par trente legions de Diabes, vien! [...]

Je croy que tous les diables sont deschainez aujourd'huy ou que Proserpine est en travail d'enfant. Tous les diables dansent aux sonnettes. (Rabelais OC II, p.97, p.99)

In his *Pantagruel*, Jarry places the line 'Tous les diables dansent aux sonnettes' in Panurge's mouth rather than that of Frère Jean (OCBP III, p.363), but at no point indicates any particular interpretation for what is ultimately a playful image as the bells are far from real, and thus join the ranks of the more figurative extrapolations from the *livres pairs*; Jarry is drawing a 'physical' item from a turn of phrase, expanding still further the range of sources from which the pataphysician can draw the essences of his books.

The twentieth *livre pair* is the final instance of an entry changed between manuscripts. In the Lormel manuscript, Jarry selected:

20. Jean de Chilra, *La Princesse des ténèbres*

'De Chilra' is a transparent anagram of 'Rachilde', itself a *nom-de-plume* – that of Marguerite Vallette (née Eymery, 1860–1953), wife of the editor and publisher of the *Mercure de France*. The work's position in Faustroll's alphabetical list gives the game away. Rachilde was a prolific author in most genres, being particularly active as a novelist; however, few of her very numerous novels are read today, and the 'Jean de Chilra' novels have attracted precious little critical attention. She remains somewhat notorious for such novels as *Monsieur Vénus* and *La Marquise de Sade*, and a good number of her novels stay very close to the plots and characters of these early pieces. Often branded as mild pornography, they owe a great deal to Sacher-Masoch's *Venus im Pelz*, but in fact Rachilde's more risqué work is remarkable for the range of sexual habits depicted, rather than for explicitness. Standing by Rodin's Balzac she thus becomes 'celle qui hors nature' (OCBP I, p.560), a title that has validity beyond her 1897 novel involving homosexuality, *Les Hors Nature*.

In the mid-1890s Rachilde started to branch out, at first using a new pseudonym and persona, as 'Jean de Chilra' (but printed 'de Chibra' in *La Princesse des ténèbres* – a phallic hint of *chibre*, perhaps?), a young anarchist writer and something of a firebrand. The use of a male persona is not the main distinction of the new *nom-de-plume* (the mask of 'Rachilde, homme de lettres' remained available for other writing in the same period): 'de Chilra' emerges simply for a change of direction which tempers the impression of sameness that links many of her novels, particularly the earlier ones. She only used the new pseudonym for two novels, and by the turn of the century was consistently 'Rachilde' again, producing more varied and often more mature work than before – such as perhaps her finest novel, *La Tour d'amour*.

Together with her husband, Rachilde was Jarry's most constant friend through most of his literary career, and a strong practical influence on his work. She was one of the few women in whom Jarry could find any value. There has been a certain tendency, ever since Jarry came into fashion and Rachilde left it, to regard his admiration for her as forced; a tenet of this study is that matters were otherwise, and that Rachilde was a figure of real artistic importance to the authors brought together by the *Mercur*, and certainly to Jarry. She was to honour his memory with a sentimental biography, *Alfred Jarry ou le Surmâle de lettres* (1928), which, for all its inaccuracies, has the authority of first-hand acquaintance. She also gave Jarry a cameo appearance in the novel *Le Parc du mystère*.¹

La Princesse des ténèbres has only seen one edition to date: Calmann-Lévy, 1895.² It tells the story of Madeleine Deslandes, a *provinciale* who marries an upright doctor and gradually falls ill, her agony paralleled by the appearances of her true love Hunter, a mysterious figure who is clearly the Devil. At first sight, the novel gives an impression of a supernatural *Madame Bovary*. Hunter's identity is all the more obvious to the reader of the *livres pairs*, as Rachilde makes what appears to be a coy cross-reference to *Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung*; Hunter recoils before the cold of the Earth ('Je suis le voyageur qui passe... et qui s'en va, car le froid me chasse!', *Princesse*, p.196) just as Grabbe's Devil freezes solid on a summer's day (Jarry's translation, OCBP II, p.29). This suggests that Jarry may have known Grabbe's play, and introduced his friends to it, a little earlier than has been stated elsewhere (notes, OCBP II, pp.698–701). Madeleine's delirium is in pace with her meetings with Hunter, and ultimately she dies,

¹ The relevant extract from this 1923 novel has been reprinted as *L'Homme qui raille dans les cimetières*, Paris: Cymbalum Pataphysicum/Fourneau, 1982.

² Dated 1896; its *dépôt légal* shows the previous year.

possessed by almost constant visions of her lover. She remains unaware of his true identity.

Rachilde's treatment of delirium and the Beyond is relevant to the psychological decline of Sengle, hero of Jarry's *Les Jours et les nuits*, and the strong links between the two novels are a subject on which I have published separately and which thus does not bear extensive repetition here.¹ The key to the thematic and psychological links that exist between the novels is the introduction of an ambiguous companion figure who takes part in the mental collapse of the central figures; in Rachilde's novel, the appearances of Hunter to Madeleine become increasingly frequent and less palpably real as the novel progresses, and in *Les Jours et les nuits* Sengle's delirium is marked by fleeting impressions of his brother, Valens.

Jarry's interest in *La Princesse des ténèbres* did not cease with its removal from the Fasquelle manuscript; he made appreciative reference to it in an article written for *La Plume* in 1903 ('Ce que c'est que les ténèbres', OCBP II, pp.432–35). The novel's presence in the *livres pairs* is a relatively routine matter, since the author was a close friend whom Jarry also admired artistically, and the novel itself is an example of contemporary writing with links to Jarry's own work; the fact that it was not Rachilde's most recent publication indicates greater thought in the selection than the simple inclusion of one of Jarry's closest friends might suggest.

The extrapolation from this novel shows close reference to Rachilde's text:

De Rachilde, le damas tissu de lourd duvet d'oiseau des vêtements de Hunter, émanation ondulante du sol, comme une flamme de cendre. (OCBP I, p.1223)

The 'de Chilra' pretence has been dropped. Jarry's allusion is to the later stages of the novel, specifically to one of Madeleine's final encounters with Hunter. The extrapolation is drawn directly from the description of his appearance, starting with his neutrally coloured coat:

En le touchant, ce manteau, on avait la sensation de palper une soie épaisse, une sorte de damas lourd, onctueux, qui aurait été tissé dans de la soie et du duvet d'oiseau, peut-être de la boue! Ses chaussures étaient poudreuses, tellement poudreuses qu'elles se confondaient avec la sable des allées du jardin, et qu'aussi, planté droit, sans pieds, on pouvait le croire ondulant au-dessus du sol, émanant de la terre, mais ne la foulant pas. (*Princesse*, p.345)

¹ Ben Fisher, 'The Companion and the Dream: Delirium in Rachilde and Jarry', *Romance Studies*, 18 (Summer 1991), 33–41.

Placing emphasis on this passage has a simple function, namely to confirm an interest in Rachilde's deft handling of the supernatural in Madeleine's delirium, represented by the ambiguous figure of Hunter, in this passage at his closest to a revelation of his identity to the heroine, from whose perspective the novel is written. The vague nature of Hunter's appearance also continues the parallel with Valens in *Les Jours et les nuits*, a character we only know of through the mind of his brother Sengle, and whose very existence becomes less definite as the novel progresses towards the annihilation of Sengle's *soi*.

In the Fasquelle manuscript, Jarry opted for the second novel written by Rachilde under her reserve pseudonym, though for the first edition the author's name was printed as 'de Childra', again rendering the anagram imperfect:

20. Jean de Chilra, *L'Heure sexuelle*

This 1898 novel is one of the rarer *livres pairs*, despite the fact that it offers a number of editions.¹ The 1933 edition is used here, as it has the advantage of reasonable accessibility through the Bibliothèque Nationale de France's microform stocks.²

Rachilde marked the publication of the second and final Jean de Chilra novel by writing a review, hilarious for those in the know and almost convincing for those not, consisting of an interview between herself and the non-existent young anarchist novelist.³ His words set out the aims of the novel:

'A l'heure...sexuelle où nous avons le bonheur de vivre, la seule faute sans excuse est de rêver d'absolu, c'est-à-dire de quelque chose de sublimant soit le vice, soit la vertu.'

The hero and narrator of the novel is a successful novelist, Louis Rogès (Louis de Rogès, until a break with his family). Noël Arnaud has suggested

¹ The first being *Mercure de France*, 1898, reprinted with 'Rachilde' as author's name in 1900, plus two differing editions by Baudinière, dating from 1933 and 1935, both as 'Rachilde'.

² It should be noted that it does include some minor modifications to the original, quite apart from its rather incongruous Art Deco cover; the 1935 edition features several inept drawings that do little to illustrate the text.

³ *Mercure de France*, XXVI (April–June 1898), 826–29. Most of the 'interview' is reprinted in Claude Dauphiné, *Rachilde*, Paris: Mercure de France, 1991, pp.268–70.

that he draws on some traits of Jarry's character,¹ but he cannot be taken as a deliberate depiction of Jarry as there is much that is peculiar to Rachilde's creation, not least the relative normality of his sexual orientation. Following de Chilra's words above, Louis attempts to absolve himself of his dream 'd'absolu' by living it out, in other words by stepping out of the realm of the dreamer. De Chilra's mock condemnation of the dreamer is reflected in the fact that Rogès ultimately fails in his quest. His fantasies are projected on to a prostitute named Léonie, who throughout regards Louis as hopelessly *maboul* but conceives a certain fondness for him from their first encounter, when she declines to pass on her syphilis to him as she would to any other client (*L'Heure sexuelle*, p.36). As his infatuation grows, Louis loses his two current mistresses – to each other, as it happens – and distances himself from his friends. After a time Léonie moves in with him and they live a one-sided idyll for a time, until her true love comes out of prison and she leaves to be with him.

The whole plot is based upon the conscious living of a dream, as opposed to the unconscious approach depicted in *La Princesse des ténèbres*, and as such illustrates certain important points about the figure of the Symbolist hero which will be discussed later. This development from *La Princesse*, without detracting from the earlier novel, makes it perfectly reasonable for the revised *Faustroll* to adopt Rachilde's most recent novel.

In Dr Faustroll's extrapolations, we have often seen a taste for references that are at best peripheral to a text, or at worst from a completely different text or texts. In this case, however, the selection – almost superfluously – locates the central image of the novel:

De Rachilde, Cléopâtre.

Cleopatra is the figure at the centre of Louis's fantasies, and a governing force throughout the novel. At the start of the narrative, he wakes at one o'clock in the morning – 'l'heure sexuelle' – and considers an ivory bust of Cleopatra in his room, from which he derives his image of 'la reine des cruelles luxures'. The intoxication of this waking dream is such that he finds himself on the street and encounters Léonie. He is convinced of her function too quickly to be psychologically plausible. He regards her as:

[...] *pure entre toutes, parce qu'elle s'ignore*. La voici, ma Cléopâtre d'ivoire, frêle et puissante de toute la force aveugle des morts [...] Elle est unique, l'objet d'art splendide enfoui sous le fumier et plus rayonnant d'être immonde. Je l'aime. (*L'Heure sexuelle*, p.32)

¹ Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, pp.375–76.

Just as Madeleine Deslandes parallels events in her real life with visions of Hunter, Louis matches stages of the relationship to his own extended fantasy visions of a supreme, sensual Cleopatra with himself in submissive roles. These visions and their effects on real life emphasise the close relationship between *L'Heure sexuelle* and the work of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, a strong influence on Rachilde from her literary *débuts* and a pivotal figure for Decadence in France. Léonie is constantly puzzled by Louis's attempts to make her into his dream figure, and the *malentendus* that result provide occasional humour that makes *L'Heure sexuelle* less intense reading than some of Rachilde's other novels. Jarry's selection of Cleopatra is almost a foregone conclusion simply because she is the governing image of *L'Heure sexuelle*, all other images being merely aspects of the hero's obsession with her; to choose another image might in fact cause doubt as to Jarry's true appreciation of the novel. Viewed more constructively, the choice again highlights Rachilde's treatment of the outer reaches of psychological reality, an active example of 'celle qui hors nature' at work.

The last island visited by Faustroll's *as* is ruled over by Rachilde: Chapter XXIV of the *Gestes et Opinions*, 'Des Ténèbres hermétiques, et du roi qui attendait la mort' (OCBP I, pp.693–95). It is only since the Cymbalum edition of *Faustroll* that it has been accepted that this chapter, featuring a king rather than a queen, refers not to Vallette but to Rachilde, by virtue of her masculine persona.¹ The king is building a 'château de cartes', which paradoxically balances by its great height and presumably represents Rachilde's already very substantial list of publications. The shadows are those of the rue de l'Echaudé St-Germain, the narrow street (little changed from Jarry's day) where the first *mardis* of the *Mercur* were held; Jarry's chapter is a transposition of one of these events. The Cymbalum suggest that the depiction of Rachilde as a king awaiting death alludes to her *récit* entitled *L'Imitation de la mort* (unpublished until 1903),² but equally we may note that at the start of Kahn's *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* (produced by the *Mercur*'s publishing house) there is just such a figure, the magus king Balthazar as he is first introduced.

¹ Cymbalum *Faustroll*, p.221.

² *Ibid.*

21. Henri de Régner, *La Canne de jaspe*

Another *Belle Epoque* author neglected by posterity is Henri de Régner (1864–1936), poet, novelist and *académicien*. His aspirations to the Académie Française were not unique among avant-garde writers – for instance Péladan mistakenly believed himself a worthy candidate – but Régner's eventual reception in 1912 marked the end of his reputation as an *avant-gardiste* and earned him reactions amounting to total rejection which have yet to dissipate. He has been an influence on a number of imaginative authors; for instance Mario Maurin has identified a borrowing from *La Canne de jaspe* in Joseph Conrad's *The Planter of Malata*.¹ Régner and Jarry were friends, with contact through the circles of both Mallarmé and Rachilde. Standing before Rodin's Balzac in the 1899 *Almanach*, Régner is 'celui qui cyclope' (OCBP I, p.560), and is addressed similarly for the chapter of *Faustroll* dedicated to him, 'De l'île de Her, du cyclope et du grand cygne qui est en cristal' (OCBP I, pp.686–87). The cyclops is not one of the strange monsters that appear in Régner's tales, but a reference to his monocle.

La Canne de jaspe is Régner's first major excursion into prose, and is made up of three collections of short stories: *Monsieur d'Amercœur*, *Le Trèfle noir* and *Contes à soi-même*.² The edition used here is the original of the complete collection (Mercure de France, 1897).

The guiding force of *La Canne de jaspe*, in common with so many Symbolist works, is mystery, both within the narrative and between text and reader. The combination of this with Régner's deliberately vague indications of eighteenth-century and/or southern European settings makes for a world reminiscent of Mérimée tales such as *La Vénus d'Ille*, with echoes of the work of Pétrus Borel; thus, as in the work of Maeterlinck, we have an example of a Symbolist attempting to create a less specific world than (for example) a Mendès *roman contemporain* or a Rachilde novel, and thereby to create a timeless work which may not date so readily.

¹ Mario Maurin, 'The Planter's French Connection: An Appropriation by Joseph Conrad', *Modern Philology*, 82 (1985), 304–309.

² The first of these was previously unpublished, while the second and third had appeared previously, in small printings. *Le Trèfle noir* was published by Editions du Mercure de France in 1894, and *Contes à soi-même* by the Librairie de l'art indépendant in 1895. There are numerous straightforward reprints of the 1897 volume termed 'éditions' in the usual manner of Editions du Mercure de France. An illustrated version was published by Editions d'Art/Devambez in 1924.

Images and leitmotifs flow freely between the three sections of the collection, conjuring up a world in which the power of the imagination is supreme. In *La Canne de jaspe* Régnier's main narrative technique is to withhold information in such a way as to break up any concept of a novelistic flow, although in *Monsieur d'Amercœur* a *cadre* is maintained when desired – tales told by, or about, the eponymous *marquis*. Régnier's manipulation of structure is significant and original, in that it elevates mystery to the status of a structural device. *Monsieur d'Amercœur* begins with conventional narrative methods, with the narrator meeting the great man and hearing the story of his life, but thereafter Régnier does not so much deviate from this framework as wantonly ignore it. Thus the perspective can change without warning or explanation; it is often not made clear that Amercœur rather than his visitor may be narrating, and there are further complications such as the introduction of another voice, for instance Monsieur de Simandre, who recounts an episode in Amercœur's earlier life via a letter to a fourth party. The reader is inevitably disconcerted by these changes; indeed this particular section poses an extra problem in that it refers to Amercœur only as 'Polydore'. At this stage we have not been told his Christian name; the result is that it is hard for the reader to grasp the relevance or even the *dramatis personae* of the account for some time.

However, the paramount factor is always the confection of an image at the end of each tale, rather than a *dénouement* as such. Often the image, or the route taken to reach it, evokes a labyrinth, a recurrent symbol in Régnier, and one in which Maurin identifies an erotic connection.¹ The *cadre* – or indeed any *cadre* – is ignored at the end of most sections, leaving the reader not with neat narrative conclusions, but with pure images free of further development or reference. Examples include 'Aventure marine et amoureuse' (*La Canne de jaspe*, pp.23–38), in which Amercœur has a mystic sexual encounter with a mermaid-like nymph on a mist-bound island; or the ladies of the town exhausted by their lover at the end of 'La Lettre de M. Simandre' (*La Canne de jaspe*, p.48). The technique reaches its apotheosis in the concluding tale, 'La Maison magnifique', which ends with Amercœur's description of the house of mirrors built to contain the shadow of Madame de Sérences (won by Amercœur in a game of chance), a house that reflects and contains the shadow that may never leave it, and yet may never be entered (*La Canne de jaspe*, p.125).

¹ Mario Maurin, *Henri de Régnier: le labyrinthe et le double*, Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1972, pp.18, 53.

The effect of these sudden terminations is to strengthen the image, and they contribute to Régnier's almost cinematic creation of a set of visual images that stay in the mind as strongly as the narrated events. The terminations leave an impression strongly suggestive of hypnosis, of a trance broken as the text is left in mid-air. The effect Régnier creates is not arbitrary, as he guides each narrative to precisely where he wishes it to end and be remembered, giving a positive value to the effect of dislocation. The effect is not in the least detrimental to the collection, as it makes for strong images, structural economy, and above all it elevates mystery from a textual trope to a major element of the experience of reading, as the reader will inevitably find that the book itself, as well as its subject matter, is a puzzle demanding investigation – though of course there is no solution as such. As Régnier says at the opening of his volume:

Fais le tour des bassins. Parcours le labyrinthe, fréquente le bosquet et lis mon livre, page à page, comme si, du bout de ta haute canne de jaspe, Promeneur solitaire, tu retournais, sur le sable sec de l'allée, un scarabée, un caillou ou des feuilles mortes. (*La Canne de jaspe*, p.6)¹

The vital point is that Régnier's labyrinth is not just the vast houses and crumbling cities of *La Canne de jaspe*, but also the book itself, as Régnier states with reasonable explicitness here. Its capacity for rapid change and dislocation is at once its great strength and perhaps also the reason for the neglect it shares with *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*, simply because it asks the reader to work hard and take up a more active, imaginative posture than narrative prose conventionally requires.

Amercœur, the orchestrator of this strange, self-contained world, has been interpreted as a Casanova figure,² but he also has more productive, literary functions that set him apart; in Part II we shall see the extent to which he and the tales that surround him are integrated, making him a clear manifestation, in many ways the most distinctive of all, of the Symbolist hero. Like *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* and the Rachilde *livres pairs*, *La Canne de jaspe* is a product of the literary circles most familiar to Jarry, those to which he was most sympathetic. And like these other works, Régnier's tales illustrate clearly various aspects of the Symbolist approach to writing, and merits *livre pair* status for its proximity to the literary ideals that Jarry was pursuing in his own work.

¹ Maurin takes this section as the departure point for his discussion of the labyrinth as a motif in Régnier (*Henri de Régnier*, pp.3–19).

² Gerhard Schmidt, *Henri de Régnier als Erzähler*, Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1976, p.50. Schmidt views Amercœur as a Casanova exaggerated in all directions, for his success in all his undertakings.

The two other collections included in *La Canne de jaspe* are less substantial work than *Monsieur d'Amercœur*, more stylised in their narratives and almost abstract characters. However, there is evidence that Jarry took some interest in these sections, particularly *Le Trèfle noir*; there is a longstanding suggestion in Jarry criticism that the name 'Her' in 'De l'île de Her' may be related to the names of characters in *La Canne de jaspe* that feature it as a prefix:¹ Hertulie, Hermotime, Hermas, Hermagore and Hermocrate in *Le Trèfle noir*, and Hermogène in *Contes à soi-même*. We may also note that Régnier was the son-in-law of José-Maria de Heredia, as another possible source for the enigmatic name of this island.²

The extrapolation from *La Canne de jaspe*, however, refers mainly to *Monsieur d'Amercœur*:

De Régnier, la plaine saure où le centaure moderne s'ébroua.

The reference alludes primarily to the fifth section of *Monsieur d'Amercœur*, 'La mort de M. de Nouâtre et de Madame de Ferlinde'. Amercœur relates one of the most bizarre episodes of his younger life, opening with his meeting with Monsieur de Nouâtre, while riding to the town of Ochria. Nouâtre is an eccentric individual with a fertile imagination thriving on auto-suggestion. He expounds his views on the 'plaine saure, un paysage de broussailles et de monticules' that he and Amercœur are crossing:

'Oui, cette terre est mystérieuse et il s'y passe des choses surprenantes; les races disparues s'y refont; j'en tiens presque la preuve et j'en guette la certitude' [...]

'Voyez-vous l'empreinte [...] c'est celle d'un faune. On m'a signalé aussi la présence d'un centaure. Je me suis embusqué plusieurs nuits pour le surprendre. On ne le voit pas mais on l'entend hennir [...] Il reste seul de sa race ou plutôt il la recommence. Elle a été détruite et pourchassée comme celle des nymphes et des satyres, car ils existaient [...] tout ce qui exista peut renaître. Cette terre est propice à l'œuvre fabuleuse. L'herbe sèche a la couleur des toisons; la voix des sources murmure ambiguë; ces rochers ressemblent à des bêtes inachevées. L'homme et l'animal vivent assez proches pour que se fassent entre eux des échanges consanguins. Le temps a dispersé des formes jadis conjointes. L'homme s'isola de ce qui l'entourne et se retira dans son infirmité solitaire. Il a rétrogradé croyant se parfaire. Les dieux se muiaient jadis aux apparences de leur choix, y prenaient le corps de leur désir,

¹ Cymbalum *Faustroll*, p.191, repeating a point made in CCP, 10 (April 1953), p.22.

² Henry Berton, *Henri de Régnier: le poète et le romancier*, Paris: Grasset, 1910, p.20. Spellings of 'Heredia' vary, 'Hérédia' also being current; however, the unaccented version is used by Jarry (OCBP II, p.312).

aigles ou taureaux! Des êtres intermédiaires participèrent à cette faculté divine; elle dort en nous, notre passion y crée un satyre intermittent; que ne sommes-nous incorporés aux désirs qui nous cabrent! Il faut devenir ce que l'on est; il faut que la nature se complète et retrouve les degrés qu'elle a perdus.' (*La Canne de jaspe*, pp.66–68)

Nouâtre's words find an echo in his own fate, in a chilling twist entirely worthy of Hoffmann. Amercœur discovers another of his acquaintances in Ochria, Madame de Ferlinde, freshly murdered by 'une sorte de bête velue, informe et hargneuse', a 'bloc de poil jaune' (*La Canne de jaspe*, pp.76–77). It escapes after Amercœur has wounded it gravely. Distracted, he goes to see Nouâtre, only to be told he has not left his room for some days. He finds Nouâtre dead from the same sword blow he dealt the monster, and smells the same 'bizarre odeur de cuir et de corne' as at the scene of the murder (*La Canne de jaspe*, p.79). The use of the verb 's'ébrouer' comes from one of the *Contes à soi-même*, 'Le Récit de la Dame des sept miroirs', where it is used to describe the noise made by a centaur (*La Canne de jaspe*, p.277), one of a group of mythical beasts who surround and threaten the narrator, and finally appear to be about to rape her – another indication of the dark side of such creatures.

The selection of the plain for Faustroll's *as* locates the fundamental difficulty that the tale holds for the reader. Nouâtre appears to be talking harmless nonsense, yet the creation of his own gruesome 'satyre intermittent' demonstrates that he is correct; at the same time the real-world setting and the reader's received ideas on phenomena that can and cannot happen resist this interpretation. The plain is a place very similar to the *Zona* of Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Stalker*, a place where the parameters of the world change for no apparent reason and, for some observers, without visible trace. In pataphysical terms it is an 'univers supplémentaire', a place where the type of event that *Faustroll* seeks to investigate can occur: 'Un épiphénomène est ce qui se surajoute à un phénomène' (OCBP I, p.668). The appearance of the 'centaure moderne' (Jarry's term) is an exemplary *épiphénomène*. Marcel Schneider, drawing on this and other material from Régnier, has used this tale and the ambiguous transformation of Nouâtre to suggest that in Régnier the distinction between life and death is not as clear-cut as normally supposed;¹ and of course in *Faustroll* the monkey Bosse-de-Nage continues to participate in events after his death (OCBP I, p.710), and Faustroll continues to communicate from the realms of 'Ethernité' after his physical death.

¹ Schneider, *Histoire de la littérature fantastique*, p.321.

22. Rimbaud, *Les Illuminations*

Among the *auteurs pairs*, Rimbaud can be grouped with Lautréamont and Mallarmé as an uncontroversial choice for an avant-garde reader at the end of the nineteenth century, and one whose appeal has remained durable. Not that general admiration of Rimbaud had reached the perhaps exaggerated level that it has today; at much the same time that Jarry was writing *Faustroll*, Gustave Kahn remarked that Rimbaud was ‘un très grand poète qu’on oublie et que Lautréamont remplace d’une façon très insuffisante’.¹ Jarry’s erstwhile friend and lover Léon-Paul Fargue bore a striking resemblance to Rimbaud in his youth,² and in their roles as ‘l’Androgyne et la Tête de Mort’ Jarry had played the senior partner to his junior Fargue much as Verlaine had to Rimbaud; in terms of physical description, the characterisations as ‘L’Androgyne’ and ‘La Tête de Mort’ from a satire on Fargue and Jarry written by Louis Lormel also evoke Rimbaud and Verlaine respectively as they appeared in the period of their relationship.³ Viewed cynically, there are aspects of Jarry’s abortive *bona mors* of 1906 that are so close to the details of Rimbaud’s last months that they almost suggest imitation, real though the medical emergency was.⁴

If the selection of *Les Chants de Maldoror* contains a degree of compliment to Remy de Gourmont as well as to its deceased author, then the choice of the *Illuminations* adds a nuance of compliment to *auteur pair* Gustave Kahn, who had been responsible for the first publication of the collection in *La Vogue* in 1886. He still retained the manuscript in 1898, so it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Jarry might have seen it. References here are to the Pléiade *Œuvres Complètes* of Rimbaud (1972, notation ‘Rimbaud OC’). The Athlone French Poets edition edited by Nick Osmond gives an excellent condensed critical history.

The vast body of criticism that exists on *Illuminations* makes lengthy analysis here superfluous, beyond noting that in Jarry’s immediate environment, the collection had a clear influence upon the development of

¹ Interview in Jules Huret, *Enquête sur l’évolution littéraire*, 4th edn, Paris: Charpentier, 1913, p.402.

² Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, p.34.

³ See Beaumont, *Alfred Jarry*, p.50. Lormel (pseud. of publisher Louis Libaude) was at one point the owner of the first *Faustroll* manuscript, hence its name. Jarry’s dedication ‘A Louis L...’ of the insulting Chapter XII of the *Gestes et Opinions* (OCBP I, pp.675–77) refers to Lormel; see Arrivé’s notes, OCBP I, pp.1224–25.

⁴ For details of Jarry’s last years, the reader should refer to Bordillon’s *Gestes et Opinions d’Alfred Jarry, écrivain*.

poetic form among the Symbolists, a part of the process whereby the very individual techniques of Rimbaud have become assimilated into general literary practice. Outside this selection for Faustroll's library, Jarry makes only cursory references to Rimbaud, which may suggest that the interest in him expressed by his *auteur pair* status was a passing one. However, we should note Jarry's statement in the *Questions de théâtre* that 'la foule' knows nothing of Rimbaud (OCBP I, p.417), and in these terms Rimbaud stands as a paragon of literature for an intellectual élite, the Symbolist principle that Jarry took further than any of his contemporaries. Indeed he took it so far that his peers were often completely perplexed by his work; he failed to combine the individuality of Rimbaud with the relative accessibility of his forebear.

The extrapolation from Rimbaud reminds us of the changes that the collection has undergone at the hands of editors over the years. It refers to the poem 'Larme', which Kahn regarded as part of the *Illuminations* but modern editors do not:

De Rimbaud, les glaçons jetés par le vent de Dieu aux mares.

The four quatrains of the poem evoke poetic malaise in the Ardennes countryside, and Jarry's reference is drawn from the final stanza, quoted below with variants from the original publication in *La Vogue*:

L'eau des bois se perdait sur des sables vierges.
Le vent de Dieu jetait des glaçons aux mares...
Et tel qu'un pêcheur d'or et de coquillages,
Dire que je n'ai pas eu souci de boire!

(Rimbaud OC, p.72, variants p.927)

In other versions of the poem Rimbaud dissociated God from the wind, and merely stated that it came from 'le ciel'. This is not a particularly revealing image, in terms of the character of Rimbaud's poetry or of Jarry's understanding of it, as in the context of the poem it simply stresses the familiar notion in Rimbaud of a violent God whose relationship with humanity is at the very least antagonistic, but who forms a productive poetic impetus. Rimbaud also evokes both water and the shore, which are as appropriate to Faustroll's navigation as the mention of *boire*; conversations with the lords of the liquid islands on which the pataphysician 'lands' often start with a Rabelaisian 'après boire'. There is also a use for the wind, namely the propulsion of the boat, although perhaps a cold wind would not be the most welcome kind. This extrapolation also shows some resemblance to the extrapolation from Mendès, with its 'vent du Nord', which as we have seen may introduce similarly metaphysical considerations. The

suggestion even of remote links between poets of such different orders as Rimbaud and Mendès may surprise the modern reader, but are another example of the refreshing effect of studying Jarry's *livres pairs* as a group of texts.

23. Schwob, *La Croisade des enfants*

This is another work by one of Jarry's friends: Marcel Schwob (1867–1905), essayist, critic and general *prosateur*, noted for his great erudition and breadth of reading. *Ubu Roi* is dedicated to him, as is Valéry's *Soirée avec Monsieur Teste*, and Jarry termed him 'celui qui sait' in the crowd in the 1899 *Almanach* (OCBP I, p.560). Schwob played a part in Jarry's early success in the literary competitions of the *Echo de Paris littéraire illustré*, and Jarry was not content with making his friend an *auteur pair* and causing Dr Faustroll to visit him on 'l'Île Cyril' (OCBP I, pp.688–89; the chapter transposes Schwob's *Vies imaginaires*¹): he paid Schwob the final honour of pulling his trousers out of his cycling socks when attending his funeral.²

This slim volume dates from 1896.³ The edition used for reference here is *Le Roi au masque d'or/Vies imaginaires/La Croisade des enfants*, 10/18, 1979, referred to henceforth as *Croisade* for the sake of clarity.

La Croisade des enfants is a narrative in the form of eight *récits*, each an observation of the Children's Crusade. Deliberately, they do not offer a coherent interpretation of this historical enigma. The incompleteness of the narrative is both a reflection and an intelligent imitation of the incompleteness of the subject matter – uncertainty and bewilderment characterise the little we actually know about the strange events that took place in or around the year 1212. Some of Schwob's narrators witness the Crusade at first hand or are involved in it, whereas others – Popes Innocent III and Gregory IX – reflect on it from a distance. The resulting lack of specificity is one of the great strengths of *La Croisade des enfants*, and is linked to the subject matter, which is not so much obscure as very odd. It is the tale of an army of children who seek to retake Jerusalem where the

¹ Michel Arrivé suggests that the children of the isle, who are born and die without ageing, not unlike Faustroll, are a reference to Schwob's *Livre de Monelle* (notes, OCBP I, p.1229).

² See the introduction to Iain White's translation of Schwob's *The King in the Golden Mask and Other Writings*, Manchester: Carcanet, 1982, p.6.

³ First published by the Société du Mercure de France, and later republished set to music by Gabriel Pierné, Dubrueil, 1904; it has usually appeared in print with other prose by Schwob, as in the edition used here.

armies of the great kings of Europe have failed, and who then disappear after embarking for the Holy Land. It inevitably recalls the tale of the Pied Piper; indeed Schwob puts an allusion to him into the mouth of Pope Innocent III, who sees him as a manifestation of the Devil and by association is unable to see the Children's Crusade as a holy work (*Croisade*, p.297).

Schwob addresses his sources as literal fact, and adapts his delivery to suit; this deliberate maintenance of the insufficiency of his sources is a function of Schwob's erudition and desire to remain true to his sources in his writing – indeed he has on occasion been accused of excessive bookishness.¹ This is a trait that is inoffensive in *La Croisade des enfants*, and in fact enhances the general air of mystery that Schwob promotes.

La Croisade des enfants offers two obvious grounds for selection. The first is the naïve style of some of the *récits*, particularly those narrated by the children; this is in line with styles to be found in *livres pairs* by Desbordes-Valmore, Elskamp and Florian, and the repeated selection of such material suggests definite taste in Jarry for this type of material. But this case is particularly telling, as Schwob uses innocence and naïvety to deepen the mystery of the Children's Crusade, in a manner that corresponds to Jarry's taste for the strange and mysterious, which we have witnessed in other *livres pairs*. *La Croisade des enfants* is striking for the efficiency with which Schwob generates a sense of mystery, assembling simple individual and almost purely observational tales (allowing for the reflections of the two Popes) into a completed work where no explanation can be offered for the events described. The guiding voices that the children hear are no more complete an explanation of events than M. de Nouâtre's interpretation of 'la plaine saure' in *La Canne de jaspe*, and the lack of reason in the Crusade as Schwob depicts it, linked with the fate of the children and the puzzlement of two Popes, makes for a chilling world-view governed by mystery, a force which links many aspects of Symbolist writing.

Most of Schwob's fiction is characterised by the brevity of individual narratives, examples being the *Vies imaginaires* to which Jarry draws attention in Chapter XXI of *Faustroll*, or *Le Roi au masque d'or* and the other tales published with it. Within such tales, often redolent of Poe, mystery can be sustained for its own sake as a simple effect, rather as it could be in a poem or a painting. This is true of *La Cité dormante* (*Croisade*, pp.147–52), in which a band of pirates (not uncommon in Schwob's work) discover a mysterious enchanted city, under whose spell they fall

¹ George Trembley, *Marcel Schwob, faussaire de la nature*, Geneva: Droz, 1969, p.18.

one by one. *La Croisade des enfants* demonstrates a more involved use of mystery through the six *récits*, each of which evokes a facet of the Children's Crusade seen from the perspectives of individual narrators to whom it is a mystery. The cumulative effect, however, is not, as we might expect, to resolve the mystery, but to deepen it, as there is no room allowed for any rationalisation of the Crusade; the body, of which the *récits* form facets, remains hollow, and mystery is stressed even more strongly in the global picture than the individual *récits* suggest.

In terms of direct textual influence upon Jarry, there are two perceptible links. One, perhaps ephemeral, is with *Pantagruel*, where Jarry invents the character of 'la princesse Allys' to suit his non-Rabelaisian plot. The name occurs in the brief 'Récit de la petite Allys' (*Croisade*, pp.308–309), an account covering the period when the children have been sold into slavery in the Middle East. The *récit* structure is used by Jarry in *L'Autre Alceste* to give a choice of perspectives on his subject, and there is at least a sympathy of technique here; the only known manuscript of *L'Autre Alceste* is dated 23 August 1896 (notes, OCBP I, p.1253), by which point Jarry would very probably have come across *La Croisade des enfants* through the *Mercur*e circle (if indeed Schwob had not given him a copy himself), as the book was on sale by May 1896.

The extrapolation from *La Croisade des enfants* is drawn from the 'Récit du lépreux', and brings hands to the fore yet again:

De Schwob, les bêtes écailleuses que mimait la blancheur des mains du lépreux.

Leprosy has left both physical and mental scars on the narrator of this *récit*, who lives in a forest in the Loire through which children pass on their way to embark at Marseilles:

Je ne sais plus quel est mon visage, mais j'ai peur de mes mains. Elles courent devant moi comme des bêtes écailleuses et livides. Je voudrais les couper. J'ai honte de ce qu'elles touchent. Il me semble qu'elles font défaillir les fruits rouges que je cueille et les pauvres racines que j'arrache paraissent se flétrir sous elles. (*Croisade*, p.292)

The leper's hands are not white, as Jarry's reference seems to imply; in fact the only parts of his body that have remained white are his teeth. He considers himself a sinner past redemption, and has a fixation about blood, in the belief that it may be able to save him. These thoughts are in the leper's mind when he seizes a straggling child as a group passes through the forest. This child, 'Johannes le Teuton', tells the leper of his sketchy beliefs about Jerusalem, based on the whiteness of Christ; white is a recurring motif in *La Croisade des enfants*. The child's lack of comprehension, and

consequently of fear, means he is not afraid of the leper. Johannes believes the *Seigneur* is white (he identifies him with Jerusalem), and in telling the leper he is not afraid of him, calls him too an 'homme blanc'. The leper sees this as a sign of redemption:

Il n'a pas eu peur de moi! Il n'a pas eu peur de moi! Ma monstrueuse blancheur est semblable pour lui à celle de son seigneur. Et j'ai pris une poignée d'herbe et j'ai essuyé sa bouche et ses mains. Et je lui ai dit:

– Va en paix vers ton seigneur blanc, et dis-lui qu'il m'a oublié. (*Croisade*, p.294)

White, conventionally a sign of comfort and of purity, becomes alternately the symbol of the children's naïve faith and that of anguish, seen in Pope Innocent's retreat into a white cell, once gilded but now worn back to white, to reflect upon the Crusade (*Croisade*, p.295). At the end of the narratives, Pope Gregory prays that the sea may return the children's whitened bones to him (*Croisade*, p.313). Transposing whiteness on to the hands of the leper, which are anything but white, demonstrates an awareness of the curiously uncertain qualities of white in *La Croisade des enfants*, which symbolise the manner in which Schwob adds interpretative depth to what can appear a simple image, in an ostensibly superficial piece of work. There is a suggestion that what Jarry terms 'la blancheur des mains du lépreux', and Schwob his 'monstrueuse blancheur' is a symbolised state of mind rather than a physical description; it is also in line with the pataphysical principle of the equality of opposites. Thus Jarry indicates an interpretative depth in a text whose criticism has generally been limited to its depiction of history. The transposition also recalls fleetingly the extrapolation from Elskamp's *Salutations, dont d'angéliques*, with its reference to 'Mes mains sur mes draps blancs de fièvre' – curiously, both extrapolations relate white to illness, although in Schwob's medieval setting the terms of reference are far removed from the crisp white (hospital?) sheets evoked by Elskamp.

24. *Ubu Roi*

This choice combines self-indulgence and relative humility. It appears selfish in that Jarry is indulging in the Péladanesque vice of self-quotation, but this is tempered with the fact that Jarry does not attach any author's name to the record of Père Ubu's exploits in Poland, and allows the title alone to determine the alphabetical position in the list of *livres pairs*. Jarry thus pre-empts the minor *contretemps* caused in the 1920s by Charles

Chassé's interviews with the Morin brothers (who had more than Jarry to do with the conveniently lost earlier version known as *Les Polonais*, along with other playlets written at the Lycée de Rennes) by not claiming, as such, any rights of property over a play of which he was not the sole author.¹

While the selection of *Ubu Roi* involves a degree of self-indulgence, as indeed does the whole exercise of creating a list of books that an author admires, the choice has a less selfish element when placed in the company of plays by Péladan and more particularly Maeterlinck; all three contemporary dramatists in the *livres pairs* sought to renew the theatre by radical departures (such as reaction in Maeterlinck and mystic flamboyancy in Péladan), and Jarry's extrapolation from *Ubu Roi* highlights the equivalent, if very different, advance made by his own play:

D'*Ubu Roi*, la cinquième lettre du premier mot du premier acte.

This is of course the second 'r' of 'merdre', responsible in part for the riots at *Ubu Roi*'s first performances, and a central interpretative point in the play; while it may be rude to say 'shit', it is doubly offensive – offensive to the intellect rather than just to audience sensibilities – to not quite say 'shit' while leaving the basic force of the word intact. Even without the consideration of obscenity, starting a play with a neologism is a particularly deliberate way for a young writer to get himself noticed. Unlikely though it may seem, all the evidence points to the 'r' having been added during the Lycée de Rennes stage of composition, to make the word more acceptable to (rather credulous?) parents.² The letter neatly symbolises the dramatic innovation attempted by the whole exercise of putting *Ubu Roi* on the stage, insulting and above all provoking the audience to react.

25. Verlaine, *Sagesse*

At the same time as he remarked that the public knew nothing of Rimbaud, Jarry stated that 'la foule [...] sait que Verlaine existe depuis qu'il est mort' (OCBP I, p.417). Leaving aside Jarry's contempt for 'la foule', it has to be admitted that Verlaine in the final years preceding his death in 1896 was not the figure he had been, and the public could almost

¹ In the unlikely event of any reader not being thoroughly familiar with *Ubu Roi* and its repercussions, reference should be made to Keith Beaumont, *Alfred Jarry: Ubu Roi*, Critical Guides to French Texts, London: Grant & Cutler, 1987.

² The 'r' was used in Henri Morin's *La Chasse au Polyèdre*, in Alfred Jarry, *Ubu Intime*, Romillé: Folle Avoine, 1985, pp.43–77 (partial text).

have been forgiven for ignoring him. As Bloy put it: 'Pauvre grand Verlaine!' (*Journal* I, 26 April 1893). It is very likely that Jarry would have met Verlaine through his literary contacts, as the poet frequented both Mallarmé (whose career he had helped launch with *Les Poètes maudits*) and to a lesser degree the *Mercure*. However, it is possible that Jarry may have encountered Verlaine somewhat earlier, as in late 1892 Verlaine held his alcoholic court in Viravaud's bistro in the rue Saint-Jacques, close to the flat shared by Jarry and his mother on the boulevard de Port-Royal and to Jarry's infamous 'Calvaire du Trucidé' nearby.¹

As in the case of the *Illuminations*, this is a work which needs no introduction here other than to examine possible motivations for Jarry's choice, and again Jarry has selected an uncontroversial work for a *littérateur* of his period. This is not to say that *Sagesse* is a thoughtless choice, as there are some provocative subtleties surrounding this *livre pair*. The edition used here is the Pléiade *Œuvres Poétiques Complètes* of Verlaine (1962), but references will be given to the numbers of the poems, to facilitate use of other editions.

While the choice of Verlaine is unadventurous, Jarry's decision to choose a collection published in 1880, rather than a more recent volume, goes against the general pattern of Faustroll's library, where Jarry often chooses the most recent work by an *auteur pair*. As in the case of *La Princesse des ténèbres*, a choice breaking this pattern attenuates the inevitable charge of sycophancy (not of course so strong with a deceased author) and also obliges us to seek particular points of relevance in the book selected. With *Sagesse*, there is an inescapable link between the emotions expressed by Verlaine and events in Jarry's life. We have already noted how Jarry and Fargue's relationship appeared to ape that of Verlaine and Rimbaud, and it is a matter of record that it too ended on bad terms (though without firearms), the rupture being reflected in Jarry's *Haldern-ablou*. Similarly, the anguish over past vices that leads to new strength in *Sagesse* is associated with the relationship with Rimbaud and its violent end. This led to Verlaine's imprisonment, during which he wrote much of the collection; this parallel surely has a role in Jarry's choice of a Verlaine *livre pair* that was almost twenty years old. We should also note that the character of the poet's new-found strength is religious, recalling the devotional aspects of the Bloy and Elskamp *livres pairs*, to say nothing of the choice of St Luke; discussion of this aspect of *Sagesse* will figure in Part II.

The extrapolation made from Verlaine for the pataphysical voyage around Paris is a peculiarly subtle one:

¹ Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, p.38.

De Verlaine, des voix asymptotes à la mort.

Jarry refers to *Sagesse* I, XIX, ‘Voix de l’Orgueil...’, a poem written in England in the summer of 1875, in which Verlaine makes borrowings from Tennyson.¹ In its opposition of past vices and new strength, the poem is a thematic microcosm of *Sagesse*. The four internal voices – ‘Voix de l’Orgueil’, ‘Voix de la Haine’, ‘Voix de la Chair’ and ‘Voix d’Autrui’ – challenge the poet’s redemption. However, his inner strength and faith allow him to exorcise these morbid voices:

Mourez parmi la voix que la Prière emporte
 Au ciel, dont elle seule ouvre et ferme la porte
 Et dont elle tiendra les sceaux au dernier jour,
 Mourez parmi la voix que la Prière apporte,
 Mourez parmi la voix terrible de l’Amour!

Jarry’s vocabulary adds subtleties ignored by previous work on the extrapolations. Jarry describes the voices as ‘asymptotes à la mort’, introducing a geometric term, one which he had himself used in the 1894 article ‘Etre et Vivre’ (OCBP I, p.343). An asymptote is ‘a line which approaches nearer and nearer to a given curve, but does not meet it within a finite distance’ (OED). So in finite terms it is essentially a parallel line, and thus gives a veiled reference to *Parallèlement*, a later Verlaine collection dealing with carnal love – including homosexual love. In 1901 Jarry reviewed an edition of *Parallèlement* illustrated by Bonnard (OCBP II, pp.607–608), and refers to the collection in the 1901 *Almanach du Père Ubu* with two Bonnard drawings (entitled *Parallèlement*) of Ubu at his easel making parallel lines into lovers. Ubu tells his Conscience of the problems that parallel lines have caused him:

J’ai fait un traité de géométrie qui a tout d’abord, et comme il convenait, été approuvé par M. Bérenger; mais M. Bérenger n’a plus été de mon avis quand j’ai énoncé ce théorème, que *pour reproduire deux parallèles, il fallait en faire des horizontales*, en d’autres termes, *les faire coucher ensemble*. Il s’est écrié que je prostituais Euclide et m’a lancé-z-à la porte. (OCBP I, pp.591–92)

A more serious echo raised by the concept of the asymptote is the permanence of the voices assaulting the poet. As asymptotes to death (the geometry and algebra featured in *Faustroll* make it quite reasonable for death to be regarded as a geometric quantity), the strict implication added by Jarry to Verlaine’s poem is that the fearsome voices, ‘mourantes que vous êtes’, never quite die under the onslaught of prayer and love; the torment and remorse cannot be exorcised definitively.

¹ V.P. Underwood, *Verlaine et l’Angleterre*, Paris: Nizet, 1956, p.242.

26. Verhaeren, *Les Campagnes hallucinées*

Jarry's command of the alphabet lets him down momentarily in placing Verlaine ahead of Verhaeren; the error is not repeated in the list of extrapolations.

Emile Verhaeren (1855–1916) is the last of the three Belgian *auteurs pairs*; although his career was not confined to Symbolism, he was more than sympathetic to the movement in the 1890s and championed Symbolist work in his critical writings; for instance Verhaeren gave an enthusiastic review of the published text of *Ubu Roi* in *L'Art Moderne* for 19 July 1896, in which he showed a thorough comprehension of the play, and particularly of its use of the puppet aesthetic.¹ It is quite possible that Jarry and Verhaeren met; Verhaeren took holidays at Knokke, near Gustave Kahn's property at Sint Anna which Jarry is known to have visited, and the two writers could also have met during Verhaeren's visits to Paris. He spent much of 1895 there, a period when Jarry remained active in literary circles despite being nominally in the army. Verhaeren was on friendly terms with Mallarmé, and also mixed with the *Mercure* circle – Vallette republished two of his early collections (*Les Flamandes* and *Les Moines*) in 1895.²

Les Campagnes hallucinées appeared in 1893.³ The edition used here is *Les Campagnes hallucinées/Les Villes tentaculaires*, Poésie/Gallimard, 1982. Where variants occur in the poems to be quoted, this edition supplies them and they will be used here rather than the final state of the text, in order to give the version known to Jarry.

Jarry is unusual among readers of Verhaeren in that he takes *Les Campagnes hallucinées* without *Les Villes tentaculaires*, the collection to which it is often seen as little more than a prelude. These *recueils* are unusual among avant-garde poetry of the time in that they are not particularly abstract; the two collections deal respectively with rural depopulation and expanding cities. Specifying *Les Campagnes hallucinées* separately has the effect of lessening its political impact. In 1891, after emerging from a period of psychological crisis, Verhaeren discovered socialism and became politically active; P. Mansell Jones describes *Les Campagnes hallucinées* as an expression of the discontent with the modern world that he acquired

¹ Reproduced in full by Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, pp.219–21.

² A. Mabile de Poncheville, *Vie de Verhaeren*, Paris: Mercure de France, 1953, pp.321–24.

³ First published in Brussels by Deman; subsequent printings include its appearance in vol. 1 of *Œuvres*, 9 vols, Mercure de France, 1912–33 and Geneva: Slatkine, 1977.

from his political associates.¹ This attitude is self-evident from the blackness of the poems, the whole collection having an apparent debt to one of the classics of political poetry, Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*. However, the political message is not fully defined until *Les Villes tentaculaires*, and the earlier collection, taken on its own, has a character that tends to be stifled by its conventional association with *Les Villes tentaculaires*.

Les Campagnes hallucinées involves psychological as well as political perspectives. The 'Chansons de fou' that punctuate the collection are wild, demented pieces conjuring up the derangement of the insane majority of the decimated rural population.² The sane have left for the cities, where there is a semblance of prosperity. The mad attempt to act like the sane, but their efforts only create a bizarre atmosphere of terminal decadence in the face of poverty, which reaches its height in 'La Kermesse' (*Campagnes*, pp.59–61);³ the *kermesse* is set up in the time-honoured manner, complete with charlatan and barrel-organ, but it is very different from the joyous *kermesses* of Elskamp's *Enluminures*, as there are no villagers left to join in the dance:

Et seuls dansent aux carrefours,
Jupons gonflés et sabots lourds,
Deux pauvres fous avec deux folles.
(*Campagnes*, p.61)

In an artistic tradition that values *Maldoror*, the mad are prime material for poetry. Indeed, this is the approach that leads René Golstein to the conclusion that *Les Campagnes hallucinées* represents the only moment at which Verhaeren can truly be regarded as a Symbolist;⁴ the poet's career passed through several phases and movements, and he could certainly have been classed as a Parnassian some years earlier. Even at the point when he composed *Les Campagnes*, he could not have been regarded as a pure Symbolist after the manner of Kahn; as Robert Frickx has noted, Belgian poets such as Elskamp and Verhaeren stand out from allied French poets of the period by their uncompromisingly personal approach to

¹ P. Mansell Jones, *Verhaeren*, Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957, p.31.

² It appears that these poems date from 1889 or earlier, from the period when Verhaeren's sanity was at risk. See Mabile de Poncheville, *Vie de Verhaeren*, p.281, and L. Charles-Baudouin, *Le Symbole chez Verhaeren*, Geneva: Mongenet, 1924, p.157.

³ Enid Starkie, *Les Sources du lyrisme dans la Poésie d'Emile Verhaeren*, Paris: Boccard, 1927, p.81.

⁴ René Golstein, *Emile Verhaeren: La Vie et l'œuvre, l'évolution des idées*, Paris: La Pensée Latine, 1924, p.67.

poetry, and to the tenets of Symbolism in particular.¹ The individualism of *Les Campagnes hallucinées* lies in its refusal to neglect the real world and the problems of the common man; Socialism and Naturalism play parts in *Les Campagnes hallucinées* that cannot be ignored, giving it an underlying rationale even when viewed in isolation, and marking it out as a work at odds with the consciously élitist art of Mallarmé and his followers.

Thus the purposeful world of *Les Campagnes hallucinées* is very far from that of Lautréamont or of Rimbaud, where the poetic expression involves an underlying irrationality; certainly Verhaeren's poems describe irrationality, but it has to be accepted that they are, precisely, describing it rather than expressing it as part of the poetic persona. Take, for example, the poem 'Pèlerinage' (*Campagnes*, pp.36–39), which follows aged peasants on a mysterious sunset excursion, and observes their gruesome immolation of a live cat. This 'Chanson de fou' mentality, very similar to that of the obsessive example presented immediately afterwards (*Campagnes*, pp.40–41: the madman has an obsession with torturing rats), shows the countryside in the process of self-destruction. Failed crops are followed by dementia among the peasants and a slide towards paganism and irrational solutions; the only escape is to the cities.

Such a portrait of the countryside is intended to provoke the reader both to pity and a will to change matters. These are not necessarily the emotions that drive Jarry to select *Les Campagnes hallucinées*, as there may be a paradox in the choice of this *livre pair*. Where Verhaeren shows a real emotional attachment to the rural scene, one often gains the impression that Jarry was no lover of the countryside and the petty provincial life it encompassed in his eyes. By the age of thirteen he was reacting against it with the adolescent spleen of 'Saint-Brieuc des Choux':

A Saint-Brieuc des Choux tout est plus ou moins bête,
Et les bons habitants ont tous perdu la tête.
A deux lieues est la mer, à deux pas les fumiers [...]
(OCBP I, p.25)

The voyage of *Faustroll* shows resistance towards physically leaving Paris: the pataphysician undertakes a marvellous journey to liquid islands and other dimensions, but only in the realm of 'Ethernité' does he finally leave the city. Not until his last work on *La Dragonne* is Jarry prepared to treat the countryside with sympathy in his writing, through the unfinished novel's evocations of the locations along the Seine which had become Jarry's home for much of the year. For *Faustroll* he is even prepared to move

¹ In *Littérature française de Belgique*, Sherbrooke, Quebec: Naman, 1979, p.13.

certain locations into Paris, to allow visits: Pont-Aven becomes a Faustrollian island to allow a visit to the artist Emile Bernard (OCBP I, pp.678–80); and Sint Anna (for Kahn) becomes the north-east of Paris (OCBP I, p.684), rather than simply lying north-eastwards; Jarry is extending the boundaries of Paris to encompass a friend normally resident there. Conversely, the *Phalanstère* at Corbeil, where Jarry spent much of 1898, scarcely features in his writing, other than correspondence about domestic arrangements.¹ In this context, there may be an element of sarcasm in the choice of *Les Campagnes hallucinées*; while the compliment to Verhaeren is genuine enough, we may also be observing Jarry gloating over the perceived decline of the countryside into grotesque insanity.

Jarry's extrapolation from Verhaeren refers to the conclusion of *Les Campagnes hallucinées*, the poem 'La Bêche' (*Campagnes*, pp.79–81):

De Verhaeren, la croix faite par la bêche aux quatre fronts de l'horizon.

Throughout this poem Verhaeren asks the reader and/or the peasants leaving for the city in the previous poem, 'Le Départ', to make a cross. This starts as a call for pious recognition of the suffering endured in the countryside:

– Fais une croix sur le sol jaune
Avec la longue main,
Toi qui t'en vas, par le chemin –

As the poem progresses the cross develops into a call for action to arrest the decline:

– Fais une croix sur le demain,
Définitive, avec ta main –

The final call is to create a standing symbol of rural decline and the demise of agriculture:

– Fais une croix aux quatre coins des horizons.
Car c'est la fin des champs et c'est la fin des soirs
Le deuil au fond des cieux tourne, comme des meules,
Ses soleils noirs;

¹ The *Phalanstère* at Corbeil – admittedly a semi-industrial and not entirely rural setting even in 1898 – was one of the locations where Jarry worked on *Faustroll*. The house was rented between Spring 1898 and January 1899 by the Vallettes, Jarry, Pierre Quillard, André-Ferdinand Hérold and Marcel Collière. It is evoked briefly in the 1899 *Almanach* (OCBP I, pp.540–41), and at a much greater distance, Jarry's bicycle races against (stopping) trains between Paris and Corbeil contribute to the 'Course des dix mille milles' in *Le Sumâle* (notes, OCBP II, p.783).

Et des larves éclosent seules
Aux flancs pourris des femmes qui sont mortes.
A l'orient du pré, dans le sol rêche,
Sur le cadavre épars des vieux labours,
Domine là, et pour toujours,
Plaque de fer clair, latte de bois froid,
La bêche.

The spade, set in the centre of the flatlands of Belgium, is the wayside shrine to the passing of the way of life that prevents the *campagne* becoming *hallucinée*; whether this passing is good or bad is something on which Jarry and Verhaeren may not necessarily have agreed, but the symbol remains visual and powerful in its own right.

27. Verne, *Le Voyage au Centre de la Terre*

Jules Verne wrote enormously successful scientific novels, and in an amendment to this tradition Jarry created the 'roman néo-scientifique' (OCBP I, p.655) in the form of the *Gestes et Opinions*. Examination of Verne's text through the optic of *Faustroll* gives an idea of just how much weight the prefix 'néo-' really carries. In 1898 Verne was living out his last years in failing health, enjoying a life of civic dignity in Amiens. *Le Voyage au Centre de la Terre* dates from 1864¹ and remains one of Verne's best known works. The edition used here is the undated current Livre de Poche printing, which features the original illustrations by Riou.

I believe that there are strong reasons to regard this final text as a third joker in the pack, following at some distance the texts of Desbordes-Valmore and Florian; and that, if so, it is the most significant of these cases. Where the seventh and ninth *livres pairs* were personal and in some ways capricious choices on Jarry's part, the twenty-seventh is a text very likely to be familiar to the reader, and there is definite evidence, both explicit and understated, that Jarry does not value it as highly as many readers past and present. This evidence has much to do with the pataphysical approach to scientific knowledge and investigation laid out in *Faustroll*.

It is easy to be distracted from such aspects by a gratuitous allusion to the novel during the sea-borne escape of Père and Mère Ubu from Poland at the end of *Ubu Roi*. There is a definite echo within their journey of observations made by Verne's narrator:

¹ First edition by Hetzel.

Une heure après, la capitale du Danemark semblait s'enfoncer dans les flots éloignés et la *Valkyrie* rasait la côte d'Elseneur. Dans la disposition nerveuse où je me trouvais, je m'attendais à voir l'ombre d'Hamlet errant sur la terrasse légendaire. (*Voyage*, pp.73–74)

And in *Ubu Roi*, as the Ubus and their surviving *palotins* make good their escape across the North Sea:

MERE UBU: Ah! quel délice de revoir bientôt la douce France, nos vieux amis et notre château de Mondragon!

PERE UBU: Eh! nous y serons bientôt. Nous arrivons à l'instant sous le château d'Elseneur. (OCBP I, pp.397–98)

Also, the comic nautical directions given by the captain in *Ubu Roi* are vaguely reminiscent of the 'grande largue et toutes voiles dehors' of Verne's Captain Bjarne, their debt to the storm in Rabelais's *Quart Livre* notwithstanding.

But *Faustroll* is not *Ubu Roi*. And perhaps the clearest aspect of this difficult novel is Jarry's attempt to put forward methods of perception and understanding that are radically different from those of inductive reasoning, and which give access to 'un univers que l'on peut voir et que peut-être l'on doit voir à la place du traditionnel' (OCBP I, p.668). These are the methods of pataphysics, and they are meant to lead the reader to dimensions which are profound in a quite different sense from the subterranean journey of Verne's novel.

Le Voyage au Centre de la Terre is mainly intended for consumption by the young, to instil scientific knowledge and a sense for investigative deduction.¹ As a result it is a paragon of simplicity, with a linear plot holding no real mysteries beyond the deciphering of directions left by a sixteenth-century Icelandic sage, Arne Saknussemm. These allow Verne's three explorers to enter the bowels of the Earth through an extinct volcano in Iceland, discover various marvels and then be thrown out of a live volcano in Sicily without actually having reached the centre of the globe. Although Verne's explorers discover many wonders, it should be clear that by virtue of its simplicity this is a strange bedfellow for some of the intense, transcendent literature encountered in Faustroll's library. Not that *Le Voyage* is devoid of conscious links with artistic literature; for instance, Daniel Compère has noted apparent references to works by two

¹ The point is demonstrated in Isabelle Jan, 'Le Voyage au Centre de la Terre est-il un livre pour enfants?', in Colloque d'Amiens (11–13 novembre 1977), *Jules Verne, écrivain du XIX^e siècle*, Paris: Minard, 1978, I, pp.81–88.

other *auteurs pairs*, Poe and Homer.¹ But as a journey of the imagination it cannot remotely compare with the lands and dimensions visited – and alluded to at various points by Jarry – in the *Odyssey* or Rabelais's *Quart Livre* and *Cinquième Livre*.

However, it is the question of method which shows a profound division between Verne and Jarry. Verne's explorers, and by extension readers, carry out their investigation in a manner devalued in Faustroll's initial definition of pataphysics:

La science actuelle se fonde sur le principe de l'induction: la plupart des hommes ont vu le plus souvent tel phénomène précéder ou suivre tel autre, et en concluent qu'il en sera toujours ainsi. D'abord ceci n'est exact que le plus souvent, dépend d'un point de vue, et est codifié selon la commodité, et encore! (OCBP I, p.669)

It becomes all the more evident that Jarry is making a critique of Verne's linear, inductive science when we consider *Faustroll's* major borrowing from *Le Voyage au Centre de la Terre* – which seems to have gone unnoticed despite its scale. Very simply, the outline characterisation of the three participants in the pataphysical voyage is built upon the framework of the three intrepid explorers of *Le Voyage au Centre de la Terre*. Faustroll, like Otto Lidenbrock, is an innovatory scientist who moves in mysterious ways and seeks to explore aspects of inner space, but Verne's scientist's exploration of it is far more prosaic than that of Faustroll in the chapter 'Faustroll plus petit que Faustroll' (OCBP I, pp.670–71). The bailiff Panmuphle resembles Axel Lidenbrock in that both are narrator figures to whom great and unexpected marvels are revealed. And the monkey Bosse-de-Nage is not only a satire on Christian Beck, but also an echo of Hans, 'personnage grave, flegmatique et silencieux' (*Voyage*, p.93), the solid Icelander who accompanies the two Germans. Bosse-de-Nage 'ne savait de parole humaine que *Ha Ha*' (apart from a few Belgian words, OCBP I, pp.671–72²), and Hans never utters more than a few syllables at a time, apparently in Danish and Icelandic, although it has been demonstrated that his words are in fact Swedish.³

We have seen the literary debts of *Faustroll* revealing themselves throughout the list; now Jarry brings us down to earth with a bump, by

¹ Daniel Compère, *Un voyage imaginaire de Jules Verne: 'Voyage au Centre de la Terre'*, Paris: Minard, 1977, pp.25–28, 57.

² The 'Ha ha!' also has roots in the pilot's boy in *The Ancient Mariner*.

³ Compère, *Un voyage imaginaire*, pp.50–51. Whether Verne intended to make some obscure point or could only find a Swedish dictionary is a mystery.

making a major borrowing from a 'joker' entry which he can reasonably expect his reader to know, where this could not be assumed in the cases of Desbordes-Valmore or Florian. And, in this case, there is understated but clear criticism of an established, popular text which may appear to have superficial similarities to Jarry's novel. Like his namesake by initials, AJ in Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (whose repartee often refers to future events), Alfred Jarry is demonstrating that he has a gift for 'the delayed squelch',¹ and the surprise value of the use that Jarry makes of Verne's characters offers one justification for the choice of this last *livre pair*. The function of this almost facetious borrowing is not unlike that of the 'r' extrapolated from *Ubu Roi*, which distorts and refutes the reader's powers of interpretative perception. With a major borrowing from a well-known work accessible to all (though Jarry's attitude to 'la foule' is only too well known), the notion of parity among the *livres pairs* is ostensibly forced upon the reader who has ventured this far – or even upon a reader who, being familiar with Verne, has glanced at the list. The matter is complicated by the inherent artificiality of the whole notion of parity, a notion which Jarry appears to debunk still further in his final extrapolation from a *livre pair*:

De Verne, les deux lieues et demie d'écorce terrestre.

If Jarry wished his reader to give *Le Voyage au Centre de la Terre* more serious consideration, thus emphasising genuine parity, the novel is hardly short of striking, original images; Jarry could select an image such as an underground cathedral of rock, the mica that Axel sees as a giant diamond, or a plain of fossilised bones. Instead he chooses a point in the journey a relatively small distance below the surface (for the author of *Vingt Mille Lieues sous les mers*) reached on 10 July and estimated to be thirty leagues south-east of Reykjavik (*Voyage*, p.197). This point marks a division in the journey, where after a long trek more or less on the level a 'puits assez effrayant' appears, and Otto Lidenbrock announces that it is the start of the real descent. Specifying this banal early point on the downward journey suggests that the reader is not expected to take *Le Voyage au Centre de la Terre* at face value; indeed the use of the expression 'écorce terrestre', furnishing rock to go with the tunnelling machinery from Darien's *Le Voleur*, is provocative and demonstrates the point further. Verne's novel 'proves' that the centre of the Earth is cold, therefore no division into core, mantle and crust exists in his terms, whereas Jarry's

¹ William Burroughs, *The Naked Lunch*, 4th edn, London: Corgi, 1963, p.167.

extrapolation subtly refuses to engage with this scientific aspect of *Le Voyage*. Jarry's only explicit reference to such geophysical theory comes with Faustroll's observations in 'Du Soleil, solide froid' (OCBP I, pp.727–28), although the immediate reference is to the theories of Lord Kelvin – Faustroll's notes are in the form of one of his telepathic letters to the English scientist.

Observations

The conclusion of the *livres pairs* with *Le Voyage au Centre de la Terre* makes it tempting to assume that we have just understood the punchline of a joke, the butt of which is the reader. However, we have not been fooled; we have travelled through a considerable range of literature appreciated, for a variety of reasons, by an author who allows us an unusually broad insight into his reading. On the journey we have encountered a great deal of work of impressive quality, as well as more idiosyncratic choices and readings whose relevance is best restricted to a study of Jarry as an individual. The fact that several of the more significant *auteurs pairs* do not feature in today's general reading of the *Belle Epoque* reflects changes in taste, rather than any particular absence of talent; artistic ability and durability do not necessarily go hand in hand. Through our introduction to Faustroll's library we are beginning to glimpse not just minutiae of interest to Jarryists, but also certain aspects of the literary orientation of the period, located by contemporary judgments and practice.

The remainder of this study is devoted to aspects of late Symbolist literary practice, as highlighted essentially by the *livres pairs* and the work of Jarry; naturally the examination cannot claim to be exhaustive, and the fields selected are determined by particular aspects that are either recurrent or that I have found particularly prominent while working through the texts of the *livres pairs*, and of the contemporary works in particular. These choices are of course subjective, and others will no doubt identify other common strands, as may be expected within such a large and fertile sample of texts; I have also chosen to concentrate on the contemporary *livres pairs* rather than those from earlier ages, for the simple reason that I have found their relevance to be underestimated in previous work on Jarry.

Faustroll's library gives us a means of access to perspectives on literature that are inherently biased towards the artistic views of Alfred Jarry, and the areas highlighted by these books serve to locate Jarry's work among that of his contemporaries, at the same time as letting us explore a certain portion of his literary environment. However, a surprisingly coherent view will emerge of broader, inherently Symbolist approaches to

literature in the areas to be examined (again using Symbolism as the acknowledged title of a particular group of individuals without necessarily involving the use of symbol). This is a study both of Jarry and of the literary context to which the *livres pairs* give access – indeed they positively invite us inside. It will be seen that there is no real opposition between Jarry and the context from which others have sought to dissociate his work.

Jarry will always stand out as an individual. His character and biography ensure this before we even begin to consider his writing in any detail. However, he is simultaneously an individualist and a perceptive member of a movement – however loosely defined – who adopts and modifies certain of its themes and devices as they manifest themselves in the pages of the *livres pairs*, aspects which Jarry uses to create literature which is highly idiosyncratic as a finished product, but which is not as such divergent from the attitudes of his literary peer group, particularly when the convention of nonconformity is taken into account. We will see examples of how Jarry serves a function of synthesis among his contemporaries, and thus see that his literary tastes merit the careful consideration that I am attempting to provide.

What to make of the extrapolations, the ‘petit nombre des élus’? Taken globally, they offer a surreal dimension-bending image as they sit in Faustroll’s boat, which despite being only twelve metres long is obliged to contain impossibly bulky items such as the Earth’s crust, as well as the pataphysician and his travelling companions. It cannot be said that any overall pattern has emerged; indeed, these apparently rather haphazard images and beings are not all good indications of Jarry’s attitude to a particular work – all the less so as some refer to completely different books. Even without any overall pattern to the extrapolations, however, it is plain that Jarry’s preparation of them shows a general sense of precision, as reflected in the careful use of a verb from Régnier that expands the terms of Jarry’s reference, or in the implications added by a single telling adjective in the case of Verlaine – a sense of precision that belies the potentially arbitrary notion of making such a list, dissociated as it seems to be from the main narrative of *Faustroll*. Two particular groupings can be discerned. One is of items potentially of physical use on Faustroll’s voyage, such as a duck to eat (Desbordes-Valmore), a wind in the sails (Rimbaud) and the many hands to row the *as* – and even without a positive identification, the images from Mendès fall into this group. The other group appears more metaphysical, and involves extrapolations such as those from St Luke (the Devil, also present in *Saint Cado*, Grabbe’s *Scherz*

and Rachilde's *Princesse des ténèbres*), Rimbaud (antagonism to God) and Verlaine (the voices in the mind). The metaphysical dimension will be our first field for extended consideration, as peculiarities of belief and associated matters are often to the fore in *Belle Époque* writing, and not least within the *livres pairs*.

PART II

RECURRING THEMES

Faith and Esoterica: Symbolist Thought

Part I of this study, the survey of the thirty-four *livres pairs*, has provided us with the raw material for a broader investigation of the world of Symbolist literature, as well as introducing certain authors peripheral to the movement (such as Bloy and Péladan) in whom Jarry takes an interest. Naturally, the selectivity of Jarry's list is a limiting factor in the choice of areas to be discussed, and I am not attempting to present the *livres pairs* as some kind of understated *art poétique*, but there is a definite structure and progression governing the chapters still to come. In the course of this second part, there are a number of *livres pairs* that will feature more than once, examined from different but complementary perspectives, which will help to establish aspects of Jarry's literary environment that influence and inform his own work, and help to relate it to that of various contemporaries. This first chapter introduces aspects of thought that are particularly salient in the contemporary *auteurs pairs*, and that also play an important part in grasping the intellectual flavour of the period. The final chapter outlines a distinctive and more practical literary outcome of the Symbolist trends witnessed by the *livres pairs*, in the development of a highly individual view of creative humanity, which has a clear relationship to the areas of thought to be examined in this chapter.

It will have become plain that we are dealing with a library that shows tendencies towards Christian faith, and that also leads beyond a fascination with the strange, curious or mysterious, towards the domain of esotericism. The observations on esotericism in this chapter are intended not so much to give a general analysis of the many and varied types of esotericism practised in 1890s France, but rather to illustrate the character of esotericism in the *Belle Epoque* writing to which Faustroll's library draws our attention. The esoteric references to be discussed are interesting in that they tend to play upon the common fascination with esoterica, rather than delving into any kind of authentic occultism; the literary uses to which such references are put set the tone for various aspects of Symbolist practice, some of which will emerge again later.

Esoteric Themes and Treatments

Esotericism as defined by a dictionary is a broad but simple concept: that of particular knowledge being available only to the initiate, thus making the acquisition of knowledge dependent upon other, prior knowledge conveyed in the initiation process. By implication, esoteric knowledge is veiled from the masses, and is the preserve of a select few. Rather paradoxically, the knowledge ceases to be arcane and becomes exoteric once the initiate knows the concepts or practices that allow access to the hidden knowledge. Thus the appeal of the esoteric is twofold: it has an appeal to those who actually wish to become initiates, and more importantly there is also a powerful appeal of suggestion – the non-initiate is drawn towards arcana by the very fact that they are secret. This appeal may generate positive or negative reactions, the latter exemplified by the widespread public concerns (justified or otherwise) that still accompany cults, sects and secret societies. In contrast, a number of *auteurs pairs* play upon the more positive and productive aspects of the fascination of hidden knowledge, and offer images of literary esotericism that are very different from the production of occultist authors – of whom there were plenty in the period, but whom Jarry, our guide through 1890s literature, ignores when compiling Faustroll's library.

The esoteric interests that we may glimpse in the *livres pairs* are not the literary output of any kind of secret societies – with one partial exception, who deserves and demands a special section of this chapter – but are in fact the outcome of genuine interest in the artistic possibilities offered by reference to unusual and unfamiliar material, and have less to do with notions of initiation than we might expect. The spirit of interest in esoterica is captured by Gustave Kahn in his novella *Jordon*, published in the *Revue Blanche* in January 1898. It forms an interesting corollary to Huysmans's portrayal of dark deeds in *Là-Bas*, through its fictionalised portrait of spiritualist circles. The writer Jordon is preparing to attend a seance:

En effet, Jordon ne savait pas trop où aller. Rentrer, c'était loin, et puis, après un passable déjeuner, il éprouvait une petite excitation qui eût peut-être favorisé le travail, mais lui paraissait aussi propre à améliorer la flânerie. Pourtant le travail... Il coupa la poire en deux et se promit de se diriger vers la Bibliothèque où l'on peut atténuer une recherche non pénible avec les joies du farniente, et il se documenterait un peu sur la dématérialisation, et ses trucs, chose possible, surtout en ce lieu; car, il le savait, – par quelle opération magique, on n'est pas fixé, – les livres qui relatent les gloires de l'ésotérisme transcendantal se trouvent partout en piles et ceux qui

démontent les expériences et falsifications sont à peu près introuvables. Ce doit être les spirites qui achètent et qui cèlent.¹

The picture this extract gives is an intriguing one, showing the reading of esoterica as a fashionable pursuit rather than a shady occupation for mysterious figures, and a pursuit for which the Bibliothèque Nationale would inevitably be a centre. Jarry is known to have spent time there – the heating provided was in part responsible for this – and the staff included some notably enlightened seekers of obscure items, including Remy de Gourmont (until 1891). And at the *Mercur de France*, where Gourmont was a leading light, esotericism was definitely in fashion; indeed part of the journal's review section was devoted to it, edited by Edouard Dubus.

The popularisation of the esoteric appears, in the first instance, to raise real problems of categorisation and terminology: how do we decide when a work, theme or motif ceases to be arcane and becomes merely unusual, or vice versa? This picture becomes more confusing still when we take into account the fact that some of the authors held in high esteem for their esoteric powers were already popular by virtue of their artistic prowess; for instance Péladan regarded Wagner and Dante as the esoteric artists *par excellence*, yet it would hardly be fair to see esotericism as the basis of their popularity. However, to worry unduly about this problem would be to misunderstand the type of fascination we are dealing with, as it creates literature in which there is, paradoxically, a shortage of references to authentic esoteric doctrines recognisable to the period reader. This factor is compounded by the process whereby various branches of esoteric thought were being re-packaged, in less esoteric forms, and thus becoming secularised towards the end of the nineteenth century.

A case in point, illustrated by an *auteur pair*, is gnosticism. Traditionally, gnostic religion has been regarded as definitely esoteric, if not indeed heretical. Yet at the end of the nineteenth century it had spread its wings a little, in watered-down versions with new names, Swedenborgism and Theosophy, both of which gave great credence to the intuitive religious experience that is the foundation of all gnosticism, and can be related to the concept of initiation. Many authors and thinkers took an interest in these branches of philosophico-religious thinking, and there was a simultaneous lack of adverse comment – indeed Jarry gives some evidence of sympathy with Swedenborgian thought.² The subtle pervasiveness such

¹ *La Revue Blanche*, XV (Jan.–April 1898), 96–97, readily available in Slatkine Reprints.

² OCBP I, pp.399, 796, 1024, all concerning the German philosopher Fechner, alias Misès.

themes can acquire as they become de-esotericised can be seen in Catulle Mendès, who gave a sign of the times in his generally dreary novel *Le Chercheur de tares* (1898), by nicknaming one of a group of seven friends (all known only by nicknames) 'Swedenborg'. This character, a fleeting presence in the text, expounds a few vaguely neo-Platonic ideas about resemblances between Heaven and Earth that are in tune with Swedenborgian thought.¹ It is a sign of the times that such matters and references, potentially heretical to some, could be freely depicted in the atmosphere of *bonhomie* that pervades the early part of *Le Chercheur de tares* – and it says something for Mendès's integrity as an author that he does not press his own principles any further within the novel, though in earlier works he did so with some effect, notably in the visionary poem *Hespérus* (1872).

Le Chercheur de tares uses genuine esoteric material of a kind, but makes little of the fact that it is esoteric; this is an approach rather different from that of the contemporary works selected by Jarry, which are often at pains to demonstrate that they allude to esotericism. An introduction to this approach may be found in the work of Jarry's friend Gustave Kahn. While Mendès can be reasonably subtle when he wishes (and we have yet to deal with the contrasting use of the esoteric in *Gog*), Kahn's *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* offers an intensely challenging approach to esoterica that not only serves as an exemplary case of Symbolist technique, but also begins to lead us towards questions of faith. The introduction to the *Conte* given in Part I stressed the pervasive power of mystery within the tale and its technique. A major aspect of this mystery concerns Kahn's treatment of legendary material and the levels of suggestion that this treatment is able to generate in the finished product, creating some of the *Conte's* most curious and memorable moments. It would be a difficult book for a reader without some grasp of its references, yet an educated approach makes it even harder to follow; the reader is forever looking up references, not so much to find out who or what they are as to try to work out why Kahn is using them in the way he does.

In *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*, we frequently come across features and characters that are familiar from legend, often from the Bible – but in Kahn's treatment they are in no way bound by received images of them. The best example of this is the leading character, Balthazar; his name is commonly recognised as one of the Three Wise Men in the Nativity story, and little further attention is generally paid to him, except to note that he

¹ Catulle Mendès, *Le Chercheur de tares*, Paris: Charpentier, 1898, pp.20–21.

is normally portrayed with dark skin. Kahn not only adds flesh to the bones that legend provides, but dares to alter the basic story with which we are all familiar, for instance by changing the place and circumstances of the three magi's meeting with the Holy Family, although he does this without detracting from the value of the meeting. In Kahn's version Balthazar recalls the meeting as happening not in Bethlehem but at El-Hissa, while he, Melchior and Gaspar were travelling to Lebanon, a journey from which they were dissuaded by the Holy Family's accounts of the events in Judea that had obliged them to flee into Egypt (*Conte*, pp.26–30).

The effect of this reworking is not so much to detract from faith in the literal truth of Scripture as to give new life to the legend, which becomes freed from the constraints of its familiar version and may thus be treated more like fiction than fact (fact accepted by habit) in the hands of an imaginative writer. This added flexibility makes it possible to weave several strands of legend together, as in the linking of a magus with the land of Sheba, the Wandering Jew and the Holy Grail, with all the echoes that they each bring with them. However great the abstraction in the settings of *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*, the result for the receptive reader is a world where legend can be as real as anything else (as in the power of the tales and memories in Balthazar's archives), where our belief in legend is actively encouraged, and where we can accept additions to it, such as a Wandering Magus.

Kahn's alterations to familiar legends have a further effect upon the reader: we are obliged to wonder where Kahn's extra detail has come from, as the overall effect suggests reference to an esoteric (in the strict sense of hidden) source. The strength of legend in the popular mind is such that we are always reluctant to accept amendments to it – for instance no amount of historical research will change the popular image of Robin Hood – and this reluctance is strongest of all in the case of religious writ and/or legend, which is where Kahn makes most of his alterations. We may, for instance, be disturbed by Kahn's decision to move the place of the meeting between the magi and the Holy Family, not so much because of any devotion to Scripture that we may have, but simply because it is not what we are used to. Nor are we used to reading expansive characterisations of Balthazar, or of Joseph of Arimathea. The reader may then try to find out where Kahn has found his information. The canonical Gospels are unforthcoming, and so are the Apocrypha, which stand at the border between simple obscurity and active esotericism, and other likely sources in Jewish or Islamic religion are no more helpful. The necessary conclusion is the one that

does Kahn the greatest credit – that the alterations are of his own invention. They are not vital to the plot of *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* or to any of the image systems that the book contains; Kahn's purpose is to set the reader thinking in unaccustomed ways, a practice that must be recognised as one of the foundations of Symbolism.

If the purpose of *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* is artistic and intellectual, what are we to make of the handling of esotericism in Mendès's *Gog*? We should not be unduly surprised to find esotericism used as a frame of reference in a novel by the former husband of the noted esotericist Judith Gautier. However, *Gog* follows a similar approach to *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* in that it invents its own esoteric precepts – though for quite different purposes. Perhaps the least predictable of the *livres pairs*, it contains subject matter that is deliberately made to appear esoteric; yet as far as can be determined, it is entirely of Mendès's invention. This is made particularly salient by the fact that *Gog* is anything but a model of subtlety in the mould of *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*.

Robert de la Harche's interview with the magus Métatron in the opening pages of the novel takes place in a tower built of stones brought from Babel by the giant Gog of Ezekiel 38, which Mendès quotes (Ezekiel 39, to which Mendès does not refer, prophesies the death of Gog; the figure reappears in Revelation 20, the source for his imprisonment in the novel). In an esoteric context there are numerous details that appear perfectly appropriate – for instance the giant's role as builder of the tower, along with his implied release from its base, or the mysteriously precise account of the whereabouts of the lost ante-Bible *Les Guerres de Jéhovah* (source of the revelation that Satan defeated God in combat, and that as a result the two have been inverted since before the Creation; *Gog* I, p.10). However, these precisions have no identifiable source. Certainly there are echoes: for instance, Gog's role in the building of the tower is reminiscent of the status accorded to Solomon and Hiram of Tyre, builders of the Temple, in the Masonic tradition,¹ and the inverted positions of God and Satan are little more than an extension of dualist theologies going back many centuries and known in many lands; in medieval France the Cathars had something similar in their notion of the Devil as *rex mundi*, leaving the soul as the domain of God.

The creation and use of the esoteric subject matter of *Gog* illustrate the secularisation of such material, as the novel's main motivation is

¹ It is known that Mendès was a Freemason; some years earlier he had made an unsuccessful attempt to recruit Guy de Maupassant. See André Vial, *Guy de Maupassant et l'Art du Roman*, Paris: Nizet, 1971, p.127.

political, creating a framework in which Mendès can make his perceived enemies appear ridiculous, within the satirical setting of a remodelled France. These enemies are the Church and Crown movement, which sought to restore both the monarchy and institutional Roman Catholicism in France. We have seen in Part I that the pseudo-esotericism of *Gog* turns Mendès's target into the definitive unholy alliance. The more direct, extravagant satire of the novel also shows a republic caught off its guard by a fake miracle, a lethargic republic lacking the energy and motivation to defend itself; in fact the republican faction simply does not appear, and it is only in this context that the crooks, whores and incapables who form the royalist camp have any chance of success. The fact that the sympathetic figure of the dying king espouses republican beliefs only serves to make the novel's political stance clearer, and marks an end to the royal line depicted, in an esoteric context, at the start of *Gog*.

Such an integration of weighty, if invented, esoteric matters into the worldly and political context of an often humorous novel is a further illustration of individualism in the literature highlighted by the *livres pairs*, and the fact that the technique comes from an author of Mendès's standing, with a substantial readership to please, makes it all the more deserving of recognition. Suggestion is the watchword here; *Gog* reveals no genuine esoteric secrets, but by suggesting that some type of esoteric interpretation pervades the plot, it operates in a similar manner to *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*, exploiting the power of the esoteric in the reader's mind. We always want to know more than we do, and no unknown is more frustrating than one which others have decided should remain veiled; thus Kahn's alterations to religious tradition, and Mendès's inverted theology with its detailed periphery, exert a particular fascination without any need for answers to be supplied. They are incomplete equations, questions without answers, and as such serve as relatively accessible uses of esoteric reference in literature, and exemplify its appeal in the *Belle Epoque*, exploiting the power of mystery without entering into the tangled issues and images of authentic esoterica.

The Gospel according to Mendès

Gog was not the only Mendès publication to blend esoteric reference with popular commercialism. It was not even the only such case in 1896; having developed one kind of esoterica for *Gog*, he delved into a more established source, the New Testament Apocrypha, to create an obscure

and extremely odd volume: *L'Évangile de l'Enfance de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ selon Saint-Pierre, mis en français par Catulle Mendès*. This is a luxurious in-folio with coloured illustrations by Carloz Schwabe, giving both Latin and French texts of a manuscript supposedly located by Mendès at the Abbey of St Wolfgang in Austria. Montague Rhodes James has demonstrated that, although the Latin includes some borrowings from the original Infancy Gospels (which will feature again later in this chapter), the text is a fake and, presumably, entirely composed by Mendès.¹ This curio forms a corollary to *Gog*, and further illustrates the potential uses of freshly composed pseudo-esoterica.

Attitudes to the Apocrypha are of course somewhat divided, just as the texts themselves are varied in character. While all are by definition non-canonical, some owe their exclusion from the New Testament to their gnostic touches, while others are manifestly fake and have less claim to specifically esoteric status. Yet the very title of the Mendès *Évangile*, claiming all the authority of St Peter, appears provocative and suggests a major 'discovery'. This impression is quickly dispelled by the sentimentality of the text. Take this example from the *Avant-Propos*:

ces historiettes merveilleuses [...] comme le Conte des Fées de la religion catholique – furent jadis contées sans doute, près des berceaux des futurs martyrs, par les premières mères chrétiennes.²

The *Évangile* is harmless, sickly even, and at times unpleasantly reminiscent of Desbordes-Valmore's *Contes et Scènes de la vie de famille*. It makes no real attempt to appear authentic, either in style or content; for instance it would take a blindly devoted reader to regard St Peter's preface (before Chapter and Verse begin) as in any sense convincing, as it is far too good to be true:

Nous, Pierre, sur laquelle Pierre sera édifiée l'Eglise, ayant maintes fois entendu la divine Marie faire des récits de l'unique fils en son premier âge [...]

Like most of Mendès's work, this bizarre yet innocuous text is intended for a broad market (the *Évangile* was marketed by the Editions de la Revue Illustrée). As Mendès was a Freemason and inherently anti-Catholic, it is hard not to see a satirical edge in his composition of a fake Gospel, but for the period consumer this aspect need not have been clear, as we are

¹ *The Apocryphal New Testament*, translated by Montague Rhodes James, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924, p.89; erroneously dates Mendès's publication as 1894 rather than 1896.

² *L'Évangile de l'Enfance de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ selon Saint-Pierre, mis en français par Catulle Mendès*, Paris: Armand Colin/Editions de la Revue Illustrée, 1896, unpaginated.

dealing with an author who also wrote for children. Yet the very commercialism of this volume seems to declare open season on unconventional areas of reference, and to some extent aligns its author with the cults of novelty and the unexpected that were common among those who classed themselves as Symbolists. The readiness of *Belle Epoque* writers to exploit such material is a significant element of Jarry's literary environment, and may be regarded as an influence upon his own eclecticism. However, this is certainly not to say that appreciation or acceptance of esotericism were universal.

Esoteric Tolerances

While admiring the ingenuity of Kahn and Mendès, we should note that they were edging on to controversial ground which could test the tolerance of some readers. For many, it was not yet even evident that the Freemasons had turned to the operative self-help of modern Masonry, and posed no great national or spiritual threat; genuine occult Freemasonry in France was effectively dead by the middle of the century.¹ However, the resistance to Freemasonry can illustrate similar points about the real position of the esoteric at the end of the century to those raised by use of esoteric allusions in works such as *Gog*. Take for instance this headlined item, found by chance, originating in *L'Autorité* of 15 April 1900:

LE COMLOT MAÇONNIQUE
CONTRE LA FRANCE.
CONTRE LA FOI.

Chacun sait aujourd'hui que les troubles profonds dont nous souffrons sont l'œuvre de la franc-maçonnerie, ramassis des hommes les plus acharnés contre l'Eglise: les juifs éternels ennemis du Christ, les protestants, minorité infime qui veut nous dicter la loi.

A leur or, à leur influence sont venus se joindre ceux de l'étranger; et tous se sont unis contre ce qui a fait la France, contre l'Eglise et l'Armée qui, seules, peuvent la maintenir au rang des grandes nations.

[...] Un instant on a pu croire à l'apaisement, mais les persécutions recommencent; des lois jacobines sont présentées; l'assaut redevient plus furieux. Eh bien, nous le disons aux catholiques: S'ils ne veulent pas succomber et la France avec eux, il faut qu'ils se défendent en toute hâte, d'abord; qu'ils reprennent l'offensive ensuite. Dieu est avec eux; qu'ils s'aident, le ciel les aidera.

¹ See René le Forestier's epic *La Franc-Maçonnerie Templière et Occultiste aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles*, Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, and Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1970.

This appears to be strong stuff, leading up to a call for decisive action. But the tone soon changes – into an advertisement for 38 years' back issues of *L'Ouvrier*, 50 worthy volumes to complete a 'sound' library, and a bureau to keep them in, all on easy credit terms. In a context where the esoteric can become a byword in advertising, we are seeing much the same type of secularisation as in *Le Chercheur de tares*. The advertisement exploits an esoteric reference, and the public's apprehension at being confronted with something 'dangerous' they do not understand, in order to encourage opposition to it. This also parallels Huysmans's approach in *Là-Bas*, where a dalliance with occultism is exploited as part of an anti-occult stance.

In considering the fascination of the esoteric, and antagonistic religious attitudes towards it, we appear to be examining two deeply opposed areas. However, what makes the attitudes to these subjects in the *livres pairs* and certain of their authors remarkable is the extent to which an attempt at integration is made, linking the unusual approach to esoterica that we have seen so far to types of faith that are themselves unusual, more in expression than form, and which in some cases – the most notable being Jarry – are clearly profound. In the literary context acknowledged by Faustroll's library there are a variety of links between the two terms of the title of this chapter, and the first to be examined shows not only clear exploitation of the esoteric, but also an interesting sense of responsibility from an author in whom many see little but an extended and often tedious pose: Sâr Mérodack J. Péladan.

Péladan

There are two reasons for reintroducing Péladan at this stage: firstly, his eccentric approach creates a brand of esotericism that bears little resemblance to any other, and that is all the more fascinating for the fact that unlike (for example) Freemasonry, it is an original product of the late nineteenth century rather than an amalgam of several centuries' thinking; and secondly, his thought forms one of the more conspicuous links between esotericism and Christian faith.

We are dealing here with a kind of pseudo-esotericism designed for the general public; where Mendès and Kahn played upon the common fascination with the very concealment of knowledge, Péladan attempted to create a fully-fledged esoteric doctrine of which he could be the founder and Grand Master. He was not a modest man. Péladan chose the name 'Rose ✕ Croix' for his doctrines. In many ways this is a convenient

reference, as the historical Rosicrucians remain an extremely nebulous and obscure quantity; indeed it is tempting to follow Frances Yates's theory that the original Rosicrucian manifestos were not necessarily the product of any organisation as such, but an incitement to form secret societies not yet existing.¹ The cloudy nature of Rosicrucian history has not prevented attempts to make the influence of the Rosicrucians seem nearly as pervasive as that of the Freemasons, on the flimsiest of evidence.² While there is common consent as to a number of Rosicrucian themes and motifs, notably those of microcosm and macrocosm, in general the title 'Rosicrucianism' has more substance than the actual movement; it thus allows Péladan considerable freedom to develop his own philosophy.

The only acknowledged Rosicrucian theme in Péladan's philosophy is the belief that man is surrounded by elemental spirits able to do him service;³ in Péladan's Rose ✠ Croix they are represented by the seven Babylonian Gods whose statues are torn down by the hero of *Babylone*. These figures also pervade Péladan's novels, where, as Hubert Juin has remarked, they are all self-projections by the author.⁴ Péladan sets out his shifting, semi-astrological theology based on these Gods in his highly sententious *Amphithéâtre des Sciences Mortes*. The first volume of this cycle, *Comment on devient mage: Ethique*, addresses itself 'au jeune homme contemporain'⁵ – in other words to Jarry's generation – and gives Péladan's basic interpretation of the Chaldean Gods, on which he bases many further divisions of humanity and the world:

La personnalité humaine, pour mes ancêtres se prismaient en sept astralités, chacune correspondante à une vocation:

Samas: Soleil, moi absolu expansif.

Sin: Lune, moi intermittent réceptif.

Adar: Saturne, moi absolu résorbé.

Merodack: Jupiter, moi rayonnant.

¹ Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972, pp.206–208.

² A good period example is Hargrave Jennings's *The Rosicrucians: Their Rites and Mysteries*, 2 vols, 3rd edn, London: Nimmo, 1887, which attempts to find Rosicrucian influence and symbolism in a most improbable variety of subjects.

³ Arkon Daraul, *Secret Societies Yesterday and Today*, London: Frederick Muller, 1961, p.197. The source of this notion dates from the seventeenth century, and Daraul likens these elemental spirits to the djinns of the *Mille et Une Nuits*, derived from Arabian cabbalistic literature.

⁴ Péladan, *Un Cœur en peine*, Paris: 10/18, 1984, p.36. Juin's preface to this edition forms an excellent general introduction to the *Sâr*.

⁵ Péladan, *Amphithéâtre des Sciences Mortes: I. Comment on devient mage: Ethique*, Paris: Chamuel, 1892, p.xvii.

Nergal: Mars, moi tyrannique.

Istar: Vénus, moi séductif.

Nebo: Mercure, moi égoïste, pénétrant les autres.¹

The prospective magus is likely to find Péladan more frustrating than revealing, as the Sâr encourages his reader to achieve an elevated status by the simple means of a sober, non-gregarious lifestyle which Péladan attempts to cloak in mystery by repeated and unrevealing use of his seven-cornered cosmology. There are no arcane truths, no revelations of profound secrets, and the pattern continues in the second and third volumes, *Comment on devient fée: Erotique*, (addressed 'à la jeune femme contemporaine'² in the interests of creating mates worthy of a magus) and *Comment on devient artiste/ariste: Esthétique*,³ before the series loses its focus and moves off into subjects such as politics in later volumes.

We are forced to pose a basic question: was Péladan, the self-styled figurehead of *fin-de-siècle* esotericism, really any kind of mystic adept? His father and brother undoubtedly were,⁴ and Péladan mixed with figures such as Papus and Stanislas de Guaita whose status in the occult is beyond question. Yet Péladan marks a move away from genuine esoteric theory and practice, and the character of his move is very relevant to the present investigation. Péladan split with Guaita in 1890, dividing their neo-Rosicrucian grouping into two: the Rose ✠ Croix Cabbalistique, and Péladan's Rose ✠ Croix Catholique, which was to last until 1897. Péladan claimed that he rejected such genuine esoteric thought as he was ever genuinely aware of, making the following declaration at the opening of the volumes of the *Amphithéâtre*:

ELENCTIQUE

Je crois et je proclame que l'Eglise catholique, apostolique et romaine est la Vérité. Je fais profession d'en être le fils et je lui promets mon intelligence et mon sang.

Je reconnais l'infailibilité du Pape prononçant sur le dogme 'Ex cathedra' et 'Urbi et orbi'.

¹ *Comment on devient mage*, p.32.

² Péladan, *Comment on devient fée: Erotique*, Plan de la Tour: Editions d'Aujourd'hui, 1981 (facsimile of the 1893 Chamuel edition), p.xix.

³ Chamuel, 1894. Between the printing of the cover and the text Péladan decided he preferred the term 'ariste' to 'artiste' in order not to restrict himself to 'ceux qui œuvrent', so one form appears on the cover and the other in the text.

⁴ Beaufils, *Biographie critique*, gives extensive information on the activities of Péladan's father and brother. See also Jean-Pierre Laurant and Victor Nguyen (eds), *Les Péladan*, Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1990.

Quoique ma conscience et ma science ne reprochent aucune hétérodoxie, je suis prêt à brûler mon œuvre de mes propres mains, si Pierre l'infaillible la jugeait mauvaise ou intempestive. S.P.¹

This is not what we would expect to find at the opening of books claiming to offer mystic knowledge (though, of course, they actually do nothing of the kind). It is, however, just what we should expect from the author of *Babylone*, the work selected by Jarry from Péladan's burgeoning list of publications: the plot based around the 'Oracle d'Ilou', presaging the coming of Christ, is no less devotional for the curiosity of the play's setting.

While insisting that his devotion to Rome was complete, Péladan was deluding his readership (if not indeed himself), as his divergence from the conventions that inspired Elskamp and Verlaine would have been regarded as positively heretical in some quarters. Very simply, he rejected the Old Testament. His given reasons for this refutation were simple too, and had little to do with anti-semitism, a force whose frightening strength in France was about to be demonstrated in the Dreyfus affair; ever the aesthete, Péladan stated that he simply found the Jewish tradition lacking in artistic merit.² In the place of the Old Testament he proposed the writings of ancient Greece and the mystic, Chaldean tradition which he adopted, and adapted to such an extent that it would scarcely be recognisable to a specialist.³ Péladan glosses over the major theological implications of this change, and his 'Type d'une journée d'initié'⁴ contains nothing that would be alien to a conventional Catholic, indeed little that anyone else could take exception to, and which even those keen on a more riotous lifestyle might find admirable in others. Péladan instructs the aspiring magus to go to church daily, and to pray devoutly after his morning bath in order to prepare 'l'œuvre de ce jour'.⁵

The basis of Péladan's 'mysticism' is piety and study. Ultimately it is not mysticism at all, at least not in the proper sense of the word, but an attempt to make the Rose & Croix Catholique into a new religious sect as well as an artistic focus. His approach to faith involves a broadening of horizons, and with it the rejection of certain established points, the Old

¹ Here taken from *Comment on devient fée*, p.xv.

² See *Comment on devient mage*, especially p.125.

³ Léon Bloy claimed the dubious credit for having introduced his erstwhile friend to the figure of Merodack Baladan in the Book of Isaiah, and thus for starting Péladan's Chaldean obsession; see 'Eloi ou le fils des anges' (a title anticipating Péladan's drama *Le Fils des étoiles*) in Bloy's *Histoires désobligeantes/Belluaires et Porchers*, Paris: 10/18, 1983, pp.255–63.

⁴ *Comment on devient mage*, pp.93–99.

⁵ *Comment on devient mage*, p.94.

Testament being the most obvious of them. The attempt failed; despite Péladan's great if often thwarted capacity for innovation, his contemporaries often saw him as a mere figure of fun; the introspective bombast of parts of his writing, and the eccentricities of his own appearance and behaviour, did much to cultivate this impression.¹

By making his brand of mysticism into a subsection of Christian belief, Péladan finds his own way around the problem of providing answers to suit the questions that esoteric suggestion raises in the reader, as the answers are already freely available through religion. He forbids the disciple to seek answers elsewhere, for instance he advises prospective magi to avoid reading the work of the figure in whose footsteps he was himself attempting to tread – Eliphas Lévi, author of the renowned *Histoire de la Magie* and the pre-eminent French mystic author of the nineteenth century.² In part this represents an established tradition, whereby pseudo-prophets stake their own claim by belittling their predecessors; thus Lévi condemns Eugène Vintras, the mid-century pseudo-prophet, and Péladan instructs his followers to avoid Lévi. There is another factor: Lévi gives answers, unashamedly and often in a very direct form, even publishing his own interpretation of the secret of youth.³

Péladan gives no answers, either because he does not know them himself, or because he is moving towards a similar type of suggestion to that used by Kahn or Mendès, riding on the wave of popular fascination with mystic subjects, and maintaining mystery by ostensibly withholding truth. Péladan has the gift of knowing where to drop hints, in just the right quantity both to puzzle an uninformed reader, and intrigue an adept by the implication that the author knows more than he says on important matters. In either case, he exemplifies the exploitation of the alluring qualities of the unknown, and his work remains perhaps the most sustained period example of this approach, despite its tendencies towards repetition and self-contradiction.

¹ Again, see 'Eloi ou le fils des anges': Bloy recounts how an acquaintance bought each volume of *La Décadence latine* with the sole aim of reducing a group of friends to helpless laughter.

² *Comment on devient mage*, p.154.

³ Eliphas Lévi, *The Key of the Mysteries*, 2nd edn trans. Aleister Crowley, London: Rider, 1984, pp.196–200.

Magi

Péladan sought to populate the *Belle Epoque* with his particular conception of the magus. Magi are also a recurring type in the *livres pairs*, and deserve further consideration here by virtue of the esoteric status often ascribed to them. We will also find that literary treatments of them are relevant to faith, if in a rather different way to what is suggested in the Sâr's *Comment on devient mage*.

For most of us, a magus is something that only comes in threes. We know that by convention one of them is black and the others white, and we are never quite sure whether we should refer to them as the Three Wise Men or as the Three Kings. Magi as a type are of particular interest in the *livres pairs*, as they form another of the links between religion and material conventionally classed as esoteric, and for a modern reader the word 'mage' is in surprisingly frequent use in Faustroll's library: prominent examples are a mention of 'les livres des Mages' at the end of Poe's *Silence*; Bloy uses the word from time to time; Balthazar, last of the race of magi kings, is the central figure of *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*; Métatron in *Gog* is a magus; and in *Babylone* all three central characters (Nakhounta, Samsina, Sâr Mérodack Baladan) either belong to or join the race of magi. If we cast our net a little wider, there are numerous examples of characters whose most salient feature is their incisive wisdom, the first distinguishing mark of a magus: Campanella and Descartes in the *Etats et Empires du Soleil*; the old man of *Enluminures*; sages too numerous to mention in the *Mille et Une Nuits*; Maldoror; various figures in Rabelais, particularly the giants when they are being used to demonstrate a stoic ideal of kingship; Monsieur d'Amércœur in *La Canne de jaspe*; Otto Lidenbrock and, at a distance in time, Arne Saknussemm in *Le Voyage au Centre de la Terre*.

The presence of all these wise men – there is a shortage of female sages – is not particularly extraordinary in literature, but that so many of them should be specifically designated as *mages* rather than *sages* is suggestive. It is true that French gives *mage* a wider usage than 'magus' receives in English, but this distinction is not enough to account for the frequency with which magi feature in the cross-section (not, of course, a random cross-section) of literature provided by the *livres pairs*. And more to the point, if we leave Poe's marginal allusion to one side, all the characters specifically designated as magi come from books written in the 1890s, by writers of widely differing temperament and outlook; there is plainly an area of common ground.

Before examining the literary phenomenon of the magus in any detail,

it would be as well to clarify what a magus is. The origins of the magi are often not very clearly understood, and in literature tend to be either ignored or left hazy. Kahn, on the other hand, is rigorous in his use of what little is known about the race of magi in the creation of his Balthazar; he places the magus king's realm of Saba (the biblical Sheba is a place whose location is not entirely clear) in the southern Middle East, corresponding to the areas of Persia where the magi are thought to have lived, and follows one strand of the tradition in making Balthazar not only a sage but a king. The magian status is a predestined one; in Balthazar's case it has been revealed to him in a haunted, deserted city that he recalls visiting. After experiencing a vision of Mobed, the anima goddess who often guides his thought, Balthazar is addressed by the apparition of an old man:

Sire roi, si vous êtes arrivé jusqu'à la ville déserte et veuve, c'est que vous deviez venir. Si vous avez traversé les zones de mort, c'est que vous deviez savoir. C'était à vous de réveiller les antiques mémoires et le labour de ce sol et de ceux qui dorment en lui. Vous êtes le fils en esprit des vieux Rois Mages qui bâtirent ici dans les temps, alors que le soleil des vertus et de la connaissance brillait vertical sur cette ville. (*Conte*, p.88)

In Kahn's version of the magus, legendary delineations are to the fore. However, Western culture offers another type of magus, based on figures with varying degrees of historical authenticity, such as Simon Magus, Faust, John Dee and Cagliostro.¹ Perhaps the most fascinating work on these and other figures is Eliza Marian Butler's *The Myth of the Magus*, which establishes the common ground between these and other figures. Her fundamental and attractive premise is that the magus is essentially a ritual hero – in which case his actual existence or otherwise need not be a problem – and that his life will generally follow certain recognisable ritual stages: a supernatural or mysterious origin; portents at birth; perils in infancy; initiation; distant wanderings; a magical contest; trial or persecution; a solemn or prophetic leave-taking; a violent or mysterious death; and subsequent resurrection.²

Naturally not all of these elements occur in the legend of any particular magus, though Butler ably demonstrates their pervasive character.

¹ Cagliostro features posthumously in Jarry's comic libretto for *Le Manoir enchanté*, alternatively known as *Le Manoir de Cagliostro* (OCBP III, pp.53–86). Although this is anything but a serious work on Cagliostro, ancestor of the female character of this *Opéra-bouffe*, the magus's powers are vital to the plot, and their very selection as subject matter for such a piece is a sign of the times.

² Eliza Marian Butler, *The Myth of the Magus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948, pp.2–3.

From her sequence of the magian life we should not be surprised to find that Christ features prominently in her list of magus figures, providing a link between mysticism and Christianity. Butler's analysis is of particular interest to us as there is evidence of the association of magi with Christ in the *livres pairs*.

This association is of course explicit in *Babylone*, which as we have seen is far less mystic than we may expect when first opening a Rosicrucian tragedy emblazoned with engravings of Assyrian mythical beasts. Péladan uses the word *mage* frequently, but never light-heartedly; and its application to Christ, 'ce Mage sans pareil', in the *archimage* Nakhounta's dying vision (*Babylone*, p.78) is designed to give Christ a fresh relevance in an unexpected context.

It is possible to glimpse another mystic presaging of Christ in *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*, and, as one might expect in this cerebral text, it is of a most erudite nature. Jesus is mentioned explicitly in Kahn's text at two main points, firstly in the tale of how Balthazar and the other kings met the Holy Family on the Flight into Egypt, and secondly when Joseph of Arimathea arrives at Balthazar's castle bearing the Holy Grail; the guest tells his host the story of Christ's death (*Conte*, pp.33–35). There is, however, a further important reference which is striking enough to appear intentional, though it lies deep within the text and concerns the literary inspirations of Kahn's book.

Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence is a Grail Romance, and its main textual borrowing from medieval Arthurian material is the Ship of Solomon, which appears in Kahn's narrative as the means of transport by which his central characters move between the different settings of *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*. This miraculous vessel is borrowed from the thirteenth-century *Queste del Saint Graal*.¹ The *Queste* gives a very full account of the ship, whose building is decided on by Solomon, following a vision of Galahad two thousand years in the future, as a means of aiding the knight. He decides to construct 'la plus merveilleuse nef qui onques fust veue, et de tel fust qui ne poïst porrir'.²

The reference to Galahad that may be inferred through Kahn's adoption of the Ship of Solomon as a plot device fits in with the notions of presaging we observed in *Babylone*, if we bear in mind Albert Pauphilet's bold theory concerning the story of the Ship in the *Queste del Saint Graal* – that it deliberately transfers onto Galahad the mystic pre-history of Jesus

¹ If the Ship of Solomon has any pre-medieval sources – which seems dubious – then they are of utter obscurity. It appears to be an invention of the *Queste's* anonymous author.

² *La Queste del Saint Graal*, Paris: Champion, 1967, p.222.

from the Old Testament.¹ This notion involves not only the prophecies of a coming Messiah, but parallel episodes and characters in Old and New Testaments. The author of the *Queste* emphasises its importance by insisting that Galahad, like Christ, is descended from King David – who is an important figure in tales within *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*. Kahn uses David to state that God is a flux, as David dances before the empty Ark of the Covenant (*Conte*, pp.47–57); God may be seen as a flux if we accept the existence of mystic links between Old and New Testaments, just as magi and other characters are fluid quantities in Kahn's ambitious work. In Pauphilet's interpretation, the complex symbols and images involved with the Ship are essentially devoted to this linking theme. Kahn does not dwell on them unduly, for instance he makes nothing of the Ship's purpose in carrying through the ages a sword which is one of the four Hallows of the Holy Grail,² but an extra, if ephemeral, level of reference to Christ is available to the reader who is prepared to take a more erudite approach than is needed for *Babylone* and its distant depiction of the 'Mage sans pareil'.

The mysticism of Christ's origins implied by his presaging, either in visions at the fall of Babylon or in direct form in the Old Testament, adds to his qualities as a magus figure, already more than adequate if we accept a magus-oriented reading of the Gospels. Péladan recognised a need for a *rapprochement* of the magi with religion, here referring to the authentic type as much as to the generation of sober, learned young men he believed he was creating:

La Religion est la forme collective de la vérité; la Magie sera le contrepoint de l'homme extraordinaire sur la vérité. Jadis les Mages étaient les recteurs de la religion, ils en sont devenus inexcusablement les adversaires.³

As noted above, almost all of the manifestations of magi within the *livres pairs* are products of the 1890s, and there is another, associated peculiarity that we need to examine briefly before looking at the most developed version of the Symbolist magus. By the 1890s the magus had come to be identified as an artistic figure in French literature, most prominently in Victor Hugo's poem 'Les Mages' in the *Contemplations*, and in Rimbaud's

¹ Albert Pauphilet, *Etudes sur la Queste del Saint Graal, attribuée à Gautier Map*, Paris: Champion, 1921, p.145.

² The Hallows, of which the familiar chalice is one and the sword another, are discussed fully in Arthur Edward Waite's *The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal: Its Legends and Symbolism* (London: Rebman, 1909).

³ *Comment on devient mage*, p.145.

conception of the *voyant*. In both these cases the magian role is closely associated with that of the artist, who is after all the recurring hero of modern literature. This association is less prominent in the particular Symbolist texts we are dealing with, where heroes and sages are rarely artists or writers, and, where they are (for instance Louis Rogès in *L'Heure sexuelle*), they do not have superhuman powers. There is a prominent exception: Sengle, hero of Jarry's *Les Jours et les nuits*, who will be examined in the final chapter. The magi of the 1890s are independent figures with no need for a role other than that of the magus – examples being Balthazar in *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*, Métatron in *Gog*, and Nakhounta in *Babylone*. There is however one important case where a *Belle Epoque* magus relates closely to the earlier literary understanding of the magus, as well as to the distinctive 1890s types we have examined; it is, of course, *Gestes et Opinions du Docteur Faustroll*, *pataphysicien*, and consideration of the magus in *fin-de-siècle* literary thought is particularly illuminating when we examine the work of Alfred Jarry.

Faustroll is the epitome of Jarry's central figures, being the personification of the erudite oddness for which Jarry is notorious and which permeates the majority of his work. The pataphysician's relationship to the magian progress as sketched out by Butler is remarkably close. Firstly, his supernatural or mysterious origin:

Le Docteur Faustroll naquit en Circassie, en 1898 (le XX^e siècle avait [-2] ans), et à l'âge de soixante-trois ans. (OCBP I, p.658)

Portents at birth are represented by the imminence of the new century, and there are perils in the doctor's infancy: as Faustroll arrives in the world at the age of sixty-three and retains this age all his short life, all the dangers of his confrontation with the law and of his voyage take place, precisely, in his infancy. Faustroll does not undergo initiation himself, but performs an act of initiation upon the bailiff Panmuphle by immersing him in his wine cellar ('pleine, jusqu'à une hauteur de deux mètres, sans tonneaux ni bouteilles, de vins et d'alcools librement mêlés' [OCBP I, pp.661–62]), and making him read his *Éléments de Pataphysique*. There are distant wanderings; although they are confined to the voyage 'de Paris à Paris par mer', the journey leads far outside the empirical dimension of the city. The episodes involving the 'Evêque Marin' Mensonger are vaguely reminiscent of a magical contest, and similarly of Pantagruel's encounter with Thaumaste. There is no trial or persecution of Faustroll (though he persecutes others, most particularly the monkey Bosse-de-Nage). Various sections of *Faustroll* could be interpreted as a solemn or prophetic

leave-taking, in particular the chapter 'Capitalement' (OCBP I, pp.700–702) which precedes the apocalypse instigated by the pataphysician. And there is a suitably mysterious death for Faustroll:

Faustroll, pour Dieu se procurant d'autre toile mise à rouir dans l'eau lustrale de la machine à peindre un autre ciel que celui de Tyndall, joignit des paumes de priant ou de nageur, selon l'attitude de dévotion quotidienne dite par les brahmines *Khurmookum*. La grande nef Mour-de-Zencle passa comme repasse un fer noir; et l'écho des seize doigts de corne des chevaux prétérits clapota KHURMOOKUM sous la fin de la voûte, sortant avec l'âme. Ainsi fit le geste de mourir le Docteur Faustroll, à l'âge de soixante-trois ans. (OCBP I, p.721)

The final section of *Faustroll*, set in the realms of 'Eternité', gives an exemplary illustration of resurrection after death, of the intellect if not of the body, though Faustroll's telepathic letters to Lord Kelvin make it plain that the doctor still inhabits a realm where physical measures and units are still of importance – indeed it is the place where they are defined.

Although he is not an artist as such, Faustroll can also be a magus in the tradition deriving from Victor Hugo:

Ce sont les sévères artistes
 Que l'aube attire à ses blancheurs,
 Les savants, les inventeurs tristes,
 Les piseurs d'ombre, les chercheurs,
 Qui ramassent dans les ténèbres
 Les faits, les chiffres, les algèbres,
 Le nombre où tout est contenu,
 Le doute où nos calculs succombent,
 Et tous les morceaux noirs qui tombent
 Du grand fronton de l'inconnu!¹

Is this not precisely a major role of the pataphysician? Faustroll ultimately approaches the 'grand fronton de l'inconnu' in the forms of God and Infinity, and analyses them in mathematical and algebraic terms (OCBP I, pp.731–34); the science through which he does this resembles a wordier and more specific version of the spirit that Hugo proposed:

Elle [la pataphysique] étudiera les lois qui régissent les exceptions et expliquera l'univers supplémentaire à celui-ci; ou moins ambitieusement décrira un univers que l'on peut voir et que peut-être l'on doit voir à la place du traditionnel [...] (OCBP I, p.668)

¹ Victor Hugo, *Œuvres Poétiques*, 3 vols, Paris: Gallimard/Pléiade, 1964–74, II, p.781.

So Faustroll is, in more than one rigorous sense, a magus. Jarry's other fictional or semi-fictional self-projections can also be discussed in terms of the magian progression through and beyond life, though none of them is quite such a complete illustration as Faustroll (who shares his Eastern origin with the race of magi). Sengle of *Les Jours et les nuits* also has much in common with the magus tradition, as well as sharing common ground with Faustroll, for he too is explicitly shown to be a pataphysician (OCBP I, pp.793–95). Much the same could be said of Emmanuel Dieu (*L'Amour absolu*) or of André Marcueil (*Le Surmâle*). However, these figures also stand specifically as Christ-substitutes, under the influence of Jarry's discernible Christ complex, seen at its clearest in *L'Amour absolu*. The thinking set out above is not in itself sufficient to transform this into a magus complex; but at the same time this introduction of a rather esoteric tradition means that we must now begin to treat figures whose immediate reference is to Christ as something rather more complicated and even more interesting. The magian dimension also has a bearing on the status of these figures as heroes, which will be discussed in the final chapter.

Faith without Esotericism

Our investigation of the treatment of esoteric themes, of Péladan, and of the value of magus figures has shown uses of esoteric reference in Faustroll's library that relate closely to Christian faith, and that invariably aim to modify conceptions of faith, either in detail (as in Kahn's subtle modifications to Scripture) or in major theological divergence (as in Péladan). However, the *livres pairs* provide a broader perspective on faith than this; our survey of Faustroll's library has introduced us to works much more closely identified with the conventional core of Christian faith (meaning, to all intents and purposes, Roman Catholicism). Elskamp naturally springs to mind, and in his early work his cultured naïvety had been taken still further than in *Salutations* or *Enluminures*, which in themselves indicate a different approach from the more complex works discussed above. Take for instance these stanzas from *Dominical*, one of the collections included with *Salutations* in the 1898 collection *La Louange de la Vie*:

Dans un beau château,
La Vierge, Jésus et l'âne
Font des parties de campagne
A l'entour des pièces d'eau,
Dans un beau château.

Dans un beau château
Jésus se fatigue aux rames
Et prend plaisir à mon âme
Qui se rafraîchait dans l'eau,
Dans un beau château.

(Elskamp OC, p.6)

These lines from the poem 'La Joie' show the poet's uncomplicated desire for his soul to be translated into that of a child and thus to retreat to an idealised Sunday and its images of heaven. Numerous poems in *Dominical* include the proviso, often used as a *pointe*, that 'Mon Dimanche est mort pour de bon' (Elskamp OC, p.10), that 'Mes pauvres petits dimanches sont morts' (Elskamp OC, p.22), but the desire for a return to this life, defined and regulated by the religious atmosphere, is made all the more poignant by its impossibility. Religion is a constant recourse in Elskamp's early published work, though it can acquire a more mature purpose than in *Dominical*, juxtaposing it with other aspects of life. For instance *En Symbole vers l'Apostolat* introduces female saints into its context of seafaring (Elskamp had spent some years at sea), using them as a substitute for having a woman in every port. A kind of pious lust is suggested, with the Madonna as a constant companion, remaining 'l'Aimée' as she is in *Dominical*.

The poetry that Elskamp soon developed is more advanced and involved, but no less centred on religion. We have already seen how the landscape of *Enlumineures* gravitates around religious life (most particularly in the *Paysages* sequence), but its delivery is designed to impart a sense of mystery, in tune with the forceful, often dissonant transitions between the individual poems, which are intended to challenge any understanding of voice, place or even time that the reader may have been developing.¹ The mystery is part of Elskamp's poetic technique, but the attitude to religion remains the same, and is distinct from these unexpected technical devices, giving a division between *forme* and *fond* that only makes the emphasis on conventional religion all the more salient.

So Elskamp's verse, in terms of its spiritual outlook, seeks a return to the past, and at first glance his poetry can seem quite unconnected with the literary environment into which it emerged. However, its religious emphasis places it in a tradition in nineteenth-century French literature that is not always fully appreciated. Looking back from our more agnostic

¹ Remy de Gourmont took note of Elskamp's mysticism, which may be detected in such tendencies, but pointed out that it in no way detracted from the poet's love of life. See Gourmont's *La Belgique littéraire*, 2nd edn, Paris: Crès, 1915, p.65.

age, it has become fashionable to speak only of the revolt against faith found in, for instance, *Les Fleurs du Mal* or *Les Chants de Maldoror*, but to do so is to simplify to the point of becoming misleading. Barbey d'Aureville, commenting on Huysmans's *A Rebours*, noted the reaction against the revolt:

Baudelaire, le satanique Baudelaire, qui mourut chrétien, doit être une des admirations de M. Huysmans [...] Je serais bien capable de porter à l'auteur d'*A Rebours* le même défi: 'Après les *Fleurs du Mal*, – dis-je à Baudelaire, – il ne vous reste plus, logiquement, que la bouche d'un pistolet ou les pieds de la croix.' Mais l'auteur d'*A Rebours* les choisira-t-il!¹

In the immediate period under examination, Huysmans offered a conspicuous embodiment of a new religious spirit. After involvement in Naturalism and then Decadence, he had turned to the Church with intense fervour, spending his last years as an oblate. The first of his Durtal novels, *Là-Bas*, is particularly interesting from the perspective of this study in that it charts a progress towards religious discovery through esoteric, indeed satanic practices – carried out in the towers of St Sulpice, which Jarry could see from the toilet window of his eccentric dwelling in the rue Cassette.² Not everyone was impressed by Huysmans's conversion; for instance Bloy poured doses of vitriol upon it in his journal, particularly in the last days of his former friend's life. Of greater apparent interest to Jarry, not a devotee of Huysmans, are conversions along the lines of those undergone (separately) by Rimbaud and particularly Verlaine. Jarry's abortive *bona mors* at Laval in 1906 has already been mentioned in the light of its curious similarities to the death of Rimbaud; in particular, the acceptance of the last rites as mentioned in the well-known letter to Rachilde (OCBP III, pp.616–17) parallels Rimbaud's deathbed conversion. Rimbaud's conversion is not of direct relevance to the choice of *Illuminations* as a *livre pair*, but the selection of *Sagesse* as Verlaine's contribution to Faustroll's library points very directly to the poet's conversion.

Verlaine found religion when in prison, and his conversion was, by all accounts, rapid and profound.³ However, *Sagesse* dates from 1880, and by the time of Jarry's entry onto the literary scene the conversion was hardly news; in his last years Verlaine appeared as a sad degenerate with a

¹ Included in Barbey d'Aureville, *Le Roman contemporain*, pp.281–82. Huysmans himself inserted these lines, altered to omit mention of Baudelaire, in the 1903 preface to *A Rebours*, stating that he had made his choice, in favour of the Cross.

² Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, p.392.

³ Antoine Adam, *Verlaine: l'homme et l'œuvre*, nouvelle édition, Paris: Hatier, 1965, p.46.

weakness for absinthe rather than as a spiritual leader of the avant-garde, and, when the quantity of verse that he had published between *Sagesse* and his death is taken into account, Jarry's choice of *Sagesse* must be regarded as provocative – part of the provocation being to recall the force of Verlaine's religious expression. The conversion as delineated in the poems is to a rigorous, conventional religion with all that it brings with it, a more mature faith than that evoked by Elskamp with the self-conscious naïvety of his Brueghelesque canvas, as it delves into the moral implications of faith more than into its external trappings. However, Verlaine's faith is by no means abstract, being introduced by perfectly conventional Roman Catholic imagery, such as might be seen in a stained-glass window:

J'étais le vaincu qu'on assiège
 Pret à vendre son sang bien cher,
 Quand, blanche, en vêtement de neige,
 Toute belle, au front humble et fier,
 Une Dame vint sur la nue,
 Qui d'un signe fit fuir la chair [...]
 'Je suis la PRIERE, et mon gage
 C'est ton vice en dérouté au loin.
 Ma condition: 'Toi, sois sage.'
 – 'Oui, ma dame, et soyez témoin!'
 (*Sagesse* I, II)

Even Léon Bloy, least patient and most cynical of writers when discussing his contemporaries, was affected by the power and passion of Verlaine's conversion as witnessed by *Sagesse*, and gave a judgment of it in *Le Mendiant ingrat* that others sympathetic to the collection would find it hard to argue with:

Paul Verlaine [...] le *seul* grand poète qui ait franchement apporté son cœur à l'Eglise depuis une demi-douzaine de siècles – rajeunissant par un tour de force de génie toutes les vieilles images que l'athéisme ou l'accoutumance avaient déteintes jusqu'au ridicule, – glorifia le Saint-Sacrement et la Prière en des vers si beaux que l'incroyante jeunesse de la Poésie contemporaine fut forcée de les admirer avec enthousiasme et d'en devenir l'écolière. (*Journal* I, 26 February 92)

Jarry belongs to precisely the generation Bloy addresses, the same one envisaged by Péladan as the readership of the *Amphithéâtre des Sciences Mortes*, and the complex but devotional religious aspects of his work give grounds for seeing Jarry as a student of the approach Bloy sees in Verlaine; however, this impression can be diffused by aspects of Jarry's interest in the superficial accoutrements of religion in its most conventional form, as

the interest undoubtedly originates in his Breton upbringing. The Breton influence introduces less conventional elements, of which Jarry's interest in iconography is the most prominent. It is acknowledged in *Faustroll* with the reference to *Saint Cado* and had already featured in Jarry's career with his work on the reviews *L'Ymagier*, co-edited with Gourmont, and the solo effort *Perhindérion*. These luxurious periodicals showed Jarry to be well read in this field, and he was himself capable of executing drawings in a convincing medieval style.¹ However, as we shall come to recognise, the 'vieilles images' also provide Jarry with a means of access to the truths that lie beneath, for which he shows real if idiosyncratic respect.

Bloy: Faith and Constraint

The uncomplicated, reactionary faith seen in Elskamp and Verlaine made for successful poetry in its time, though interest in this work has declined since, particularly in the case of Elskamp. Thus it is suitably ironic that one of the more durable authors of the period has proved to be Léon Bloy, with his one-man frontal assault on the religious and moral values of his time, a protest that failed to find an appreciative and hence commercial audience, but which forms a necessary counterpoint to our discussion of religion, as it is highlighted by Jarry through the *livres pairs*. In many ways Bloy resembles Péladan, the other truly distinctive modifier of faith in Faustroll's library, being an outsider and an individualist, capable of much the same kind of uncompromising bombast in his writing – indeed he played upon the extreme violence of his outlook to such an extent that factors such as his exemplary use of the French language, and even his religion, are all too easily neglected.

Bloy set out to scare and shame his readership, and in the process to construct a reputation as an ascetic firebrand. He thus enjoyed the status of a disturbing *éminence grise*, forever attempting to remind society of its duties and inadequacies. He shared with more anarchistically inclined authors a profound contempt for the bourgeoisie and the clergy that served it, and in his *Exégèse des lieux communs* he made a sustained attempt to interpret the inanities of bourgeois language and thereby make intelligent mockery of the society that created it. Bloy's most profound attack on the bourgeoisie concerns its attitude to religion, which he sees as dangerously lightweight:

¹ See Michel Arrivé, *Peintures, Gravures et Dessins d'Alfred Jarry*, Paris: Collège de 'Pataphysique, 1968.

Quand j'exhorte ma blanchisseuse, Mme Alaric, à ne pas prostituer sa dernière fille comme elle a prostitué les quatre ainées ou que, timidement, je propose à mon propriétaire, M. Dubassier, l'exemple de quelques Saints qui ne crurent pas indispensable à l'équilibre social de condamner à mort les petits enfants, et que ces dignes personnes me répondent: – Nous sommes aussi religieux que vous, mais Dieu n'en demande pas tant..., je dois reconnaître qu'elles sont fort aimables de ne pas ajouter: *au contraire!* bien que ce soit évidemment, nécessairement, le fond de leur pensée.¹

The view of religion in society given by Bloy may be related to that held by Darien's crooked Abbé Lamargelle, who sees religion as a restrictive force holding society back unnecessarily (*Le Voleur*, pp.475–76), but Bloy is keen to see that restriction strengthened, even if it is to the detriment of current society as he sees and reviles it. His evident aim, a bold one in the modern age, is to convert the masses to the rigorous Roman Catholicism that governs his own life, as opposed to the easy-going Sunday faith that he perceives in the inane society around him. Bloy thus sets himself an epic, impossible task, and the fact that he is one of the more widely read authors of the period today gives some grounds for thinking that he did not strive entirely in vain.

Where Péladan attempts to convert by suggestion of beautiful concepts and hidden knowledge, Bloy prefers a blunt approach; his fiction, excepting some of the tamer *Histoires Désobligeantes*, owes nothing whatsoever to the art of compromise, but depicts anguished lives played out *in extremis* before a backcloth of impending doom, attempting, as in *Le Désespéré*, to create new saints out of his central characters² – and thereby often from projections of himself.

The central figures of Bloy's autobiographical novels, *Le Désespéré* and *La Femme pauvre*, impress by the scale of their suffering; in the religious context, they undergo a process of private martyrdom. Usually this is drawn from Bloy's own experience. *La Femme pauvre* mixes the vitriol with a maturity of approach that owes something to the fact that Bloy left the novel uncompleted for some years. It also represents the point at which his religious vision is at its clearest, relatively unencumbered by his occasional obsessions with peripheral matters such as La Salette or other hobby-horses, which were consigned to separate volumes such as *Celle qui pleure*. The experiences set out in his journal in the years before the completion of *La Femme pauvre* undoubtedly serve as a catalyst to the purification and articulation of Bloy's precepts, including his views on the importance of poverty to the religious life as he views it:

¹ Bloy, *Exégèse des lieux communs*, Paris: Gallimard, 1968, p.38.

² Véronique in *Le Désespéré* is specifically described as 'la sainte' (*Le Désespéré*, p.219).

'Vous aurez toujours des pauvres parmi vous.' Depuis le gouffre de cette Parole, aucun homme n'a jamais pu dire ce que c'est que la Pauvreté.

Les Saints qui l'ont épousée et qui lui ont fait beaucoup d'enfants assurent qu'elle est infiniment aimable. Ceux qui ne veulent pas de cette compagnie meurent quelquefois d'épouvante ou de désespoir sous son baiser, et la multitude passe 'de l'utérus au sépulcre' sans savoir ce qu'il faut penser de ce monstre.

Quand on interroge Dieu, il répond que c'est Lui qui est le Pauvre: *Ego sum pauper*. Quand on ne l'interroge pas, Il étale sa magnificence.

La Création paraît être une fleur de la Pauvreté infinie; et le chef-d'œuvre suprême de Celui qu'on nomme le Tout-Puissant a été de se faire crucifier comme un voleur dans l'Ignominie absolue.¹

This is reasoning that the normally poverty-stricken author of *Faustroll* might well admire. The praise of poverty as a way to faith is also part of Bloy's anti-bourgeois stance, decrying the quest for filthy lucre that has created the appalling society he pillories in the *Exégèse des lieux communs*. This stance would have a definite appeal for the avant-garde intelligentsia of the late 1890s, in line with the fashion for anarchism and the destruction of bourgeois values that it entails. Bloy cannot concede that a bourgeois could go to heaven, as his kind of faith is intended only for those located below the 'respectable' strata of society; this is certainly true of the focal figures of *Le Désespéré* and *La Femme pauvre*, who are also driven down – and thus spiritually upwards – by inner impulses, usually of a self-destructive character. The most extreme example of these tendencies is Caïn Marchenoir, Bloy's self-projection and *Le Désespéré* in person, who also plays a part in *La Femme pauvre*. The dying Marchenoir's leave-taking in *La Femme pauvre* is a concise expression of the tormented but self-assured faith that distinguishes Bloy, in his life as much as in his writing:

– Nul ne peut me sauver. Dieu lui-même, par égard pour les quartiers pauvres de son ciel, ne doit pas permettre qu'on me sauve. Il est nécessaire que je périsse dans la sorte d'ignominie dévolue aux blasphémateurs des Dieux avarés et des Dieux impurs. *J'entrerai dans le Paradis avec une couronne d'étrons!*

Paroles étonnantes qui le racontaient tout entier, ce grandiloque de boue et de flammes, et que, seul au monde, sans doute, il était capable de proférer!²

It is difficult to imagine a faith harder to follow than that of Léon Bloy.

¹ Bloy, *La Femme pauvre*, Paris: Mercure de France (but bound as no. 1194 in the Gallimard Folio series), 1972, p.247.

² *La Femme pauvre*, pp.284–85.

His religion is uncompromising and merciless, as demanding as that of the Middle Ages, a period for which he had a great admiration.¹ Preached at the heart of a prosperous nation in an age of progress, it is clearly subversive, and this helps account for the status it acquired among a socially disillusioned avant-garde that regarded works such as *Sagesse* and the writings of Barbey d'Aurevilly as models to be followed. Even among the religiously uncommitted it was accepted that devotion and its consequences were to be admired; Rachilde, anything but a pious figure, heaped praise upon Bloy and gave every impression of being genuinely moved by his work.² The forcefulness of Bloy makes it easy to gloss over the areas of theological unconventionality in his thought, which are in fact considerable; it has been demonstrated that he can tend towards gnostic practice, for instance in the visions of Véronique in *Le Désespéré*, and that his mystical elements amount to a partial endorsement, perhaps not altogether conscious, of the doctrines of Vintras;³ so not even Bloy's rigour is wholly conventional, and he too leans towards aspects of esotericism. Bloy's attitude is, however, far less outlandish than that of Péladan, and relates directly to the power of faith, unlike the approach of Kahn or Mendès, using religion as a contribution to art.

There remains, however, another major element of the esoteric/religious thought to which the *livres pairs* draw our attention, an element that is a governing factor in the fusion of contemporary trends that Jarry represents – and its immediate source is perhaps a surprising one.

Jarry: Hermeticism and Faith

Much of the literary production of the Symbolists is widely regarded as 'difficult'; this is one of the principal reasons for the neglect into which it has fallen. Sadly, it is all too rarely recognised that for the Symbolist authors of the 1890s, the difficulties imposed on the reader were central to their understanding of literature, and not an unfortunate mystification created as a by-product. The difficulties created have a definite relationship with the revival of interest in esoterica, as there are close parallels

¹ See Gacougnol's remarks, occasioned by floods in the Loire, on popular piety in the style of the Middle Ages, *La Femme pauvre* pp.168–70, and Marchenoir's opinions about the medieval Church and its art, pp.187–90.

² See for instance *Mercure de France*, XXVI, p.936.

³ Richard Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870–1914*, London: Constable, 1966, pp.140–43.

with a tradition generally regarded as esoteric, though in earlier centuries it was often indistinguishable from more conventional philosophies: hermeticism. Examination of the relevance of this tradition to Jarry's work can help to clarify the religious dimension of pataphysics as presented in the *Gestes et Opinions*.

The hermetic tradition has its origins in the *Corpus Hermeticum* and other fragments attributed to Hermes Trismegistos, who is identified alternatively as the Egyptian God Thoth, or as an Egyptian seer from the time of Moses. The hermetic writings cover a variety of subjects, including astrology, magic, philosophy and theology, but have a tendency to contradict themselves. They are thought to be the work of several authors, which as in the case of the *Mille et Une Nuits* does not make for a homogeneous collection. There is, nonetheless, one constant in any understanding of hermeticism, indeed one which has passed into common usage – namely that anything hermetic is considered to be sealed, and difficult or impossible to access.

The literary potential of hermeticism was recognised early on, for example in Renaissance poetry, and enjoyed a resurgence in French writing at the end of the nineteenth century, under the guidance of Mallarmé, the mentor not only of Jarry but of some dozens of aspiring authors. Indeed it is interesting to note that hermetic tendencies in the work of Jarry and other young poets tailed off rapidly after Mallarmé's death in 1898; with writings such as *Messaline* and the *Spéculations* composed a few years after Mallarmé's demise, Jarry made a point of quitting the higher astral planes to which he had aspired since arriving in Paris and becoming a *mardiste*.

Mallarmé does not make his poems as difficult as they are in order to discourage readers of lower intellectual capacity – the introductory note to *Vers et prose* makes it plain that the poet's intentions are less self-damaging than this. Malcolm Bowie has made a valuable study of the problems of entering Mallarmé's poetic world, exploring the poet's *modus operandi*.¹ However, Mallarmé's disciples were not all as conscientious as their master in remembering to place something that could eventually be grasped under the often bewildering hermetic surface. Jarry started off as one of the

¹ Bowie, *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult*. This study is primarily concerned with *Prose pour Des Esseintes* and *Un Coup de dès*, but its overall approach to Mallarmé is of great value. See also Haskell M. Block, 'Mallarmé the Alchemist', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, VI(2–3) (May–December 1969), 163–79, which points out Mallarmé's debt to the alchemical tradition and suggests it as a source, predating Swedenborg and Baudelaire, of the doctrine of correspondences.

worst offenders. Much of the *Minutes de sable mémorial*, his first published volume, positively rejoices in its incomprehensibility, though there are pieces, such as 'L'Opium', that can and do stand on their own. It is harder to be generous towards pieces such as 'La Plainte de la Mandragore' and 'Le Miracle de Saint-Accroupi', which are profoundly difficult to read and have attracted little analysis. In the 'Linteau' to the *Minutes*, Jarry comments on the dilemma regarding the poet's ability to make himself understood; he admits the difficulties inherent in the *Minutes* without actually doing anything about them (OCBP I, pp.171–73). Alain Mercier's excellent study of esotericism in Symbolist writing places Jarry's early work at the convergence of a number of esoteric tendencies, and rightly so, but his analysis is concerned with *forme* rather than *fond*, and thus fails to take account of the metaphysical role of hermeticism in Jarry's work; we should, however, note Mercier's concentration on the different manifestations of esoterica in the arts, and particularly in visual motifs.¹ Jarry's attempt to turn these visual entities into words and characters makes *César-Antechrist*, the extraordinary celestial dialogue written largely in heraldic terms and incorporating a version of *Ubu Roi*, into the unique piece of writing that it is, and indeed offers as productive an approach to it as we are likely to find. *César-Antechrist*, through its difficulty, plays upon the hermetic tradition, but is not in fact totally hermetic; although it is hard to follow without the aid of a critical edition, its subject matter and imagery can be located and are not gratuitous invention. By looking at some of the sources Jarry adopts and adapts, we can see a little of the hermetic technique of the 1890s at work, and also see something of his approach towards religious texts and belief.

While Jarry's exploitation of iconography in *César-Antechrist* stems from his taste for the neglected and the unusual, at a theological level *César-Antechrist* stretches the reader's terms of religious reference, and for some there are parts that could verge on the heretical – first and foremost the temporary glorification of the Antichrist. Jarry also steps outside the New Testament for his inspiration, and gives us glimpses of the Apocrypha; the clearest example is to be found in the last Act of *César-Antechrist*, with 'les deux grands oliviers qui sont ENOCH et ELIE' (OCBP I, p.326). The association of Enoch with Elias originates in the Acts of Pilate, in which the crucified Christ carries out the Harrowing of Hell and fetches the saints and patriarchs held there up to Heaven. Upon being delivered to the archangel Michael they meet Enoch and Elias, the only two

¹ Alain Mercier, *Les Sources Esotériques et Occultes de la Poésie Symboliste (1870–1914)*, 2 vols, Paris: Nizet, 1969, I, *Le Symbolisme Français*, particularly pp.268–69.

humans to have been taken up alive, destined by God to oppose the Antichrist.¹ The functional inclusion of such a reference not only illustrates Jarry's relative hermeticism by its obscurity, but also shows a broad knowledge of Scripture. Another, more ephemeral reference to the Apocrypha occurs in *Ubu Enchaîné*; Ubu's assertion that 'Nous avons tué Monsieur Pissebock, qui vous le certifiera lui-même' (OCBP I, p.445) is curiously reminiscent of an episode in the Gospel of Thomas, one of the apocryphal Infancy Gospels, in which the infant Jesus raises a playmate from the dead to exonerate himself from responsibility for his demise.²

L'Amour Absolu, Jarry's most difficult novel for the reader, contains further echoes of the Infancy Gospels; appropriately so, as it is in this book that the author's Christ complex is given its fullest rein. This complex is what sets Jarry's approach to faith apart from that of the other authors we are examining, and it is also of importance to the final chapter of this study, which examines hero figures. For Jarry, faith is an introverted, personal matter, far more so than for a figure such as Bloy; however the personal relevance of faith to Jarry is quite different from that understood by Elskamp or indeed Verlaine, for whom religion is based on awareness of and contact with a superior external force – gentle and nostalgic in Elskamp, powerful, uncompromising yet compassionate in Verlaine. Jarry's approach is more deliberate and audacious: through a faith that is often couched in terms unusual to the point of hermetic incomprehensibility, Jarry attempts to meet God on equal terms. In so doing he reaches beyond the bounds of any conventional faith, and Jarry's literary encounters with the Absolute help to establish the individuality of the faith revealed in his literature, and at the same time demonstrate further thematic debts to his contemporaries.

The faith of Alfred Jarry as witnessed by his writings is curious for its combination of convention and originality, a duality reflected by the religious perspectives he highlights through the *livres pairs*. It is a matter of record that Jarry's religious upbringing, in the hands of his mother and

¹ The Acts of Pilate, also known as the Gospel of Nicodemus, exists in a number of versions, all of dubious origin. The different versions are translated side by side in Rhodes James. See, in Rhodes James's translation of the Greek text, Acts of Pilate II, chapter IX (p.140). On the periphery of the *livres pairs*, Enoch and Elias also feature in Cyrano de Bergerac's *Etats et Empires de la Lune*, albeit in a very different treatment from that in the Acts of Pilate.

² In Rhodes James the incident appears in Thomas VII,2 (p.62), but a much closer parallel to Jarry's phrasing can be found in Hone's earlier translation (London: William Reeves, 1820) under 1 Infancy XIX,8: 'let us go and ask the boy himself, who will bring the truth to light'.

various teachers, was conventional and rigorously Roman Catholic, with various nuances peculiar to the Breton tradition. The darker, idiosyncratic aspects of Breton Catholicism help to account for Jarry's interest in curious religious iconography such as *Saint Cado*, a local manifestation of the type of art for which Jarry showed his appreciation with his reproductions of Dürer and *Images d'Epinal* in *L'Ymagier* and *Perhindérion*; it has been suggested that, in *Faustroll*, the paintings of 'Clinamen' (OCBP I, pp.714–19), produced by the 'Machine à Peindre' after Faustroll's devastation of the world, may be *Images d'Epinal*.¹

Apart from iconography, French Roman Catholicism seems unimportant to Jarry, indeed at times he makes fun of it. The comic ecclesiastical Calendar from the 1901 *Almanach* is a particularly obvious example ('25 juillet: St Cul [...] 2 septembre: St Lazare, Gare', OCBP I, pp.578–79), and in the 1899 *Almanach* we find the record of Ubu's theological studies at the Seminary of St Sulpice, the knowledge from which he intends to leave to his son Malsain Athalie-Afrique (OCBP I, p.545). The introduction of Ubu inevitably lends an aura of humour and indeed satire to these religious matters. Jarry found the neighbourhood of St Sulpice very much to his taste, and in honour of the general atmosphere and the presence of the firm of Rif, Bloch & Paraf, ecclesiastical robemakers, on the ground floor,² he christened the famous 'deuxième et demi' at 7, rue Cassette the 'Grande Chasublerie'. It is recorded that while living there, he surrounded himself with items in Roman Catholic taste, including not only old prints such as *Saint Cado*, but also many issues of the Catholic newspaper *La Croix*.³

Even if the religious upbringing Jarry received was conventional, his impression of it was plainly otherwise. In sidelines such as the New Testament Apocrypha we see an investigative mind at work on material normally kept out of the public eye. There are places where it is possible to see the curious way in which Jarry's mind understands religious life, seeking out new dimensions which, as we shall see, *Faustroll* attempts to explore and quantify. Here, for instance, are the young Sengle's impressions of his pilgrimage to Ste-Anne d'Auray in *Les Jours et les nuits*:

Il conçut Sainte Anne comme un astre double, soleil et lune, faisant les cordages secs des baves filamenteuses des grains, et nette la mer de ses mobiles verrues visqueuses; et glaçant d'un tel froid les moulins incendiés, qu'elle congèle même la flamme [...]

¹ See Béhar, 'Jarry et l'imagerie populaire'.

² Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, pp.392–93.

³ See the account by André Salmon, quoted in Bordillon, *Gestes et Opinions d'Alfred Jarry, écrivain*, pp.63–64.

Sengle élit donc Sainte Anne comme truchement de soi avec l'Extérieur et synthèse de toute sa force éparpillée en saxifrage dans les interstices des pierres militaires. Et il forma cette synthèse par une invocation perpétuelle selon soi et selon les rites. (OCBP I, pp.798–99)

The terms in which Sengle – who is of course a projection of aspects of Jarry – expresses his religion do nothing to compromise its validity, but it is important to note that Jarry and his self-projection are not using the usual vocabulary or style of religious devotion, and are a world away from the conventional representation of Christian subjects. We should also note the invocation made 'selon soi'; implicitly, the character must enjoy an elevated status to make this validation, and it is through the elevation of his self-projections that Jarry attempts to meet God on equal terms. There is a strong hint of gnosis in Sengle's invocation, seen here not in any diluted Swedenborgian form but in the power that it has in Bloy, where the individual represents a complete religious community, ministering to itself without clergy, and claiming its own rights of access to God. Jarry, with his science of pataphysics, goes further than Bloy and adds a hermetic dimension.

We have already noted the peculiarity of Sengle's religious communication; throughout the novel he is a character who mystifies the real-world figures around him, being set apart from the circumstances in which he finds himself by virtue of his intellectual and more particularly his pataphysical skills (OCBP I, pp.793–95), and thus it is appropriate that his religion should be one whose terms are veiled. The powers of St Anne are entirely personal to Sengle, and are thus hidden, being merely hinted in the best tradition of Mallarmé. There are mystic indications also, in the visualisation of the Saint as an 'astre double', a conception that suggests ancient Egyptian rather than Christian religion.

In brief, the terms in which Jarry represents Sengle's faith make it clear that it is esoteric, as its operation is a veiled one. Jarry is here developing an original interface between faith and esotericism that takes an approach that is quite distinct from that of Péladan: where the Sâr seeks a renewed but relatively conventional faith through the infusion of esoterica, Jarry suggests the elevation of faith to the status of an esoteric cult hidden within the individual. This cult is familiar by name in studies of Jarry (and already so in this one), but it is rare that any coherent or impartial attempt is made to analyse its specifically religious aspects. It is, of course, 'la pataphysique'.

In later chapters of *Les Jours et les nuits* Sengle's status as a pataphysician is brought into play; we witness his ability to influence physical

phenomena and thus control aspects of his world. There is a religious dimension to his pataphysical status, although, in line with the conclusion of the novel (Sengle loses his mind), it is suggested that there may also be a dimension of self-deception linked to it:

Il résultait de ces rapports réciproques avec les Choses, qu'il était accoutumé à diriger avec sa pensée (mais nous en sommes tous là, et il n'est pas sûr du tout qu'il y ait une différence, même de temps, entre la pensée, la volition et l'acte, cf. la Sainte Trinité), qu'il ne distinguait pas du tout sa pensée de ses actes ni son rêve de sa veille. (OCBP I, p.794)

Sengle comes to resemble a Christ figure; this is made plain through his elevated status and consequent close relationship with the Absolute, combined with his final sacrifice – a mental one in which he loses the last remnants of the distinction between reality and hallucination (OCBP I, pp.834–35). Of course this also relates him to the tradition of the magus. However, it is in *Faustroll* and *L'Amour absolu* that the relationship between Jarry and God is most fully explored.

Taking *L'Amour absolu* first, this complex novel is particularly personal in its subject matter; it refers directly to a Breton childhood, Jarry's self-projection in this particular case being known as Nédélec Doue in Breton, and Emmanuel Dieu in French (OCBP I, p.928). While the biblical names attached to characters in *L'Amour absolu* are of central thematic significance to the novel, we should not forget that conspicuously religious names – and not just those of saints – were in much more common use than today; for instance, the witness to Jarry's own birth certificate was a family friend by the name of Emmanuel Marie.¹ However, in such a context the use of names such as Emmanuel Dieu (or indeed Marie-Joseph-Caïn Marchenoir) remains provocative, particularly through the deliberate choices and (in Bloy) combinations of biblical names involved.

The status of Emmanuel Dieu as a Christ figure barely needs stating once his name is given, and in view of the extreme stylistic abstruseness of the novel it is just as well that it is given, as the name provides the reader with some guidance to the sequence of events that is likely within the plot – if such simple structural terms can be applied to *L'Amour absolu*, whose division into many thousands of self-contained mini-paragraphs does away with most received ideas on the necessity of progress from one event to another. The use of the name Emmanuel Dieu can also be viewed as a negative point, depending on the reader; Keith Beaumont points out that the peculiar religious expression of *L'Amour absolu* can verge on

¹ Arnaud, *Alfred Jarry*, p.310.

blasphemy.¹ Emmanuel Dieu is also portrayed within the novel as 'le Christ-Errant' (OCBP I, pp.921–24), a counterpart to the Wandering Jew (who of course also features in *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*), and his parents are named Joseb and Varia, Breton forms of Joseph and Mary. We do not actually observe the sacrifice of the hero, but the first chapter, 'Que la Ténèbre soit!' (OCBP I, pp.919–21) explains that he is incarcerated in a cell at La Santé prison, awaiting execution – the rest of the novel is in flashback.

Emmanuel Dieu, by virtue of being the son of a Holy Family transposed into contemporary Brittany (we have glimpsed something similar in Elskamp's *Salutations*), is effectively God incarnate, and this identification, along with the opacity of the novel, leads to a non-explicit, hermetic depiction of his divinity that contributes to the overwhelming oddity of this novel, in which celestial relationships are played out and modified in a largely contemporary setting. *Faustroll* is less esoteric in style – though still far from conventional – as the Doctor's ultimate purpose involves communication of a kind, describing and rationalising God and Faustroll's own position relative to him. Faustroll is aware that even while in roughly the same dimension as the real world, he has a direct relationship to God – in fact he sees no distinction between himself and God. As Panmuphle relates:

'Etes-vous chrétiens? dit un homme bronzé, vêtu d'un sarrau bariolé, au milieu de la triangulaire petite ville.

– Comme M. Arouet, M. Renan et M. Charbonnel, dis-je après avoir réfléchi.

– Je suis Dieu, dit Faustroll.

– Ha ha!' dit Bosse-de-Nage, sans plus de commentaire. (OCBP I, p.679)

Religious imagery does appear in *Faustroll*, but it has little to do with the pataphysical relationship with God; the encounter with Laurent Tailhade in Livre III is set in 'La Grande Eglise de Muflefiguière', with Tailhade as Prester John in a transposition of the anarchist bombing in which he had been injured (OCBP I, pp.689–91), and the 'Evêque Marin' Mensonger (OCBP I, p.697) is included for reasons not entirely ecclesiastical – Jarry had already reproduced a drawing of this legendary monster in the fifth issue of *L'Ymagier* (notes, OCBP I, p.1230). The character of the magus Faustroll is set out in completely secular terms, but he is nonetheless endowed with God-like powers: he has a boundless capacity for investigation and observation that resembles omnipresence, and apocalyptic powers are

¹ Keith Beaumont, 'Jarry et le Catholicisme', *L'Etoile-Absinthe*, 25–28 (1985), 11–29, p.12.

revealed by his annihilation of virtually everyone on the Earth by lighting his 'petite bougie parfumée, qui brûla pendant sept jours' (OCBP I, p.703). However, it is only after the demise of his earthly body that Faustroll's relationship with God is clarified, in the realms of 'Éternité'.

The pataphysician's telepathic letters to Lord Kelvin, the distinguished scientist, are couched in scientific terms, and this form of expression adds an oblique comment on the debate as to the relative values of science and religion, which had some currency in the 1890s; Jarry's equation of the two sides is one of the nuances in the designation 'roman *néo*-scientifique' (OCBP I, p.655). Faustroll observes the phenomena around him, and in the final two chapters makes remarks and calculations concerning God. Chapter XL, 'Pantaphysique et catachimie', is a quotation from the 'Dialogue sur l'érotique' also used in Chapter XXXIX, which concludes in neo-platonic tones that man is the solid, tetrahedral expression of God, and therefore that God and man are one and the same (OCBP I, p.731). This is a conclusion that had already been stated by Mendès, in the Swedenborgian poem *Hespérus*: 'Dieu, c'est l'Homme divin; le Ciel, c'est l'homme énorme'.¹

Jarry's attempt to provide a rationalisation of God in *Faustroll* is a bold sortie into the territory of philosophers and theologians. However, it is a sortie that has more to do with faith than the calculations and algebra provided by Dr Faustroll might lead us to imagine; Jarry gives God a geometrical definition that runs right through all possible worlds, a line leading from nothingness to infinity, the Absolute or call it what we will, and including on its way literally everything in existence. By doing this, Jarry is stating that God is a universal presence, with the implied suggestion that it is therefore impossible to expunge him from any aspect of our lives. This offers a 'proof' of omnipresence, and at the same time a justification of the exalted status of man in the pataphysical universe. God is man and man is God; therefore they can do the same things, and we see Faustroll doing things of which man is not ordinarily capable in the non-pataphysical world. Sengle does the same in his control over objects, as does André Marcueil of *Le Surmâle* with his superhuman stamina.

These men are pataphysicians, and therefore, being the fully aware 'Axiome et principe des contraires identiques' (OCBP I, p.290 – the two apparent opposites being God and man), they become demi-gods at the very least. Faith and learning go hand in hand, as in Descartes; this is

¹ Mendès, *Poésies*, II, p.123. Mendès's conclusion is based on an observation of the illusory nature of death, a view shared with Jarry.

stated clearly by the inclusion at the opening of 'Ethernité' of a Latin quotation from Bacon, stating that a little philosophy inclines one to atheism, but a great deal of it brings one to religion (OCBP I, p.724). The actual existence of God is never at issue, however, and this is distinctive in itself, as the proofs provided by *Faustroll* serve purely to define God's area and the equivalence of God and man. And as these representatives of mankind at the heart of Jarry's novels are equivalent to God, it is appropriate for them to move in mysterious ways and become the inaccessible, hermetic figures that they invariably are.

The voyage that the bailiff Panmuphle takes with Faustroll constitutes an initiation into the world of pataphysics, which as we may now see, is a world closely associated with faith; thus the process Panmuphle undergoes is not unlike the development of the young Sengle's highly personal faith. The shifting narrative voice of the novel makes it hard to tell which of the later chapters are actually narrated by Panmuphle; one effect of this is to mask any knowledge we may glean as to what he has learned from Faustroll, another is to suggest that he has become sublimated into the body of pataphysical knowledge, rather like a member of the Invisible College of the Rosicrucians. Whatever the case, his status is greatly increased; he starts as a bailiff, in Jarry's eyes the lowest of the low,¹ and is elevated to a status where he is given insight into great marvels and mysteries, and is allowed to observe apocalyptic events. However, Jarry does not give any clear, empathetic description of the revelation, indeed the actual workings of the science remain an utter mystery. Henri Béhar points out in his work on the relationship between pataphysics and hermeticism that Jarry's is not an explicit science² – as we have already observed, it is thus an esoteric one, which in this instance means much the same as calling it hermetic. This elevation of human standing and dignity through initiation – even if that initiation is hidden – is a theme found in hermetic sources, linked to their platonic predecessors, for whom man was a reflection of the divine and must thus aspire to higher things, without the humility demanded by later Christian teaching – at the time the *Corpus Hermeticum* was composed, hermetic, neo-platonic and Christian thought could not always be clearly distinguished from one another. In such a context it is no blasphemy for Faustroll to claim to be God when asked if he and his companions are Christians, as such polarities of

¹ Both Arnaud and Bordillon record Jarry's various brushes with bailiffs in great detail.

² Henri Béhar, 'Hermétisme, Pataphysique et Surréalisme', in Anna Balakian (ed.), *Proceedings of the Xth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*, New York 1982, 3 vols, New York: Garland, 1985, II, pp.495–504 (p.499).

thought and being become one when viewed pataphysically – as Béhar aptly points out, the identification of opposites is also a feature of hermetic doctrine, indeed of all anti-Cartesian systems.¹

Béhar also suggests that the use of obscurity as a trope, common to Jarry and the Surrealists, may not refer consciously to hermeticism.² In the case of Jarry at least, this is debatable; the climate of Mallarmé's circle and the general currency of esoterica – quite apart from Jarry's associations with characters as well versed in the arcane as Remy de Gourmont and Berthe Courrière – surely make it credible that Jarry's move into hermeticism is quite deliberate. We should also note Yves-Alain Favre's assertion that both Mallarmé and Jarry, echoing Hugo, regard the writer as a magus,³ a status which, as we have seen, is a facet of the writing of the period.

Jarry's custom-built philosophy of pataphysics, constructed on a hermetic base, represents an attempt to set up his own niche in the fashion for esoteric writing, and the presence of themes such as human elevation and dignity, which have multiple possible sources, including hermeticism and religion, is a significant element of the whole. Within a context of writing intended to be hard to understand, such themes cannot fail to evoke the hermetic tradition and its brief revival. Jarry also attunes himself to contemporary fashions in relating his brand of esotericism so precisely to Christian faith; in this it bears comparison with Péladan's attempt to create a new thought system. And along with the Sâr, Jarry marks the vital point where esotericism and faith meet, where current fashions combine to produce work that has in the long run proved to be one of the most distinctive products of his time. Hindsight allows us to determine fashions more clearly than can be done at the time, and thus it can, paradoxically, be easier to appreciate Jarry today than it was in his own time, when his blending of fashions caused such confusion that he had real trouble getting his work published.

¹ 'Hermétisme, Pataphysique et Surréalisme', p.496.

² *Ibid.*, p.495.

³ Yves-Alain Favre, 'Précisions sur Jarry et Mallarmé', *L'Etoile-Absinthe*, 13–14 (1982), 23–33, p.32.

Heroes: The Symbolist Übermensch

In the preceding exploration of metaphysical aspects of both Jarry's work and the environment of the *auteurs pairs*, it has become clear that the status of leading characters is a distinctive feature of these strands of late-nineteenth-century literature. In the specific case of Jarry, we have seen how figures such as Sengle and Dr Faustroll, despite their hermeticism, play a specific and central part in the reader's relationship with the dimensions to which these figures enjoy access. It thus seems particularly appropriate now to explore *Belle Epoque* treatments of the literary hero, who is remodelled by various *auteurs pairs*, and indeed Jarry himself has a great deal to offer in study of the hero. We shall see that Jarry once again demonstrates an interest in contemporary literary trends, which are then developed within his own writing, and by so doing he once again becomes a focus for discussion of his contemporaries.

I am using the word 'hero' in its broadest sense, to indicate the central figure of a work without necessarily equating him with the Heroes of antiquity and the tradition of great deeds that goes with them – though Jarry does have a certain interest in such figures, witnessed by the choice of the *Odyssey* as the seventeenth *livre pair*. The use of the masculine term 'hero' is deliberate, simply because heroines are rather rare in *fin-de-siècle* writing. Emphasis and viewpoint are almost always masculine, and this even extends to those Rachilde novels where the central character is a woman. Such figures as Raoule de Vénérande (in *Monsieur Vénus*) and Mary Barbe (*La Marquise de Sade*) are implacable, dominant and above all masculine – the tone is set with Raoule de Vénérande's habit (one that Rachilde herself had followed) of dressing as a man,¹ and from the resulting inversion of sexual roles. In the two Rachilde *livres pairs*, there are still no heroines as such. Although Madeleine Deslandes is the central figure of *La Princesse des ténèbres*, she is a weak character whose characterisation is not fleshed out very far, and the true figure of fascination in the novel is her demonic lover, Hunter. *L'Heure sexuelle* is narrated from a first-person male viewpoint, and the prostitute Léonie is merely a two-dimensional

¹ Rachilde, *Monsieur Vénus*, Paris: Flammarion, 1977, pp.110–11.

means to an end, namely the realisation of the fantasies of Louis Rogès. There is of course one heroine in Jarry, the eponymous *Messaline*, but again she falls – very much under the influence of Rachilde, whose guiding hand is apparent throughout the novel – into the traditionally masculine role of dominant partner, in perhaps Jarry's least interesting or inspiring novel. Sad to say, Jarry's literary environment generally fails to tap the potential of the heroine and uses such figures as something close to a novelty, an individualistic trait promoted mainly by Rachilde.

The Avoidance of Heroes

Before embarking on our investigation of the hero as glimpsed through the prism of Faustroll's books, we should note a contrasting approach that the *livres pairs* also show us, where the author avoids including or emphasising a central character at all. The simple absence of a hero can be observed in *La Croisade des enfants*, with its multi-faceted narrative with characters who are confined to their own *récit*; much the same is true of the lyrical *Trèfle Noir* and *Contes à soi-même* sections of *La Canne de jaspe*, and also of Mendès's *Gog*, with its perhaps too large cast of characters moving in and out of its various intrigues. This is in strong contrast to its earlier 'twin' novel, *Zo'har*, in which vigorous characterisation and psychological anguish are to the fore, and also to such Mendès novels as *Le Chercheur de tares*, in which character development is drawn out to tedious lengths, particularly in the sub-Marchenoir figure of Arsène Gravache, whose writings form the hub of the novel; in *Gog*, where Mendès avoids such tendencies, he creates a less artistic but far more exhilarating novel. No character in *Gog* is allowed to become more than two-dimensional, and most are caricatures, often grotesques; this is shown most clearly by the clergy in the novel, the fearsome Monseigneur Tordoya, chaotic Abbé Clipot and naïve Père Primice. Their lack of depth also strengthens the political drive of *Gog* against the Church and Crown movement. Figures with more potential for sympathy, such as Caroline Majade, 'La Savate', have no greater depth, and are sketched out as monomaniacs serving simply as tools for advancing the plot, and often for incidental comedy of character.

This approach to character is distinctly Rabelaisian, and reminds us of Adrien Bertrand's comparison of *Gog* with Rabelais (noted in Part I) – though in Mendès's novel the characters remain within their simple set delineations, in contrast to the shifting, malleable inhabitants of Rabelais's chronicles. A different denial of the central figure, and one more

indicative of specifically Symbolist attitudes, is to be found in *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*. From the outset, Kahn makes plain that his approach to character is going to be unusual, and even within his own contemporary work it is quite different from that shown in, for example, the novella *Jordon* or the more prosaic 1898 novel *Le Cirque solaire*:

Certains des personnages représentent des idées, sont immortels ou se réincarnent. Ainsi le roi mage Balthazar, de la première partie, devient dans la seconde, Maître Ezra. D'autres de ces personnages représentent des phénomènes passionnels, et se comportent selon les habitudes de la vie légendaire. (*Conte*, p.5)

Balthazar/Ezra is the central character of *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*, but as Kahn's explanation suggests, he is not a clearly defined figure. His occult powers and purpose as guardian of the Holy Grail are demonstrated rather than explained, and the reader's conception of him is never allowed to become at all definite. The book's complex plot, shifting through lands and ages, adds still further to this haziness. In addition, Kahn makes a deliberate choice of the most mysterious of all figures as another leading character: the Wandering Jew. His identity is plain to any reader with a basic grounding in legend from his first appearance at Balthazar's palace in Sheba, but is deliberately confused in the second section of the book. Here Kahn first introduces Ezra as a doctor on his way to a patient; we already know that Ezra is Balthazar, but Kahn peppers his description with legendary traits of the Wandering Jew, particularly the powers of healing as witnessed in many accounts of his career.¹ Later Kahn dispels this added mystification by introducing Maître Asverus (the Wandering Jew himself, under a slightly changed name from his earlier appearances as Ahasverus²), but he has achieved his aim of deliberately pulling our idea of a character out of focus. Kahn's refusal to define his characters fully, or to let them retain the same characterisation, is a function of the mystery that runs through the book, but this technique is not an entirely isolated phenomenon; we shall meet some analogous perspectives on the hero later, in writing where the hero is intended to be mysterious, but where the plot and its progress need not be. The originality of *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence*

¹ See for instance the account of the Wandering Jew's visit to Ipstones (Staffordshire) reproduced in Jennifer Westwood, *Albion: A Guide to Legendary Britain*, London: Granada, 1985, pp.224–25.

² More than a quarter of a century later Kahn would use the name 'Schimme Schverous' for the Wandering Jew as eponymous hero of one of his *Contes Juifs*. See Kahn, *Contes Juifs*, Plan de la Tour: éditions d'Aujourd'hui, 1977, pp.5–15. Mendès also made use of the figure, in the poem 'La Charité' from the *Contes Épiques (Poésies, II, pp.88–89)*.

lies in its mystic integration of structure and character, and if this technique is understood it becomes a much less daunting prospect for the reader.

The Decline of the Decadent

So far, I have fought shy of drawing a line between the Symbolists and the Decadents. The main reason for this is that I am inclined to agree with Mendès that there is no simple division to be made;¹ the barrier between the movements is highly fluid, all the more so as some authors can fall into both groupings, and the late Symbolist movement differed in many ways from Symbolism as it might have been understood in the 1880s, the high period of Decadent literature. Distinctions are therefore difficult and at times misleading; for instance, Kahn's choice of the title *Symbolistes et Décadents* for a volume of criticism sits uneasily on a doctrinal history of Symbolism that does not draw a line to state where Decadence (or indeed any other kind of writing) stops and Symbolism starts. However, it is possible to make clear distinctions between Decadence and Symbolism when we are discussing the hero: the Symbolist hero represents a genuine development from the central figures of Decadent literature, and thus stands as another of the points defining the maturity of 1890s Symbolism that we are seeking.

For many, it is Péladan who represents the model of a Decadent novelist, with the excesses of his ornamental style, constant introspective self-reference, and his affected attitudes and lifestyle; indeed Alan Busst has gone so far as to see in Péladan 'the caricature of so many Decadent tendencies'.² This approach is valid in itself, but it also compartmentalises Péladan a little more than he deserves; in his approach to the hero, the Sâr can also be seen as a sympathetic influence upon the development of the distinctive Symbolist type. We have already noted Hubert Juin's comment that Péladan is a master of the art of the self-projection, which is also a cornerstone of characterisation in Jarry. In thematic terms, Péladan is of course closely in tune with the Decadent mainstream: his vast *Ethopée*, the novel cycle *La Décadence Latine*, is founded on the principle that the society it depicts is in its last, fatal days of decline. The first and best

¹ Mendès, *Le Mouvement poétique français de 1867 à 1900*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale/Fasquelle, 1903, pp.153–55.

² Alan Busst, 'The Image of the Androgyne in the Nineteenth Century', in Ian Fletcher (ed.), *Romantic Mythologies*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967, pp.1–95 (p.44).

known volume, *Le Vice Suprême*, dismantles the values of this society by emphasising the sheer perversity and excess of its decayed nobility and socialites. A number of characters are fleshed out into credible portraits – but not even the most central of these figures, Léonora d'Este, can claim to be the novel's hero figure. The role is reserved for none other than 'ce Mérodack [...] jeune homme à l'air grave'.¹

This figure – the name is of course familiar from *Babylone* – is the antithesis of the decadent society he enters. As a native of Chaldea and a *mage*, he is not only an initiate into Péladan's philosophy, but he is also racially separate from the society of *Le Vice Suprême*, which is primarily Italian and French; and, as the above quotation suggests, he is a serious, level-headed person, in direct contrast with the decadent characters. He does not actually appear until the novel has run more than a third of its course, and his entrance is dramatic; his speech and appearance make him the sole centre of attention at a reception.² From this point onwards other characters become secondary; Léonora d'Este may be the 'vivante allégorie de la décadence latine',³ but the concentration on Mérodack shows us that this is not the ideal of the novel; he represents both criticism of the decaying socialite *milieu* that tempts him, and the introduction of a new model of humanity.

Mérodack is not a man of action; his effect on others operates through their fascination and his wisdom. When he is compelled to fulfil his horoscope's prediction that he will become a killer, avenging the rape of his beloved Corysandre, he does not fight a duel as other characters in the novel do. Mérodack kills by enchantment, using a wax effigy of his victim's head.⁴ When the normally private Mérodack makes a public outburst, his effect is again not so much one of direct action, but of causing others to change their perceptions. He shouts 'Ohé!!! Ohé!!! Les races latines!!!' during a particularly awful play, popular with a decadent audience, and causes a riot as the rest of the audience come to their senses and support him. A commissioner attempts to throw him out; while Mérodack's reaction is violent, it also has elements of a mystic rather than physical action, and indeed a certain passivity as he gathers force from his environment:

Livide, l'agent posa la main sur l'épaule de Mérodack; mais il la retira instantanément brûlée, et il se courba en arrière sous un irresistible vent. L'adepte n'avait pas fait un geste; absorbant tout le fluide favorable du public, il s'était

¹ Péladan, *La Décadence Latine, Ethopée: I. Le Vice Suprême*, Geneva: Slatkine, 1979, p.116.

² *Ibid.*, pp.135–46.

³ *Ibid.*, p.83.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.332–33.

ainsi transformé en une vivante machine électrique; à cet instant, il tenait la foudre, et d'un coup de poing eût étendu l'agent raide mort.¹

In the fact that Mérodack is not a man of action in the conventional sense, we may see a link with the character of the Decadent hero as mapped out by George Ross Ridge, namely a figure whose true relationship with the world is one of absorption through the senses, without necessarily projecting himself back into the world. In Ridge's view the classic example of this is the introspection of Des Esseintes, hero of Huysmans's *A Rebours*, who is able to gratify himself entirely by imaginary impressions of sensual experiences and thus has no actual need for the outside world to furnish real stimuli, discarding it in favour of Art.² The Decadent hero is selfish, to the extent of regarding himself as the only conceivable point of interest; other people exist only to be used and abused. Clear examples of this attitude include Péladan's Léonora d'Este, Rachilde's unsexed heroines, and Léopold, the anguished hero of Mendès's *Zo'har* (though he has the tempering influence of requited if incestuous love for another selfish character, his sister Stéphanie). Selfish cruelty also leads us towards the fascination with sado-masochistic relationships that has long been identified as a fundamental part of the fictional society that the Decadents create; Octave Mirbeau saw masochistic relationships as the vital key to Decadent morality, aesthetics and even politics.³ The influence of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch on the French Decadents is all the more pertinent for the fact that he was known personally by a number of the writers we are investigating; indeed there is some (disputed) evidence that he saw the 21 May 1894 performance of *Babylone*, also attended by a number of Jarry's friends and fellow writers.⁴ However, although his direct influence, closely associated with Decadence, is readily identified within Jarry's literary environment (and most particularly in Rachilde's earlier novels), it is in stark contrast with the potent central figures we shall find in the work of Jarry and others, as masochism is a *de facto* denial of heroic status, passing will and supremacy to someone else.⁵ Yet despite – or because of – the

¹ *Le Vice Suprême*, p.262. The *fluide* is the ether, in which Mérodack believes.

² George Ross Ridge, *The Hero in French Decadent Literature*, Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1961, pp.49–57.

³ See Jennifer Birkett, *The Sins of the Fathers: Decadence in France 1870–1914*, London: Quartet, 1986, p.33. Birkett notes this point from Mirbeau's *Le Jardin des supplices*.

⁴ Although there is documentary evidence of Sacher-Masoch's presence, his health at the time casts some doubt upon it. See Beaufils, *Essai sur une maladie du lyrisme*, p.285.

⁵ See in Gilles Deleuze's *Présentation de Sacher-Masoch*, Paris: 10/18, 1973, the demand in Sacher-Masoch's contract with Wanda for 'Renonciation tout à fait absolu de votre moi', (p.297), fundamental to the largely autobiographical relationship in *Die Venus im Pelz*.

Decadence of his surroundings, Péladan's Mérodack as seen in *Le Vice Suprême* is an early model of the Symbolist view of the hero.

Mérodack is an introspective character, much in the mould of other Decadent heroes, but his relationship with the world is a very different one. He is a mystic, and throughout *Le Vice Suprême* he remains an enigma to those around him. But, unexpectedly, he is an outspoken enigma. Not simply a contemplative mystic, he expounds his views with a forthrightness that belies their sheer oddity, and draws others to him by virtue of his partial isolation from the degenerating world around him. His magnetism plainly extended to the reading public, as he helped to make Péladan's first novel into the Sâr's greatest commercial success – though we should not discount the appeal of the book's licentious plot, from which Mérodack remains largely aloof.

The appeal of Mérodack is that of a critic, a non-decadent hero within a decadent society, and as such he represents one of the points that marks the movement away from the model of *A Rebours* and the mid-century dandy, who is often an empathetic creation of the author. Péladan, as the student of the *Amphithéâtre des Sciences Mortes* will know, is a vitriolic critic of the decline of society and politics into apathy and bourgeois values, and the figure of Mérodack is intended to be his primary representative in the fight against the general decay, as well as the governing Jupiter figure of the Chaldean pantheon which, in *La Décadence latine*, is translated into human figures in the modern world.

Also, it is unfortunate that, as the *Ethopée* progresses, the extravagances of style become so intense that the novels can be genuinely hard to follow. If ever there was Art for Art's sake, the Decadent ideal shared with the Parnassians, it is to be found in such novels as *Un Cœur en peine* (1890), where Mérodack remains a governing presence, in his 'Château de Rose-Croix', but is quite lost in a style that is profoundly Decadent (in the sense of self-indulgent), made up almost entirely of alternating sententiae and quotations from other novels of the *Ethopée*.¹ Mérodack is such a prevalent figure in Péladan's work that it is impossible to ignore him, and in the *livres pairs* we have already seen him in his antique guise as Sâr Mérodack Baladan of *Babylone*; in the theatre he is at his most accessible, and, if one overcomes the play's potential for awkwardness, at his most attractive. Governed by Péladan's Chaldean astrology, his basic character is the same as ever – masterful, literally a king in this work, sexually magnetic but also humanely sensitive; this last quality is shown in his

¹ Péladan's decision to exclude all action from *Un Cœur en peine* accounts in part for its style; see Beaufils, *Essai sur une maladie du lyrisme*, p.188.

development as a seer and his passage to a state of virtual androgyny, another of Péladan's obsessions, and not an easy one to depict on the stage. His sympathetic qualities and above all his dignity distinguish him from the truly Decadent conception of the hero and mark progress on the way towards the distinctive Symbolist heroes we shall meet in due course, even if he operates within a flamboyantly Decadent setting.

If Mérodack represents a frontal assault on the Decadent ethics of the hero, a less overt but no less relevant critique is offered by Remy de Gourmont, a far subtler author whose exclusion from the *livres pairs*, as has been noted, seems to be a matter of personal alienation from Jarry, his former *protégé*. His novel *Sixtine* is one of the most telling illustrations of the problems inherent in the Decadent hero, in the central figure of Hubert d'Entraques.

Sixtine and its author sit uncomfortably on the shifting boundary between Decadence and Symbolism, and Noël Arnaud has called the novel 'peut-être le plus beau roman symboliste (nous voulons dire qu'il contient tout le toc et tous les tics du Symbolisme)'.¹ Gourmont was one of the foremost theoreticians of the Symbolist movement, and one of its prime movers with his work at the *Mercure*. His own fiction nonetheless has a strong Decadent tinge, frequently recalling the Huysmans of the pre-conversion *A Rebours* era. The novel, like so many of the period, is semi-autobiographical, and includes aspects of Gourmont's relationship with Berthe Courrière, whose laughable attempts to seduce Jarry feature in *L'Amour en visites* and brought about the split between Jarry and Gourmont. In the mould of the classic Decadent hero, d'Entraques is a dreamer and, as it happens, also a writer, attempting to write a florid piece called *L'Adorant*, in step with the progress of his love for a young widow, Sixtine Magne. Jennifer Birkett sees in his internalised anguish 'a celebration of the decadent hero's incapacity in any world except that of his own dream'.² This is not quite the whole truth about d'Entraques; he is distinct from the mainstream Decadent hero, as he is not really an empathetic projection of his author. The variation from the real-life source is the first indication: whereas d'Entraques loses Sixtine to a more masculine suitor, Berthe Courrière was Gourmont's mistress for some years, including the period of the novel's composition. D'Entraques is more of a satirical creation, a parody of a Decadent hero rather than an honest version of the type. For instance, the *gestes et opinions* of Huysmans's *Des Esseintes* are narrated in unbroken *style indirect libre*, with the effect of keeping the character sufficiently

¹ Alfred Jarry, p.193.

² Birkett, *The Sins of the Fathers*, p.103.

veiled to prevent a value judgment on him, but in the case of d'Entraques the products of a Decadent mind are more accessible, presented in a form that allows a direct examination of the fictional character behind it. These products are d'Entraques's writings, represented by the text of *L'Adorant*.

Read from the perspective of 1898 and of Faustroll's library, the six chapters of *L'Adorant* included in *Sixtine* almost give an impression of Henri de Régnier: an Italian setting, shifts between prose and verse, chapters opening *in medias res*, often with strange and suggestive images such as a shower of peacock feathers,¹ and a strong impression that much is being said more for the sake of saying it with style than for any effect it may have. From the perspective of 1890, date of the novel's publication and a time when Decadence was more in vogue, the effect is rather different. It is to throw d'Entraques into sharp relief beside his *alter ego*, Guido Della Preda, and to make his final resolution to lead a studious, pious and reconciled life seem as unimpressive as it is when compared with Della Preda's dramatic and wordy suicide, driven on by the implacable Madonna of his visions.² The urge to profess inferiority is a frequent motif of the Decadent hero, and is usually linked to sexual masochism,³ but in d'Entraques it is taken to extremes; his cerebrality – *Sixtine* is subtitled 'roman de la vie cérébrale' – prevents him from being a suitable mate for Sixtine, and Juin points out the clear inferiority complex that emerges through the creation of d'Entraques's novel, describing this in terms of Pygmalion. D'Entraques fails to fulfil the role and finds new life, but his creation Guido succeeds – by dying.⁴

The abortive affair with Sixtine represents an attempt by a Decadent hero to step outside the cerebral, aesthetic world in which he is commonly delineated, and his failure suggests a temporary exhaustion of the literary potential of his kind. In the Symbolist perspective Hubert d'Entraques is a dated character; we may see in him the effective demise of the Decadent hero as a potent force and a clear way ahead for the evolution of a new type, which would be created largely by writers personally familiar with Gourmont, as well as with his work and artistic thought. This decay, however, is by no means the only factor contributing to the new brand of Symbolist hero; the *livres pairs* furnish us with illustrations of a further type, a creation of certain writers independent from both Decadence and Symbolism, but whose influence is still important, particularly for Jarry.

¹ Remy de Gourmont, *Sixtine, roman de la vie cérébrale, suivi de Lettres à Sixtine*, Paris: 10/18, 1982, p.166.

² *Ibid.*, pp.326–27, pp.308–11 respectively.

³ Ridge explores this aspect throughout his book.

⁴ Preface to *Sixtine*, p.35.

The Rise of the Aggressive Individualist

If the mid-1880s witness the start of the decline of the Decadent hero with *Le Vice Suprême*, they also mark the emergence of a different type of hero, one who is in part a reaction to the Decadent type (and of course also recalls certain earlier figures), but who is also a positive new creation. This more assertive type of hero is featured in the *livres pairs*, in the first instance by the progenitor of the type: Caïn Marchenoir, Léon Bloy's *Le Désespéré*.

Bloy is one of the most outspokenly reactionary authors in French literature, and without his like in his period. We have seen the vehemence of his desire for a return to medieval Christian values as he chooses to view them; although, as we have noted, his ideology contains some concepts that are far from orthodox, the raw aggression of his delivery is such that it is easy to miss this point. The hero of *Le Désespéré* is of course none other than Bloy himself, entirely recognisable but with sympathetic elements carefully edited out. He is a vehicle for Bloy's religious dogma in the slow martyrdom he endures, but what makes him so extraordinary is the extent to which his martyrdom is self-inflicted. His poverty is real enough, but Marchenoir compounds it by going out of his way to make his writing insulting to the point of becoming unsaleable, and testing his friends to the point of deep embarrassment, usually by imperious demands for money (see *Le Désespéré*, p.43). These traits were also prominent in Bloy himself; *Le Pal* is an object lesson in how to become unemployable as a writer, and Bloy's journal is peppered with letters demanding money, followed by expressions of Bloy's indignation at losing the friendship of their recipients.¹ The only event capable of shocking Marchenoir is the voluntary disfigurement that his beloved Véronique undergoes (*Le Désespéré*, pp.214–25), yet he is somehow able to glory in seeing her suffer for him (*Le Désespéré*, p.225), such is his personal brand of egotistical asceticism.

Pierre Glaudes has sought to demonstrate the quintessentially Decadent influence of Sacher-Masoch in Marchenoir's story, but in fact the suffering of Bloy's novel is far bleaker and more powerful than the specifically masochistic brand.² There is no real religious dimension in Sacher-Masoch, but the need for Marchenoir to suffer begins on a higher plane, with the Crucifixion and its demand for penitence:

¹ On the strange art of Bloy's letters, see Albert Rombeaut, 'Destination: inconnu', *Revue des Sciences Humaines*, 195 (1984), 79–100.

² Pierre Glaudes, 'Du sang, de la douleur et des larmes... Lecture du *Désespéré* de Léon Bloy à la lumière de Sacher-Masoch', *Romantisme*, 48 (1985), 47–61.

Quand les bourreaux descendirent du Calvaire, ils rapportèrent à tous les peuples, dans leurs gueules sanglantes, la grande nouvelle de la Majorité du genre humain. La Douleur franchit, d'un bond, l'abîme Infini qui sépare l'accident de la Substance et devint NECESSAIRE. (*Le Désespéré*, p.194)

Even religious comfort in its conventional form is denied to Marchenoir, who like Bloy is an anti-cleric. Strong condemnation of the hypocrisy of the clergy isolates Marchenoir still further, and the only place he and other believers mix without friction is the Grande-Chartreuse; the financial generosity of the Père Général at his departure marks one of the rare points where Marchenoir allows his emotions to overcome him (*Le Désespéré*, p.186).

Marchenoir is a new breed of hero, created outside any literary grouping but admired by the Symbolists in particular. He is frank, devoid of affectation, and cultivates a form of intellectual brutality, which is directed mainly at himself. He is deliberately self-destructive and self-isolating, with a death-wish that is satisfied in *La Femme pauvre* (1897), another text that fictionalises events from Bloy's life, some of which also appear in journal form in *Le Mendiant ingrat*. Marchenoir features in *La Femme pauvre*, though not as the central figure. Nonetheless it is impossible to ignore him:

Cet étrange Marchenoir ayant été fort décrit dans un autre livre, il serait oiseux de réitérer ici sa peinture. Mais l'ignorante Clotilde, qui le voyait et l'entendait pour la première fois, s'étonna d'un homme qui avait l'air de parler du fond d'un volcan et qui naturalisait l'Infini dans les conversations les plus ordinaires.¹

Marchenoir maintains his alternately magnetic and repulsive presence throughout the first part of *La Femme pauvre*, but in the second Bloy finally kills off his self-projection. He dies alone, unshriven and in utter poverty, leading the suffering to a kind of logical conclusion.² Bloy is also giving a sign of the times. Marchenoir is a character whose creation denies the value of affectation as practised by Decadent heroes, but by the time Bloy completed Marchenoir's life story the intellectual climate had changed, and a more subtle representative of basically similar views became a possibility. *La Femme pauvre* was written in two main stages, although these do not tally exactly with the first and second parts; the first bout of composition took place in 1891, and the novel was completed in 1896–97. And for the latter part of the novel, Bloy translates himself,

¹ Bloy, *La Femme pauvre*, p.102.

² *Ibid.*, pp.314–15.

adding features of the artist Camille Redondin to blur the issue (see the notes to the edition of *La Femme pauvre* referred to in the footnotes), into another self-projection: Léopold, who marries Clotilde, 'la femme pauvre' of the title.

Léopold is Bloy's artistic representative where Marchenoir was the embodiment of his temperament. He recalls the presence of Elskamp's *Enlumineurs* among the *livres pairs*, as he is an illuminator, indeed the re-discoverer of the art. Jacques Petit has pointed out that the passages explaining Léopold's approach to his art are a direct transposition of Bloy's attitude to writing, and notes also that Bloy had dabbled in illumination.¹ Léopold and Marchenoir are friends, and Léopold recognises a mysterious correspondence between the boldness of his own work and the virulent writing of Marchenoir.² This is another indication that we are dealing with two projections of the same mind into the text, but equally significant are the differences between the two versions. Marchenoir, always outspoken and alien to any kind of easy comfort, spiritual or temporal, upsets any situation he enters, and does his best to demolish the opinions of others. Léopold, however, is a calming influence, and for a time the salvation of Clotilde – a figure who somehow seems unworthy of being called the heroine of the novel, as she is a curiously hollow character used essentially to reflect the people and influences that bear upon her. In their marriage we have a portrait of the Bloy *ménage* that had developed since the writing of *Le Désespéré*, and, despite privations very similar to those detailed in *Le Mendiant ingrat*, the marriage shows a happy stability.

As one might expect in Bloy, happiness cannot last, and the author kills off this more sympathetic self-projection, just as he did the first. However, Léopold goes out in a blaze – literally – of glory, as he dies saving women and children from a fire at the Opéra-Comique. Bloy takes a certain pleasure in fire falling as if from heaven on 'l'abjecte musique de M. Ambroise Thomas', and in the decimation of his detested bourgeoisie, but he reserves a fine death and transfiguration for Léopold:

Quelqu'un prétendait l'avoir aperçu, la dernière fois, au centre d'un tourbillon, brûlant immobile et les bras croisés...³

The fact that Léopold dies to save a class of person that Bloy, in his Marchenoir mode, would happily see vanish from the face of the Earth is not quite enough to deny the quality of Léopold's deed; it is one of the very few

¹ Notes to *La Femme pauvre*, p.414.

² *La Femme pauvre*, p.186.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.389–90.

conventionally daring deeds of heroism carried out by avant-garde heroes of the period, and certainly the most dramatic. It also goes against the grain in that it is an act dedicated to others; charity is a concept that Bloy usually only touches on when seeking support for himself. One interpretation is that within Bloy's ascetic world-view, Léopold's heroism in helping the bourgeoisie condemns him to death; he has become a collaborator.

Taken within the broader church of 1890s literary doctrine, Léopold runs with the grain rather than against it, and in so doing demonstrates that there is a conciliatory side to Bloy. Although Léopold is an artist, any temptation to associate him with Decadent convention is efficiently dissolved by the sympathetic, indeed loving character he exudes, and also by the very nature of his art, removed from the aesthetics of his own century and thus agreeable to the reactionary side of Bloy as well as to an audience that could appreciate the poetry of Elskamp or the dramas of Maeterlinck. With Léopold, Bloy advances from the fire-breathing hero exemplified by Marchenoir towards a more widely acceptable human type, who can serve as a mouthpiece without the violence of the delivery taking over completely, as it can with Marchenoir. The reader can grasp why Marchenoir should be an outcast and live in poverty through his deliberate intellectual violence, aimed at the reader as much as at the 'cochons', but Léopold's penury encourages sympathy, as he is a character who does good and whom we see as unjustly wronged. Bloy's impatience to kill Léopold off and then to proclaim *Le Mendiant ingrat* as the true sequel to *Le Désespéré* (see Part I) suggests that if Bloy felt he was starting to fit in with fashion – in other words to compromise his individuality – he wanted nothing to do with it.

If the forces behind the creation of Bloy's abrasive individualists are often metaphysical, those we see in his acquaintance Georges Darien are almost entirely political. In our earlier encounters with Darien we noted his subversiveness; the central figures of his novels are the medium by which the subversive message is delivered, and also humanised for the reader. Unlike Bloy, Darien denied the value of the self-projection; indeed he denied that an author's biography had any relevance to literature.¹ It could reasonably be argued that Darien was creating a self-defensive barrier with such statements, but his stance is useful in that it isolates his heroes from interpretations based on his own character. Thus they are better able to present purely political points, to emphasise Darien's attitudes rather than any aspects of personality. The two Darien *livres pairs* offer the

¹ See Redfern, *Georges Darien*, p.11.

clearest uses he makes of heroes to demonstrate aspects of his revulsion at the modern world:

Je suis simplement un homme révolté par l'horreur de la situation générale et, n'étant ni assez intelligent, ni assez savant pour me conduire en citoyen du monde, je désire me révolter simplement comme Français.¹

After all the complexities and mystifications we have met, Darien's delivery is refreshingly direct. With the exception of *Les Pharisiens*, all Darien's novels are narrated in the first person, making his heroes the most accessible we shall meet. Their accessibility also sets them a little way apart from the main thrust of avant-garde development, but this individuality can also contribute to their appeal – the broad diversity of Symbolist tastes comes to the fore once again, as Darien was admired by a Symbolist readership with artistic principles very different from his own.

The hero of *Biribi*, the novel passed over in favour of *Le Voleur* in the Fasquelle manuscript, marks a stage of development towards the figure of the thief Georges Randal. Jean Froissard (the name is oddly similar to that of the late medieval writer Jean Froissart) is more than a simple vehicle for the condemnation of an aspect of the 'situation générale', namely the inhumanity of the military discipline experienced by Darien in Tunisia: Froissard is developed as a complex and often split personality, showing the effects of army brutality at an accessibly human level. Walter Redfern's account of Froissard is thorough, so the details need no repeating here.² However, we should note one central point: outspoken though he is, and whatever the value of his status as a man in revolt, Froissard is a victim. It is accepted from his youth that he will always be an outsider, unable to conform (*Biribi*, pp.49–53; Froissard's family moralise on his decision to join up), and there is a consequent mental resignation that ultimately leads him to the penal companies. There is a moral point here, showing the conflict between ingrained submission from Froissard's bourgeois upbringing and his primal urge to revolt, an urge which is never strong enough to prevail. By the time of *Le Voleur*, Darien is prepared to take the subversive power of his heroes to its peak, by allowing the revolt its full reign.

Georges Randal, the hero of the novel, quickly overcomes the malicious attempts of others to make him into a victim. His uncle defrauds him over his inheritance, so Randal promptly spoils the uncle's plans to marry off his daughter Charlotte (with whom Randal is in love) by burgling the groom's family home (*Le Voleur*, pp.81–82). This brusque rupture with

¹ Darien quoted in Auriant, *Darien et l'inhumaine comédie*, p.13.

² Redfern, *Georges Darien*, pp.39–62, especially pp.50–54.

conventions of behaviour marks Randal out as a winner where Froissard is a loser, and marks the point where he embarks on his highly successful life of crime. While Froissard is punished for his misdemeanours, Randal leads a charmed life; detection is always distant from his own career and only affects other crooks, such as his friend Canonnier. At the same time, Randal is highly articulate, as are other voices in the novel such as that of his associate Issacar, and forms a persuasive mouthpiece for the deeply subversive analysis of society on which the whole novel is based. He has the power to dupe the satirised individuals he meets by words as well as deeds, for instance with his spoof contribution to the *Revue pénitentiaire* (see Part I), but by sharing the joke with the reader Randal makes his cruelty sympathetic. Even more than Froissard, he is developed at sufficient length to engender real interest in his progress; he is also unusual among 1890s creations in that he inhabits a completely realistic world, in which his location will be familiar to the reader, even if his socio-political stance may not be.

Another distinction between Froissard and Randal is that the latter becomes an analyst of society, able to redefine his own position within it; Redfern calls him a social Darwinist.¹ We have observed that Froissard is a born victim; the events of his life compound this quality rather than combat it. Issacar, Randal's mentor at the start of his life of rebellion, suggests to him that humanity is divided 'en deux factions à peu près égales: les bourreaux et les victimes' (*Le Voleur*, p.63). The motives behind the whole of Randal's subsequent career can be regarded as a desire to be among the *bourreaux*, to be a winner at any cost – to others. He is not without his moments of doubt, disappointment and indeed anguish, for instance upon the death of his daughter (*Le Voleur*, pp.365–66). These moments contribute greatly to the creation of a three-dimensional character, but Randal remains no less decisive and single-minded in his attitude to the world and its inhabitants. For instance, while mourning his daughter he cannot feel remorse for the death of the disreputable money-changer Paternoster, whom he had inadvertently killed (needing money from him to pay a specialist) on the Christmas Eve when the child's condition became critical (*Le Voleur*, p.369).

His normally dispassionate outlook is what enables Randal to live not only as a thief, but as a highly successful one. This approach to life plainly appeals to Darien, as it works against his greatest dislike – hypocrisy. The hypocrisy of Urbain Randal, Georges's dishonest but respectable uncle,

¹ Redfern, *Georges Darien*, p.137.

frames the novel's main narrative; his mismanagement of Georges's inheritance and refusal of Charlotte's hand in marriage come at a stage where Urbain has marked his nephew down as a loser, and are Randal's direct inspiration to become a *bourreau*. He compounds the potential shame of his sexual relationship with Charlotte by carrying out his first burglary, which reduces the fortune of the Montareuil family, into which Charlotte is to be married, to a level such that the union would be unacceptable to Urbain. Randal's final retirement from crime comes with the swindle that he and his occasional partner in crime, Abbé Lamargelle, perpetrate on Urbain as he expires on his deathbed, already a pathetic figure: they substitute a new will for his own, diverting his fortune from the coffers of the Institut Pasteur back to his family. Compassion for the dying would not be appropriate for a Darien hero in this instance, as it would involve hypocrisy; for Darien there is no reason not to speak ill of the dead if they happen to deserve it.

Biribi depicts a revolt which is negative and, for Froissard, futile – the reaction of the victim against something stronger than himself. *Le Voleur* is practical revolt, with tangible results for the hero, namely financial security, moral decisiveness, and in Lamargelle's view a kind of truce with society: 'Le vol n'aura été pour vous qu'un essai d'acclimatation à la Société' (*Le Voleur*, p.473). Rachilde saw in its practicality a refreshing antithesis to the aesthetic excesses of 1890s literature:

Le Voleur, c'est l'apologie de l'anarchie pratique. Non pas celle des illuminés et des inconscients; de l'anarchie qui, SEULE, pourrait réaliser des choses utiles à notre époque de rêveurs un peu trop occupée de théories [...] Le héros de Darien me semble un homme et je regrette que l'auteur le désavoue un peu dans sa préface. Randal est un lettré, un conscient, un logicien de premier ordre. Il sent que les temps sont arrivés de négliger toute hypocrisie. Au sabre d'un innocent comme M. Esterhazy ou au sceptre d'un admirable bourgeois comme M. Félix Faure, il préfère la pince-monseigneur, c'est plus courageux et plus humain. Moi, je l'en félicite.¹

Rachilde oversimplifies Darien's politics; as the text of *Le Voleur* makes plain, he is not exactly an anarchist nor indeed purely a socialist, and his views would develop along generally divergent lines, towards Georgism.² We should, however, stray briefly into the philosophical background of this particular brand of hero. The common characteristics of the assertive heroes in Darien and Bloy are strength and independence of will, for instance:

¹ Review of *Le Voleur* in the *Mercure de France*, 25 (Jan.–Mar. 1898), 226–27.

² Auriant and Redfern both cover these later developments in Darien's politics.

Va retrouver ton père, fille de voleur! il m'a volé mon argent et toi tu veux me voler ma volonté! Va-t-en! Va-t-en! (Randal to Charlotte, *Le Voleur*, p.101)

Given the period we are dealing with, this inevitably brings our thoughts round to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Schopenhauer had a certain vogue at the time, being among the inspirations of the fashionable French philosopher (and Jarry's schoolmaster) Henri Bergson. However, Bloy noted inadequacies (as he saw them) in Schopenhauer's reasoning that might also ring true for other *auteurs pairs* with a belief in some form of the Beyond:

L'affreux cuistre Schopenhauer, qui passa sa vie à observer l'horizon du fond d'un puits, était certes bien incapable de soupçonner l'origine *supernaturelle* du sentiment dominateur qui précipite les hommes les plus forts sous les pieds des femmes, et la chiennerie contemporaine a glorifié sans hésitation ce blasphémateur de l'Amour.¹

Metaphysical considerations apart, Bloy condemns the pessimism with which Schopenhauer is often associated, by stressing the value of love; we should remember that these assertive heroes are more human than their often ethereal Decadent counterparts, and even Marchenoir can be tender. Darien would no doubt have challenged Bloy's assumption of the supernatural motivation behind love, but equally he would quite possibly have his own political reasons to reject Schopenhauer as an influence; as many passages in *Le Voleur* make plain, the will as understood by Darien is a reactive product of social forces; for instance in Randal it is fuelled by the misdirection of money and a subsequent desire to control its movements, and it is not a philosophical quantity. Darien develops a more applied world-view, matching the political drive of his work. Bloy's rejection of Schopenhauer is based on his own metaphysical attitudes, but one cannot imagine that Jarry, in 1898 about to complete *L'Amour absolu*, with its strong if contorted attachment to religion, would find reason to argue with it.

The case of Nietzsche is a little more involved. Jarry remarked at the end of his life that one of his Rennes schoolteachers, M. Bourdon, had introduced him to Nietzsche even before French translations were available (OCBP III, p.531). Symbolist reviews were instrumental in promoting Nietzsche in France, including the publications most closely associated with the contemporary *auteurs pairs*, the *Mercur de France* and the *Revue Blanche*; Paul Valéry featured among those who published work on Nietzsche in the Symbolist press. Notable work on Nietzsche also appeared in the popular *Revue des Deux Mondes*.² His anti-Christian stance

¹ *La Femme pauvre*, p.156.

² For a complete account, see Eric Hollingsworth Deudon, *Nietzsche en France: l'Antichristianisme et la critique, 1891–1915*, Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982.

held the potential for greater problems than did Schopenhauer, but this aspect of Nietzsche was less evident in the 1890s than it was to be, with a religious backlash coming only after the philosopher's death in 1900.¹ We should also remember that the central work in Nietzsche's denial of God, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, was not even fully published at the start of the decade, when he first became known in France; the first complete publication, in German, dates from 1892. More important here is the appeal and reasoning of Nietzsche's cult of human vitality, associated with the fashion for anarchism. Given this fashion it is not surprising that a welcome awaited Nietzsche's reasoned background to the rejection of received values, and the figure that was to replace them, the *Übermensch*. Not, of course, that the *Übermensch* was a new concept; it features as a concept in many authors before Nietzsche, notably in Goethe, whose influence is strong in Jarry's *Ontogénie*.

The new appeal of the *Übermensch* for Jarry's artistic generation is its association in Nietzsche with a world-view that could be regarded as sympathetic to anarchist thought and literary practice. In particular we should note the concepts of *Sklavenmoral* (slave morality) and *Umwertung aller Werte* (inversion of all values) as likely contributions to the social analysis and hero figure of *Le Voleur*. For Darien, those who do not alter aspects of the society they live in are slaves (*Le Voleur*, p.372), and the hero is the person capable of effecting changes – in Randal's case, stimulating the movement of money. In thus making the thief a hero, not for reasons of his romantic appeal but for specific political motives, Darien is also using him as the means of inverting values. For Jarry this is plainly a part of *Le Voleur's* appeal, since, as remarked in Part I, Darien's social analysis finds its way into *Ubu Enchaîné*, with the play's logical conundrums on the implications of freedom and slavery. Eric Deudon has observed that Henri Albert, who promoted Nietzsche in the *Mercure*, 'ne pouvait concevoir cet *Übermensch* en d'autres termes que celui d'un remède énergétique aux problèmes de la société',² and while this may be an incomplete approach to the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, it is all that is required for the development of Darien's heroes from the thwarted revolt of Froissard to the accomplishments of Randal.

¹ Again, see Deudon for detail on this point, which forms one of the main strands of his book.

² Deudon, *Nietzsche en France*, p.43.

The Symbolist Hero

We have seen the hero developing in two ways towards the immediate environment of *Faustroll* as it is acknowledged by the *livres pairs*. One of these has been characterised by degeneration, the decline of the effete dandy prized by 1880s Decadence, his poise disrupted from within and finally losing importance as the 1890s develop a wider conception of what may constitute an aesthetically satisfying character, in line with a changing aesthetic in the avant-garde. As a counterbalance to this degeneration, the reader of the *livres pairs* encounters characters of great vitality, who are in line with contemporary philosophy even if they are not always achievers. Add to these factors the aspects of 1890s literature explored in the previous chapter (fascination with off-beat thought and motifs, a cultivation of hermeticism, a metaphysical dimension tending towards religious faith), and we have the ingredients for a distinct and largely unexplored type, the Symbolist hero, some notable examples of which feature in the *livres pairs* and the works of Alfred Jarry. Most particularly, they emerge from the prose of authors closely allied to the *Mercure de France*.

In this light, the obvious place to start is with Rachilde, the *animatrice* of the *Mercure* circle. We have already noted in passing the bloodthirsty heroines of her notorious early novels, but by the late 1890s Rachilde was widening her repertoire. The type of the strong woman was not abandoned (for instance, it recurs in *La Jongleuse* [1900]), but the two Rachilde *livres pairs*, published under a new *nom-de-plume*, use very different central figures. *La Princesse des ténèbres* focuses on a weak female figure, the sickly Madeleine Deslandes, whose mind and health become subservient to her demonic and in part illusory lover, Hunter; of greater interest to us here is *L'Heure sexuelle*, where Rachilde uses not only a male central figure but also first-person narration. Moreover, this novel shows refreshed versions of some of her favourite themes.

Once again Sacher-Masoch is to the fore. His theme of the controlling Mistress is fundamental to the earlier, better known Rachilde novels, but in *L'Heure sexuelle* Rachilde makes unusually close textual reference to *Die Venus im Pelz*, moving the point of view from the dominant to the submissive partner – as it is in Sacher-Masoch. And just as Sacher-Masoch's hero fantasises about an idealised Venus, Rachilde's Louis Rogès dreams of an idealised Cleopatra (to whom Jarry's extrapolation draws our attention). The recollection of an incestuous aunt who covered the young Louis alternately with blows and kisses (*L'Heure sexuelle*, p.176) mixes elements of Sacher-Masoch's Wanda and of his narrator's aunt, whose

treatment of the hero had been a major turning-point in his obsessions with fur and cruelty.¹ Also, Rachilde's account of a journey to Italy with this aunt recalls the trip there under roughly similar conditions in *Die Venus im Pelz* (*L'Heure sexuelle*, p.174).

These intertextual aspects of *L'Heure sexuelle* are only surprising to the reader of Rachilde for their directness, made all the more plain by the adoption of a male narrator and central figure. What is surprising, however, is that Rachilde is also debunking her source. This process operates through the figure onto whom Louis projects his fantasies. Léonie is not a figure like Wanda, who after initial hesitation becomes capable of going beyond the man's fantasies and exploiting them for her own ends; she is a simple-minded prostitute who has little grasp of the dimensions that Louis sees in their relationship. For instance, note the incidental comedy when he attempts to convey elements of a vision he has had of himself as a negro slave-boy to a Cleopatra who frolics with tigers:

– Je suis très vieux, Reine, et il me faut le piment des lointains mystères d'Égypte pour me rappeler ma jeunesse et ma force. Les filles qui boivent le sang des têtes coupées sur leur bouche ou celles qui jouent entre les pattes des tigres.

– Oh bien, non! Je ferais jamais ce travail-là, *aujourd'hui*. Avec des chiens, passe encore, mais des tigres... Vous pourriez me donner mille francs, je marcherais pas. (*L'Heure sexuelle*, p.129)

The uncomplicated reality of Léonie is sharply contrasted with the fantasy world of Rogès, which slowly becomes even more incongruous than it may have seemed at the outset. Louis's modes of thought and speech, along with his life story (he is a novelist of noble birth who has broken away from his family), mark him out as an individualist, though not one as powerful as Marchenoir or Randal; his individual obsession, like theirs, is to live his life in a particular way, one that justifies the oddities of his fantasies. He seeks to be 'celui qui va tuer le rêve. Le vivre, peut-être' (*L'Heure sexuelle*, p.19). As such he moves into the typically Symbolist field of mystery and hallucination. By projecting his dream, however unsuitably, onto another person (Léonie), he moves into the realm of the dream, in which he plays the part of Caesar to her Cleopatra. In Faustrollian terms, he is exploring a version of the 'univers supplémentaire à celui-ci' (OCBP I, p.668), the environment in which the science of pataphysics operates. Like parts of *Faustroll's* alternative universe, Louis's new dimension is to be found within the confines of contemporary Paris,

¹ Deleuze, *Présentation de Sacher-Masoch*, pp.173–74.

and can be lived in after a fashion; one effect of the dichotomy Rachilde creates between the dreamer and those around him is to stress the unreality of the dream world more than Jarry ever chooses to. And ultimately the dream collapses, when Léonie leaves and is no longer available to play her vital if poorly acted role; though even before this point the fantasy starts to crumble, with the hero realising that he too can no longer play his part in the *mise en scène* of their life together. The dream dies through Louis's act of having lived it, and his particular quest is completed.

Louis Rogès's excursion into mysterious dimensions is a limited one, effectively confined to an exploration and exorcism of elements of his own psyche. Nevertheless it marks a point of entry into the world of the Symbolist hero. He is distinguished from other obsessed fictional novelists such as Hubert d'Entraques by his forthright decision to modify his life, asserting his individuality, and remaining a strong figure through his sheer persistence in following the dream through, at the temporary expense of losing his few friends when he withdraws completely into his fantasy world.

The *livres pairs* offer us another characteristic Symbolist hero from the *Mercur* circle, in the form of Henri de Régnier's Monsieur d'Amercœur. We have already observed the bold technique of the collection of stories in which Amercœur appears, and the way that it veils the activities of Amercœur from the reader, whose primary task is to try to grasp the elusive character of Amercœur when negotiating the structural labyrinth of this first section of *La Canne de jaspe*.

From the outset, the reader is persuaded to think of the hero as a man of mystery. For the narrator he is 'le célèbre marquis dont rêva ma jeunesse' (*La Canne de jaspe*, p.12); the isolated episodes of *Monsieur d'Amercœur* are meant to fill in gaps left by conventional biographies of the character. In the carefully edited outline of his life that Régnier provides, Amercœur has a distinctive role combining mystery, demystification, and ultimately an absence of set interpretation:

Cette entrée de M. d'Amercœur dans l'histoire se fait peu à peu et se confirme à mesure que sa présence y tourne à la préséance et qu'il dépossède de leurs faux attributs des figures fameuses qui n'y deviennent plus que des masques apocryphes sous lesquels on distingue, grossi pour ces mimiques où il répugnait, le fin sourire de leur instigateur. Le voici donc un homme qui a dirigé son temps. On lui découvre une action secrète, et il semble, après tout, qu'on ait raison de voir en lui un des ressorts de l'époque. Sinon, et au moins, il reste un cas de concordance unique par la façon presque merveilleuse dont les faits de sa vie s'adaptent, comme d'eux-mêmes, au sens et à la portée qu'on leur veut attribuer. (*La Canne de jaspe*, pp.10–11)

Precise biographical detail, such as the reasons for the disgrace into which Amercœur has fallen, thus becomes quite superfluous. From earlier comments on *La Canne de jaspe* it should be clear that its carefully disjointed form is in deliberate contrast to the linear exposition of mainstream prose, and Amercœur is a prime example of a hero adapted to the literary practice of late Symbolist fiction. It is clear from the outset that Amercœur is an appealing character, and a worthy object for respectful, distant admiration, but the concession that his life may be interpreted at will sets the true tone for the reader; the freedom of conception is here made broader and more concrete by application to a human being.

Once again we are led back to the central Symbolist principle of art as freedom, with the reader being free to read as he or she wishes, just as the author is free in his or her composition. More specifically, the Jarryist will recall Jarry's speech preceding the first performance of *Ubu Roi*, in which he said that 'vous serez libres de voir en M. Ubu les multiples allusions que vous voudrez' (OCBP I, p.399). Just as Ubu can represent a variety of things (mainly unpleasant), Régnier's work allows us the freedom to read it as we choose, being disconcerted by the changes between stories if it interests or pleases us to do so, or absorbing the resonances of episodes as individual pieces if we wish. The same approach can be taken to Schwob's *Croisade des enfants*, and the overall effect is analogous to that of choosing whether to read a volume of poetry as a cycle or as individual poems.

The flexibility of Amercœur as a character is designed to suit this freedom of reading, and the structural chicanery of *La Canne de jaspe* suits him in its turn. No single narrative voice prevails – sometimes the narrator relates Amercœur's recollections of his youth, sometimes the aged *marquis* speaks for himself, a letter from a third party may be the means of narration, or the narrative position, can be left ambiguous. This makes it impossible to build up a definite picture of the hero, all the more so as there is such wide variety in his exploits. Even within a single tale, the worlds in which he operates are unstable. Taking 'Aventure marine et amoureuse' as an example, he may begin in a conventional world (and indeed a classic genre), being sent to sea as a young man, but by the end of the tale he is on an enchanted island engaged in a mystic, erotic encounter with a nymph. Both elements are as real as each other in the narrative, and Amercœur is the means of movement between them – thus he must be regarded as capable of operating in both, becoming another initiate of 'l'univers supplémentaire'.

From the perspective of the *livres pairs*, Amercœur's movement between worlds of reality and mystery recalls certain pre-Symbolist figures

highlighted by Jarry. The most obvious example is the narrator of Cyrano's *Autre Monde*, many of whose discoveries on other worlds are concerned with the world of the imagination; this is plainest in the *Soleil*, Jarry's specific choice, a world that gradually comes to resemble a human brain rather than a celestial sphere. Agib, the third kalandar in the *Mille et Une Nuits*, is another example, with the fantastic but emphatically real encounters of his fateful journey. And once more, there is the pervasive influence of Rabelais, whose characters can be altered to suit particular episodes (for instance, the changing size of the giants), and can travel through worlds that may be real, satirical, or merely *jeux d'esprit*, as in the case of the two-dimensional tapestry of the 'Pays de Satin' adopted by Jarry for his own *Pantagruel*.

Amercœur could not be described as anything but individualistic, all the more so in view of the cloak of mystery that shields him from the reader (is he married? does he have children?), but he only fits into the mould of the aggressive individualist encountered in Bloy and Darien to a limited extent, through his personal magnetism and potency; certainly he is far from being outspoken, as his characterisation is one of understatement. His mysterious movements behind the scenes recall Mérodack (in his more lucid settings, particularly *Le Vice Suprême*), as the implicit controller of any situation in which he appears. Régnier removes his hero from the world of occult explanations hinted at in Mérodack; there are mysteries aplenty in *Monsieur d'Amercœur*, but they are just that and not an invitation to read pseudo-astrologies. Régnier's text is refreshingly free of jargon when discussed after Péladan and before Jarry. Amercœur's extravagances and lifestyle do not make him a Decadent, as his character is veiled to a point where he transmits few value judgments to the reader; the primary impression is of a mild lack of interest in the ornaments that surround him, of a kind of stoicism.

In the above paragraphs I have been practising a slight deception in describing Amercœur's character as veiled from the reader; as he is an artistic creation, not even part of a *roman à clef* such as *Le Désespéré*, what we cannot see is quite simply not there. Part of the fascination of *La Canne de jaspe* is its ability to sustain a narrative built around this strangely empty figure, an artistic construction pure and simple. This is literature in which the borderline between art and life is a blurred one; the cultured incompleteness of Amercœur takes this a step further than does conventional prose fiction, where we often see an attempt to grasp the whole of a character and bring it into the foreground. Amercœur, by comparison, is a receding figure about whom we seem to know less at the end than at the

start, though the final impression of these tales is a more satisfying one than this might suggest.

L'Heure sexuelle also deals with borderlines between life and art, but is rather different in that it shows a life moving into and out of the realm of art, rather than between reality and the deliberately hazy dimensions of *Monsieur d'Amercœur*. One hint of the pervasiveness of the artistic dimension is surprisingly explicit for those who have read a little poetry, and suggests that Louis Rogès's adventure could be more than an extension of his own fantasies, as it can suggest an unconscious role for art. This telling moment comes as Léonie is talking about a medal she remembers from childhood, brought up by the plough:

– Sur cette grande médaille en argent, il y avait une tête d'empereur. Pas Napoléon, *l'autre*, et c'est à *l'autre* que tu ressembles. Tiens, en te touchant, j'ai tout à fait l'idée de la médaille...

– Le profil de César! Vous me flattez, ma reine.

Seulement, au lieu de rire, j'ai peur. (*L'Heure sexuelle*, pp.242–43)

It is surely no coincidence that this is a precise echo of Gautier's 'L'Art', the conclusion of *Emaux et Camées*:

Et la médaille austère
Que trouve un laboureur
Sous terre
Révèle un empereur.¹

Just as curious as the reference is the fact that it is not the imaginative Rogès who makes it, but the slow-witted Léonie; her association of the world he has created (in which she is Cleopatra) with art, hinted at by the medal reference, is a comment upon his obsessions rather than a part of them, but the reference to art via the poem is too subtle for the character of Léonie to make consciously. The suggestion is that the literary allusion, or indeed art itself, subject of the poem, is floating on the wind, an ethereal part of life. We cannot fail to be reminded of Jarry's comment after one of his own more outrageous personal *gestes*: 'N'était-ce pas beau comme littérature?'² While *littérature* could be regarded as a pejorative term by some writers, including Maupassant and Verlaine, Jarry's concentration upon the *livres pairs* and their artistic implications has shown us that it is of the highest value to him; and we have now advanced far enough in our discussion to turn our attention to the heroes of Jarry's

¹ Théophile Gautier, *Emaux et Camées*, Geneva: Droz, 1947, p.132.

² Apollinaire, 'Feu Alfred Jarry', p.24.

novels, in whom the concept of the Symbolist hero is developed to a logical conclusion.

It is a long-established convention that most of Jarry's heroes are self-projections, identified through elements of biographical detail (army experience in Sengle of *Les Jours et les nuits*, family history in Erbrand Sacqueville of *La Dragonne*) or of aesthetic temperament (Dr Faustroll, Ubu after the fact). Although we have a very clear biographical picture of Jarry, it is almost exclusively through his central figures that we can gain understanding of his world-view, as the version transmitted through his everyday life and sources such as his journalism was a mix of mystification and affectation, however entertaining it may have been; Patrick Besnier speaks aptly of 'une réticence centrale, qui reste efficace', and evokes the image of Jarry gradually destroying his own portrait by Henri Rousseau in order to conceal himself still further.¹ However, the greater point of interest here is that Jarry's heroes stand out as another of the cases where his work demonstrably synthesises principles developed by contemporaries he admired. This helps to account for the oddity of some of his creations; the schism between declining Decadents and assertive outcasts is a large one, with the potential for a bizarre outcome when they are brought together and mixed with other aspects of Jarry's creativity.

The genesis of the Jarry hero can be seen – from a distance – in the *Minutes de sable mémorial* and *César-Antechrist*, hermetic early works that remain genuinely hard to follow even with the critical apparatus now available. The Duke Haldern, of *Haldernablou* (featured in the *Minutes*), is Jarry's first sustained self-projection. He is obscured from the reader by one primary factor, language – the intense language of Symbolism taken to excess, and uncomfortably close to that of Vensuet's 'prose d'officier' in *Les Jours et les nuits* (OCBP I, pp.789–91). The figure of *César-Antechrist* is even less clear, though this is also a function of the play's subject matter, with the protagonist as a cog in a set of celestial events; matters such as characterisation or any possible self-projection are of limited relevance in this work. And like *Haldernablou*, *César-Antechrist* is a relatively short dialogue piece (particularly if we excise the trimmed version of *Ubu Roi* which forms its 'Acte Terrestre'), with limited space for character exposition, which in any case may be seen as inappropriate in a piece populated by symbols and heraldic devices. Even granted the mysteries that we have come to expect from them, it is to Jarry's novels that we must turn for the self-projections to come alive.

¹ Besnier, *Alfred Jarry*, p.9.

Jarry follows the Decadent convention of *style indirect libre* as a first line of defence; there is usually direct access to the thought of his heroes, but impersonal narration denies them the opportunity for a rhetorical address to the outside world. Their emotional links with the world outside the self are always tenuous, and sometimes non-existent. For instance Sengle's only emotional tie with the outside is with his brother Valens, an ephemeral figure whose existence is not a categorical fact (OCBP I, pp.767–71), and while he may have friendly and even sexual relations with other characters, there is no hint of any emotional reliance on them; in this respect he recalls the spiritual independence of Bloy's Marchenoir. Emmanuel Dieu, in *L'Amour absolu*, also experiences deep uncertainty about relationships – which seems reasonable given that characters in this particular novel do not have stable, reliable identities, in a distant echo of *Le Conte de l'Or et du Silence* (although Kahn does give clearer guidance than Jarry regarding the changes his characters undergo).

L'Amour absolu grew out of early sketches for Jarry's second published novel, *L'Amour en visites*, which repudiates the value of human attachment in general, and not merely of heterosexuality. The sequence of seductions that the protagonist Lucien undertakes, undergoes or resists are experiences that vary from emptiness to the grotesque. The overall effect is a demonstration of human beings exposing their emotional personalities and revealing a can of worms, where little is as it seems and, above all, where others cannot be trusted; hence Lucien's anger at young Margot's suggestively ambiguous account of having a tooth removed, with its overtones of childbirth ('*Chez la petite cousine*', OCBP I, pp.869–72). A perceived hypocrisy in others is a trait familiar from Darien and more pertinently Bloy. Marchenoir in particular cannot tolerate variations in personal attitude, and neither could Bloy; *Le Mendiant ingrat* is filled with the passage of Bloy's acquaintances from warm regard to the status of 'cochons', a process that becomes predictable through repetition.

In Jarry's work the end result of the distrust of others is a retrenchment within the individual. Jarry's expression of this is not at all like the expansive rebelliousness of Darien's Randal, but still involves a desire to shock, akin to that of Marchenoir but usually made even more intense by the quality of unexpectedness that Jarry plays upon. An example is the introduction of Erbrand Sacqueville in the relatively coherent early chapters of *La Dragonne*; his portrait as a dashing *polytechnicien* seems simple, but as soon as he emerges centre-stage in the narration he belies his apparent propriety by becoming incapably drunk, much to the consternation of his prospective father-in-law, and then causing panic with a display of the

irresponsible use of firearms worthy of Jarry himself (OCBP III, p.453). The portrait is not so much subverted as destroyed in the space of a few lines.

La Dragonne is a dying Jarry's attempt to penetrate the mass market with a relatively accessible novel, yet he deliberately makes its hero into a deeply puzzling character. This is a kind of literary suicide; even if Jarry had completed *La Dragonne* according to plan (OCBP has made it easier to read by removing the clumsy sections added by Charlotte Jarry after her brother's death), it is hard to imagine that it would have found a publisher; money advanced on the strength of projects such as this and *Pantagruel* was given to Jarry as a humanitarian rather than a commercial gesture. However, even if he did not attain this goal, Jarry had at least recognised that accessibility was desirable. We should not be surprised to find that the heroes of earlier novels, aimed at a more refined, and as it proved non-existent market, are hard – if rewarding – work for the reader. The only clear exception to this is the disappointing *Messaline*, a second attempt to 'faire du Rachilde' after the failure of *L'Amour en visites*.

Returning to Sengle, hero of his first novel *Les Jours et les nuits*, Jarry launches himself into both the creation of a hero in the Symbolist mould, and the first sustained attempt to explain pataphysics. In an anti-army novel, Sengle owes a little to Froissard of *Biribi*, but the impersonal narration distances him from the reader and aids the retreat into his own world of hallucination and uncertainty. In the real world he has a definite magnetism, partly sensual (at its strongest when he is with friends in Paris) and partly intellectual, through the appeal of his *littératures*. His movements are often shadowy, and the stages in his gradual desertion from the army and from himself are imperfectly defined; in this respect he parallels the mysterious movements and transitions of Régnier's Amercœur, who appeared in print in 1897, the same year as Sengle. Like Léopold in Bloy's *La Femme pauvre*, Sengle is a wronged character, in that he is plainly of unsuitable temperament for the brutal, ignorant military régime he is obliged to live under ('Sengle vivant est condamné à mort, et il sait la date', OCBP I, p.749). Another point of resemblance with Léopold is that he is capable of love; the fact that his particular love may be a narcissistic one, and becomes more so as his image of his brother Valens fades into a reflection of himself, does not devalue its intensity.

Nosocome, a medical student who is one of Sengle's comrades, demonstrates that Sengle's magnetism extends to physical telekinesis (OCBP I, p.793), and from such occurrences Sengle attains full awareness of his powers and derives pleasure from the role they give him; like

Mérodack, he becomes a 'gouverneur'.¹ As he changes from unwilling soldier to pataphysical magus, Sengle becomes, in Nietzschean terms, a very clearly defined form of *Übermensch*:

Le monde n'était qu'un immense bateau, avec Sengle au gouvernail [...] l'image la moins absurde était celle de la balance romaine, un poids fabuleux reflété [...] et équilibré par Sengle. Plus philosophiquement, et Sengle ne croyant pas péché l'orgueil imaginait volontiers ce schéma formidable [...] ainsi c'était bien Sengle qui s'identifiait à l'image agrandie, et la figure imaginaire; et le monde minuscule, culbuté par la projection de son sosie gigantesque sur l'écran de l'autre plateau de la balance, croulait, comme une roue tourne, sous la traction du nouveau macrocosme [...] Et Sengle avait dulcinifié ou déifié sa force. (OCBP I, pp.794–95)

His pataphysical powers form a challenge to Sengle's existence as a conventional human being, and ultimately his hallucinations lead to his reduction to a vegetative state (OCBP I, p.835). The highly equivocal character of the hallucinations concerning Valens has an incidental effect of throwing into doubt the validity of the pataphysical reflections, an ironic slant which can compromise Sengle's status as a demonstration of Jarry's thought. Thus there is a case for the creation of another self-projection, immune from such human complications: Dr Faustroll.

The opening description of Faustroll's habits smacks of the Decadent aesthete, taken to a further extreme even than Des Esseintes:

Ce matin-là, il prit son *sponge-bath* quotidien, qui fut d'un papier peint en deux tons par Maurice Denis, des trains rampant le long des spirales; dès longtemps il avait substitué à l'eau une tapisserie de saison, de mode ou de son caprice. (OCBP I, p.659)²

The absorption in art of this character who sees through eyes made of ink (OCBP I, p.659), along with the formal precision of his personal habits, tends to associate him with those Decadent heroes who live by performing gestures simply for the aesthetic pleasures of doing so, but at the same time the oddity of his habits when compared with any conceivable human life acts as a parody of the decayed genre. But what could be more self-indulgently Decadent, and very reminiscent of accounts of the hero's reading in *A Rebours*, than to include a catalogue of Faustroll's library and then to select an essence from each work, in the 'petit nombre des élus'?

Any notion of Faustroll as a Decadent is quickly dispelled, and not

¹ Péladan, *Comment on devient artiste/ariste*, p.72: 'Mérodack, c'est le recteur, le gouverneur, le roi'.

² The paper by Maurice Denis is reproduced in the *Cymbalum Pataphysicum Faustroll*.

merely by these elements of potential parody. The novel's changes of voice (essentially between an impersonal narrator, Panmuphle and Faustroll himself) have the effect of blurring the matter, as indeed they do with so many aspects of *Faustroll*, and it rapidly becomes clear that Dr Faustroll has other, more unusual strings to his bow. We have already seen that he exemplifies the figure of the magus in Symbolist literature, but other unusual aspects are also of importance. Firstly, there is his role as a scientist, engaged in personal investigation of up-to-date scientific principles, notably those of Charles Vernon Boys, William Crookes and Lord Kelvin, to whom Faustroll addresses telepathic letters from the realm of 'Ethernité'.¹ Secondly, there is the question of Faustroll's pataphysical powers as they manifest themselves upon the world. Sengle uses his powers to no greater ends than influencing games of chance, whereas Faustroll is able to exert a major influence upon the world around him, placing himself in control of its destiny. He has the power to move into the artistic dimension merely hinted at in *L'Heure sexuelle*, where he seeks out quintessential beauty in the portraits of 'De Paris à Paris par mer'. He also has the power to transpose matter and dimensions – the voyage by dry land to liquid islands, the creation of the *élus* – and ultimately the power of life and death, which are more closely linked in his world than in our own. Faustroll kills Bosse-de-Nage, but this does not stop the latter from entering into conversation with his characteristic 'ha ha!': 'n'ayant jamais existé qu'imaginairement, [Bosse-de-Nage] ne pouvait être mort définitif' (OCBP I, p.710). Just before executing the hapless monkey, Faustroll undertakes a six-day anti-Creation by means of lighting a small candle, and eradicates most of the population, adding a touch of Rabelais along the way:

Le premier jour, la flamme fut rouge, et divulgua le poison catégorique dans l'air, et la mort de tous les vidangeurs et militaires.

Le deuxième jour, des femmes.

Le troisième, des petits enfants [...] (OCBP I, p.703)

Fulfilling the role of the pataphysician, defined in *César-Antechrist* as 'Axiome et principe des contraires identiques' (OCBP I, p.290), Faustroll inhabits a universe of paradox that he generates himself and superimposes on the normal world; the move into his own 'univers supplémentaire à celui-ci' is demonstrated by the press-ganging and initiation of the bailiff Panmuphle, as banal and unwelcome a real-world character as may be

¹ Details of the scientific influences upon *Faustroll* have been identified by Linda Klieger Stillman in 'Physics and Pataphysics: The Sources of Faustroll', *Kentucky Romance Quarterly*, 26 (1979), 81–92.

imagined. However, although the narrative quickly moves into the pataphysical world, the conventional three-dimensional world continues to exist in parallel with it. This is seen after Faustroll's own equivocal death; while he survives mentally, having left the Earth, his physical body rots in the gruesome reality of the famous Paris Morgue:

La Morgue récéla deux jours sur son pupitre le livre révélé par Dieu de la vérité belle étalée dans les trois (quatre ou N pour quelques-uns) directions de l'espace.

Cependant Faustroll, avec son âme abstraite et nue, revêtait le royaume de l'inconnue dimension. (OCBP I, p.723)

The resurrection of Faustroll within the 'inconnue dimension' from which he sends his letters to Lord Kelvin is a confirmation of his divine status; also, like a God he has the power of life and death, including the power of creation. The extrapolation of the 'petit nombre des élus', many of them living figures, recalls the infant Christ's animation of clay birds in the apocryphal Infancy Gospels. Faustroll's manner also suggests that of a deity: although he does not demand worship, he seems omnipotent and also, to all practical purposes, omniscient; his relations with advanced contemporary science show him in communion with those who test the furthest frontiers of knowledge. When he imparts knowledge, however odd it may be, he does so in the tone of a decree; this tone is best demonstrated by Chapter XXVII, 'Capitalement' (OCBP I, pp.700–02). And as the ultimate proof of his status, we have already seen that when asked if he is a Christian, Faustroll simply replies 'Je suis Dieu'; he is free from duplicity in all his other statements, so why doubt him now? – assuming, of course, that we have become attuned to the suspension of disbelief and to the flexible response that the text of the *Gestes et Opinions* demands.

In granting his hero divinity, Jarry has gone beyond the Péladanesque method of inserting self-projections, masquerading as obscure Gods, into otherwise fairly conventional plots. He has demonstrated a movement from the apparent (stylised) humanity of Dr Faustroll, the debtor scientist upon whom Panmuphle tries to serve a court order, to the Olympian heights of divinity: Faustroll becomes the most complete version possible of an *Übermensch*, and one which, into the bargain, neatly counters the death of God in Nietzsche. In creating the character of Faustroll and his *gestes*, Jarry attempts to map out the surface of God, or one way of looking at God, more compulsively than in the pseudo-scientific calculation made by Faustroll in the final chapter, 'De la Surface de Dieu'. Jarry concludes thus:

Donc, définitivement:

DIEU EST LE POINT TANGENT DE ZERO ET DE L'INFINI. *La Pataphysique est la science...* (OCBP I, p.734)

The corollary Jarry does not explicitly add is that the means through which such truths may be explored is the hero, just as surely as the politics of Darien's *Le Voleur* are elucidated so efficiently through the character of Georges Randal. The particular type of hero exemplified by Faustroll also ties up a strand of thought we have met before: the theme of the magus, a characteristically *Belle Epoque* contribution to the aesthetic of the hero, and a link between humanity and divinity exemplified by Faustroll the pataphysician.

For those readers who can, like Eliphas Lévi, regard religion as a flux linked to ultimate truth, *Faustroll* is a very pious work. As a figure, Faustroll represents a high point of individuality among Jarry's heroes, but not a saleable one; consequently Jarry translates many aspects of him, along with clearer echoes of other writers, into the last hero figure he succeeded in creating in a coherent state: André Marcueil, *Le Surmâle*. The final hero, Erbrand Sacqueville, is too incomplete for extended discussion, although some critics, notably Beaumont, have produced critiques of *La Dragonne* far more readable than the unfinished novel itself.

We have seen how Bloy makes a point of sacrificing his heroes, and Jarry does something very similar with his own; the sacrifice of Marcueil is perhaps the most accessible and sympathetic of these episodes. Sengle is reduced to mental vegetation, sacrificed to his own dream; Faustroll, although he survives in spirit, undergoes a ritual death with the passage of the 'grande nef Mour-de-Zencle' (OCBP I, pp.720–21); Messaline chooses to make the sword that executes her a phallic symbol in her own mind, thereby alluding to various types of sex/death pagan sacrificial rites (OCBP II, p.138); and Marcueil meets his violent end through his confrontation with the electrodes of the *Machine-à-inspirer-l'amour*. But while Marcueil follows in the lineage of Jarry and Bloy's sacrificial heroes, there is also something of the very different Monsieur d'Amercœur in him. The clue to this is given by a strong textual similarity between Marcueil's attempt to improve upon the sexual prowess of 'l'Indien tant célèbre par Théophraste' and, in Régnier's tales, the events that conclude 'La Lettre de M. de Simandre'. Marcueil imprisons the courtesans ostensibly hired to provide the raw material for his feat, while he is elsewhere, breaking the record with just one sexual partner, Ellen Elson. At the psychological moment, the women force a violent escape (OCBP II, p.253). These circumstances are highly reminiscent of an incident which I have already

touched on. Simandre has been searching for the young Amercœur on the boats that the latter has been using as a movable habitat (in true *Palais Nomades* tradition):

On arriva aux salons. Portes closes. On les enfonça. Chacun se pressa pour voir. Nous entrâmes. Personne. Mais dans le grand boudoir en rotonde, où leur colère avait brisé tous les miroirs, on trouva, seules, les cheveux épars, accroupies ou couchées, nues, les neuf plus belles dames de la ville, qui, chacune, avaient cru sans doute y venir en secret et s'y trouvaient réunies par le caprice singulier de leur unique, multiple et alternatif Amant. (*La Canne de jaspe*, p.48)

A more constant suggestion of Amercœur lies in Marcueil's technique of disguising himself, chameleon-like, to suit certain exploits – thus, to emulate Theophrastus's Indian, he appears as an Indian, and for the novel's great set piece, the 'Course des dix mille milles', he transforms himself into the hyper-athletic *Pédard*, while in his daily life he cultivates the appearance of a sickly, wealthy intellectual. In the age of Batman and Superman, such a mix of lifestyles is not unfamiliar. Marcueil moves in a shadowy manner, and it can take time for his chosen forms to become distinct; witness his participation in the ten thousand mile race, where he does not become visible as anything more than a shadow until the race is nearly over. Even when his presence becomes clear, it takes time for onlookers properly to understand what they are seeing (OCBP II, pp.229–32).

As we have seen, Régnier cultivates an impression of Amercœur moving behind the scenes, quietly orchestrating the play of events; in *Le Surmâle*, Jarry creates a character who orchestrates surprises for other characters, not unlike those that Régnier generates for his reader. Jarry wrote on Régnier's technique of character for *La Plume* in 1903, after completing *Le Surmâle*, and suggested (specifically discussing *Le Mariage de minuit*, but the comments apply to other works) that Régnier's characters are not in fact chameleons, but practise a 'mimétisme inverse', projecting themselves onto their surroundings rather than vice versa (OCBP II, pp.415–17), making their world suit their character. This is a kind of aesthetic assertiveness, and the concept is widely applicable to the figures we have been discussing: Marchenoir is a self-destructive ascetic, so he not only inhabits a universe of suffering, but also helps to perpetuate this environment; Rogès projects his dream onto another, weaker-willed human being; Froissard's inborn rebellion is suitably reflected by the fact that we see him under inhuman conditions that demand reaction and revolt; Amercœur has a mysterious past, and so he is presented in a style that engenders further mystery; and Faustroll, being a pataphysician,

transforms the everyday Paris and the people who live in it into the hyper-artistic environment that makes the text of the *Gestes et Opinions* simultaneously bewildering and fascinating.

This is where we can identify the Symbolist hero at his clearest. He is a figure out of the ordinary, who inhabits a textual universe that is created to be in tune with him – and that will in turn reflect his centrality as its generating force, emphasising his power. This power is what makes him a true hero, distinct from the anti-heroes of Naturalism or of the twentieth century; he is a hero not by deed but by status within the text. Where the Decadent hero lived by absorbing sense impressions from his surroundings, the Symbolist hero lives by making impressions upon his environment, which he can determine and/or govern. Symbolism brings the process of redefining the hero to a head, because the universes it creates can be very odd indeed; they form an ideal impetus for the creation of these highly distinctive, non-prosaic characters. And it is in Jarry, as so often, that these tendencies in Symbolist literature are taken to their extremes. His universes are the oddest of all, and consequently, ‘pour ceux qui savent lire’, his heroes can be the most compelling. They are self-projections as a *point de départ* only, as the heroes proceed to explore areas that are closed to the inhabitants of the real-life universe. The preoccupations of the particular mind that sends them forth are unique, and the reader should never lose sight of the idiosyncrasies that are as fascinating as the profundities of Jarry’s work. But at the same time it is a distortion to see Jarry as a totally independent worker, and the techniques through which he turns the idea of a self-projection into a hero link him inextricably with the authors he admired; another debt acknowledged within his work, by the list of *livres pairs*.

Conclusion

Jarry was not afraid to beg admission to the world of popular literature, from which he was excluded by the abstruse nature of the products of his own fertile imagination. Rachilde, more than thirty years after the event, recalled this exchange:

[...] un jour je lui avouais ne rien comprendre à la lecture de *César-Antechrist*:
‘Tout de même, Père Ubu, si vous vouliez écrire comme tout le monde...

– Apprenez-moi!’ coupa-t-il de sa voix cinglante.

Ce que je fis d’ailleurs, un peu pour le plaisir de me venger du mot et aussi pour lui permettre de gagner sa vie.¹

Rachilde’s claim to have educated Jarry, is not, as we have seen, entirely without foundation, although this is often hard to see now that his fame has eclipsed hers. The fact remains, however, that in his lifetime Jarry was not a successful author; his reputation was built upon the notoriety of *Ubu Roi* and later upon the concise wit of his journalism. The bulk of his work only emerged from obscurity for the attention of later generations. His status as a writer who creates a synthesis of the work of his contemporaries could not easily be recognised at the time, needing the benefit of hindsight (‘nous ne disséquons point les auteurs vivants...’), particularly as Jarry’s work appears, at first sight, so different from that of other writers of his period.

A problem unstated by Rachilde, indeed hard for her to grasp in her position in the artistic community, was that of just who ‘tout le monde’ actually were. The avant-garde scorned most mass-market authors (Pierre Loti being something of a *bête noire* for Jarry), and thereby became more and more incestuous – witness the spate of mutual admiration in print of which *Faustroll* forms a part. In seeking his literary models, Jarry turned to a peer group that was as much social as artistic, and thus doubly influential upon him; orphaned at the age of 21, he looked to literary circles as a second family. In the course of this study we have witnessed the enormous variety of Symbolist writing in its latter phases, as well as the bizarre character of many of the works that Jarry admired, which have fallen into

¹ Rachilde, *Alfred Jarry ou le Surmâle de lettres*, pp.22–23.

obscurity for the simple reason that they represent the culmination of a literary movement rather than the foundations of a new one – the death of Mallarmé robbed Symbolism of the last of its great masters, and other pivotal figures such as Kahn and Régnier were not nascent Modernists. Even Rachilde was destined to spend virtually half her long and productive life in relative obscurity and penury.

Can we say that Jarry would have done any differently? It has long seemed to be a convention to assume that had he lived, Jarry would have become one of the leading lights of progressive literature. This is a dangerously romantic point of view. Jarry died relatively young, but not young enough for that fact alone to help ensure his glory; his career ended in his mid-30s, at an age where creativity is often seen at its zenith. Among his own heroes, he reached roughly the same age as Cyrano, Florian, Grabbe, Schwob and Jesus Christ; and yet at the end his energies were devoted to the rambling mass of *La Dragonne*. The dissipation that entered Jarry's work in the years after *Faustroll* and that reached critical proportions from roughly 1903 onwards was immediately caused by a lack of heat and food coupled with an excess of drink, but these factors can also be seen as symptoms of a sickness in literature. And, crucially, Jarry's life is often hard to distinguish from literature. As Apollinaire put it:

Alfred Jarry a été homme de lettres comme on l'est rarement. Ses moindres actions, ses gamineries, tout cela, c'était de la littérature. C'est qu'il était fondé en lettres et en cela seulement.¹

The Symbolist circles to which Jarry devoted himself were already approaching the height of their creative powers when he made his literary *entrée* in 1893–94. Using the cross-section furnished by the *livres pairs*, we have witnessed some of the curious directions that Symbolist literature took in the years leading up to *Gestes et Opinions du Docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien*, the novel that combines its own remarkable world-view with a synthesis of so many trends and literary viewpoints of the contemporary avant-garde, and in so doing declares the unbridgeable chasm between the commercial mainstream and the deliberately non-prosaic, often semi-abstract literature that we have been exploring. The cult of novelty in avant-garde writers made this as complex a period as exists in literary history, and one in which the unity of a movement is, paradoxically, often defined only by its admission of artistic variety and digression. We have also glimpsed here and there a tendency that largely escaped Jarry, namely the ways in which the avant-garde cultivated accessibility. Certainly Jarry

¹ Quoted in Beaumont, *Alfred Jarry*, p.293.

tried to change, seemingly very much under the personal influence of Rachilde, and with *Le Surmâle* and *Messaline* he produced what remain his most commercially successful novels. The journalism of *La Chandelle Verte* also shows that Jarry had a certain ability to control the character of his output; indeed the commentaries given in OCBP II reinforce this impression by locating the *faits divers* that gave rise to Jarry's flights of fancy, and thereby tempering the fantasy. The fact remains, however, that Jarry failed to make a viable career out of such writing, surviving largely on philanthropic advances of money from Claude Terrasse and other benefactors, and he would never again be as prolific or as imaginative as he had been in the years that produced *Faustroll*.

The virus – or one of them – that triggered the illness that weakened Jarry's literature and contributed (through material factors dependent on artistic ones) to his physical death was that his literary context had collapsed. The sheer enthusiasm evident in the compilation of the list of *livres pairs*, the collection of extrapolations, and the cultured grafting of aspects of contemporary literature into Jarry's own work suggest the image of a child let loose in a sweet-shop, tasting everything that is there to be had and consuming to excess from certain particularly tasty jars. The sweet-shop was Parisian literary society, and the favourite jars include the aspects of literary practice discussed in Part II of this book. The child is of course Jarry, one of the younger members of fashionable Bohemian society, caught up in an atmosphere filled with genuinely impressive figures and very innovative work. The child does not care to imagine that the shelves could ever be emptied, or worse still that the sweet-shop could close. Effectively, this is what it did.

The new century that served as a portent at Dr Faustroll's birth brought a kind of mundane responsibility with it, producing frankly less exciting work; even Péladan lost his edge. The fact that the experiments of the late Symbolists were to prove so transitory adds some fuel to the arguments that have marked down so many *auteurs pairs* as minor figures. In a long-term perspective the charge may be fair, but in 1898 circumstances and genuine literary quality combined to make such writers into figures of definite importance who could not fail to impress a young *littérateur* such as Jarry. And as a figure described without malice by one of his closest friends as an 'assimilateur jusqu'à la singerie',¹ Jarry stood to lose more than most by the loss of imaginative impetus among those with whose work he felt demonstrable affinities, such as those explored in this study.

¹ From Alfred Vallette's obituary for Jarry in the *Mercure de France*, reproduced by way of a foreword to Rachilde, *Alfred Jarry ou le Surmâle de lettres*, pp.3–4.

Thus the exploration of Faustroll's library represents a great deal more than the establishment of minutiae that will interest only the Jarry specialist, a task which has been cumulatively achieved since the 1950s and to which I hope I can claim to have made a few contributions; the exploration of Jarry's reading is helpful in approaching this often apparently unapproachable writer (it can be tempting to sympathise with Annie Le Brun's suggestion that 'il n'y a pas de côté pour aborder Alfred Jarry'¹). Any function that *The Pataphysician's Library* may have in clarifying the text of *Faustroll* is, however, of secondary importance to reconstituting the portrait we can derive from following the reading of Alfred Jarry, a portrait of a dynamic but doomed literary environment. We have been engaging in artistic archaeology, seeking out a largely forgotten literary age, only a century behind us, through the clues left by an author who stands as a memorial to that time.

Jarry's status as a unique thinker who commands widespread respect for his transcendent literature is not damaged by the exercise, though it is modified somewhat by the conclusion that he was far from alone in his tastes and attitudes. What remains unique is the extent to which Jarry exploited and synthesised the approaches of his contemporaries, an issue which is all too easily blurred by his other, more distant debts and aspirations, such as his taste for Rabelais. Ultimately, the fact that Jarry is sometimes seen today as one of the most durable late Symbolists justifies, in retrospect, the whole purpose of creating Faustroll's library. The manifold debt to others implicit throughout Jarry's work is freely acknowledged by the list, and in this acknowledgment lies an attempt to preserve the stimulating qualities of 1890s work against the ravages of time – which has, in the event, treated it more harshly than it deserves. I hope that readers of *The Pataphysician's Library* will feel encouraged and emboldened to explore this neglected but absorbing literary environment further.

¹ Annie Le Brun, 'Comme c'est petit un éléphant', in Jarry, *Le Surmâle*, Paris: Ramsay/Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1990, pp.141–211 (p.146).

Bibliography

Jarry Publications and Studies

Readers of Jarry are fortunate in that there is a scholarly and more or less comprehensive three-volume Pléiade *Œuvres Complètes* of Jarry; there was a time when it seemed the fifteen-year hiatus between the first two volumes might become permanent. We can now happily discard the deficient 1948 collection edited by René Massat. However, it is possible that further texts by Jarry remain undiscovered or sequestered in private collections, given that a number have come to light over the years (for instance *Léda*, *Le Manoir enchanté*, *Ubu Cocu*).

In addition to the Collège de 'Pataphysique, the reader should be aware of the Société des Amis d'Alfred Jarry, founded in 1979 and publishing *L'Etoile-Absinthe* on a loosely annual basis. This body was responsible for the Jarry colloquium held at Cerisy-la-Salle in 1981 (proceedings published 1985), and since its foundation special issues of periodicals including *Europe*, *L'Esprit Créateur* and the *Revue des Sciences Humaines* have been devoted to Jarry.

Several noteworthy books on Jarry have appeared in recent decades. Of the various North American titles, Linda Klieger Stillman's *Alfred Jarry* is a sound introduction. Three European publications are of particular importance. Noël Arnaud's *Alfred Jarry: d'Ubu Roi au Docteur Faustroll* is a thorough biography of Jarry up to the end of 1898, which includes much important period detail, and thus acts as a frequent point of information for the student of the *Belle Epoque*. Henri Bordillon's *Gestes et Opinions d'Alfred Jarry, écrivain* is less ambitious, but covers the whole of Jarry's life. The most useful overview of Jarry's life and work is Keith Beaumont's *Alfred Jarry: A Critical and Biographical Study*.

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