

## Towards the Visual in Poetic Experimentation: Stephane Mallarmé & Guillaume Apollinaire

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### **Abstract**

This article discusses the poetics of two famous French poets and critics: Stephane Mallarmé(1842-1898) and Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), whose aesthetic experiments have had a tremendous impact on 20<sup>th</sup>-century experimental poetics since their beginnings in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Concrete Poetry (1952), Visual Poetry (the 1960s), Architectural Poetry, Language Poetry (1973), Sound Poetry (1950), Performance Poetry (10960), Fluxes Poetry (1967), and many more unconventional poetics may have been directly influenced by their work. These two poets have been the first to, particularly and distinctively, enlist experimental concepts of syntax and form into their poetic signatures. More significantly, perhaps, they have been the first to offer poetics that challenge conventional confessionism on radical cultural and aesthetic levels. Traditionally under-layered by an exhibitionist poetic self, confessionism persisted as a given during both pre-modernist and modernist poetries in one form or another. This paper will discuss the cultural and aesthetic transformation of that poetic self, on the insightful hands of these courageous artists, from a linear two-dimensional voice to a liberated multi-dimensional and more democratic structure offering paradoxical negotiations and critiques of the function of poetry in today's society and the role of language in modern capitalism. This will hopefully

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enhance the current understanding of the cultural and linguistic mechanisms by which readership participation influences creative processes and redefine aesthetic and cultural value. The work of these poets has been at the forefront of a long line of similar futuristic redefinitions, foreseeing the future of aesthetic experimentation and establishing poetic footholds to anchor that future.

**Keywords: Mallarmé, Apollinaire, Postmodern poetry, Experimental poetry, Avant-garde poetics.**

### **1- Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898): Life and Poetics**

Stéphane Mallarmé was the first artist (and as yet doubtless the only one) who conceived and continued throughout his life to hold to the project of doing what he wanted in a domain of the mind wherein, by universal and time-honored consent, the action of the will is almost powerless, success being achieved by the favors of some fatality, or else of fickle gods who are unswayed by prayers and untouched by toil and the sacrifices of time and thought (Valéry 294)

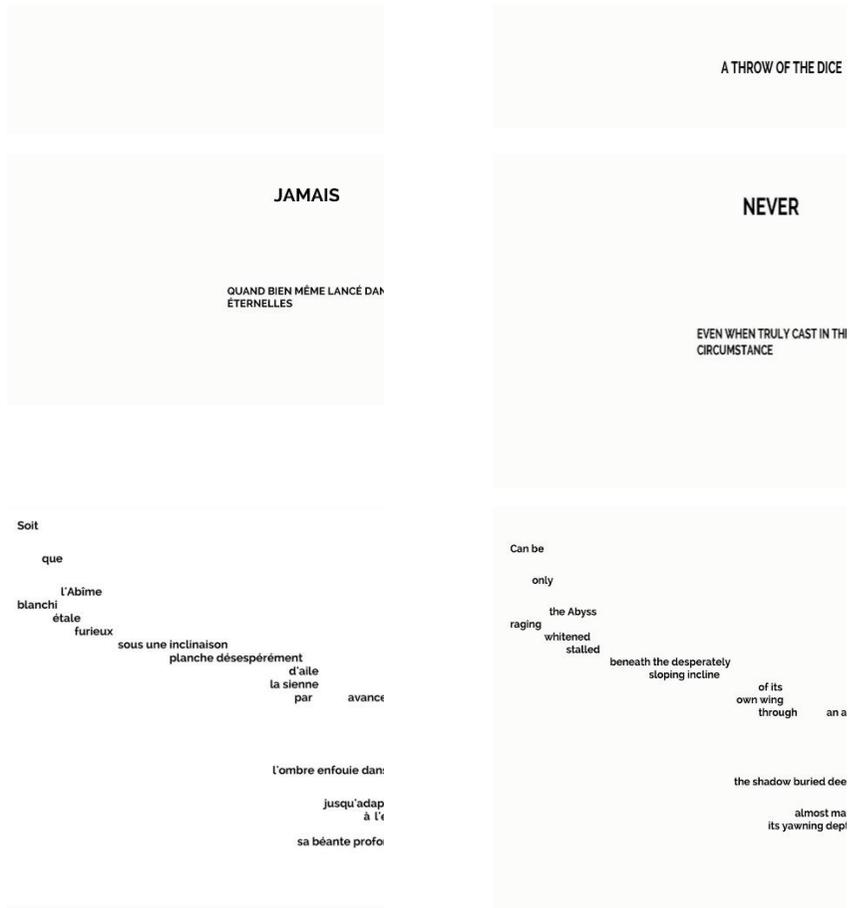
Mallarmé's early life seems to have significantly influenced his aesthetics, in general, and poetic expression, in particular. Losing his mother at an early age (1847), (when he was only five (Blackmore 35), must have impacted his intellectuality in more than one sense. He must have viewed poetry, especially in its most complex and symbolic form, as some shelter against the cruelty and irrationality of reality then. As a child, Mallarmé "buried himself in books but irritated his teachers with his subordinate attitude" (Ross 4+). Poetry must have offered him some

parallel universe through which he could make sense of the meaninglessness and confusion of that early life. Thus, the unmistakable sense of loss and yearning that permeates throughout his poems is probably an echo of this traumatic childhood, among other things. "Symbolism" itself, as Richard G. Goodkin suggests, is:

The tracking down of a home by one who is a stranger to it but who, by the fundamentally ambiguous nature of the concept of *xenia*—the term denoting the guest-host relationship and the noun/adjective related to it, *Xenos*, referring simultaneously to guest and to host, or rather to the necessarily double identity which each of them carries, host in his own land and guest in that of his corresponding *Xenos*—is both outsider (searcher for what functions as a house on the road) and insider (guest received and nurtured by the house upon his arrival). (Goodkin3)

Persistently seeking excellence is another defining lineament of Mallarmé's poetics that does not only speak directly to his brutal childhood but also represents the aesthetics of the age in which he lived. Receiving his baccalaureate in (1860), Mallarmé did further studies teaching English in London (Blackmore 35). Respectful but not profitable, Mallarmé's work as an English school teacher from (1863) to (1893) (Blackmore 35) must have helped him a great deal both intellectually and culturally. Mallarmé's job offered him extensive knowledge of English literature, in general, and English sonnets, in particular. His familiarity with the sonnet, both formally and contextually, is one of the founding bases of his symbolic poetics. Its

conciseness, verbal density, and formal acuity are visible in his choice of vocabulary and general structure from his earliest poem entitled “*Futile Petition*” in *La Papillon* magazine in (1862) (Blackmore 35), with which he initiated his poetic career. Here is an excerpt from his poem “Un coup de désjamais’abolira le hasard - The Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance” (1897)





Mallarmé (1897-2006), A Throw of the Dice, (Figure 1)

His innovation seems to offer two significant characteristics. The first is positive ambiguity as a rejection of traditional narrative structures or the causal sequencing of sentences and phrases. The second may be apparent in his attempt to minimize poetic ego to the least possible presence through complex format or use of a-syntactic spacing on the page, offering poetic codification and multi-layered symbolism.

In the above poem (Figure 1), the visual location of the phrase “A Shipwreck’s depth” by comparison to its previous “The Eternal Circumstance” adds a further layer of symbolism to the combination in the reading of these two phrases by visually representing the idea of depth. The sonic and verbal signs of the two phrases are thus complemented by their visual positioning on the page to intensify the implication of depth without a single added word. The aesthetic impact in reception becomes almost indescribable with both the visual and verbal dimensions of meaning conspiring to underline the infinite sense

of the sublime un-representable. As fellow poet and critics Paul Valery suggests:

...no line he wrote fails to make us feel that its author had thought through language as if, on his own, he were reliving its multifarious invention; and, placing himself from that time on a summit where no one before him had even thought of settling, he remained until the day he died, intimately contemplating a truth whose proof he wished only to communicate by marvellous examples. (Valery 295)

For Mallarmé, poetic creation is not a spontaneous out-of-the-moment representation of emotional experiences. Instead, it is a mental activity that demands effort in both creation and reading. In the process of creation, neither personal experiences nor emotional confessions are represented, but rather, a dynamic multi-dimensional dose of poetic reflections, both in form and context. As he himself says, "to describe something is to show

it in its finished form" (Llyod 294). Readers must guess, analyze and contemplate simultaneously to decode the poetic depth and acuity of the symbolic register.

In his *Stephane Mallarmé: Collected Poems and Other Verse* (2006), Blackmore argues that through his symbolistic poetics, Mallarmé redefines the role of both the poet and poetry. "The vital role of poetry," for Mallarmé, is to "purge language of its everyday setting" (Mallarmé 11). Indeed, "The poet," in Mallarmé's terms, is "a high priest" who should necessarily be "set apart from the mundane political

process in order to learn and reveal the mysterious truth” (Blackmore 12). Roger Pearson points out that for *Mallarmé*:

The poet's role amidst a welter of meaningless contingency is to create linguistic patterns that may just convince us, for a nanosecond, that they do mean something, that we have seen beyond the veil of the here and now. (Pearson 10)

However, as the poetic excerpt above explains, and as is evident in most of his work, Mallarmé's poetics redefines not only the role of the poet aesthetically as the inventor of new-visual-verbal forms of the sublime un-representable but also as an explorer of newer depths in the relationship between language as codes and the architecture of space on the page and outside. In his *The Number and Siren: A Description of Mallarmé's Un Coup De Des* (2012), Quentin Meillassoux points out that:

Endogenous code -decryptable solely using clues disseminated throughout the work itself- rather than an exogenous one . . . the code will not give us the ultimate key to the poem, but rather the form of its unsuspected lock: not the revelation of its true meaning, but the making explicit of a heretofore invisible difficulty (Meillassoux 5-11).

Where the “The Shipwreck depth” is represented in language, it is equally redefined and visually re-codified by its location. More significantly, perhaps, where it is re-coded and redefined, it is ultimately re-opened and un-ended, therefore impossible to finally

ascertain or fully comprehend. This is the greatness of this poetics, as it never shows its final core, never yields the last meaning, or wishes for an end game. As Valéry puts it:

...he dreamed of a poetry that would be as it were deduced from the system of properties and characteristics of language. Each work of beauty that had already been created represented for him some page of a supreme Book which would be arrived at by an ever-greater consciousness, and purer utilization, of the functions of speech. To the poet's act, he attributed a universal meaning and a kind of value that one would be tempted to call "mystical," were this not a forbidden word. (Valéry 304)

## **2- Mallarmé and the Zeitgeist:**

Lying under the overwhelming umbrella of early twentieth-century major scientific, philosophical and cultural transformations, Mallarmé's poetics can be seen as equally evocative. His symbolic poetic experimentation is generally intended to break up with every cultural, aesthetic, and artistic taboo that prevailed during the turn of the century. His work seems to mark the delineation between confessional and non-confessional poetics not only as experimentation becomes a norm in the early through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and to the present, through his, and his fellow experimentalist Apollinaire's ideals, but, more significantly, perhaps, because his poetic challenging of previous norms has become aesthetically demanded and even expected. His work has also signaled the preliminary ethos to a

subsequent period of claimed poetic objectivity and anti-ego poetics that spanned most of the 20th century. In other words, as a founding pioneer of poetic Symbolism, Mallarmé, among others, inspired a whole line of literary and artistic signatures over the 20<sup>th</sup> century from Eugène Ionesco (1925-present) of Switzerland and the Noigandres group (1958-1975) of Brazil to Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925-2006) of Scotland and Robert Lax (1915-2000) of the USA. Mallarmé's Tuesday evening salon was a crucible through which some of the most influential poetic and artistic movements were formed and revived at the turn of the century.

Unlike Naturalism and Realism, particularly dominant at the turn of the twentieth century, Mallarmé's poetic experimentation breaks up with representations of self or any claimed realism. Mallarmé's works, in other words, represent human beings, neither physically nor emotionally. Instead, seemingly poetic fantasies, internal linguistic contemplations, and vague scenes of everyday objects are represented through semiotic shapes, colors, and individualist rhymes. In its particular a-syntactic poetic symbolism and use of internal space, Mallarmé's poetic language echoes a lot more than the simple sense of ambiguity and alienation permeating through the turn of the century. In his *Stephane Mallarmé* (2010), Roger Pearson makes an insightful observation:

In May 1889, he talked of the "full-blown crisis" that verse itself was undergoing (corr., 312), and later he gave the title of "Crise de vers" (verse crisis) to a complex and considered statement of his poetics in which he related the controversial innovations of verse

libre (free verse) to the political and religious crises of his age (Pearsons 9).

In this sense, Mallarmé's "encrypted" (Meillassoux 3) poems, of which *Un Coup De Des*, (A Throw of a Dice) is only a model, offer a means with which to redefine the idea of alienation itself away from simple complexity or ambiguity. It argues for a being in touch with a sublime sense of existence and an infinite line of possibilities. Meaning in the simplest un-refined sense of the word is vehemently rejected and even ridiculed on a textual level by dropping conventional syntax and underlining blank spaces. Tracing heterogeneous semiotic forms, implicit associations, and various rhythmical patterns, readers might "crack the riddles of existence" by "cracking these poems" (Ross, 4+). However, any immediate meaning is undetectable, uncatchable, and unrepresentable throughout the poem. Though seemingly page-bound, Mallarmé's symbolic poems always end up in continuity of meaning. For this reason, it is an open space for endless readings and re-readings.

### **3- Challenging Conventional Confessionalism:**

Throughout his symbolic poems, Mallarmé attempts to minimize the poetic ego, as a confessional uncovering of the self, through deconstructing any implied agreement between reader and author. Utilizing the techniques of symbolic de-codification, typographic effects, and fragmental structuring in highly irregular forms, Mallarmé deconstructs the conventional dualistic pattern of author-reader identification. Identification as a psychological behaviour often helps to settle and stabilize cultural definitions of being, allowing more sense of righteousness and identity. This kind of identification offers settling, rather than investigative, accounts of reality, allowing

for sensations of achievement and anchorage. In short, the kind of identification used by capitalistic consumerist politics to appease consumerists in their fragile identities. Therefore, Mallarmé transforms the author-reader implied pattern throughout his works from ease to anxiety and confusion. In the same poem quoted above, for example, Mallarme offers neither a sequential pattern nor a plot-based narrative identifiable by the reader. Instead, a multi-layered and complex series of codifications are represented formally and verbally. The author, therefore, is no more targeting a specific audience with specific requirements. His main concern is no more satisfying the reader's requirements through appealing, serene, and pleasing poetic forms.

On the contrary, complex brainstorming that requires deep contemplation and further investigation is offered. Such poetic forms are not generally meant to please and entertain the audience. Instead, they arouse the reader's fear, psychological conflict, and profound anxiety.

The dissociation between author and reader initiates, in its turn, a whole literary stream in which author-reader divorce becomes a particularly defining characteristic. Mallarmé's early initiation of the concept of "death of the author" (Barthes 143) set reader/readers not only as the sole but also as the infinite interpreter of the poem. For example, it is only through the reader's sight and imagination that Mallarme's coded poems are interpreted-able. The poem, therefore, has as many interpretations as readers. This author-reader dissociation is only attainable through redefining and re-prioritizing three primary poetic denominators: form, verbosity, and meaning.

In Mallarmé's works, form is generally identified as prior to verbosity, while the latter is identified as prior to meaning. The position of a phrase like "The Master" perpendicular to the much longer and more complex "beyond the former calculations/ where the cost maneuver with age" places the subject-object relationship as confrontational. In other words, the words' positions imply a struggle between "The Master," the captain of a symbolized ship, perhaps standing for life or existence, and the whole complex possibilities (or manoeuvres) of fate or life. The visual location of the two opposite poles throws the whole significance of both phrases into a much deeper, more confrontational light that exponentially multiplies their impact in reception. The verbal aspect of the form occupies a lesser degree of significance than the visual and structural aspects of meaning.

Prioritizing form over sound is quite apparent in most of Mallarmé's poems. The formal-visual effect, including typology and symmetric features, is a significant denominator of Mallarmé's poetics. In terms of their fragmental performance, lack of syntax, and punctuation, his poems seem un-foldable or radically non-linear. However, both in their symbolism and fragmentation, Mallarmé's poetics does redefine the cultural and aesthetic atmosphere of loss and alienation at the turn of the century but also signals an emerging literary stream that is, remarkably, neither confessional nor representative. Offering irregular and ambiguous poetic forms, Mallarmé attempts to liberate his poems from the contours of usual verbosity and social and political context, the most defining of a poetic self. In his *Frameworks for Mallarmé: The Photo and The Graphic of*

*an Interdisciplinary Aesthetic* (2008), Gayle Zachman touches on the same idea when he views Mallarmé writings as basically “hermetic”:

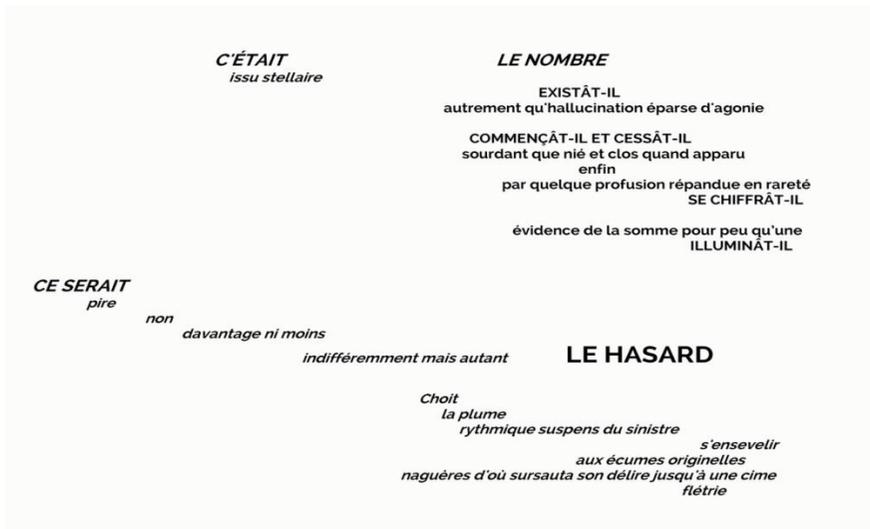
The product of a poet who had no concern for the outside world, no use for technological development or the sciences, and little interest in the ups and downs of the art market. (Zachmann 18)

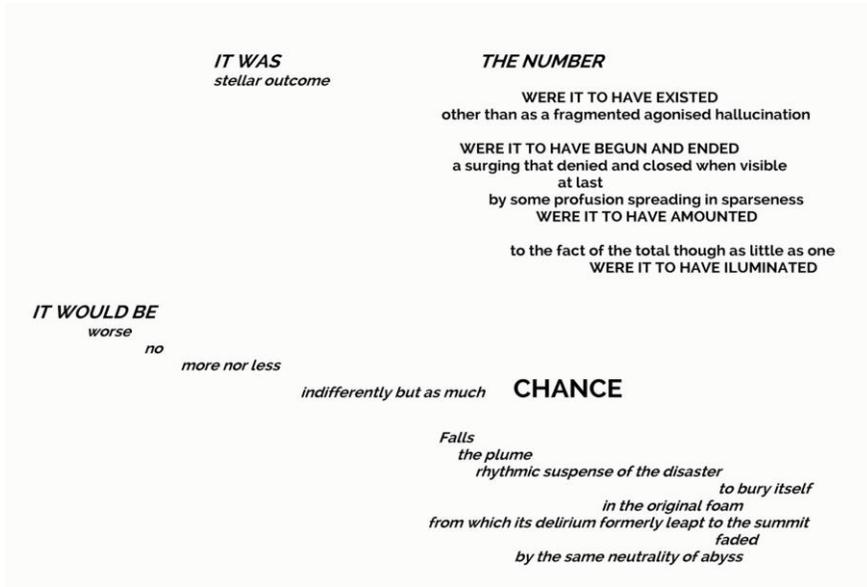
In his *Paper Machine* (2001), Derrida discusses Mallarmé’s *Un Coup De Des*, as a starting phase of the "secularization" and "democratization" of conventional "books" (Derrida 13). In other words, the apparent contradiction between *Un Coup De Des*'s conventional book form and its adventurous internal typology offers what Derrida terms as “tension between gathering and dispersion” (Derrida 13) which elevates the degree of readers’ freedom of interpretation. Derrida goes on to redefine some of the most fundamental and often misunderstood or marginalized concepts in literature, such as "book," "writing," "modes of inscriptions," "production," "work," "support" and "market economy" (Derrida 5). "The Book to Come," in Derrida's terms, signals a significant phase of literary production in which it is no longer folded but digitized. It implies three possible forms of alternation: the first he sees as a process of "restructuration," in which linguistic form is a-syntactic. In contrast, the others are "alternation in identity" and a mission of "rescue from a present shipwrecking" (Derrida 9). In his book, Derrida is much concerned with Mallarmé’s *Un Coup De Des* as an early model of rejecting conventional linearity:

The linearity with which book writing is so often associated already receives a blow {coup}. It was not

the first, in all the marine, abyssal, ghostly, numerical, or numero-logical figures of this "coup de des" to the extent that I could not read this text out loud, in the linear successiveness of a temporality, without destroying the differentiated sizes of the letters and the typographical distribution of a spacing that no longer respects the divisions and irreversibility of pagination . . . it could be said that we have assimilated Mallarmé's work more or less readily, but not *Un Coup De Des*. *Un Coup De Des* implies a completely different book from the book we have: it makes us feel that we call "book" according to the traditional Western usage, in which the gaze identifies the act of comprehension with the repetition of the linear back-and-forth motions, is justified only in the facilitation of analytic comprehension (Derrida 9-13).

#### 4- Prioritizing Form:





Mallarmé (1897-2006), *A Throw of the Dice*. (Figure 2)

Mallarmé's *Un Coup De Des* (1897) (Figure 2) does not offer any kind of conventional unfolding of semiotic significance relevant to specific content. Instead, the poem seems to challenge both traditions; narrative or conventional linearity and grammatically punctual poetic confessionality. Throughout the poem, neither dramatic tension nor a climax is represented. Instead, moving back and forth, the reader has to trace a constellation of disjointed poetic phrases. However, these phrases are not randomly scattered on the paper. Instead, word-space proportions seem to be neatly investigated and precisely decided upon throughout the poem, as explained above. In other words, utilizing blank spaces and typographic effects, Mallarmé visually creates specific psychological effects. The poem, in general, is offered in a third voice, with no first-person-pronoun.

Significantly, the title of the poem itself is divided into three parts: "A Throw of a Dice"/ "Will Never"/ "Abolish Chance."

Throughout the poem, some words such as "NEVER," "JAMAIS," "ABOLISH," "N'ABOLIRA," "LE NOMBRE," "THE NUMBER," and "LE HAZARD," "THE CHANCE" are capitalized, and bolded. For an apparent reason, the broken and disjointed lines of the poem are written in heterogeneous fonts. The lines which represent the voice of reason, investigating possibilities such as: "the case of / the sea attempting via the old man/ or the latter versus the sea/ an idle chance," are offered in standard formats, while other lines which offer internal conflicts and inevitable fates such as: "hurled/ howled out/ swirl of hilarity and horror/ utterly lost and lonely quill," are italicized. In this sense, through various typographic properties, Mallarmé's *Un Coup De Des* is typically an early visual poem to be seen rather than listened to, read, or semiotically apprehended. Roger Pearson hints at the same point when he argues:

Mallarmé performed his poetic mysteries as a sequence of compelling glimpses and delicate deferrals. For him, the poet's role amidst a welter of meaningless contingency is to create linguistic patterns that may just convince us, for a nanosecond, that they do mean something, that we have seen beyond the veil of the here and now. (Pearson 10)

In terms of its typography and versification, *Un Coup De Des* is generally interpretable as a plot scene of a captain, "THE MASTER," of a wrecked ship who is like "a hoary maniac" making his last attempt to survive. Praying to the "waves", "destiny", or "any other spirit", the captain attempts to "pass proudly on": "THE MASTER/ risen/ inferring/ from his conflagration/ that there/ as you threaten/ the one

and only/ NUMBER that cannot". Though relatable on a psychological level, the poem still offers no exclusive relevance to a specific theme. Symbolically, the poem can be viewed as a scene of life at large in its irregularity and ambiguity. Man's struggle against fate, or "CHANCE," as Mallarmé terms it in capital form, is probably a major concern in the poem. The "waves" that persistently "caressed," "polished," restored," "washed," and "softened" the captain's soul is probably a symbol of the mishaps of life. Hinting at the "neutrality of the abyss" and "the rhythmic suspense of the disaster," Mallarmé interrogates fate. What makes man the way s/he is? The poem ends up stating that man is "not human," and this is what will "HAVE TAKEN PLACE." Yet, when it comes to the perpetual duality of man against fate, there still no absolute defeat, "EVERY THOUGH" man makes "EMITS A DICE THROW."

In this sense, Mallarmé impresses through semiotic signs and verbal code by utilizing language in its most injunctive function. In other words, the poem is not offered through punctual poetic language. Therefore, a chaotic and unstable form with innumerable interpretations is represented. Accordingly, the wholesomeness of the confessional poetic ego, as represented in conventional poetry, is almost wholesomely abandoned.

### **5- Prioritizing Language:**

As Mallarmé views it, language is the primary medium of poetic representation, not prior to forming but to meaning. In Mallarmé's terms, poetic language does not represent a meaning to be traced, followed, or unfolded. Rather, it is liberated from poetic clichés, representations of nature, pedagogical purposes, and even specific

audiences to address. Mallarmé's poems, in other words, are not meant to impress a wide range of audience. On the contrary, his poems create an overwhelming sense of tension and uncertainty. Replacing conventional plain metaphors with symbolic and complex imagery, which are particularly difficult to be traced and unfold, Mallarmé seems to awaken the more real power of language.

His symbolic language is the major denominator of his poetics. Semantically, it holds the general framework of the poem by determining what is present and what is absent. Throughout his poems, Mallarmé impresses linguistic signs with multiple or innumerable interpretations by carefully positioning them in specific locations against one another. This, in turn, creates intense complexity, for the linguistic presence of meaning is always relative and intrinsically tentative. It does not always offer readers tangible matter for interpretation. Meaning, therefore, remains indefinite and undetectable. It is not only the poetic ego that necessarily gets deconstructed and ultimately debunked, but also the very presence of the concept of authorship as an authority of semiotic significance. Citing Mallarmé's words, in his *Stephane Mallarmé* (2010), Pearsons points out:

Being a poet is not easy, therefore! Removed from the realm of "exceptional deeds and vulgar proceedings," the poet must live a form of "omission," almost a "death," for his "exploits" are performed in the world of dream . . . |" so as not to bother anyone" (Pearsons 13).

In her *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), Julia Kristeva defines "all linguistic categories" as "a social effect of the relation to the other." This "social effect," as Kristeva views it, is particularly

identifiable in terms of two categories of "objective constraints": the first is "biological constraints, including sexual differences," and the other is "concrete historical family structures" (Kristeva 29). Therefore, according to Kristeva, "all genetic programming," including "displacement, condensation, absorption, repulsion, rejection, and stasis," are "necessarily semiotic" that functions as "innate preconditions, memoizable by the speeches, for language acquisition" (Kristeva 29). Citing Mallarmé, Kristeva hints at the primary function of literature as the potentiality to create "intelligible" rhythm through syntax. Kristeva argues:

Mallarmé calls attention to the semiotic rhythm within language when he speaks of "The Mystery of Literature." Indifferent to language, enigmatic and feminine, this space underlying the written is rhythmically unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgment, but restrained by a single guarantee: syntax (Kristeva 29).

surgi de la croupe et du bond	Arisen from the ramp and bond
D'une verrerieephemere	Of fleeting glassware, the distraught
Sans fleurir la veillee a mere	Vigil is never flower-crowned,
Le col ignore s'interrompt.	The unknown neck merely steps short.
Je crois bien que deux bouches n'ont	I feel sure two mouths never fed,
Bu, ni son amant ni ma mere,	Neither her lover nor my mother,
Jamaisa la memechimere,	On the same fantasy as each other,
Moi, sylphe de ce froid plafond!	I, sylph with cold eaves overhead!
Le pur vase de'aucun breuvage	The vase plain of any drink save
Que l'inexhaustible veuvage	Widowhood inexhaustibly
Agonise mais ne consent,	Suffers death but does not agree,
Na'f baiser des plus funebres!	A kiss naïve and O how grave!
A rien expirer annocant	To breathe out any final mark.
Une rose dans les tenebre.	That heralds some rose in the dark.

Mallarmé (1897) *untitled* (Blackmore (eds) 2006-114) (Figure 3)

This untitled poem seemingly depicts some everyday objects such as the "glassware", the "vigil", the "vase," and "some rose." However, throughout the poem, the speaker seems to deprive these objects of their objectivity and changes them into codes with further connotations. Turning its presence into absence, the speaker changes these objects into mere linguistic signs with various possibilities of signification. The poem, for example, starts with a vague scene of glassware with uncrowned flowers within a daydream that arises from memory. The speaker depicts the glassware as "fleeting" and the "vigil" as "never flower-crowned." Through such ambiguous and confusing representations, the poem not only arouses the reader's curiosity and

interrogation but also evokes his mental ability to guess, trace and decode.

It is not until the second stanza that the speaker in this poem signifies his mother. Similarly, the "vase," as another signified, is mentioned in the third stanza. In this sense, the speaker creates an extended metaphor that leaves us wondering whether the poem is about a vase with crownless flowers or a mother with whom his stay was very short. Is it the "widowhood" that does mourn? Or, rather, an orphanage that deafens ears in every line? Is it the "vase" that yearns to a "rose in the dark"? Or the speaker who yearns for a "naïve kiss" from a missed mother? In this sense, the speaker creates an overwhelming atmosphere of tension and uncertainty through symbolism and semiotic codification.

However, another form of poetic ego is probably undeniable throughout the poem. It is an insightful ego aware of human nature, impulses, and insecurities. It does not only tell but acts what it tells through psychological influence and formal codification. Readers might have some moments of esoteric clarity, but they will always have no actual resolution regarding meaning. Lost in infinite cycles of interpretations, the reader experiences the serenity of having no choice. Though formally regular, both in its ambiguity and symbolism, the poem invokes one of humanity's most complex dilemmas regarding the inherent meaninglessness of the world versus man's insistent search for meaning. The poem continues in four stanzas, each consisting of three-to-four short lines. Narrated in the third voice, the ego utilizes the first-person pronoun twice to assert the whole poem as personal: "I feel sure two mouths never fed/ I, sylph with cold eaves overhead!". It traps

readers between their aspirations to find meaning and their inability to catch the ultimate one. Therefore, the ego in the poem amplifies human tension and anxiety to the maximum through a seemingly, at least formally, conventional work of art. In other words, the tension and uncertainty represented through such a sonnet-like poem could hardly be more significant.

Critics sometimes term this contradiction between traditional form and extremely symbolic content as "the terrorism of the politesse" (Howells 30). Sartre, for example, represents terrorism of the politesse as "eschewal of the contingent" primarily "a result of their implicit purification of the real" (Howells 32). In this sense, throughout his poems, Mallarmé does not only break up with a conventional poetic representation of personal experiences and human feelings such as love, grief, or loss. Instead, he seems, both formally and poetically, to liberate poetry from any pedagogical, ornamental, or even entertaining responsibilities. In his *The Symbolist Home and The Tragic Home: Mallarmé and Oedipus*, for example, Richard. E. Goodkin compares the symbolist poet to a tragic hero. Goodkin argues:

Like the symbolist poet, the tragic hero reaches an absolute that constantly eludes him. Both of them do for creating a kind of hermeticism, be it that of the lonely hero who dreams of being completely himself or that of the lonely poet who dreams of creating a superior language, one which requires nothing external to it, in order to yield superior meaning, or perhaps in order to refuse meaning. (Goodkin 8)

In this sense, Mallarmé's "hermetic" poetics is meant to liberate the poet, the poem, and even the reader from the contours of language. Throughout his poems, the speaker always feels under no obligation to make sense to the reader. The reader, in turn, is not attached to a specific meaning. Instead, extraordinarily symbolic or somewhat codified poems with various semiotic, geometrical, and mathematical connotations are delivered.

Nevertheless, even in their symbolism and typographically unfamiliar forms, Mallarmé's poems still offer means for an apparent poetic ego. This is not a conventional confessional ego like the one defined above, a psychological uncovering of personal identity, but a philosophically insightful and intellectually contemplative one. Its distinctiveness emerges from its apparent understanding of its place in the world and its freedom to represent itself. It symbolically offers a contemplative view of man's place in this universe. It strives to be genuine, regardless of attachment to any claimed reality.

Furthermore, in terms of its ambiguity and non-confessionalism, it allows both poet and reader to be comfortable in their skins. Powerful symbolism herein acts as a veil behind which both poet and reader can tell/comprehend and act what they tell/comprehend without rules, responsibilities, and judgments. Together they become "the" significant creators of their perception of this poetic code or coded poem.

At first glance, Mallarmé's poems seem irrelevant to reality and apart from any social or political ideology. Nevertheless, even in their rejection of semiotic representation of reality through rhetoric and rhythm, particularly relevant to Classic and Romance poetics, Mallarmé's poems still offer another form of resisting and re-forming

reality. In other words, Mallarmé's struggle against language as the sole field of human representation is probably an early form of resistance to capitalist domination. Breaking the duality of the signifier and the signified, even in its allegoric manifestation, Mallarmé destabilizes any implied definitive agreement over specific semantics. His ambiguous, extended, and highly symbolic imagery defeats any semiotic dominance practiced forcefully upon reality and allows both poet and reader to be inherently free. As such, delineating simple everyday objects, such as a flower, a window, or a vase, can be seen as symbols of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century's anti-capitalism. In terms of its boldness, insolence, and detachment from its surroundings, the vase is perhaps indicative of the bourgeois style.

#### **6- Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918): Life and Poetics**

On the other hand, Apollinaire seems to surpass the spirit of loss and alienation permeating through the beginning of the twentieth century and simultaneously the sense of revolt against it. Both in his symbolism and fragmental style, Apollinaire joins the mainstream of uncertainty and search for identity, which is, mainly, one of the most defining purposes of art, science, philosophy, and poetics at the beginnings of the twentieth century according to so many commentators and cultural critics (Otis xviii).

Commenting on *Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War*, as a representation of some of the significant transformations taking place at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and their influence on aesthetics, Hyde writes:

It was a change of mood that stemmed ultimately from  
the rapid technological advances of the early twentieth

century and the general widening of horizons brought about by such inventions as the motorcar, the airplane, radiography, cinematography, and radio communication (Hyde 2).

Apollinaire was born in Rome on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 1880 (Rees 14). His mother, "Angelica de Kostrowitzky" was always present. However, his father, who was later investigated to be "Francesco d'Aspermont, an Italian officer of Swiss descent" (Shattuck 6), was always a "shadowy figure" (Rees 14). As an illegitimate, at his birth, Apollinaire was named "Guillaume Albert Dulcigni" (Rees 14). Receiving his education at "The Catholic College Saint Charles" (Rees 14), just like Mallarmé, Apollinaire was employed for a year as a "tutor to German family with houses in the Rhineland" (Rees 15). This is where Apollinaire met "Annie Playden, the governess of the family" (Rees 15) and fell in love with her. Later, adult Apollinaire devoted himself during World War One to France, "the country to which he devotes all his admiration and loves even he was not French" (Rees 14). Apollinaire's significant poetic collections are *Alcools* (1913) and *Calligrammes*(1918). Affected by his severe head injury during the war, Apollinaire died on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November, 1918.

This "disjointed" life, as Rees recounts it, made him "too busy to foster mature reflection" (Rees 21). However, the influence of such unstable life on Apollinaire's poetics could hardly be more significant. As a fatherless child, for example, Apollinaire had an ultimate opportunity to experience life on his own, away from patriarchal surveillance and hierarchal authority. In his *Selected Writings of Guillaume Apollinaire*, Shattuck argues:

Apollinaire was an illegitimate child who never had any relationship with his father and probably never knew his identity. No social stigma ever resulted from this unorthodox birth, as far as one can discover, but it led to the almost complete freedom in which Apollinaire spent his childhood. (Shattuck 10)

In this sense, Apollinaire's torn childhood and lost identity made him "cosmopolitan of the truest type" (Shattuck 11). Despite his devotion to France as an alternative to a home he never had, Apollinaire represents neither social nor political issues throughout his poems. Instead, his poems are non-specific in terms of historical-period or geo-political ideologies. It represents "migration as one form of marginalization" (Khamis 1). It offers universal and existential concerns almost entirely free from context and detached from national or international bias.

### **7- Apollinaire versus Picasso:**

Both in its fragmentation and formative experimentation, French symbolism is much reflective of the artistic experimentation offered by early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Avant-Garde, in general, and Cubism, in particular. Generally identified as the "leader of the Parisian Avant-Garde" (Bohn12), Apollinaire's work seems to inspire Avant-Garde painters, both in their god-like performance and rejection of artistic norms and authoritative capitalism. Setting the general framework of Cubism as the most influential artistic movement at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in his *Cubism*, Apollinaire redefines the work of art as "a flame with a magic unity- if it is divided, each spark is like unto the

single flame" (Apollinaire 1). In this sense, even in their fragmental performance, as Apollinaire views them, Cubist paintings still offer a unique artistic unity. Through such unity, every single poem fragment is as essential, complete, and identifiable as the whole work.

Cubist painting, as Apollinaire argues, is not much concerned with representing "space within time," which is mainly the common theme of Classic art. Instead, it offers an all-time artistic experience that is not exclusively representative of the "fugitive present" or "fashion" (Apollinaire 2). Through Cubist paintings, Apollinaire argues, the viewer can, at one glance, "embrace the past, the present, and the future" (Apollinaire 3). In other words, in their work, Cubists do not represent specific human experiences within a given period. By contrast, they offer simultaneous poetic experiences through which all periods are juxtaposed. Creating such effects of simultaneity and fragmentation, Cubist painters divide the work into small "cubes" (Apollinaire 29). Therefore, the viewer's mission is to put this "puzzle of various spatial views together into a whole" (Apollinaire 29). In this sense, it is only through the viewer's sight and imagination that Cubist paintings are coherent and comprehensible.

As such, Cubist art seems to abandon art's conventional function as pleasing, ornamental, or documenting. It "repudiates" every attempt to produce appealing and consumable artistic products (Apollinaire 11). Instead, it is much more concerned with finding other forms of pleasure away from that primarily from "the spectacle of natural things" (Apollinaire 11). Deviating from the natural representation of objects, Cubists added what Apollinaire terms an "illusion" (Apollinaire 29). Through such illusion, painted objects are

represented as infinite and relative as it is in reality. In this sense, Cubist work was generally identified as deviating in form and audacious in representation. In his *Apollinaire on the Edge: Modern Art, Popular Culture, and the Avant-Garde*, Bohn views Apollinaire's "audacious works" (Bohn 13) as an initiative to a whole stream of anti-artistic movements of art such as Surrealism and Dada. Bohn argues:

Many of the poems also appropriate elements of everyday reality. Some depict a slice of life, some engage in visual pursuits, and some focus on everyday objects. Paralleling similar developments in the arts, the genre appealed to several poets who came after Apollinaire, especially those associated with Dada and Surrealism. (Bohn 13)

The effects of the artistic experimentations permeating through the beginning and the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on Apollinaire's poetics could hardly be more significant. Hinting at Apollinaire's close friendship with pioneer Cubist painter Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Rees refers to Cubism as "the mental stimulus" which pushed Apollinaire "further along the path of le nouveau" (Rees 28). Like Cubist painters, Apollinaire is not much concerned with the poem as a final product. Instead, throughout his poems, more attention was paid to the creative process itself. His poems, in other words, were an act of living, or rather, in a more straightforward language, an everyday activity, which is not necessarily appealing and consumable. In his poems, Apollinaire verbally celebrated everyday objects such as a watch, a tie, and a mirror. Furthermore, in its anti-poetic visual forms, Apollinaire's

poems match Cubist painters' deviational forms and non-matching colors. Hyde argues:

Undeniably, Apollinaire was encouraged in this thinking by the similar fragmentation of structure he observed in Cubist paintings, particularly in the work of Picasso, which he also considered to stem from the simultaneous depiction of the same object from several viewpoints. (Hyde 16)

*La Cravate et la montre*

LA CRAVATE  
 DOU  
 LOU  
 REVIE  
 CUE TU  
 FORDES  
 ET QUI T  
 ORNE O CI  
 VILLÉ  
 OYE- TU VEUX  
 LA JEN  
 RESY  
 NER

COMME L'ON  
 S'AMUSE  
 SI  
 EN

les heures  
 et le  
 vert  
 dantage  
 lussit et  
 cadaverique

Je bal  
 lécoute

les Muses  
 sur penes de  
 son corps

l'Enfi  
 redressé  
 par un fou  
 de philosophe

semaine

la main

Tircis

Mon  
 cœur

le beau  
 te  
 de

les  
 yeux  
 vie  
 pas  
 se  
 l'enfant la  
 dou  
 leur  
 de  
 mon  
 rir



*La Cravate et la Montre*, (*The Tie and the Watch*), from *Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War*. p. 78. (Figure 3)

*Girl with a Mandolin*, (1910), by Pablo Picasso, from *Cubism*, 2010. p. 33.

(Figure 4)

For example, Apollinaire's *La Cravate e la Montre* (*The Tie and the Watch*) (Figure 3) can be viewed as one form of drawing by words. The poem challenges conventional versification's linearity and metrical patterns through its focus on visuality or shape-based form. The poem offers two shapes from everyday life; a tie and a watch, both

represented through words. The poem, therefore, does not allude to the tie and the watch as two symbols of modernist life. Instead, the tie and the watch are already drawn on paper in a two-dimensional form. The poem, in other words, is not about a tie and a watch. Instead, the poem consists of a tie and a watch.

In his *Girl with a Mandolin* (Figure 4), Picasso utilizes what Apollinaire terms "the vocabulary of shapes" (Apollinaire 41). Words and phrases are replaced by little cubic fragments randomly juxtaposed into a multi-layered unity. The painting does not offer an appealing scene with a good variety of colors. Instead, throughout such experimental painting, Picasso attempts to "renew unceasingly the appearance which nature assumes in the eyes of men" (Apollinaire 7). Therefore, the scene of a girl holding a musical instrument is not represented as romantic and visionary as it might be in reality. By contrast, a non-geometrical collage of various irregular cubes and no chromatic significance is offered. Lines, as perhaps is evident, are melted, so that the shape and the background are fused into one three-dimensional unity.

### **8- Poetry as means of Resisting Alienation:**

Regarding its anti-syntactic symbolism, Apollinaire's poetics is a means of redefining reality internally and externally. On the one hand, throughout his poems, Apollinaire redefines man's position within the world as an observer: a re-organizer of the chaos. It celebrates every human act, regardless of its short-term implications, and repositions it relative to its space on the page. It battles the early 20th-century sense of loss and alienation by placing the dot where it belongs on the page. For him, poetry is probably a way of survival

through which he understands not only a turbulent and unstable reality but also a dormant internal sense of meaninglessness. For him, poetry is a concomitant activity through which both poet and reader re-create their sense of the world and their own correcting posts as re-creators. It is an act of joy, re-being, and assertion of existence. Shattuck argues:

For him, there was no separation between art and action; they were identical. He wrote verses on matchboxes and postcards to send to his friends with complete spontaneity. Being a poet was not a word to him but rather the natural way of living and manifesting the great love he felt for people and things. (Shattuck 10)

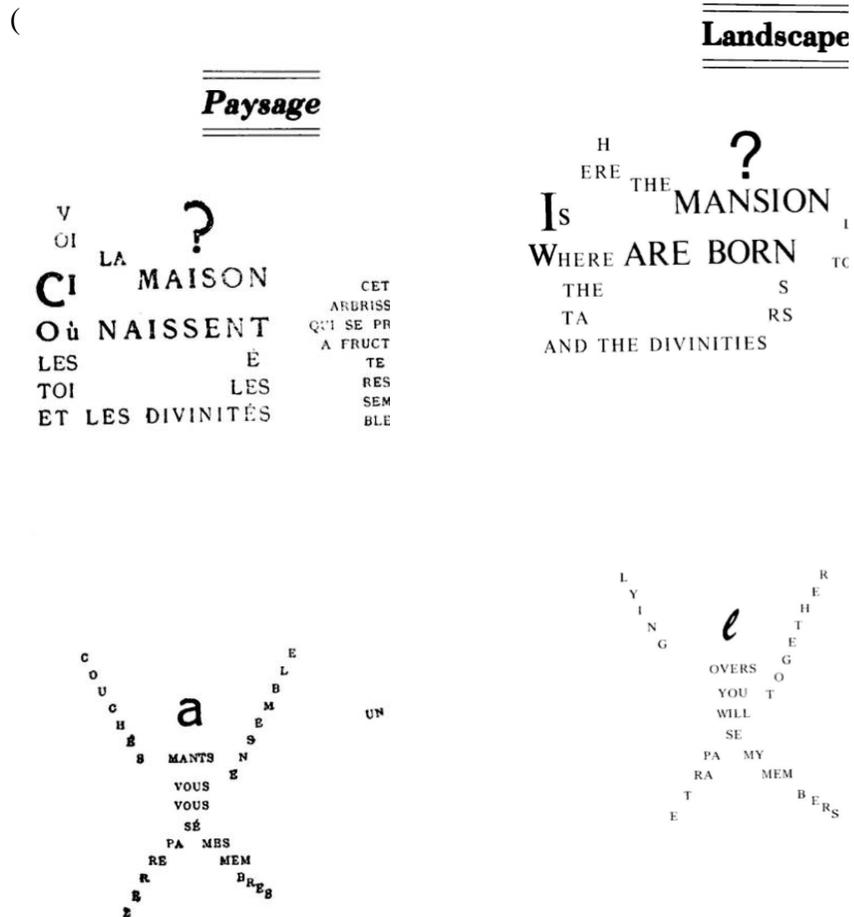
As a front-line soldier in the French army, war is the theme of most of Apollinaire's work. Nevertheless, in his poems, Apollinaire represents the horrors of war in an entirely innovative and unprecedented way. He celebrates war as a transition to higher levels of human consciousness and potentiality. This reconciliation, or rather, glorification of war, stems, in the first place, from Apollinaire's torn childhood. As a stateless child and an adult soldier, the war provided Apollinaire with his long-sought sense of belonging, devotion, and priority. France, in other words, became the motherland for which Apollinaire devotedly sacrificed.

Regarding ego poetics, Apollinaire still offers an inherently rebellious form of ego. Apollinaire rejects conventional poetic eloquence throughout his poems, particularly relevant to Classic and Romance poetics. Utilizing chaotic and fragmental poetic forms, Apollinaire joins the stream of aesthetic, scientific, and artistic experimentation, particularly trendy at the beginning of the twentieth

century. Apollinaire breaks up with conventional poetic dogma in more than one sense throughout his poems. Firstly, he rejects poetry's conventional tenet as an elevated hierarchal practice exclusively relevant to a specific class. In his poems, for example, Apollinaire offers tangible figures and modernist structures most representative of the intensity and condensation of the age, such as a car, a bridge, and a clock. This speaks directly to the industrialized culture and the anti-poetic spirit prevalent through the beginning of the century. Rees argues; “the challenge of the century expressed itself in the shock and surprise of a new vision, the need of the writer to find an idiom suitable for the expression of new ideas, the changed identity of the man, speed, and discontinuity” (Rees 26).

Secondly, throughout his poems, Apollinaire minimizes ego poetics, particularly dominant in conventional poetics, through two primary techniques: "**surprise**" (Rees 27) and "**simultaneity**" (Hyde 15). This is what critic Garnet Rees views as a reflection of what he sees as “a long-held belief of his that even the most insignificant objects could hold powerful meanings” (Rees 32). For Rees, this poetic celebration of everyday trivial objects, or in his words, "the search for the unexpected," begins to “dominate at the expense of the unity of the poem” (Rees 27). However, Apollinaire's poetics offers, as we shall see in more detail, not simply an aesthetic discovery of negligible everyday objects but a redefinition of reality in terms of its most overlooked, under-appreciated aspects and dimensions. Far from indulging in simple poetics of surprise, the aim of Apollinaire's utilizes surprise, even shock, to force a newer view of reality's existing relationships and

dimensions for newer, more affluent, and therefore, more accurate understandings of it aesthetically and culturally. Here is a poem from Apollinaire's Calligrammes (1913-1916)



30 PAYSAGE

(Apollinaire 30) (Figure 5)

The “x” shaped visual form of the phrase “lying together” completed by the phrase “separate my members” and centered by “will you over” offers the shape of two lovers mingled in a body embrace. Lying on the grass, the lovers seem to enact a love scene in a word

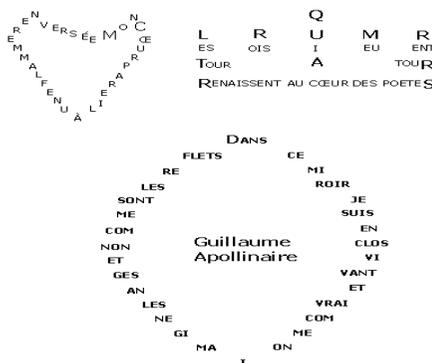
shape that much surpasses and infinitely enhances the direct meanings of the words. This is added to the smoke-shaped phrase “a lighted cigar smoke” and “the little tree beginning to bear fruit resembles you,” which itself takes the shape of a tree, and the phrases "here is a mansion where the stars and the divinities are born" themselves resembling a shape of a house. In words, utilizing precise positions on the page, the poem depicts, in visual form and typography, a love scene where the lovers are lying on the grass looking at the stars next to a beautiful house. The poem re-arranges and redefines reality and humanity's visual and contextual components, as if in a cubist painting. Even though it is understandably a love poem, it is still non-confessional and almost universal both in its avoidance of particular psychological reflections and syntactic identity features. There is no pointing to a poetic "I" as with most conventional poetics, not to mention the utter absence of the first-person-pronoun itself. In short, there is a particularity but not a confessional identity.

In other words, throughout his poems, Apollinaire offers not too much emotional confessionalism meant to evoke the reader's empathy for, or adoption of, an issue or a cause, personal or public. Instead, his poems are as innovative at the level of typography as they are at the language level. Apollinaire's poetics, like Mallarmé's, in other words, is much more concerned with the visual and the typographic rather than the verbal and the musical. Moreover, like Mallarmé's, Apollinaire's poems are neither narrative nor self-revealing in any conventional way. Instead, shape fragments, basically random and primarily complex, are offered once more. Therefore, to comprehend Apollinaire's poems, readers have to investigate the layout of the poem side by side with his

attempt to challenge its sequential meaning. Only through the reader's potentiality to trace, analyze, connect and re-arrange the poem's partial re-interpretable significance(s) is that meaning recreate-able.

### 9- Calligrammes and Defamiliarization:

Apollinaire's Calligrammes have been inspiring poetic forms through which words are typographically re-distributed asymmetrically on the page to give a general impression of a specific shape that might imply a distinctive meaning. The form of the Calligramme can be either explanatory or contradictory to the apparent meaning of the words from which they are formed. They are poetic creations that give a "spatial" sense to a poem depicted, rather than written, in a "pictorial" form, creating an "immediately intelligible form" (Hyde11). In this sense, to catch a possible meaning, Calligrammes have to be visually and verbally investigated. They require extra mental, analytical and investigative effort from readers. Calligrammes, therefore, are neither self-assertive nor informative. Instead, they are unfamiliar, even shocking, poetic forms that mentally and emotionally provoke readers.



(Apollinaire 89). (Figure 6)

In his *Coeur Couronne et Miroir* (*Heart, Crown, and Mirror*) (Figure 6), Apollinaire represents three irrelevant objects precisely distributed on the page. Again, like Cubist paintings, this poem is a picture poem, through which colors and lines are replaced by letters and typographical figures. Readers must visually trace the letters up and down, backward and forward, to re-assemble a visual delineation of the significance. Readers must work hard to re-discover or recreate an interpretative relationship between these poetic figures.

For example, the crown figure in the poem forces readers' sight to move vertically and horizontally to get the following line: "THE KINGS WHO DIE ONE BY ONE ARE REBORN IN POETS' HEARTS ."The kings who "die" and get "reborn in poets' hearts" can be viewed as an allusion to history and its active influence on the present. This considerable dynamism in reading a line, including frequently moving upwards and downwards, attunes to the represented cycle of death and rebirth. It is representative of history in its turbulent and unstable dynamicity. Here we find every aspect of the poem is evocative in readership both aesthetically and culturally. Aesthetically the dynamism itself refers to the sublime sentiment of pleasure and pain; effort and frustration, sense and ultimate endlessness of sense. Readers are physically exerted to grasp a glimpse of sense and a means of solace. Culturally, this dynamism challenges settled identities and stable unquestioned egos. It challenges methods of reassurance aimed at a profit, ease of identification targeting consumerism, and readiness of indulgence supporting the status quo.

The poet's name at the center of the virtual mirror further represents self-questioning and the search for identity. Utilizing

capitalized separate letters, distributed in the clockwise direction, the voice in the poem declares: "IN THIS MIRROR I AM ENCLOSED LIVING AND REAL JUST AS YOU ." Nevertheless, in its most informative and confirmative tone, such an axiomatic and unnecessary declaration reflects an unmistakable sense of self-doubt.

Underlying his declarative and defining language, the speaker probably wonders: am I who I really am? When written linearly, the heart figure will be: "MY HEART IS LIKE AN UPSIDE DOWN FLAME ." This line is mainly a typical confessional poetic line. Nevertheless, through typo-dynamic representation, it is transformed into an innovative verbal-visual poetic figure that questions any identities and confessions.

In this sense, it is only through the eyes of the reader that the poem is re-invented and re-discovered. The reader traces connects, analyzes, and decides what to comprehend. Rather than the poems necessarily. A reader's selective ego is one who subjectively decides what is comprehensive in the light of its context, sentiments, and mental structures.

Though inherently mysterious and symbolic, the poem still offers a form of poetic ego that might or might not represent the poet's ego. It is a dynamic ego that does not tell but acts. It does not narrate but creates. Despite seemingly non-narrative and non-confessional, both in its external fragmentation and complex symbolism, the poem still implies its author's turbulent and alienated life. In his *Selected Writings of Guillaume Apollinaire*, Shattuck argues:

They point to his verse as a tremendous and corroborating excrescence of his life. The glee with

which Apollinaire cultivated his myth and mystery has not made the critic's job any easier. However, the true poet is there, even if he keeps himself in his shadow. He can be found best by direct and sustained attention to his verse and a critical eye on the enchantments of his life. (Shattuck 5).

The author's authorial voice, so to speak, is still somehow present as a shadowy figure in the background of the work. Though unrevealing and non-biographical, the poem is still representative of the poet's life in more than one sense. In art, for example, it is only through the selection of colors and lines that the ego of the painter is declared and uncovered. Likewise, in this poem, the name in the middle of the mirror, the free choice of specific figures to represent, and how to represent them are all proprieties through which the poetic ego of the poet is detectable. In other meaning, though seemingly irrelevant and non-coherent, the poetic figures in the poem should have once meant something to the poet. However, this "something" is not declared through a narrative voice, particularly common in Classic and Romance poetics. Instead, the connection between these figures is kept ambiguous and symbolic. It is totally up to the reader to guess the connection. The poem, therefore, might have numerous readings within innumerable contexts.

Unfortunately, Apollinaire's long-term attachment to the arts ended up tragically. In 1911, "Apollinaire was arrested on suspicion of stealing the Mona Lisa from the Louvre" (Rees 17). Such a condemnation did not only destroy Apollinaire's relations with the artists but also with his adopted homeland, France. As a stateless child,

such a loss spoke directly to Apollinaire's deepest insecurities and melancholy. In this sense, Apollinaire's existential dilemma of alienation and loss of identity comes back to the surface. As Hyde argues: "like the great symbolic poets, Apollinaire finds deep aesthetic satisfaction in the beauties of obscurity and allusiveness of utterance" (Hyde 2). This is particularly the mood in which his *Alcools* (1913) is written.

### **10- Alcools: (Under Mirabeau Bridge)**

Formally speaking, both in its layout and typography, *Alcools* does not offer a conventional coherent unity. It is a collection of frequent poems that are not relative by subject or length. In other words, throughout the book, long poems are frequently intervened by other short ones. The poems, therefore, are not sequential or chronological. Instead, these formally heterogeneous poems do not offer much syntactic coherence or conventional narratives, a fact observable by many critics. For example, Rees argues:

There is no grouping by subject; short poems are separate long poems. The denial of any facile autobiographical chronology allows the poet to cover his tracks and diminish the element of direct confession (Rees 21).

In terms of its layout, Apollinaire's *Alcools* challenges confessionalism and syntactic coherence and, perhaps more significantly, any form of regular co-relativeness or implied causality. The title is a trading name of a drink, insinuating life's commerciality, un-stability, and contradiction.

Sous le pont Mirabeau coule la seine	Under Mirabeau Bridge the river slips away
Et nos amours	And lovers must I be reminded
Faut-il qu'il m'en souviene	Joy came always after pain
La joie venait toujours après la piene	
	The night is a clock chiming.
Vienne la nuit sonne l'heure	The days go by not I
Les jours s'en vont je demeure	
	We're face to face and hand in hand
Les mains dans les mains restons face a	While under the bridge
face	Of embrace expire
Tandis que sous	Eternal tired tidal eyes
Le pont de nos bras passe	
Des eternal regards l'onde si lasse	The night is a clock chiming
	The days go by not I
Vienne la nuit sonne l'heure	
Les jours s'en vont je demeure	Love elapses like the river
	Love goes by
L'amour s'en va comme cette eau courante	Poor life is indolent
L'amour s'en va	And expectations always violent
Comme la vie est lente	
Et comme l'esperance est violente	The night is a clock chiming
	The days go by not I
Vienne la nuit sonne l'heure	
Les jours s'en vont je demeure	
	The days and equally the weeks elapse
Passent les jours et passent les semaines	The past remains the past
Ni temps passe	Love remains lost
Ni les amours reviennent	Under Mirabeau Bridge the river slips away
Sous le pont Mirabeau coule la seine	
Vienne la nuit sonne l'heure	The night is a clock chiming
Les jours s'en vont je demeure	The day go by not I

(APOLLINAIRE- 56) (REES eds),

As a soft drink, *Alcools* is symbolic of shifts in mood and plane consciousness associated with negative views of the world. In its intensity and contradiction, the actual process of making *Alcools* itself is many representatives of the chaotic order of the poems, particularly, and the randomness of life, in general.

*Alcools*, therefore, seems to investigate man's position within the world in general. It universalizes its content to free itself from national concerns and other contextual questions. Phrases like "*Love elapses as the river/love goes by/Poor life is indolent/And expectations always violent*" do not inform of a particularly connected aesthetic argument or concept. The image "like a river by itself is not particularly informative of a specific tangible cultural stance or ideal. Rather it throws a universal, almost un-definable impression of the concept of love coupled or enveloped with loss, perhaps even utter detachment or satiric lack of being. The last phrase with the words "expectations" and "violent" might give the impression of utter frustration in life and being but also imply absolute animosity and rejection. However, the relationship between the first two phrases and the remainder of the stanza seems almost completely hidden or left for readership to ascertain and conclude. It is perhaps evident that in its a-syntactic form and content, *Alcools* represents early 20th-century man's overwhelming sense of alienation and search for identity.

The poem consists of eight stanzas frequently intervened by these two lines: "The night is a clock chiming/ The days go by not I .". The eight stanzas are heterogeneous in length, irregular in rhythm, and devoid of rhyme and punctuation marks. It starts and ends with the same lines. This probably symbolizes history in its circularity,

alteration, and accumulation. The repetition of these two lines, side by side with the virtual anxiety resulting from the chiming clock and the regular flow of water against the bridge, implies a subconsciously rhythmical poetic effect.

On the other hand, the irregular length of the lines creates a similar linguistic tempo echoing the same sense of uncertainty and loss prevalent throughout the beginning of the twentieth century. The unadjusted poetic lines' typographical effect challenges traditional poetry's regular typography and linearity. Despite its simple ordinary layout, the poem breaks up most aspects of conventional poetics using its very conventionally visible writing look. Therefore, the poem seems to revolt against tradition through tradition, investigating conventional linearity and syntactic causality or narratives.

The poem attempts to reveal the cruel face of industrialized culture at the beginning of the twentieth century in more than one sense. Firstly, it utilizes modern industrial figures such as the "clock chiming" and the "bridge ." Secondly, the bridge's stability against the river flow parallels the stability of the speaker's love against the flow of time. Both the bridge and the lover seem to be stuck in time. The bridge cannot escape the persistent flow of the river. Likewise, the speaker cannot cut the emotional cords with his beloved. The poem reflects modern man's intensive sense of loss in an increasingly unstable reality through complex imagery. However, by its severe nature, this existential problem overshadows and effectively hides an authorial identity in a continued state of tension, appearing only as a lost trace in the seemingly disconnected language and imagery. As

existential, it almost always offers its components with expressions of newness and originality.

### **11- Mallarmé Versus Apollinaire: (The Hermetic Vs the Heroic)**

Both Mallarmé and Apollinaire seem to share, more or less, the exact history of loss in terms of their respective domestic lives. They have passed through similar social circumstances regarding their early childhood upbringings. Both have lived through childhood with single parents; Mallarmé's mother died when he was only five, and Apollinaire's father never acknowledged him in the first place. This single-parent upbringing influenced their aesthetic methodologies in ways that seem pretty revealing. Apollinaire's choice of obscurity and symbolism and Mallarmé's choice of ambiguity and codification seem relevant to their individual needs for detachment and independence.

Apollinaire's and Mallarmé's poetics offer unique forms of the poetic ego. Theirs are not confessional or self-revealing as in classical or conventional poetics. Instead, they are alienated poetic subjectivities redefining a turbulent and fast-changing cultural context. Throughout their poems, their poetics equally echo a sense of uncertainty and ambiguity, overwhelmingly marking the zeitgeist of the era.

Mallarmé's emphasis, however, is on abstract symbolism and ambiguity. His accurate positioning of each component word and letter is unique, making his poems "encrypted" in some critics' views (Meillassoux 3). Each poem offers a form of coded representation of a dilemma or a concept as abstract as it is complex and rich in potential interpretations. Thus, Mallarmé's poetics offers conceptual positioning,

and typography is irrelevant to the meaning sought. No particular shapes or familiar objects are provided in Mallarmé's work, but only abstract positioning, each carrying its specific significance.

On the other hand, Apollinaire's poems are allegoric in their symbolism, offering words in familiar overall shapes. However, their general significance draws from those representations' symbolic role in the rich meaning of the poem. In Apollinaire's poetics, readers will confront shapes like trees, flowers, houses, roses, and even letters like X, or numbers like 0, with each representation given an interpretive role in the overall significance of the work. Both Mallarmé and Apollinaire offer complex, rather than simplistic or conventional, forms of the authorial poetic ego that are mentally and emotionally destabilized and destabilizing.

It is pretty significant that the abstract and the delicate nature of Mallarmé's poetic techniques, subsidized by his challenge to conventional poetic cannon in terms of both form and content and his disinterest in the commercial value of art, defines him in Zachmann's words as "hermetic" (18). By contrast, the same radical challenge of the same cannon and cultural ethos subsidized by a rather vulgar or chaotic use of the visual aspects of the language on the page (shaped after familiar things) should transform Apollinaire into a daring "heroic" figure in Shattuch's words (50). Both poetics seem not interested in producing the finality of artistic creation, therefore against any commercial manipulation of the cultural, artistic value. In this regard, they are both heroes; they are both hermits. They are not much concerned with the poem as a final product. Representing everyday scenes and familiar objects such as a vase, a bridge, flowers, and

clocks, while generally viewed as non-elevated and non-aesthetic, inherently challenges commercial aesthetic norms of the day.

Similarly, offering abstract locations and unique shapes also challenges the norms of the day differently. As such, their poems are not meant to be appealing and captivating. They do not target a specific audience by asserting and amplifying that same audience's cultural and ideological ego. Instead, the early vigour and hostile poetics of both Mallarmé and Apollinaire seem to attack, destabilize, or at least question and re-consider man's perception of life in general. It is, therefore, not a self-asserting but self-questioning poetics. It does not create a homogeneous and unified audience indulged in a mono-view of life and values. Instead, it seems to push the conventional frontiers of poetic representation a little further. It re-investigates man's identity within such a destabilized and rapidly changing context at the turn of the century, regardless of any capitalist standards or commercial criteria.

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## التحول البصري في التجريب الشعري:

ستيفن ملارميه و جوليام أبوللونير

### ملخص

تناقش هذه الدراسة أدبيات إثنين من شعراء فرنسا الشهيرين هما: ستيفان ملارميه (1842-1898) وجوليام أبوللونير (1880-1918) بما لتجاربهما الجمالية من تأثير ضخم على أدبيات القرن العشرين التجريبية منذ بداية أعمالهما في أوائل القرن. فحركات الشعر التجريبي من مثل "الشعر المجسم" (1952)، و"الشعر البصري" (1960)، و"الشعر المعماري" ، و"شعر اللغة" (1973)، و"الشعر الصوتي"، و"الشعر الادائي" ، و"شعر الردودية" (1967) وغيرها الكثير من الأدبيات غير التقليدية تأثرت بشكل شبه مباشر بأعمالهما. فقد كانا كلاهما أول من ضمن التصورات التجريبية للشكل والسياق اللغوي بشكل فريد ومحدد داخل بصمتها الأدبية، بل والأكثر دلالة من ذلك أنهما كانا أول من قدم أدبيات تتاهض جذرياً علي المستويين الجمالي الخاص والثقافي العام الاعترافية الشعرية التقليدية التي استمرت بصورة أو باخرى في شعر الحداثة وماقبلها. يناقش هذا البحث إذًا التحولات الثقافية والجمالية لهذه الاعترافية علي أيدي هذين الشاعرين الشجاعين من صوت شاعري سطري ثنائي الأبعاد في القصيدة إلي بنية دلالية ديموقراطية متعددة الأبعاد تقدم مفاوضات وتحريات حول قيمة الشعر ووظيفته في المجتمع المعاصر وحول دور اللغة في الرأسمالية المعاصرة. سيساهم ذلك كما يأمل البحث في إثراء الفهم السائد للآليات اللغوية والثقافية التي تؤثر بها القراءة الإيجابية في عمليات الإبداع وصنع القيمة الثقافية والجمالية. فلقد تصدرت أعمال هذين الشاعرين طابورا طويلا من التجارب المستقبلية المشابهة مما جعلها مستتبنة لمستقبل الإبداع الشعري ومؤسسة لرسوخ ذلك المستقبل في آن واحد.

كلمات مفتاحية: ملارميه، أبوللونير، شعر ما بعد الحداثة، الشعر التجريبي، أدبيات الطليعة الفنية.