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The genesis of poetic prose in the works of Louis-Ferdinand Céline through
the transgressive and maieutic agency of the figure of the Double

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Dedication

This work is for my uncle Dr Isidore Grünberg, physician, linguist and officer in the French army during the war in Indochina who, as *baroudeur* as Céline, was the inspiration for this work. It is also for his son, my cousin Jean Grünberg whose untimely death deprived me of his valuable insight into my work.

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To the personnel of the *Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine* (IMEC), and especially the librarians at L'Abbaye d'Ardenne who helped smooth the path of my research.

Finally, in appreciation of the unfailing support and encouragement of my family, including my cousin Michèle Grünberg-Praeger, and of one friend in particular, all of whom played an essential role in the completion of this work.

Mais quand on est faible, ce qui donne de la force, c'est de dépouiller les hommes qu'on redoute le plus, du moindre prestige qu'on a encore tendance à leur prêter. Il faut s'apprendre à les considérer tels qu'ils sont, pires qu'ils sont c'est-à-dire, à tous les points de vue. Ça dégage, ça vous affranchit et vous défend au-delà de tout ce qu'on peut imaginer. Ça vous donne un autre vous-même. On est deux.

Louis-Ferdinand Céline
Voyage au bout de la nuit

Writing is not arriving; most of the time it's not arriving.
One has to go away, leave the self.
How far must one *not* arrive in order to write?
One must walk as far as the night.
One's own night. Walking through the self towards the dark.

Hélène Cixous
Three steps on the ladder of writing

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Abstract

This study examines Louis-Ferdinand Céline's quest for the actualization of his creative aesthetic through the transgressive and maieutic agency of the figure of the Double manifest in his works. In that capacity, we examine the Double's role as a vehicle for the production of the author's poetic prose. To this end, we interrogate the role of the Double as a coping mechanism for the author's fractured psyche caused by the trauma of his war experiences and a concomitant horror Céline perceived as extant in man's inhumanity to man, concealed by a veneer of 'civilised' behaviour.

Because the figure of the Double is manifest in Céline's works in two distinct capacities, both as a coping mechanism and in providing the impetus for the production of his poetic prose, we have divided this study into two sections comprising Transgressors and Midwives. The first analyses those elements in Céline's aesthetic which were transgressive, iconoclastic, providing the initial impulse for creative production. These influences include war and the author's concept of death; father figures who exerted an influence on both the medical and literary careers of the author; Céline's transgressive use of idiolect, and the presence in the author's work of Dionysian and Apollinian elements as a metaphor for creative conflict.

The second section examines those aspects of the Double which are maieutic in the Socratic sense in that they deliver the outcome of dialectic argument present in the fundamental conflictual (and creative) opposition or rivalry between Doubles as a product of that dissent, in the form of poetic prose. Those elements which act as 'Midwives' in this context include the act of writing *per se* as a catalyst for the resolution of Céline's fragmented psyche; ambiguity and the grotesque in subterranean spaces as a site of regeneration and finally, Shakespeare's works as an intertextual touchstone and seat of linguistic and poetic inspiration.

If the word 'maieutic' relates to the Socratic method or dialectic of eliciting knowledge by a series of questions and answers, we posit that Céline's figurative use of a maieutic method for eliciting truth or authenticity in his work is evidenced in the high level of poetic prose as its outcome. It is also extant in the effect that the author's prose has on the reader in eliciting an *active* response in the form of a participatory

reading of Céline's works by appealing directly to the reader's emotions as well as, in a best-case scenario, prompting the reader to re-write Céline's works.

An observation of the trajectory of the figure of the Double throughout Céline's oeuvre, from his first manifestation in the person of the author's avowed double Bardamu¹ in tandem with the protagonist's Double Robinson in *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, through the gradual decline of his avatars in successive novels, culminating in his final elimination in Céline's last work *Rigodon*, revealed a significant pattern in terms of a literary solution to a personal issue. We discovered a parallel between the novels in which the highest degree of poetic prose was attained and the presence of those figures of the Double who were most transgressive: Mille-Pattes in *Guignol's Band* and Jules in *Féerie pour une autre fois*. We also noted that a relative diminution in the level of poetic prose in the novels of the trilogy coincided with a decline and eventual demise of the figure of the Double. This led us to conclude that the figure of the Double was simply a literary device for the actualization of the author's project: the resolution of Céline's internal conflict and his reliance on the Double as a seat of both refuge and inspiration, and a concomitant manifestation of an authentic voice represented in his poetic prose. However, we emphasise that the disappearance of the figure of the Double in Céline's works does not imply an abolition of that figure, but rather an assimilation by the protagonist of *all* those elements which constituted his 'Otherness'. This factor is inherent in the attainment of a state of immanence, both by Céline and the protagonists in his novels.

¹ « Bardamu ? – Ce n'est pas moi, c'est mon double. Mais Robinson aussi. » : Jeanne Carayon : *Le docteur écrit un roman* : Cahiers de l'Herne No 3 : Paris 1962 : p 22

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Introduction

This study examines the manifestation of the figure of the Double in the novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline in the context of its transgressive, maieutic and ultimately catalytic agency in the production of the author's poetic prose. We draw the reader's attention to the fact that this term in no way implies an association with Baudelaire's *Poèmes en prose*, but simply denotes a level of lyricism and poetic imagery present in Céline's works. While the transgressive element in the Double is one which triggers fundamental change in an iconoclastic defiance of the rules of convention, it is through the Double's maieutic function that the fruit of that transgressive act bears fruit. We submit that the realisation of Céline's creative aesthetic manifest in the degree of poetic prose present in his works is the outcome of a creative dynamism inherent in the two opposing elements of transgression and gestation examined in this work. In a maieutic role which emulates Socrates' delivery of knowledge through dialectic, Céline presents the reader with the outcome of the creative rivalry between the narrator-protagonist and his Double in a narrative style which induces an active reading and interpretation of his works.

For clarity, we have divided the chapters into two categories; those *Transgressors* whose iconoclastic force shatters the mould of hidebound convention and monolithic social structures - a spirit that is at the root of the creative impulse - and those figures who, in the role of *Midwives*, bring the author's prose into being after a period of gestation. In their dual agency as transgressors and midwives, the figures of the Double act as catalysts for the actualisation of Céline's creative impulse by helping to reconcile the divergent facets of his fractured psyche.

War played a pivotal role in Céline's life, not simply as a thematic backdrop and framework for his oeuvre, but also in prompting the author's creation of the Double as a defence against the horror of man's inhumanity to man witnessed during both World Wars. Sylistically, in an accretion of poetic prose augmented by the intercession of the Double, Céline's works mirror his emotional passage from a resistance to war evidenced in the early novels to a gradual acceptance of it as a facet of life; one which is as integral to man's destiny as death. We therefore posit that an acceptance of war on these terms rendered the Double redundant, hence the gradual disappearance of

this figure from the later novels, culminating in his complete absence at the close of Céline's last novel, *Rigodon*. We examine the trajectory and role of the figure of the Double in this context.

In Céline's work, transgression and midwifery complement each other as agents for the procreation and delivery of the author's poetic prose. The inherently violent act of sexual procreation finds its literary pendant in the act of writing itself, often in a state of *délire*, with the catalytic agency of the Double bringing it to fruition. Profoundly ambiguous, both on a personal as well as a literary level, the significance of Céline's work lies as much in the fabric of the narrative itself as it does in the spaces intrinsic to that fabric; much as the reality of lace is inherent in the holes between the tracery of the filigree. We accordingly examine the role of the Double as an expression of the creative *creux* within the author as expressed in his work, in the belief that the significance of his work lies in the interstices produced by the catalytic action of the Double.

The presence of the Double in Céline's works appears to be an allegory for the ambivalence which pervades the author's work on several levels. We therefore explore each of the manifestations of the Double present in his work in order to grasp more fully the author's intention in creating this figure, as well as the impulses which underpin his work as a whole. Such an examination will provide an insight into the wellspring for the creation of the characters which populate his work, and in particular their function as Doubles in the context of an expression of the author's *alter ego*.

It is clear that whilst Céline's works are not, strictly speaking, autobiographical, the transposed events in all his works are based on those he experienced throughout his life. His boyhood in Paris is the subject of *Mort à Crédit*, while *Casse-Pipe* and *Voyage au bout de la Nuit* describe his enlistment in the army during the First World War. His youth in London is the subject of *Guignol's Band*, while the start of the publication of the pamphlets is set against a background of the interwar years. *Féerie pour une autre fois I* and its sequel, *Féerie pour une autre fois II (Normance)* depict Céline's life in Montmartre during the early days of the second World War, and the bombing of Paris in April 1944. His last three novels, *D'un Château l'autre*, *Nord* and *Rigodon*, commonly referred to as the 'Trilogy', commence with the author's flight

from Paris in the company of his wife and friend Robert le Vigan subsequent to the sacking of his apartment in the rue Girardon, continuing with his exile in Germany and finally the journey north to Denmark and eventual imprisonment.

The profoundly ambiguous nature of the author is evident in his choice of the pseudonym 'Céline'¹ to denote his identity as a writer. Importantly, it also served as a mask to conceal his literary identity from his medical colleagues. Dr Destouches therefore adopted the *persona* of Mr Céline in a calculated action that revealed a fundamental schism in his personality. Given the subject of this study, it is significant to note the evolution of the names of the narrators of Céline's novels, successively revealing a gradual *rapprochement* to the author's true self, and a discarding of the mask he had assigned to the characters designated as his *porte-parole*. Although Ferdinand Bardamu, the narrator of *Voyage au bout de la Nuit* bears Céline's middle name, it is perhaps the furthest removed onomastically from the author's origins. Ferdinand is the name assigned to the narrator of *Casse-Pipe*, *Mort à Crédit* and *Guignol's Band* as well as the pamphlets, while the narrator relating the events of *Féerie pour une autre fois I* and *II* is both Ferdinand and Céline, signalling the pivotal role of this novel in his oeuvre. However, the narrator of *D'un Château l'autre*, *Nord and Rigodon* bears the pseudonym Céline-Destouches in an indication of the reconciliation of the divided facets of the author's Self; Céline the writer and Destouches the medical doctor.

Transgressors

War, Death and the Double

In this chapter we examine war as a pivotal element in Céline's life and oeuvre, and its implication in terms of trauma as an agent for the expression of the author's creative impulse. War, and in particular Céline's direct experience of combat at the Front in 1914 during World War I where he was wounded, had a profound effect on his psyche. We therefore posit that it was as a result of this experience, coupled with possible trauma experienced in infancy² that led him to adopt the figure of the Double in both his personal as well as his literary capacity as a shield against possible recurrent danger and emotional injury. We draw on Freud's early papers on War

¹ One of the names of the author's grandmother Céline Guillou

² As there is no anecdotal evidence to support this supposition, this notion remains purely speculative.

Neuroses in support of this hypothesis. We also note Céline's comments on war contained in his *Hommage à Zola* where he deflected his address to an anti-war polemic and a reflection on war and death. Equally relevant is Freud's 1932 letter to Einstein questioning the fundamental meaning and function of war in the context of man's two basic instincts of self-preservation and destruction.

The second section of this chapter examines the implication of Céline's attitude to death, both as a medical doctor who has taken a Hippocratic oath to preserve life at any cost, as well as that of a writer with a fatalistic attitude towards man's demise. We also discuss the notion and implication of an elective death, or suicide present in Céline's earliest work, his medical thesis on the Hungarian doctor Philippe Ignace Semmelweis, as well as the self-induced death of Robinson, Bardamu's Double in *Voyage au bout de la nuit*. Also significant is the 'suicide' of Pliny the Elder to whom Céline dedicated *Féerie pour une autre fois II (Normance)*

The third section comprises an analysis of various key figures of the Double, including their female counterparts. We believe the latter express the *anima* or female component in Céline's personality with which he appears to have conducted an ambiguous relationship. In this context we explore the sensation of uncanniness produced by the presence of the daemonic female which Freud ascribed to the *unheimlich* or a sensation of the uncanny in a confrontation with the female genital organs. This phenomenon is particularly significant in *Mort à crédit* in the relationship between the narrator Ferdinand and his mother Clémence. Importantly, we examine the figure of the Double in the context of a protective device or shield adopted to mitigate against the threat of a possible recurrence of past trauma expressed in flashbacks to the narrator Ferdinand's war experience in *Guignol's Band*.

Father-figures as initiators to the au-delà

The important initiatory role played by father-figures in Céline's life, both in a medical and literary context, is outlined and examined with regard to its implication for the creation of the author's œuvre. Each father-figure, whether real or fictitious, was a catalyst for the creation of Céline's work, with many real-life figures such as Henry de Graffigny-Raoul Marquis being transposed into a fictional role as Roger-Marin Courtial des Pereires. In a medical context, Philippe Ignace Semmelweis, the

Hungarian doctor who discovered a cure for puerperal fever, and who was the subject of Céline's medical thesis, played a pivotal role in the author's life, as he was the subject of the author's first literary work, albeit intended for a more scientific purpose. We also examine the reasons for the phenomenon of 'death by caricature', the fate that befell some of Céline's father-figures, notably Ludwig Rajchman, the author's employer at the SDN (*Société des Nations*). Rajchman's distinguished medical record coupled with his seniority contributed to the admiration Céline felt for him. However, this did not prevent the author from savagely caricaturing Rajchman in his play *L'Eglise* in the ridiculous figure of Yudenzweck and later in *Bagatelles pour un massacre* transposing him into the figure of Gutman and Yubelblat.

Dancing – and singing – with Dionysos

This chapter explores the mythical divine duality of Dionysos and Apollo as a metaphor for the ambiguity expressed in the figure of the Double in Céline's work. That ambiguity finds its expression in dance and song, both of which act as agents for the creation of the author's lyrical prose. We examine Dance as an expression of the desire for evasion and ascension as a metaphor for a creative attempt to escape the strictures of society, and its association with Nietzsche's notion of *La Grande Santé* and a concomitant sublimation of the individual's ego. Dance as an expression of the transgressive presence of Dionysos is explored in the context of the production of poetic prose in the Céline's work. The presence of song, predominantly expressed in the form of the *chanson populaire*, is examined in parallel with the function of the Chorus in Attic Greek tragedy as a reflection and interpretation to the audience of the events featured at the performance.

The conflictual relationship of these divinities is examined terms of a *creative* conflict from which artistic excellence emerges in an echo of the rivalry present in the relationship between Céline's protagonists and their respective Doubles. The outcome of that conflict in Céline's novels is that of poetic prose brought to fruition through the intercession of the two divinities.

The transgressive element in Céline's idiolect is ideally suited to the production of comedy and its offshoot caricature in the author's work, both frequently embodied in ironic laughter. Céline's idiolect was thus his chosen vehicle for the expression of his poetic prose as well as for the caricature of both individuals and society in an attempt to assert his authority over them. The notion of transgression is directly coupled to that of power and the concept of hierarchical difference in varying degrees. Céline was thus able, through the adoption of his own literary style – his idiolect – to transgress the accepted norms and laws of syntax and narrative. However, the power issues inherent in those of difference are subtle and dangerous, as Céline discovered when, after writing two novels in which he explored transgression in both stylistic and thematic formats, he embarked on writing anti-Semitic pamphlets, thus carrying his form of literary subversion to the extreme, and earning him public disapprobation and alienation from French society. Argot is ephemeral, scintillating for a brief moment before being overtaken by time. But, as Céline pointed out in an interview, as a result of his use of idiolect, unlike those written in conventional prose style, his works would truly have *lived*, and not merely existed. Céline's use of his particular idiolect fits the description of Victor Hugo's use of this form of literary genre as a subversive narrative device where "Le souterrain perturbe la langue et réforme le style"³.

Midwives

Maieûtikos

We use the word 'maieutic' in the Socratic sense, relating to the philosopher's dialectic or method of eliciting knowledge by a series of questions and answers. The word is derived from the Greek *maieûtikos* relating to midwifery, and was used figuratively by Socrates. It is not indifferent to note that the profession of Socrates' mother Phaenarete was that of a midwife, and that implicit in the definition of *maieûtikos* is the notion of assisting at the 'birth' of a hitherto unknown element.⁴

³ Chelebourg, C : *Sur un fond de ténèbres quelque bizarre alphabet – le souterrain et la langue chez Victor Hugo* : in *L'Imaginaire du Souterrain* p 130

⁴ "Maïeutique: gr **maieutiké** 'art de faire accoucher' : Méthode par laquelle Socrate, fils de sage-femme, disait accoucher les esprits des pensées qu'ils contiennent sans le savoir. » : *Le nouveau Petit Robert* 2001 : p 1488

For Socrates, the prerequisite for his *maieutic* method was to cleanse the mind of all false knowledge or preconceived ideas. For this reason, he always started his instruction by leading his interlocutors to confess their ignorance of that which they had been certain they knew best. This is widely accepted as the basis of Socratic irony, which we believe also parallels the transgressive phase in the production of Céline's poetic prose. When Socrates' questioning began again, its objective was to lead his interlocutors whose thought it guided, in the desired direction, to discover for themselves the Truth about which they had previously admitted ignorance. This is the essence of the Socratic method: his *maieûtic* – the art of intellectual midwifery.

Socrates' method consisted of gradually weaning his interlocutors away from the immediate attraction of Sophistic dialogue or *eristics*, thus allowing the conceptual seeds of imagination and creativity to be maieutically nurtured, until they reached full term when they were 'delivered' by Socrates. As the son of a midwife, he is known to have described himself as a metaphoric heir to his mother's literal midwifery.

Consequently, in his *Dialogues*, Plato's fictional Socrates often used the metaphor of 'birthing' an idea whose development had been gradual, but which would endure in contrast to the immediate but transient result of the *eristics* employed by the Sophists.

This work examines Céline's particular maieutic method which, as a sequel to a preliminary transgressive phase, culminated in the 'delivery' of poetic prose written in a style designed to reach directly to his readers' emotions, thus ensuring that the interlocutor became part of the text. The essence of the maieutic method is thus one of self-discovery, by both the author and his readers. Parallels between Socrates' maieutics and the Sophists' *eristics* – the former in pursuit of human excellence and the Truth in human relationships; the latter self-seeking and agonistic – reveals an image of Céline's aversion to facile intellectual ideas and his proclivity for an emotional reaction elicited in the reader through his poetic prose: "Cela me demande d'avoir des Idées! Et Dieu je n'ai pas d'Idées"⁵ was his response to Jean Paulhan's request for an article to be published in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* – a request which was to result in the creation of *Entretiens avec le Professeur Y*.

⁵ *Céline: Romans t IV* : Éditions Gallimard 1993 : p 1354

Writing as a catalyst for the integration of Céline's divided self

This chapter explores the phenomenon of writing *per se* as a catalyst for the containment and resolution of the schism present in the author's personality expressed in the assumption of a pseudonym or literary 'mask'. The issue of the writer 'dying to himself' in a sublimation of his ego as defined by Jacques Derrida in his work *L'Écriture et la différence* or the writer's "complication primaire", is a key element in this chapter. The figures of Hermes and, by extension, Mercury, underpin Céline's entire oeuvre, and we therefore examine this phenomenon in the context of the writer's artistic production, bearing in mind that the duality Hermes-Mercury is relevant as a pivotal alchemic figure in Céline's work. We therefore explore the role of this figure in the context of *psychogogy* – and instrument of maieutic – in the 'delivery' of Céline's poetic prose.

We examine the role of fantasy in Céline's novels in the context of the alchemic agency of the duality Hermes-Mercury and the significance of this divinity in Céline's life and work. The catalytic function of writing is also interrogated in the context of Rank's observation that the creative act of an artist is none other than "...an appointment as such of the artist with himself; a spontaneous expression of the creative instinct, the first manifestation of which is embodied in the production of the personality itself."⁶

Ambiguity and the grotesque in subterranean space as a metaphor for the Double

The subterranean world is eminently ambiguous, representing the seat of both refuge and regeneration and, by implication, creation. It is in this context that we interrogate the role of the literal and figurative subterranean spaces in Céline's works as the site of a descent into oneself in pursuit of the Truth. That descent implies an initiatory process on both a spatial and an emotional level into an enclosed space which facilitates a hypogeal journey pursued by the author in search of himself. The outcome of sequestration within such a space is eloquently demonstrated by Céline in the degree of poetic prose present in his novel *Féerie pour une autre fois II* in an evocation of the confines of a prison cell in the Vestre Faengsel.

⁶ Rank, O : *L'Art et l'Artiste* ; Créativité et développement de la personnalité : Bibliothèque scientifique Payot 1998 : p 55 : « ... le rendez-vous en tant que tel, de l'artiste avec lui-même est une expression spontanée de la tendance créatrice dont la première manifestation est (...) la formation de la personnalité elle-même. »

The grotesque as a subterranean space is in itself an iconoclastic notion implying the seat of creativity, derived from the Italian word *grottesca* meaning ‘cave’.

Significantly, Victor Hugo viewed the grotesque as “La plus riche source que la nature puisse offrir à l’art,”⁷ and it is in this context that we explore that notion in relation to Céline’s works, where images of the grotesque and the abject abound.

My Bard-à-moi: Shakespeare and Céline

Céline’s fascination with the works of the Elizabethan playwright known as the ‘Bard of Avon’ predates by several years the establishment of his literary career. An enthusiastic theatre patron, Céline first recorded his admiration for Shakespeare in correspondence with Charles Dullin, a French playwright, in 1929; one in which Céline vaunts the playwright’s work as the epitome of theatrical creation. That fascination was to continue throughout Céline’s life, with references to, and direct (and indirect) quotes from the English playwright occurring throughout the author’s oeuvre, culminating in both volumes of *Guignol’s Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois*. Above all, Céline admired Shakespeare’s ability to express a level of emotion through literature; one which he wished to emulate.

In the context of the parallels between Shakespeare’s last play *The Tempest* and Céline’s work, we interrogate the intertextual references present in both *Guignol’s Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois*, contrasting the stylistic and thematic elements in the narrative of both works, and exploring the extent to which Shakespeare influenced the degree of fantasy and magic present in Céline’s work.

Invitation...

In his prologue to *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, Céline leaves us in no doubt as to the power of the imagination, particularly in its literary form, to transport both author and reader to “(...) l’autre côté de la vie,” (V p 5) – the *au-delà*. It is a journey on which Céline invites us to accompany him, our passport being earned through intimate, active participation in his works. It is in this sense that Céline’s text is maieutic in the Socratic context, as it assists us in the delivery of the spirit that animates our thoughts.

⁷ Le Petit Robert p 1180

List of Abbreviations

The works by Louis-Ferdinand Céline referred to in the text are identified under the following symbols :

BM	<i>Bagatelles pour un massacre</i>
BD	<i>Les Beaux Draps</i>
CA	<i>D'un château l'autre</i>
EC	<i>L'Ecole des cadavres</i>
EY	<i>Entretiens avec le professeur Y</i>
FI	<i>Féerie pour une autre fois I</i>
FII	<i>Féerie pour une autre fois II (Normance)</i>
GBI	<i>Guignol's Band I</i>
GBII	<i>Guignol's Band II (Le pont de Londres)</i>
MàC	<i>Mort à crédit</i>
MC	<i>Mea Culpa</i>
N	<i>Nord</i>
R	<i>Rigodon</i>
V	<i>Voyage au bout de la nuit</i>

I : Transgressors

Chapter One

War, Death and the Double

War

Almost immediately after impetuously enlisting in the Army, Bardamu, the narrator of *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, finds himself caught up in a headlong and apparently suicidal race towards destruction. Having unwittingly embarked upon « une croisade apocalyptique », war proves to be the occasion of Bardamu's emotional deflowering, as, finding himself « pris dans cette fuite en masse, vers le meurtre en commun, vers le feu, » he « venai(t) de découvrir la guerre tout entière. (Il) était dépuclé. » (V p 14) Bardamu undergoes an epiphany that not only sets the tone for this novel, but for Céline's entire oeuvre: a calculated decision *not* to follow absurd, senseless orders in the name of duty: « Je n'étais point très sage pour ma part, mais devenu assez pratique cependant pour être lâche définitivement. Sans doute donnais-je à cause de cette résolution l'impression d'un grand calme. » (V p 36) Taking belated cognisance of his impetuous enlistment, Bardamu questions how, before leaving the Place Clichy, he could have predicted the horror that awaited him, as well as "... tout ce que contenait la sale âme héroïque et fainéante des hommes?" (V p 14) As though that horror « venait des profondeurs », he finds himself ineluctably « pris dans cette fuite en masse vers le meurtre en commun, vers le feu. » (V p 14) Despite his desire for flight, Bardamu resigns himself to his fate: « J'allais m'en aller. Mais trop tard! Ils avaient refermé la porte en douce derrière nous les civils. On était faits, comme des rats. » (V p 10) And any lingering doubt as to Bardamu's denouncement of war as a social malaise or Man's venality is dispelled in his observation that:

«La grande défaite, en tout, c'est d'oublier, et surtout ce qui vous a fait crever, et de crever sans comprendre jamais jusqu'à quel point les hommes sont vaches. Quand on sera au bord du trou faudra pas faire les malins nous autres, mais faudra pas oublier, non plus, faudra raconter tout sans changer un mot, de ce qu'on a vu de plus vicieux chez les hommes et puis poser sa chique et puis descendre. Ça suffit comme boulot pour une vie tout entière. » (V p 25)

We speculate that Bardamu's obsession with flight stems from the effects of Céline's traumatic experience in combat, described in a letter to his childhood friend Simone Saintu on 31 July 1916 which depicts the survivors of war trauma as phantoms

wandering aimlessly in search of peace in oblivion: « Presque tous ceux avec lesquels je suis parti en campagne sont tués, les rares qui subsistent sont irrémédiablement infirmes, enfin quelques autres comme moi, errent un peu partout, à la recherche d'un repos et d'un oubli, que l'on ne trouve plus (...) »⁸

Krogold

Although the reality of war is present throughout Céline's oeuvre, an example of mythological war in the form of the The Legend of King Krogold⁹ offsets the horror of contemporary warfare to a certain degree through its element of fantasy. Indeed, the Legend is « proche du conte de fées, (...) défense contre les misères du monde. »

¹⁰ Moreover, the appearance of the Legend in various works throughout Céline's oeuvre signals « l'opposition foncière entre les deux pôles de l'existence, à la fois symbole et thèse du monde de l'imagination, de la poésie, du rêve.¹¹ » At the height of the bombardment of Paris in *Féerie II*, the narrator lists the Legend among other unfinished, unpublished works: "Légendes et soucis.... *Le Roi Krogold*.... *Casse-Pipe*..... *Guignol's*.... en rade! plus de papier !" (FII p 251). We speculate that the mention of these novels at that point in the narrative was an attempt to attenuate the horror of war, much in the same way as the figure of the Double was employed for this purpose in this and other novels. Curiously, in *D'un Château l'autre*, we encounter a King Krogold « d'autant plus terrible qu'il est devenu femme: Aïcha qui règne avec ses dogues et règle l'ouverture des portes de l'Enfer. »¹² However, similar to the opposition found in the original legend between the terror inspired by Krogold and the beauty and harmony found in Gwendor, in the *Château*, the horror of Aïcha and her 'room 36' is offset by "des jeunes filles gracieuses qui passent un instant dans une vie; de vieilles dames fragiles qui habitent le monde de la poésie", as well as Madame Bonnard in whom one "ressent une 'musique de fond.'"¹³ Above all, the sinister environment is mitigated by « les danseuses finalement qui s'acheminent vers

⁸ *Cahiers Céline 4 : Lettres et premiers écrits d'Afrique 1916-1917* : Éditions Gallimard 1978 : p 61

⁹ The version of the Legend lost when Céline fled Paris was called *La Volonté du roi Krogold*.

"Disparue aussi, (...) *La Volonté du roi Krogold*, une espèce de féerie hors du temps, à laquelle je fais allusion dans plusieurs de mes livres, et où j'avais mis, à grand effort, une autre face de mon imagination" (Poulet, R: *Entretiens familiers avec L-F Céline* : Librairie Plon 1958

¹⁰ Ostrovsky, E : *Céline et le thème du Roi Krogold* in *Cahiers de l'Herne* No 5 1985 p 201

¹¹ Ibid p 201

¹² Ibid p 206

¹³ Ostrovsky, E : *Céline et le thème du Roi Krogold* in *Cahiers de l'Herne* No 5 1985 p 206

toute la poésie, l'harmonie possible à l'homme, et à leur tête celle qui en est
l'incarnation : Lili, Arlette, Lucette. »¹⁴

The recounting of the Legend of King Krogold at the start of *Mort à credit* makes this chapter one of the most important in that work, as it is an allegory for the ongoing conflict between reality and fiction encountered in life. However, when the narrator Ferdinand attempts to recount the legend to his cousin and fellow medical colleague Gustin Sabayot, he encounters a “démarche passive et désintéressée (qui) fait de la légende un récit prononcé *dans le vide* (...)”¹⁵. (our emphasis) Given that Gustin is to Ferdinand, by reason of a shared medical profession “en quelque sorte le double (...) comme Robinson l'était pour Bardamu dans le *Voyage*”¹⁶, the effect of the retelling of the Legend falling on deaf ears is capital, as it destabilizes the narrator of *Mort à credit* to the same extent as did Robinson's lack of response to his greeting in Africa. (V p 170)¹⁷ In each case, it appears as though the narrator's attempt to establish an identity through the medium of his Double fail, leaving him in a void.

The dialogue between Gwendor and Death in the Legend is perhaps one of the most revealing passages relating to Céline's aesthetic, setting the tone in *Mort à credit* for the entire work: “La Mort: ‘Il n'est point de douceur en ce monde, Gwendor! Rien que de légende! Tous les royaumes finissent dans un rêve!’” (MàC pp 512-513) The Legend also reveals Céline's fundamentally pessimistic view of life; one in which all that is opposed to the lyricism of Gwendor – « la cruauté, la victoire, l'autorité établie, la vie impitoyable », ¹⁸ eventually triumphs, and « (...) l'amère vérité s'impose: le monstre n'est pas vaincu par le héros; la justice ne triomphe pas ». ¹⁹ The wisdom encapsulated in the Legend is thus a leitmotif that traverses Céline's entire oeuvre, depicting an ongoing battle between the molar societal forces of Capitalism and the

¹⁴ Ostrovsky, E : *Céline et le thème du Roi Krogold* in Cahiers de l'Herne No 5 1985 :p 206

¹⁵ Ibid p 202

¹⁶ Ibid p 203

¹⁷ This occurrence is mirrored in *Guignol's Band II* when Ferdinand tries to identify Mille-Pattes : “Alors c'est toi?” que j'y fais (...) ah! Ce vide ...comme aspiré moi.” (GBII p 465)

¹⁸ Ostrovsky, E : *Céline et le thème du Roi Krogold* in Cahiers de l'Herne No 5 1985 : p 204

¹⁹ Ibid : p 204

molecular ones of creativity, humanity, instinct and above all, music and dance.²⁰

Theatre of war

The Legend of King Krogold, traces of which appear throughout Céline's oeuvre, narrates the absurdity of war in a hyper-theatrical manner. This 'facialising'²¹ of war emphasizes its heartlessness and also objectifies war in an apparent bid by the author Céline to come to terms with its dehumanizing element. The theatricality of the presentation sets the tone for the rest of Céline's oeuvre, gradually developing into a "mode de vision et de fiction de toute l'écriture."²² Llambias observes that quite early on in his literary career, Céline might have become aware that "cette écriture théâtrale était nécessaire à sa vision de l'histoire."²³ We in turn speculate that this form of distancing through facialising or theatricality – the donning of a protective mask – enabled Céline, through the agency of figures of the Double present in his work to move *within* the context of History (a molar institution) while remaining creatively productive. We believe that Céline attains this goal by countering the molar paranoid phenomenon of History by 'innoculating' himself with a similar phenomenon, that of theatricality, in much the same way that a vaccination counters the spread of a disease through the administration of a small quantity of the disease itself. The embodiment of facialising in Céline's work is the figure of La Vigue, based on the real-life actor Robert le Vigan, one of Céline's acquaintances in Montmartre. Already introduced to the reader as Norbert and silent movie actor in *Féerie II*, he is present in the Trilogy as the *gaucho* in *D'un Château l'autre* and, significantly in the context of Deleuze's

²⁰ The terms *molar* and *molecular* are used in this context are defined as such in Deleuze and Guattari's work *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie: Mille Plateaux*. In deleuzo-guattarian terms, the word 'molar' represents all that is repressive in society, encompassing Capitalism, education, social norms and literary convention. In opposition to this term, the word 'molecular' denotes all that is creative, free from convention and propitious for the achievement of Céline's oeuvre

²¹ The term 'facialising' is derived from Deleuze and Guattari's work *Mille Plateaux*, in which the term represents the social (repressive) norm: "...it is White Man himself, with his broad white cheeks and the black hole of his eyes. The face is Christ" [A thousand Plateaus : Deleuze G and Guattari F : translation B Massumi : Continuum, London : 2004] p 196. This definition has obvious implications for racism and a concomitant creation of the Other: "If the face is in fact Christ (...) your average, ordinary White man, then the first deviances, the first divergence-types are racial: yellow man, black man, men in the second or third category.(...) They must be Christianized, in other words, facialized.(...) Racism operates by the determination of degrees of deviance in relation to the White-man face, (...)" p 197 Ibid. Given this definition of 'facializing', it is significant that La Vigue, on parting from Céline and Lili in *Rigodon* assumes a Christ-like gesture: "Il reprend sa pose Christ (...) Il étend le bras droit, vers nous, au-dessus de nous très doucement... 'La Vigue, je vois tu nous bénis'" (p 801 *Rigodon*)

²² Llambias, R : *Guerre, histoire et langage dans le récit célinien* : Revue des Sciences Humaines : Octobre-Décembre 1986 : p 89

²³ Ibid p 89

definition of 'facialising', as Christ in both *Nord* and *Rigodon*.²⁴ Throughout the Trilogy he also appears as La Vigue, traveling companion of the protagonist Céline-Destouches and his wife, Lili.

Nomad

Céline's novels play themselves out against the backdrop of two World Wars, and as we will see²⁵, the creation of the Double is a defence mechanism for both the author and the narrator Céline against the horror he experienced during both those wars. However, a positive side of war *does* exist, and it is this aspect of war which we believe plays a dual transgressive and regenerative role in the evolution of Céline's stylistic quest to attain a state of pure emotion; a smooth space which is propitious for creativity. It is in *Nord* that we encounter a form of war, a 'war machine' "which has escaped the control of the State to revert to its natural *nomadic* multiplicitous state, thereby becoming unstoppable."²⁶ Céline's words at the start of a chapter in *Nord* evoke a nomadic image which is precisely the context in which Deleuze and Guattari draw a distinction between the positive and negative aspects of war: « (...) chaque fois que l'on confond l'irruption de la puissance de guerre avec la lignée de domination de l'Etat, *tout se brouille*, et l'on ne peut plus comprendre la machine de guerre *que* sous les espèces du négatif, puisqu'on ne laisse rien subsister de l'extérieur à l'État lui-même (...) »²⁷ However, war reveals its positive face when it comes up against « (...) États et aux villes, comme aux forces (de striage) qui s'opposent à l'objet positif ; dès lors la machine de guerre a pour ennemi l'État, la ville, le phénomène étatique et urbain, et prend pour objectif de les anéantir. C'est là qu'elle devient guerre : anéantir les forces de l'État, détruire la forme-État. »²⁸ We posit that this description of the positive and negative aspects of war parallels that of Céline's quest for creative resolution, as war permeates every aspect of *his* nomadic journey in search of a '*métro-émotif*', a vehicle to carry him seamlessly towards his destination; the expression of pure emotion through his works.

²⁴ « Il prend facilement l'air tout au bout de tous les malheurs.... Christ aux Oliviers.....(...)» (N p 342) ; « Il reprend sa pose Christ... devant nous, là...(...) » (R p 801)

²⁵ In the section of this chapter devoted to the figure of the Double

²⁶ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and Schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : Peter Lang publishing: 2001: p 172

²⁷ Deleuze and Guattari : *Mille Plateaux* : pp 438-439 in Hainge G, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*:p 173

²⁸ Ibid: p 173

Passage

It is in the *Voyage* that we witness the greatest degree of transgressive, iconoclastic behaviour of both the narrator, Bardamu and his Double, Robinson with regard to the phenomenon of war. One by one, each element of heroism and patriotism is debunked, mainly through the mechanism of farce, in a novel that “ne retient que la totale abjection de la guerre, et désacralise toutes les notions entourés du plus haut respect. Le patriotisme et l’héroïsme dont a fait réellement preuve le brigadier Des Touches sont complètement effacés par le romancier Céline (...)»²⁹ In an echo of the *Legend of King Krogold*, « le but n’est pas de montrer que le courage est une vertu, une qui trouve sa récompense, mais au contraire d’ériger *la peur et la folie* en seules attitudes responsables dans un monde collectivement insensé. »³⁰(our emphasis) Early on in the *Voyage*, the narrator Bardamu recognises the value of the imagination when faced with his own imminent, abject end in the mud of Flanders : « Quand on a pas d’imagination, mourir c’est peu de chose, quand on en a, mourir c’est trop. » (V p 19), and he decides to take cover under the guise of cowardice, a figurative form of evasion; to “(...) être lâche définitivement.”(V p 36) At this point, death, for the narrator Bardamu has not yet become an intrinsic part of life, and his most urgent need is to preserve himself from death instead of accepting it: “Je préférerais la mienne de mort, tardive, Dans vingt ans... Trente ans...peut-être davantage, à celle qu’on me voulait de suite, à bouffer de la boue des Flandres, à pleine bouche, plus que la bouche même, fendue jusqu’aux oreilles, par un éclat. » (V p 19) Significantly, the solution to this problem « prend la forme d’un *dédoublément* de sa personnalité (...) »³¹, a notion which supports our thesis regarding the origin of Céline’s creation of the figure of the Double as a shield against trauma. This is evidenced in the fact that the chapters on war in the *Voyage*, relayed by the 20 year old Cuirassier Destouches, constitute a violent diatribe “du meurtre institutionnalisé au moyen de descriptions exhaustives de ses aspects les plus terribles”,³² and a concomitant disillusionment regarding the “vacherie” of his fellow combatants, in which he concludes that it is man alone who inspires fear: “C’est que je ne connaissais pas encore les hommes. Je ne croirai plus jamais à ce qu’ils disent, à ce qu’ils pensent.

²⁹ Llambias, R : *Guerre, histoire et langage dans le récit célinien* : *Revue des Sciences Humaines* tome LXXV No 204 octobre-décembre 1986 : p 91

³⁰ Ibid p 91

³¹ Day, Philip Stephen : *Le Miroir allégorique de Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Editions Klincksieck 1974 : p 70

³² Ibid p 70

C'est des hommes et d'eux seulement qu'il faut avoir peur, *toujours*. » (V p 15) (our emphasis) At this point, the stage is set for the creation of the first in a series of Doubles present in Céline's works ; the archetypal *alter-ego* or shadow self – Robinson, the quintessential transgressor who dares to execute what Bardamu only dreams of doing.

According to Day, « La juxtaposition de la mort des hommes et du spectacle d'abattoir permet à l'auteur d'imposer à son lecteur une violente impression visuelle qui lui sera essentielle pour comprendre et partager les réactions ultérieures de Bardamu. »³³ This is an important observation in terms of Céline's aesthetic which aims to "creat(e) an expression capable of passing directly to the reader's emotive core"³⁴, in order to create a situation where there is a mutual assimilation between reader and text; a "becoming-reader/text".³⁵ Far from impeding Céline's creative process (and progress), war and writing are complementary; they are two sides of the same coin. Indeed, « Guerre et écriture possèdent les memes effets, les mêmes vertus. »³⁶ Both war and writing « opèrent un *dédoublement de l'homme* qui le transforme en mort-vivant.³⁷ Toutes deux élèvent la mort *hic et nunc* au statut de *créateur* : création d'une altérité³⁸ irréductible à soi et au monde. »³⁹ (our emphasis) It is in this '*altérité*' then, the fruit of a synthesis of war and writing (and, by implication, death) that the figure of the Double has its origin. The transgressive nature of that figure is thus a mirror-image of War and Death. Turning on their creator, both the « survivant des combats et l'écrivain accèdent aux portes d'un monde étrange, constamment menacé par la destruction au moyen *du double* dont Céline dit avoir été accompagné toute sa vie. »⁴⁰ (our emphasis) The presence of that Double is acknowledged by the author in *Nord* on being presented with a passport photograph

³³ Day, Philip Stephen : *Le Miroir allégorique de Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Editions Klincksieck 1974 : p 72

³⁴ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and Schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline* :Peter Lang publishing 2001: p 123

³⁵ Ibid p 150

³⁶ Llambias, R: *Guerre, histoire et langage dans le récit célinien* : *Revue des Sciences Humaines* : Oct-Déc 1986 : p 100

³⁷ Ibid p 100. We note that the figure of Mille-Pattes in *Guignol's Band* is the embodiment of this phenomenon.

³⁸ We note the transgressive nature implicit in the definition of this word : « L'altérité est le concept le plus antipathique au 'bon sens' » (Barthes) : *Le Petit Robert* p 72

³⁹ Llambias, R : *Guerre, histoire et langage dans le récit célinien* *Revue des Sciences Humaines* : octobre-décembre 1986 : p 100

⁴⁰ Ibid p 100

which he scarcely recognises : « j'étais pas encore habitué à être identique et moi-même et cependant méconnaissable... plus tard je m'y suis fait, très bien fait, promener un double, un espèce de mort, un mort avec cannes et soucis... un méchant qui vous abattrait, ferait que vous renvoyer au cimetière d'où vous n'auriez pas dû sortir... moi depuis 14.... Pas que de 44 ! » (N p 349)

Pacifist

Given the tone and content of Céline's pamphlets, the reading public could be forgiven for not realising that the author, far from promulgating war, was essentially a pacifist, an ideology he had espoused since his youth. This view is expressed unequivocally in letters written from Africa to his childhood friend Simone Saintu: « Voici aujourd'hui que je quitterai Rambouillet pour la grande aventure (...) la guerre commence à me faire l'effet d'une ignoble tragédie, sur lequel le rideau s'abaisserait et se relèverait sans cesse (...). »⁴¹ It is clear from this letter that the horror Céline has witnessed, as well as the injuries he suffered have conspired to turn him against the inhuman side of war for ever. However, the experience has also had a positive effect, having «fait prendre conscience à Céline de l'importance de la pulsion de mort chez l'homme, et l'écriture n'est que le moyen privilégié de découvrir cette pulsion sous tous ses masques.(...) l'horreur de la guerre et la blessure subie secrètent un pacifisme de plus en plus affirmé, dont on perçoit assez vite la pente prophétisante. »⁴² It was precisely this pacifism that prompted Céline to write the pamphlets in an attempt to avert a second World War equal in horror to that of its predecessor of which he had first-hand experience. And it is this viewpoint he shares with the reader in *Féerie I*: «J'ai voulu sauver la glotte (...) leur faire esquiver l'Abattoir, mes livres pour ça!» (FI p 13)

Transgression

War is a primary transgressive element in Céline's works, and will be considered thus as an agent for the destruction of molar entities faced by the narrators in his works, and by extension, as a liberating force acting on the author-narrator himself to achieve aesthetic fulfillment. Significantly, it is the traumatic experience of war itself that

⁴¹ *Cahiers Céline 4* : p 60 : Lettre du 31 juillet 1916

⁴² Llambias, R : *Guerre, histoire et langage dans le récit célinien : Revue des Sciences Humaines* Tome LXXV No 204 octobre – Décembre 1986 p 93

prompts Céline to create figures of the Double who, in turn inhabit the transgressive environment of war.

In the early novels, we are witness to the fact that the transgressive agency of the Double on the narrator is successful to a degree, despite the fact that at the close of *Mort à crédit* Ferdinand still yearns to return to war: “Je veux partir mon oncle! ...Je veux aller m’engager demain...”⁴³ Hainge believes that the failure of both Bardamu in the *Voyage* and Ferdinand in *Mort à crédit* to achieve liberty is reflected in Céline’s literary style, as “the delirium on which Céline’s aesthetic is to be constructed is never fully integrated into the writing of his first two novels, remaining primarily on the level of content and not that of style.”⁴⁴ We therefore trace the evolution of both the transgressive agency of the Doubles present in Céline’s subsequent work as well as a parallel development in his poetic literary style which develops as a result of that figure’s catalytic action.

While the narrative in both *Voyage* and *Mort* follows a linear trajectory, from *Guignol’s Band* onwards there is a fundamental change ; the narrative structure becomes inchoate, privileging style over thematics :

“Entre ces aventures et le lecteur vient s’interposer un narrateur, dont le présent et la mémoire ne peuvent qu’interférer avec l’ordre des événements, le bouleverser, lui imposer leur ordre propre, c’est-à-dire leur *désordre*. On atteint ainsi peu à peu les derniers romans, ceux de la trilogie allemande, dans lesquels le lecteur ne trouve plus l’histoire qu’il attend qu’à travers la présence d’un narrateur constamment au premier plan (pour commencer en début de roman) et seulement au gré des caprices de sa mémoire.»⁴⁵

Apocalypse

The role of war as an agent for the actualisation of Céline’s aesthetic expression is the matrix on which the author’s entire œuvre is based, even though both war and the historical context in which it occurs hardly appear propitious for artistic creation. Paradoxically, « ces récits pleins de la guerre aient toujours été affirmés comme une

⁴³ Céline : *Mort à crédit* : Romans t I : Éditions Gallimard 1981 : p 1100

⁴⁴ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and Schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline ; D’un ... l’autre* : Peter Lang publishing 2001 : pp 18-19

⁴⁵ Godard, H : *Les Références au travail narratif dans le roman célinien* : Actes du Colloque International d’Oxford, septembre 1975 : *Australian Journal of French studies* : p 7 in Hainge, G : p 19

incessante mise en garde contre (la guerre). »⁴⁶ Despite the constant presence of war, Céline's corpus therefore constitutes a pro-humanity, anti-war message.

The transgressive element inherent in War, namely the quest for dominance of one faction over another – can therefore be said to act, not simply as a trigger for the creation of a Double in the narrator, as we have remarked earlier as a function of his inability to cope with the horror of war, but also the creation of ‘l’aventure plus fascinante d’une écriture en constante invention, oscillant entre le récit impossible de la bataille et la mise en scène de l’opérette.(...) entre l’Histoire, parfaitement indéchiffrable dès lors qu’elle se pose en ennemie, et la “Féerie”, sorte de chronique de l’outre-là. »⁴⁷ In an antidote to « l’effrayable culpabilité, l’immense lourdeur du monde et de l’haine », Céline rewrites History in a style that is « béant de trous de plus en plus profonds, et de points de plus en plus aériens »⁴⁸, an image which is evoked by the Orléans bridge which literally disintegrates under bombardment in the preface to *Guignol’s Band I*. The image of the exploded bridge evokes an apocalyptic scene of chaos, a state in which creativity flourishes, as it is the polar opposite of ordered, predictable life. Bonnefis endorses this notion in his observation that the “Archipont nous donne tout. D’un seul coup toutes les arches, tous les archi, toutes les *arkhe*; l’arche proprement dite, qui est la partie cintrée d’un viaduc ; l’arche de Noé, l’arche sépulcrale ; les deux arcs triomphaux de la vie et de la mort ... Toutes les arches et tous les archaïsmes. Le chaos. »⁴⁹ What is more, there is « Pas de pont qui tienne, sans le chaos. Ponts et chaos tiennent ensemble (...) Un pont est, par essence, une structure boîteuse », a factor which augments its potential for creativity. Indeed, a bridge is *defined* by its very instability, as « s’il n’était agité, sécoué de soubresauts, c’est bien simple: aux yeux de Céline, ce ne serait pas un pont (...) »⁵⁰ If, when intact, a bridge already possesses an ephemeral, unstable quality, and thus, by extension, the potential for aesthetic creation, how much greater that potential if the bridge were fragmented, as is the case of the Orleans bridge in Céline’s novel? War or no war, a bridge in the Célinian sense “n’est jamais trop d’aplomb”, it is a fragile structure

⁴⁶ Llambias, R : *Guerre, histoire et langage dans le récit célinien :Revue des Sciences Humaines* tome LXXV No 204 octobre-décembre 1986 p 90

⁴⁷ Ibid p 90

⁴⁸ Ibid : p 90

⁴⁹ Bonnefis, P : *Le Rappel des Oiseaux* : Presses Universitaires de Lille 1992 p 17

⁵⁰ Ibid p 18

between man and the void, bearing within its definition the implied warning that anyone “qu’à tant flirter avec l’abîme () ne l’embrasse à folle étreinte.”⁵¹

As the embodiment of a creative agent, then, the symbolism of the bridge is capital in Céline’s works, not only in *Guignol’s Band* where it frames both segments of the work, but also in other works such as the *Voyage*, at the close of which Bardamu observes a tug passing under several bridges as well as a lock: “son appel a passé le pont, encore une arche, une autre, l’écluse, un autre point, loin, plus loin (...)” (V pp 504-505), and in the author’s last work *Rigodon*, where the bridge over the Kiel canal represents his final destination : “le pont du *Kanal!* Oh je m’étais douté que nous en approchions... et nous y sommes! » (R p 878), thus circumscribing Céline’s entire oeuvre, starting with the *Voyage* and ending with *Rigodon* . There is no doubt then, that the bridge is the “primordial symbol in *Guignol’s Band*, the gravitational centre from which all begins and to which all returns, that which spans every aspect of the work; for the bridge in *Guignol’s Band* is used not only as a narratival frame, but also to create a link between the thematic and stylistic levels of the text.”⁵² While this notion undoubtedly applies to *Guignol’s Band*, we would extend it to include Céline’s entire oeuvre as mentioned above, for which the bridge acts as a metaphor for “that which annuls death not by attempting to ignore and dissimulate it, but by confronting it and converting it into a source of amusement, divertissement, comedy.”⁵³

It is precisely the outcome of the creative quality embodied in the structure of the bridge that the protagonists in *Guignol’s Band I* experience; an indiscriminate disintegration of animate and inanimate beings and objects reduced to the sum of their parts and rendered in one of the most poetic passages present in Céline’s work. An example of the positive effect of the war-machine occurs in the scene of the bombed bridge, almost atomized, fragmented by the violence of the blast, from the chaos of which a scene of pure poetry emerges in the form of a grotesque image of a dismembered hand:

⁵¹ Bonnefis, P : *Le Rappel des Oiseaux* : Presses Universitaires de Lille 1992 p 18

⁵² Hainge, G : *Capitalism and Schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline.*: Peter Lang Publishing 2001: p 69

⁵³ Ibid p 69

“Je voyais plus haut maintenant que les nuages ... là alors c’était du special... là en plein ciel!
... En plein azur! ... la vision féérique... une main coupée je voyais...une main bien pâle sur
des flacons (...) et qui saignait au goutte à goutte... une main pâle blanche et tout autour des
nuées d’oiseaux... tout rouges... voletant jaillis de ces plais même... les doigts tout scintillant
d’étoiles (...) tout vous emporte... tout vogue aux rêves... tout abandonne... aux fêtes du
Palais des Nuits... » (GBI p 94)

Duality of war

Apart from the figures of the Double that appear in Céline’s works, we believe that War represents an over-arching Double in and of itself, expressing the dark side of the author’s creative impulse from which he flees in the *Voyage*. War, and its outcome, Death, is the leitmotif of a manifestation of horror and abjection that at first pursues the author Céline as well as his protagonists, before they come to assimilate it and to recognize its regenerative power.

This study demonstrates how, throughout the evolution of Céline’s novels, played out against a backdrop of both World Wars, the concept of death evolves from something that is to be feared – and thus delayed or postponed – hence the title of *Mort à credit*, to an element that is to be welcomed and embraced. We will observe how the author evolves in tandem with his literary creation, to a point where death no longer represents fear and immobility, but the promise of a new life and a concomitant stimulus for creation. This notion is embodied in the pregnancy of Virginie in *Guignol’s Band II*, as well as in the images of pregnant women in *D’un chateau l’autre*, one of whom, “une Allemande de Memel” (CA p 289), is in the process of giving birth at the conclusion of the novel.

War is perhaps the dark side of every human being; the combative, destructive aspect that we hide even from ourselves as something that is socially unacceptable. War is the socially sanctioned transgressive facet of humanity; transgression being its most fundamental tenet in a bid for survival. Death (of the enemy) is its desired outcome, and when that war is internalised in an individual due to the clash of two opposing facets of his personality, the outcome is no different. It is in one’s attitude to the death of one’s subjectivity or individuality that one truly becomes a creative human being – one devoid of ego. Deleuze defines this state as “becoming-imperceptible”. The Double is a metaphor for the battle within each one of us, and accentuated in a

creative personality – for the reconciliation of the dual warring factions in one’s nature; a striated nature striving for what Deleuze termed a ‘smooth space’ in which to realize its full creative potential.

We posit that the Doubles created by Céline in his works are the agents for the resolution of the internal conflict the author experiences between the dual facets of his nature. In his novels, we witness a bid not to vanquish his shadow self, but to become *reconciled* to it, just as he comes to accept the presence of War and ceases to fight against it, and in the process recognises its positive creative aspect. Contrary to previous definitions of War and Death as simply the principal thematics in Céline’s works, they are, in addition, a stylistic device that operates in his works to release the creativity of the prose. The figures of the Doubles therefore represent thematics in the service of stylistics; transgressive, iconoclastic agents that bring about the dissolution of hierarchical, institutionalized norms and constructs, thus releasing Céline’s creative impulse.

Traditionally, transgression is associated with the notion of an accession to a position of power – usually associated with the supplanting of one figure of power by another.⁵⁴ In the context of Céline’s use of the Double as a transgressive agent, we submit that the outcome of this strategy is the accession of the author’s creative power through the sublimation of the polar, paranoiac facets of his being, and the subsequent emergence of his creative schizophrenic side. The Double therefore serves as an agent in the battle for dominance between one’s negative, strictured self and the free, creative aspect of one’s being. The end result is the space created between the two

⁵⁴ We deal with this aspect of transgression in a subsequent chapter, in the context of Céline’s frequent quotes from Shakespeare.

opposing poles (paranoia – schizophrenia)⁵⁵; that space which is so often represented in Céline’s works by the image of a bridge. It is also present in the holes in the lace that define and demarcate the fabric *as* lace; and that ‘lace’ is Céline’s text, the outcome of the battle between his Self and the Other, his shadow self or *alter ego*; that state of existence that Hainge perceptively describes as ‘To be *and* not to be’, thus conflating Hamlet’s dialectic, and with it the hesitation implied in the original quote: ‘To be or not to be, that is the question’. In *Féerie I*, this conflation is embodied in the narrator Ferdinand’s question ‘Binotoubi?’ (FI p 114) Hainge identifies the figure of Mille-Pattes in *Guignol’s Band* as a successful example of Inter-Polarity⁵⁶ and thus a trope for Céline’s ‘métro émotif’: “Like the métro émotif that he comes to embody, then, Mille Pattes is but a vehicle to convey the individual into a space in which desire can be liberated.”⁵⁷ In this context, he represents a figure of a Double capable of transporting both author and narrator towards their aesthetic goal through the agency of *délire* as defined by Deleuze and Guattari as an “oscillation entre les deux pôles” of schizophrenia and paranoia.

State of siege

An important facet of war in Céline’s novels is that of a state of siege, from which an escape route is offered through the transgressive force inherent in a cavalry charge which is evoked on several occasions by the image of the Colonel des Entrayes and his horse. Céline’s first memory of a literal state of siege no doubt dated from the events at No 59, rue de Chabrol where the anti-Semite and anti-Mason Jules Guérin immured himself in order to avoid arrest for activities relating to the French Antisemitic League. The siege lasted from 13 August to 20 September 1899, when

⁵⁵ Deleuze, G and Guattari F : *L’Anti-OEdipe* : p 451: in Hainge, G: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : pp 10-11: “The vision of existence that Deleuze and Guattari propose, then is one in which there exists a fundamental antinomy, an apparently irreconcilable division of life into a schizophrenic, desiring, molecular level, in which all is fragmentary, instantaneous and intensive, and a paranoid, fascistic, extensive, molar level (...) for, as Deleuze and Guattari state, “L’investissement paranoïaque et l’investissement schizoïde sont comme deux pôles opposés de l’investissement libidinal inconscient, dont l’un subordonne la production désirante à la formation de souveraineté et à l’ensemble grégaire qui en découle, et l’autre effectue la subordination inverse, renverse la puissance et soumet l’ensemble grégaire aux *multiplicités moléculaires des productions de désir*. Et, s’il est vrai que le délire est coextensif au champ social, on voit dans tout délire les deux pôles coexister, et des fragments d’investissement *schizoïde révolutionnaire coïncider avec des blocs d’investissement paranoïaque réactionnaire*. L’oscillation entre les deux pôles est même *constitutive du délire*. (...) »(our emphasis)

⁵⁶ The space between the paranoiac and schizophrenic poles as defined by Deleuze

⁵⁷ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and Schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : Peter Lang publishing 2001 : p 61

Guérin eventually surrendered, to be condemned to “dix ans de reclusion, transformés l’année suivante en peine de bannissement”⁵⁸. The author witnessed this event in the company of his father when he was five years old. Céline’s memory of Fort Chabrol was entrenched ten years later when, as a young man of fifteen, he witnessed Guérin’s funeral cortège floating down the Seine, the anarchist having perished during the 1910 flooding of the Seine at Ablon.

There is no doubt that these events impressed themselves indelibly on Céline’s memory, according to the description he evokes in *Nord* : “Parlant du Fort Chabrol, souvenir de môme, j’ai vu ce siège.... Et la reddition.... à propos encore, j’ai lu depuis, combien ce Guérin était suspect... bourrique ou pas, je l’ai vu embarquer à Ablon, par les pontonniers du 1^{er} Génie, mort de sa belle mort, quai de l’Ecluse... pendant la grande inondation, 1910 ... les souvenirs de môme sont toujours si c’était d’hier... » (N p 359) Céline also evokes this memory in Version B of *Féerie pour une autre fois*, comparing it to the RAF bombardment of Paris, thus corroborating our thesis that the author’s experience of war is closely linked to that of a state of siege. “Ils étaient gentils dans un sens. J’en avais vu des choses pareilles ... le fort Chabrol dans mon enfance (...) C’était encore avec mon père après son bureau. Ils tiraillaient par les fenêtres, ils soutenaient un siège..... des anarchistes....(...) C’était un évènement terrible. Je crois que c’est les *premiers coups de feu* que j’ai entendus. »⁵⁹(our emphasis) Significantly, the siege of Fort Chabrol is also recalled in Version B’ of *Féerie* when Ferdinand is pursued by a menacing crowd together with the dog Píram: “... tout l’attroupement au trottoir ... là au moins cinquante personnes.... (...) je barricadera... Fort Chabrol! Ah! Fort Chabrol! Et la bande alors... Bonnot...et Buzenval et *Cartouches*.”⁶⁰ Godard notes that Céline is never at a loss for examples of buildings and houses under siege, having quoted from no less than four examples in the above paragraph. Apart from the siege of fort Chabrol already mentioned, they include « ... la villa de Choisy-le-Roi dans laquelle Bonnot s’était retranché en 1912 (ces deux épisodes reparaitront ensemble dans *Nord* (p359) ; le château de Buzenval, dans la commune de Rueil-Malmaison, qui fut en 1871 l’enjeu d’un des derniers combats du siège de Paris, enfin le tableau qui date de 1873

⁵⁸ *Céline* : Romans t II Éditions Gallimard 1974 : p 1164

⁵⁹ *Version B de Féerie pour une autre fois* : Romans t IV Editions Gallimard 1993 p 856

⁶⁰ *Ibid* : *Version B’ de Féerie pour une autre fois* : p 1007

et représente la défense héroïque d'un bâtiment lors de la bataille de Bazeilles en 1870. »⁶¹ Significantly, each of these instances of a state of siege involves an interaction with the police force, a 'molar' institution of repression to which Céline was subjected in prison⁶² – the restrictive environment in which *Féerie II* was written – thus reflecting the author's rebellion against the public disapprobation and censure that had resulted in his imprisonment.

We posit that the only manner in which to liberate oneself from a state of siege, such as that in which Céline found himself both in practical terms, incarcerated within his prison walls, as well as figuratively through the public censure he had invoked through the publication of his pamphlets, was through a literary act of transgression in the form of a simulated act of war, notably in the form of a cavalry charge. As we have already witnessed in *Guignol's Band I* and *II*, whenever the narrator was subjected to emotional pressure, this act of aggression is personified in the cavalry charge of Colonel des Entrayes, who Céline had first encountered during his traumatic experience at the Front in 1914. The most striking examples of this evocation occur in *Guignol's Band II*, on each occasion close on the heels of a traumatic event in the narrator's life. On the occasion of the death of Van Claben and Mille-Pattes, Ferdinand, having assumed the identity of des Entrayes' horse, exclaims “.. me voilà la charge et la force!” (GBII p 429), while the second instance occurs when the narrator, haunted by guilt and the spectre of the policeman Matthew in pursuit, exclaims “La force que j'incarne! Et le colonel sur mon dos! (...) la charge! Châargez! Châargez!”. (GBII p 593) We note the importance in these citations of the use of the words 'force' and 'charge', which underscore the violence of the act of transgression which will result in a lifting of the state of emotional siege in which the narrator found himself. As Godard notes, « La sortie que peut tenter un assiégé n'est pas sans ressemblance avec une *charge de cavalerie*, elle aussi lancée contre la ligne ennemie pour la percer. »⁶³ (our emphasis)

⁶¹ Ibid : *Notes et variantes* p 1491

⁶² « Dans un caveau je pousse mon fantôme de roman » the author writes in a letter to Lucette Destouches dated 11 September 1946.

⁶³ *Féerie pour une autre fois* : *Notice* : Romans t IV Editions Gallimard 1993 : p 1164

Jules-Entrayes

In Version B' of *Féerie pour une autre fois*, we encounter a reversal, a mirror-image of the situation regarding the colonel des Entrayes and his horse, in which previously (in *Guignol's Band*) « Ferdinand se voyait alors en situation non seulement de cavalier recevant l'ordre, mais de cheval. »⁶⁴ However, in Version B' of *Féerie*, the positions are reversed, with Ferdinand as narrator in the person of des Entrayes launching the battle cry, mounted on Jules as his 'horse': "La cavalerie est représentée par Jules, soudain réapparu dans l'atelier, et que son chariot à quatre roues transformé pour la circonstance en un centaure grotesque. »⁶⁵ Devoid of the arrogance he displayed on the Moulin de la Galette while hurling invectives at, and directing the Allied bombers towards Montmartre, Jules is in this instance reduced to an abject figure. In this version of *Féerie* he is not only reduced physically through his infirmity in his representation as a horse, but is "aussi soumis, bégayant, humilié, qu'il pouvait être triomphant et arrogant la nuit précédente (...)"⁶⁶ Mounted on the equestrian incarnation of Jules, Ferdinand echoes des Entrayes' battle-cry "Haut les coeurs!"⁶⁷ in a moment of triumph and liberation, signaling a release from the stricture of imprisonment and moral censure that had reduced him to a state of siege: « Ferdinand s'est enfin mis ici en situation de prononcer *lui-même* cette injonction qu'il *subissait* comme cavalier au moment critique des attaques, pendant la guerre, et qui, depuis, n'a cessé de le *hanter*... »⁶⁸ (our emphasis) In other words, Ferdinand – Céline has begun to take *charge* (literally and figuratively) of his own life in an act of transition which was made possible through the transgressive actions of the figure of his Double, Jules. That transition is symbolized by his assumption of the role of des Entrayes – formerly a figure of authority and fear; a trigger of traumatic memory which he has subsumed, thus rendering it powerless – and a concomitant recovery of his authentic voice and, by extension, his creative power.

Jules's stammer, ("T'as des... des... po...po... poches?" and "pour les pé pé pé pé... »)⁶⁹ as well as several other examples in this episode, recalls that of Mille-Pattes in *Guignol's Band II*, signaling the "embodiment of Ferdinand's schizophrenic,

⁶⁴ *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Notice : Romans t IV Editions Gallimard 1993 : pp 1164 - 1165

⁶⁵ Ibid p 1165

⁶⁶ *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Notice : Romans t IV Editions Gallimard 1993 p 1165

⁶⁷ *Féerie pour une autre fois Version B'* : p 1019

⁶⁸ Ibid p 1492 (Note 1 of page 1019)

⁶⁹ *Féerie pour une autre fois* :Version B' : Romans t IV Editions Gallimard 1993 : p 1020

emotive side that is still ensnared by the paranoiac molar pole (...) in other words that side of Ferdinand that Ferdinand knows can do him harm within molar society, that side of him of which, in a moment of excessive paranoia, he tried to rid himself by pushing Mille-Pattes under a train.”⁷⁰ Incensed that the crowd gathered outside Jules’s studio, where the narrator and the cripple are holed up, (“cernés ... c’est un siege”⁷¹), appears to make no distinction between himself and Jules, and that “ils (les) fourrent dans le même sac ... lui qu’était RAF assez, merde! La façon qu’il menait l’orchestre ... un peu dites! Là-haut, du moulin toute la nuit.... C’est la fureur, la passion...”⁷², Ferdinand launches a warlike attack, a ‘cavalry charge’ to liberate them from the impasse in which they are caught : “En selle! Que je te saute en voltige!”⁷³ On this occasion, Ferdinand has no hesitation in exacerbating Jules’s degradation, teaching him to neigh like a horse, “Fais ‘hin... hin’ Je lui montre à hennir”, and going as far as to observe “Faut que je lui parle cheval”.⁷⁴ Thus launched into battle against the crowd – a symbol of public disapprobation suffered by Céline – Ferdinand urges his ‘steed’ ever faster, although conscious of the precariousness of their trajectory: “tu verses pas, t’inclines hein Tu te penches à Junot ... tu te lances pas aux marches”⁷⁵, spurring him on with verbal abuse and insults, which are the equivalent of the spurs worn by des Entrayes : “Allez! Allez! fougueux corsaire! Tomate! Ivrogne ! Faut que je l’injure... et puis la (mot illisible) de la guerre. »⁷⁶ Eventually losing his ‘mount’ as Jules takes a corner too fast, overbalancing due to the weight of Ferdinand’s manuscripts stowed between his stumps, Ferdinand is deposited on the pavement, while Jules continues to careen downhill alone towards the métro Lamarck-Caulaincourt.

In the figure of Jules-cum-horse, at one with his wheeled platform and weighted with Céline’s manuscript as ballast, we discern a parallel with the author’s ‘métro émotif’. Just as for Céline’s « métro-tout-nerfs-rails-magiques-à-traverses-trois-points »⁷⁷ to function efficiently, ballast is required: “Pour poser mes rails émotifs! .. simple

⁷⁰ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang Publishing 2001: p 59

⁷¹ *Féerie pour une autre fois* :Version B’ : Ibid p 1021

⁷² Ibid p 1021

⁷³ Ibid : p 1021

⁷⁴ Ibid : p 1022

⁷⁵ Ibid p 1025

⁷⁶ Ibid p 1025

⁷⁷ *Entretiens avec le professeur Y* : t IV : Éditions Gallimard 1993 : p 543

comme bonjour! ... sur le ballast (...) ils tiennent pas seuls mes rails! ... il me faut des traverses!”⁷⁸, for Jules too “C’est le poids, le lest aussi son salut”⁷⁹; a ‘literary’ ballast, Ferdinand having stowed his manuscript between the cripple’s stumps at the start of their trajectory. Bereft of his ‘horse’, Ferdinand is in turn reduced to an abject state, staggering towards the metro, while pretending to hurl explosives at the crowd. Deprived of his manuscript, Ferdinand is left with a single ray of hope, that “(Il a) sauvé la vie, c’est quelque chose”⁸⁰. It appears that having apparently been thwarted in his literary vocation, the narrator has no other recourse but to fall back on his medical one; that of healing, of saving lives.

Vocation

In the same Version B’ of *Féerie*, we discover another allusion to Céline’s dual vocation of writer – doctor, when describing the labour and ultimate reward involved in creating his literary works, he compares it to “l’acharnement de terrassier ... de terrassier des ondes ... tout petit trait de scalpel près, le temple fripe, effrite, s’efface Vous attrapez plus rien, rien vient... C’est la magie...”⁸¹. There is no doubt that for Céline, his predilection vacillates between writing and medicine as a means of expression through a form of self-sacrifice in order to regain oneself:

“La plume est un scalpel de mage, de mage en terrasse (...). C’est un travail de fée c’est tout, où l’homme périt damné, perd l’âme, la bonne gentillesse, la bite, tout.... (...) brandit sa pauvre *ardoise* de tête, qu’il a vu des plans, la comète, passée de cent millions d’années... qu’il a dit (...) enfoui devant que la lune naisse. Oh ! c’est du tourment pas dicible.... Oh ! la médecine est encore mieux... tourments de nénette pour tourments (...) »⁸²

Any doubt as to the degree to which the phenomenon of war influenced and determined Céline’s creative output is dispelled in Lucien Rebatet’s evocation of Céline’s Odyssey across wartorn Germany in the company of his wife Lili, Le Vigan and Bébert the cat, together with the manuscript of *Guignol’s Band II* concealed in Bébert’s basket: “Il s’engageait dans un monologue inouï, la mort, la guerre, les armes, les peuples, les continents, les tyrans, les nègres, les Jaunes, les intestins, le vagin, la cervelle, les Cathares, Pline l’Ancien, Jésus-Christ. La *tragédie ambiante*

⁷⁸ *Entretiens avec le professeur Y* : t IV : Éditions Gallimard 1993 :p 542

⁷⁹ *Féerie pour une autre fois Version B’* : t IV :Éditions Gallimard 1993 : p 1026

⁸⁰ Ibid p 1027

⁸¹ Ibid : p 972

⁸² *Féerie pour une autre fois* :Version B’ : p 972

pressait son genie *comme un vendange. Le cru célinien jaillissait de tous côtés.* »⁸³
(our emphasis) It is thus clear that as a metaphor for the Double, war, and its concomitant suffering experienced by the author was the catalyst for the production of his particular literary ‘vintage’.

Backdrop

When Céline commenced writing *Féerie pour une autre fois*⁸⁴, three situations existed which were propitious for the creation of this oeuvre, both of which encapsulated the elements of a state of siege: public censure incurred as a result of the publication of his pamphlets; his experiences of a journey across war-torn Germany and his incarceration in the 3 square-metre cell in the Vestre Faengsel in Denmark. Each situation symbolized a form of restriction; the first limiting his social space, the second representing a constriction of his emotional space through the experience of trauma while the third literally constrained his physical existence. « Avec ses expériences des deux dernières années – le printemps de 1944 à Paris tel que pouvait le vivre quelqu’un dans sa situation, la traversée de l’Allemagne à feu et à sang, cette cellule du fond de laquelle il commence à écrire -, il a le sentiment de tenir le sujet qui lui permettra de donner une nouvelle fois toute sa mesure. »⁸⁵ Indeed, Céline regarded this combination of circumstances in so favourable a light that he felt capable of « crev(ant) une deuxième fois le plafond », a sentiment expressed in an unpublished letter to J-G Daragnès in 1948, as he had done more than a decade earlier with the *Voyage*. While Céline’s first novel had as its background the First World War, *Féerie* is set against a backdrop of the Second, where “Aux mitrailleurs et obus de 1914 répondent les bombes de 1944 (...)”⁸⁶, linked by a common interrogation that had preoccupied Céline for most of his life, and one to which he was almost reluctant to uncover the answer, so unthinkable was it: “(...) une violence inhérente à l’homme.”⁸⁷

Regrettably, despite the poetics of the text in a novel which saw its thematics deployed in the service of stylistics, and not the conventional reverse, a general

⁸³ Rebatet, L : *Herne* p 236 : in *Romans t II* p 997

⁸⁴ We note that the version of this novel published as *Féerie II* was written during Céline’s incarceration, prior to *Féerie I*.

⁸⁵ *Féerie , pour une autre fois* : Préface : *Romans t IV* Editions Gallimard 1993 p ix

⁸⁶ *Féerie pour une autre fois* : *Préface* : *Romans t IV* Editions Gallimard 1993 p x

⁸⁷ *Ibid* p x

incomprehension of Céline's text and style, together with a legacy of moral censure as a result of the anti-Semitic content of the pamphlets conspired to condemn both versions of *Féerie* to commercial failure. Céline would therefore only realize his vision of 'breaking the ceiling' in his next novel *D'un château l'autre*. Despite a level of stylistics deployed in *Féerie* which Céline described as "purement émotif", and therefore completely liberated from the strictures of conventional written French, his novels failed to find favour with postwar French public in whose minds the content of the pamphlets, conflated with postwar revelations of Nazi atrocities towards the Jews, created a degree of moral censure that eclipsed an objective appreciation of the stylistic achievement present in both versions of *Féerie pour une autre fois*. Prophetically, Céline declared in an interview with Robert Sadoul that his emotive style was the element in his literary oeuvre which would "remport(er) tout de même la victoire, quand (il) serait mort".⁸⁸

Thoughts on war and death

In the *Voyage*, Céline depicts Man in his most primal state; that part of his nature that is conventionally dissimulated behind a veneer of 'civilised' behaviour. In his essay *Thoughts for the times on War and Death*, published in 1915, Freud speculates that modern man is perhaps more primitive, more savage than so-called 'primitive man', as the former is able to return from war, apparently psychically unscathed: "When the frenzied conflict of this war shall have been decided, every one of the victorious warriors will joyfully return to his home, his wife and his children, undelayed and undisturbed by any thought of the enemy he has slain, either at close quarters or by distant weapons of destruction."⁸⁹ In contrast, primitive man's behaviour appears far more 'civilized', as he may not "set foot in his village nor touch his wife until he has atoned for the murders committed in war by penances which are often prolonged and toilsome."⁹⁰ Indeed, the very emphasis on the biblical commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' has its corollary in man's innate blood-lust; the fact that "we spring from an endless ancestry of murderers, with whom the lust for killing was in the blood, as

⁸⁸ Ibid p xi : Interview avec Robert Sadoul de mars 1955 : *Le Magazine littéraire* sept 1990 : p 102 et l'Année Céline 1990 p 56

⁸⁹ Freud, S : *Thoughts for the times on war and death*: Collected papers vol IV: The International Psycho-Analytical Library No 10: Hogarth Press 1925 pp 311-312

⁹⁰ Ibid p 312

possibly it is to this day with ourselves.”⁹¹ In underscoring the principle of man’s innate desire to kill, Freud draws attention to a passage in Balzac’s *Le Père Goriot*, where the author alludes to an extract from the works of J-J Rousseau which refers to the death of a mandarin in Peking, and the possibility of that death being brought about by a pure act of will. Rousseau implies that the life of the mandarin would easily be dispatched if there were no possibility of the origin of his death being uncovered, hence the origin of the expression “*tuer son mandarin*” which encapsulates man’s innate capacity to kill.

Seventeen years later in a letter to Einstein,⁹² Freud makes the astonishing claim that despite the ambivalence of the warring instincts of self-preservation (Eros) and self-destruction (Thanatos) present in Man, he is inherently a pacifist for “organic reasons”.⁹³ Elaborating on this concept, he goes on to say that “This is not merely an intellectual and emotional repudiation; we pacifists have a constitutional intolerance of war, an idiosyncrasy magnified, as it were, to the highest degree.”⁹⁴ This statement finds its parallel in Bardamu’s declaration that “La vérité de ce monde c’est la mort. Il faut choisir, mourir ou mentir. Je n’ai jamais pu me tuer moi.” (V p 200) In turn, this evokes Céline’s sentiments expressed in his *Hommage à Zola* in 1933 when he suggests that man is incapable of existing in a brutalized, masochistic society “... sans la violence d’un mensonge”.⁹⁵ Violence countered with violence then, in an attempt to attenuate its malign influence on Man through the ‘inoculation’ of a lie.

Freud ends his contemplation on war and death with an existential question that might have been drawn directly from the *Voyage*, and indeed, we speculate that the psychiatrist’s article could have been the source of related questions raised in Céline’s first novel. They included the possibility of war continuing to exist as long as “...the repulsions between peoples (were) so intense”⁹⁶, causing Freud to pose the question “Is it not we who must give in, who must adapt ourselves to (wars)?”, instead of

⁹¹ Freud, S : *Thoughts for the times on war and death*: Collected papers vol IV: The International Psycho-Analytical Library No 10: Hogarth Press 1925 : p 312

⁹² *Why War ? (1932)* : Freud, S : Collected Papers Vol IV : The International Psycho-Analytical Library No 37 : American edition 1959

⁹³ *Ibid* p 286

⁹⁴ *Ibid* p 287

⁹⁵ *Cahiers de l’Herne* No 3 : p 179

⁹⁶ *Ibid* p 316

“living psychologically beyond our means”⁹⁷, thus denying the truth of man’s innate nature. He also questions whether it might not be “(...) better to give death the place in actuality and in our thoughts which properly belongs to it, and to yield a little more prominence to that unconscious attitude towards death which we have hitherto so carefully suppressed?”⁹⁸ This argument resonates closely with Céline’s observation that “Toute la jeunesse est allée mourir déjà au bout du monde dans le silence de vérité. (...) La vérité, c’est une agonie qui n’en finit pas. La vérité de ce monde c’est la mort.” (Vp 200) And in his dialogue with the Abbé Protiste⁹⁹ Bardamu’s reflection on the culmination of earthly happiness being conditional on the ability to “(...) mourir avec plaisir, dans du plaisir...” (V p 380) reveals his viewpoint on death while simultaneously issuing the *caveat* that « Le reste c’est rien du tout, c’est de la peur qu’on n’ose pas avouer, c’est de l’art. » (V p 380)

In paraphrasing the maxim “*Si vis pacem, para bellum* (If you desire peace, prepare for war) as *Si vis vitam, para mortem* (If you would endure life, be prepared for death)”,¹⁰⁰ Freud offers us an indication of the origin of Céline’s dictum regarding death being the only truth in life. In turn, Céline acknowledges his debt to Freud, and more specifically to the article from which this quote was taken, in an interview with Charles Chassé in 1933, when he justifies the importance of literature in general and

⁹⁷ Cahiers de l’Herne No 3 : p 316

⁹⁸ Ibid : p 316

⁹⁹ A name that evokes the Greek God Proteus who is defined by his capacity to become amorphous or protean: **Dieu grec**. L’un des « vieillards de la mer ». Fils de Poséidon et de Phénice ou d’Océan et de Téthys. Il garde les troupeaux de monstres marins appartenant à son père. Il a le don de divination, mais il se refuse à donner sa prédiction à moins qu’il n’y soit forcé : il suffit de surprendre pendant sa sieste et de l’enchaîner ; il rend à la fin sa prophétie après avoir essayé de s’échapper, prenant des formes effrayantes ou insaisissables, comme celle de l’eau ou du feu. Dans une tradition posthomérique, Protée est un roi d’Egypte qui garde Hélène à sa cour et renvoie Paris à Troie avec une nuée (selon Euripide) à la place de la femme enlevée. Mais il accepte de la rendre à Ménélas quand celui-ci vient la réclamer. **Protée**: Le Petit Robert des noms propres 2002 pp1688-1689

‘Protiste’ is also a name that evokes Freud’s association with his colleague Weismann: Bellosta, M-C: *Céline ou l’art de la contradiction*: “Auguste Weismann observa qu’à l’opposé des êtres vivants supérieurs (qui sont constitués d’un corps individuel, ou *soma*, mortel, et de cellules germinales, ou plasma germinatif, immortel), les protistes ont un corps immortel, puisqu’il y a identité chez eux entre individu et cellule germinale. Pour appuyer son hypothèse de la pulsion de mort, au chapitre VI d’*Au-delà du principe du plaisir*, Freud recourt aux « protistes » en faisant observer la « frappante analogie qui existe entre la distinction weismannienne ‘soma-plasma germinatif’ et notre distinction ‘instincts de vie – instincts de mort’ (...) » : p 117

¹⁰⁰ Freud, S : *Thoughts for the times on war and death* (1915): Collected papers vol IV: The International Psycho-Analytical Library No 10: Hogarth Press 1925: p 317

of a style of 'delirium' in particular in his remark that "Le délire, il n'y a que cela, et notre grand maître actuellement à tous, c'est Freud."¹⁰¹

War neuroses

In his work *Beyond the pleasure principle*, as well as his Introduction to Ferenczi, Abraham, Simmel and Jones's work *Psycho-Analysis and the war neuroses*, Freud expressed the belief that the explosion of war neuroses, and especially those of a traumatic nature were provoked by an earlier conflict or division of the 'I' or Ego experienced prior to the actual incident which caused the trauma: "The conflict takes place between the old ego of peace time and the new war-ego of the soldier, and it becomes acute as soon as the peace-ego is faced with the danger of being killed through the risky undertakings of his newly formed *parasitical double*."¹⁰² (our emphasis). Differently phrased, the old (peacetime) ego protects itself from the danger posed to its existence by a flight into traumatic neurosis in defence against the new (wartime) ego which it recognizes as life-threatening. It is from this vantage point, besieged like the political agitators Guérin, Liabeuf and Bonnot¹⁰³ that the pacifist ego defends itself against annihilation by its new warlike incarnation. In this description it is impossible not to recognize the figure of Robinson, encountered by Bardamu immediately after the horrific events suffered at the Front; a figure that is capable of the 'risky undertakings' mentioned by Freud, entirely are foreign to Bardamu, and which inspire in the narrator ambiguous feelings of fear and admiration

In the image of the besieged, pacifist 'I' we discern a symbol of one half of a double entity, or rather another face of a single entity with two different faces which we believe lies at the root of Céline's creation of the figure of the Double in his works. We may therefore deduce that this phenomenon was brought about by a traumatic occurrence – probably the incident in 1914 at Poelkapelle during which the author was wounded and subsequently decorated for an act of bravery in saving the life of an

¹⁰¹ Chassé, C : *La Dépêche de Brest et de l'Ouest* 11 octobre 1933 in *Cahiers Céline* I p 88

¹⁰² Ferenczi et al : *Psycho-Analysis and the war neuroses : Introduction by S. Freud*: pp 2-3

¹⁰³ Referred to *supra* under the subheading *State of siege*. In addition, Yves Pagès' description of the triad: "Si la triade Guérin-Liabeuf-Bonnot expérimente une synthèse spécifique, ce n'est pas celle de l'anarchiste de droite, mais celle du forcené type, de l'assiégé permanent qui réinterprète les catégories sociales, culturelle, historiques et politiques (...) L'agitateur Guérin s'adresse surtout à un public de petits commerçants et de boutiquiers; Liabeuf prolonge l'image d'Epinal de l'artisanat des faubourgs; Bonnot et sa bande incarnent le désarroi d'une mouvance dite 'sous-prolétarienne': trimardeurs, réfugiés, sans-travail etc." : Pagès, Y : *Les fictions du politique chez L-F Céline* : p 37

officer – but which was *preceded* by an earlier conflict of the ego. We can only speculate that this might have occurred as a result of traumatic childhood or youthful experiences, although historically there is little to substantiate an hypothesis that Louis-Ferdinand Destouches' childhood was anything like as violent as that of the narrator Ferdinand in *Mort à Crédit*.

Alter ego

The figure of Bardamu in Céline's first novel embodies the characteristics of a neurotic personality riven by a conflicted ego, evidenced in Bardamu's declaration that he "n'avait plus la tête très solide" (V p 9). His internal duality is reflected in the dialogue between himself and Arthur Ganate, in which opposing ideas are exchanged, together with the roles of each interlocutor. This fundamental duality is underscored by the fact that Céline's original intention was to make Arthur, the conformist, the narrator while Bardamu the anarchist was to be his dialogic interlocutor. It was therefore Céline's original intention that Arthur Ganate be the one to enlist in the war, and not Bardamu. The 'Je' (I) of the unpublished version of the *Voyage* – the one who supported the French race, love and religion and professed respect for one's forefathers - was therefore originally Arthur Ganate, contrasted with an 'Il' (He) – Bardamu - who opposed these notions.

In a key episode at *Le Stand des Nations* which clearly demonstrates Bardamu's Double or *alter ego*, the narrator sees his own silhouette among the targets at the shooting range; "(...) celui-ci entre les pipes et les petits ballons, sur tout ça on avait tiré tant qu'on avait pu, à présent sur moi on tirait, hier, demain." (V p 58) Terrified, Bardamu exclaims "Sur moi aussi qu'on tire Lola!" (Vp58), leading Bellosta to comment that

« (...) c'est lui-même qui est invité à tirer pour *se* massacrer, assassin *alter ego* de sa victime. Ce dédoublement se prolonge en se modifiant dans le récit des jours qui suivent la crise : le narrateur perçoit alors en lui la dualité d'un *moi agressé* et d'un *moi agressif* »¹⁰⁴

As a result of this emotional crisis, Bardamu is placed under observation in a clinic, and it is here that he becomes conscious of his duality while formulating a mechanism

¹⁰⁴ Bellosta M-C : *Céline ou l'art de la contradiction* : Presses Universitaires de France ; Paris 1990 : p 124

to control the fear that his fellow man inspires in him by reducing him to his lowest common denominator : « Il faut s'apprendre à les considérer tels qu'ils sont, pires qu'ils sont (...) » (Vp 63) In applying this stratagem, Bardamu frees himself from the weight of perceived censure in the discovery that “Ça vous donne un autre vous-même. On est deux.” (Vp 63) This is a clear demonstration of the function of the Double, created as a device to control or manage a traumatic experience, whether it arises from an external or an internal source. This episode and its outcome also vindicates Freud's notion of a conflict between the “ideal habituel” and the new “idéal guerrier” which characterizes victims of traumatic war neuroses, resulting in an internal conflict which weakens the ‘I’ or Ego. Significantly, « (...) la différence entre la paix et la guerre est que dans la première, le moi est fort, mais attaqué par surprise, tandis que dans la seconde, il est préparé à l'attaque mais affaibli. »¹⁰⁵

Flashback

In his essay *Action du traumatisme, Traumatisme en action, Action sur le traumatisme*, the psychiatrist Barrois refers to « cette fameuse triade spécifique comprenant le blocage des fonctions du Moi – les crises émotives – les troubles du sommeil et les symptômes de répétition »,¹⁰⁶ all of which are characteristic of Céline's behaviour. The first trait is discernible in what the author termed his *délire*; the second in an avowed tendency towards insomnia while the third is evidenced in recurring dreams or flashbacks to traumatic war episodes. In Céline's novels *Guignol's Band I* and *II*, this last characteristic is played out in episodes relating to a recurrent dream involving the Colonel des Entrayes and his horse in an obsessional replay of the most horrific incidents of war: “Et alors joujou la mitraille... l'enfer des combats! les ventres qui s'ouvrent! Qui se referment! Les têtes qu'éclatent! Boyaux partout! ... glouglous... (...) Des boucheries si rouges, si épaisses que c'est plus par terre qu'une bouillie” (GBII p 340) The recurrent nightmare suffered by Ferdinand, the narrator in *Guignol's Band I* and *II* is particularly significant in the context of the figure of the Double as the embodiment of the split ‘I’ or Ego, as « Le cauchemar répétitif est le type du ratage du rêve dans sa fonction de second Moi, qui échange avec le Moi vigile des représentants pulsionnels, dans une sorte de *jeu de miroir* et d'amortissements

¹⁰⁵ Barrois, Cl : *Action du traumatisme, Traumatisme en action, Action sur le traumatisme* : Nouvelle Revue de la Psychanalyse Vol No 31 : 1985 : p 249

¹⁰⁶ Ibid p 246

successifs. Dans le cauchemar, dans la terreur nocturne, il semble que le Moi du rêve avait besoin d'urgence de *passer la main* au Moi vigile devant un état de véritable indigestion psychique. »¹⁰⁷ (our emphasis) This is an empirical demonstration of Bardamu's protective device which he adopts following the traumatic incident at *Le Stand des Nations*. The result is the creation of a Double as a means to both dissipate and cushion the shock of a traumatic incident.

Password

Expanding on the definition of the traumatised personality, Barrois notes that they « ressentent leurs troubles comme à la fois une sorte de persécution interne (par l'intrusion répétitive du cauchemar devenu traumatisme renouvelé) et un tendance au repli, au retrait social, qui répond, chez certains d'entre eux, à un sentiment persécutoire externe diffuse (...) »¹⁰⁸ Once more, we identify Céline in this description, particularly with regard to a sense of persecution which led to the writing of the pamphlets, and later, following their publication, with a redirected sense of persecution regarding the moral censure of the French public. Also characteristic of those suffering from war neuroses is a "conduite de secret" caused by the "traumatisme interne qui le hante", or a 'secret space' which « n'est pas sans évoquer certaines sociétés initiatiques, que parfois seulement un 'mot de passe' suffit à ouvrir (...) ».¹⁰⁹ We believe that the pivotal role accorded the 'password' in Céline's novel *Casse-Pipe* vindicates the notion that the author not only exhibited the character traits defined by Barrois, but also that he, in conformity with his autodidacticism, submitted himself to psycho-analytical therapy through his writing, consciously employing the narrative device of the *mot de passe* as a mechanism for liberation from recurrent images of war-invoked trauma by entering a 'secret space' inhabited by the Double where both author and protagonist were able to confront the fears that haunted them. In *Casse-Pipe*, that space is characterized by the narrator's silence and amnesia. This demonstrates a transgressive tactic that « permet à Céline de mettre le langage en entier en état de dysfonctionnement : 'personne n'arrive véritablement à communiquer, dans *Casse-Pipe* ; les uns, les figures hiérarchiques, par excès, emportés qu'ils sont dans la démesure d'un discours sans cesse éclaté, les autres, les

¹⁰⁷ Barrois CI : *Action du traumatisme, Traumatisme en action, Action sur le traumatisme* : Nouvelle Revue de la Psychanalyse Vol No 31 : 1985 ; p 252

¹⁰⁸ Ibid : p 246

¹⁰⁹ Ibid p 247

acteurs soldatesques, par manque, parce qu'ils restent perdus dans la pâte, toujours grommelée, grognée, d'une sorte de sous-langue animal et infantile. Et le héros lui-même se taisant.' »¹¹⁰ Not only is the narrator silent, he is also amnesiac, a fact that increases his isolation from his fellow soldiers : « Tu sais comment que tu t'appelles au moins ? (...) tu l'as oublié ton nom? Je vais te le dire, moi, le mot. » (CP p 33)¹¹¹

Enemy within

In his article *Beyond the pleasure principle* published in 1920, Freud distinguishes two separate instincts: the Ego-instinct which has as its aim "the reinstatement of an inorganic state"¹¹² from which life emerged – Death or Thanatos. The other instinct is sexual and reproductive, linked to creativity and ultimately to a "semblance of immortality" - the Libido or Eros. This article marked a turning point in Freud's thinking as, before this essay, he had placed the sexual instinct on centre stage as the motivating force of Man's actions. Positing a theory that went 'beyond' the pleasure principle, Freud developed his theory of the primacy of a death-drive.

We interpret this description of the conflict or rivalry between the 'old' and 'new' egos as emblematic of the function of the figure of the Double as employed by Céline in his narrative; that of a protective device against the potential destruction of the Ego posed by a conflict between the two opposing ego-instincts. What is more, the threat of dissolution does not only appear in the form of a bellicose manifestation of the Ego itself, but also from the sexual or libidinous instinct, as

In the traumatic and war neuroses, the ego of the individual protects itself from a danger that either threatens it from without, or is embodied in a form of the ego itself; in the transference neuroses of peace time the ego regards its own sexual hunger (libido) as a foe, the demands of which appear threatening to it. In both cases the ego fears an injury: in the one case through the sexual hunger (libido) and in the other from outside forces.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Cornille, J-L: *Conte d'auteur: L'Impressioniste* : Presses Universitaires de Lille : 1992 : p 236 quoting Richard, J-P : *Céline et Marguerite* : Critique 1976 pp 924-925

¹¹¹ Ibid p 236

¹¹² Freud, S : *Beyond the pleasure principle*: The International Psych-Analytical Press: 1922:p 54

¹¹³ Ferenczi et al : *Psycho-Analysis and the war neuroses* : Introduction by S. Freud: pp 2

¹¹³ Ibid p 4

Freud posits that in the case of war neuroses, the element most feared is “after all an inner foe” – one which distinguishes it from pure traumatic neuroses, and more closely approximates the transference neuroses.

We submit that Céline was prey to both categories of neurosis as defined by Freud and, by extension, was subject to both forms of threat posited by the psychiatrist. With regard to a threat from within, Céline at the age of nineteen, leaves us in no doubt as to the intrinsic fragility of his ego: « Je suis de sentiments complexes et sensitifs – la moindre faute de tact ou de délicatesse me choque et me fait souffrir car au fond de moi-même je cache un fond d’orgueil qui me fait peur à moi-même (...). »¹¹⁴ On the other hand, while delighting in the pleasure experienced in sexual encounters with a number of women, both in the author’s life as well as those depicted in his novels, the protagonist, be he Bardamu or Ferdinand, appears to engage in a love-hate relationship with all of his female companions, as though he feared their power over him. The exceptions are Molly in the *Voyage* who counters the narrator’s misogyny with a patience and understanding that disarm him completely, in granting him the freedom to pursue his journey of self-discovery: “C’est le voyageur solitaire qui va le plus loin... Vous allez partir bientôt alors?” (V p 235) . The second is Lili-Arlette of *Féerie pour une autre fois I* and the Trilogy. However, even in *Féerie* the relationship is tainted by jealousy and the perceived threat of a loss of the narrator’s creative mastery to the malevolent artist Jules. Only in the Trilogy does the narrator enter into a semblance of tranquil relationship with a female partner – his wife Lili, which is not only indicative of a reconciliation of the ego-conflict which gave rise to the creation of the Double, but also of the necessity for that figure’s demise, having become redundant in the life of both author and narrator.

Trauma in action

In a meta-grammatical analysis of the “structure propositionnelle de la névrose”,¹¹⁵ Barrois illustrates that texts which display evidence of trauma and of nightmarish episodes, are characterized by « la fonction sujet (souvent ‘ça’ ou un ‘je’ suivi d’une forme passive pronominale), la brièveté des énoncés, la rareté des adjectives. »¹¹⁶ This

¹¹⁴ *Carnet du Cuirassier Destouches* (1913) : Romans t III : Editions Gallimard 1988 : p 75

¹¹⁵ Barrois Cl : *Action du traumatisme, Traumatisme en action, Action sur le traumatisme* : Nouvelle Revue de la Psychanalyse Vol No 31 : 1985 : p 254

phenomenon is evident from the outset in Céline's novels, the first of which, the *Voyage* starts with the words "Ca a débuté comme ça. Moi, j'avais jamais rien dit. Rien. C'est Arthur Ganate qui m'a fait parler." (V p 7) (our emphasis) - phrases that display both the impersonal *ça* as well as the causative-passive form of the verb *parler*. Given that the novel closes with the words "qu'on n'en parle plus" (Vp 505)¹¹⁷, we submit that the use of the repetition-as-mantra, together with the use of the demonstrative pronoun *ça*, coupled with the impersonal pronoun *on* serve both the narrator and the author as an *incantatory shield* against the disruptive power of trauma to shatter, or at the very least, to split the Ego. As such, they are textual indicators of the immanence of the Double in Céline's works. Barrois cites Céline as one of a number of artists who were "agis par leur trauma".¹¹⁸ As such, he was the subject of a study in abjection by Julia Kristeva who observed that "La douleur, l'horreur et leur convergence vers l'abjection nous semblent être des indications plus adéquates à cette vision *apocalyptique* qu'est l'écriture célinienne."¹¹⁹ Barrois concludes his analysis of Céline's work with the observation that « Le style, le caractère lancinant, répétitive, de l'horreur toujours rappelée (...) la biographie même de Céline (l')inclinent à faire l'hypothèse que cet homme était en proie au 'traumatisme en acte'. »¹²⁰

It is widely believed that the act of artistic creation *per se* is capable of 'disengaging' or freeing the traumatized individual from his compulsion for repetition. Although this phenomenon has frequently been noted in those recovering from infantile trauma, it is less common in sufferers from adult neuroses. However, Céline's work occupies a unique and ambiguous role in this regard, as "tellement le contenu de ses livres semble être, malgré la technique stylistique et la puissante créativité, une traduction directe du cauchemar."¹²¹ Whether that nightmare preceded the one experienced by Louis Destouches at the Front; whether it was caused by a childhood event or simply

¹¹⁶ Barrois Cl : *Action du traumatisme, Traumatisme en action, Action sur le traumatisme* : Nouvelle Revue de la Psychanalyse Vol No 31 : 1985 : p 254

¹¹⁷ In which Rabaté discerns in the impersonal 'on' an indicator of absolute value : « 'qu'on n'en parle plus', dont la tournure impersonnelle traduit la valeur absolue » : Rabaté, D : *Poétiques de la voix* : Librairie José Corti : 1999 : p 109

¹¹⁸ Barrois Cl : *Action du traumatisme, Traumatisme en action, Action sur le traumatisme* : Nouvelle Revue de la Psychanalyse Vol No 31 : 1985 : p 255

¹¹⁹ Kristeva, J : *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* : Editions du Seuil 1980 : p 180

¹²⁰ Barrois Cl : *Action du traumatisme, Traumatisme en action, Action sur le traumatisme* : Nouvelle Revue de la Psychanalyse Vol No 31 : 1985 ; p 255

¹²¹ Barrois Cl : *Action du traumatisme, Traumatisme en action, Action sur le traumatisme* : Nouvelle Revue de la Psychanalyse Vol No 31 : 1985 : p 256

the product of an over-sensitive mind,¹²² we will never know. However, what we *do* know is that Céline's entire oeuvre represents an attempt to come to terms with his personal Apocalypse through the agency of the figure of the Double in his works.

Zola

In June 1933 at Médan where Céline was asked to render homage to Zola, he converted his address to an anti-war polemic and a reflection on war and death. In that address, he evoked the brutality of the modern world of which he became conscious for the first time at the age of six while visiting the Universal Exhibition of 1900 with his father. That brutality was encapsulated in the image of an escalator, "ce trottoir roulant qui grinçait jusqu'à la galerie des machines pleine, pour la première fois de métaux en torture, de menaces colossales, de catastrophes en suspens."¹²³ In the face of a threat of this magnitude to one's being, there is no question that Céline perceived that the only possible form of combat existed through his art in a bid to retain a vestige of his identity. Observing that current reality had become untenable, Céline emphasized that as a result, man had increasingly taken refuge in "les symboles et les rêves"¹²⁴, a state in which he lived out nine-tenths of his life. On a more optimistic note which underscores the role of tragic circumstances as a vehicle for creative activity, he observed that man's "tragique et grotesque" circumstances had created a climate where "jamais la littérature ne fut si facile à concevoir."¹²⁵ In the context of a world inhabited by the images of a war that had recently ended, coupled with the impending threat of another, Céline's use of the word '*anaphylactique(s)*' in the text dedicated to Zola, is significant. An adjective, the word is derived from the noun '*Anaphylaxie*' meaning "augmentation de la sensibilité de l'organisme à une substance étrangère après que celle-ci a été introduite."¹²⁶ Céline thus creates a clear image of man invaded by external threat, the traumatic effect of which is capable of precipitating him « dans des convulsions meurtrières à n'en plus finir. »¹²⁷ Indeed, Barrois notes that

¹²² Céline frequently described himself as an *écorché vif* or hypersensitive person

¹²³ *Hommage à Zola* : L'Herne No 3 : Lettres Modernes 1962 : p 169

¹²⁴ *Ibid* p 169

¹²⁵ *Hommage à Zola* : L'Herne No 3 : Lettres Modernes 1962 : p 170

¹²⁶ *Le Petit Robert* : 1993 : p 89

¹²⁷ *Hommage à Zola* : L'Herne No 3 : Lettres Modernes 1962 : p 170

« ...il est hautement probable que si tel sujet n'avait pas connu (l'enfer de la guerre) son destin psychique (quelle que soit sa vulnérabilité antérieure, comme l'ont prouvé de nombreuses études) se serait déroulé 'comme pour tout le monde'. (...) la série ininterrompue des guerres depuis 1939 a démontré que chacun, y compris 'le vieux sergent' chevronné et *non pathologique jusque-là*, est susceptible de faire sa 'mauvaise rencontre' (...) qui le conduira au psychiatre (...) en cas de formes chroniques de la névrose traumatique de guerre. »¹²⁸
(our emphasis)

In his homage to Zola, Céline underscores the notion of a war-traumatized nation in his observation that civilization appears to be in the grip of "une incurable psychose guerrière" in which man is condemned to live "pour ce genre de redites destructrices."¹²⁹ And, in a nod to Freud, he questions whether the death-instinct (of the Ego) has not gained ascendancy over the instinct for survival (Life and the Libido), as man appears to seize every opportunity "à jouer à la mort."¹³⁰ Indeed, modern man appears to possess a "désir de néant", of self-annihilation inherent in the individual but especially in the collective; a sort of "impatience amoureuse, à peu près irresistible, unanime, pour la mort."¹³¹ Man would be the last to admit his quasi-sexual passion for death, but as Céline shrewdly points out, "*le tropisme est là, et d'autant plus puissant qu'il est parfaitement secret et silencieux.*"¹³² It is the clandestinity, the refusal to openly acknowledge the death-wish that makes it so powerful an agent and determinant of Man's actions. Steeped in a desire for annihilation, there is no doubt that "l'âme de l'Homme s'est définitivement cristallisée sous cette forme suicidaire." And in a direct reference to Freud's essay *Beyond the pleasure principle*, Céline links the death-instinct to that of the Ego, emphasising death's ineluctability by placing it metaphorically on the zero-point of the roulette wheel, from which vantage point, "le Casino gagne toujours".¹³³

Death

Inherent in the Hippocratic Oath taken by every medical doctor, is the vow to preserve life at any cost, a notion which appears to be at odds with Céline's fatalistic view of

¹²⁸ Barrois Cl : *Action du traumatisme, Traumatisme en action, Action sur le traumatisme* : Nouvelle Revue de la Psychanalyse Vol No 31 : 1985 ; p 243

¹²⁹ *Hommage à Zola* : L'Herne No 3 : Lettres Modernes 1962 : p 170

¹³⁰ Ibid p 170

¹³¹ Ibid pp 170-171

¹³² *Hommage à Zola* : L'Herne No 3 : Lettres Modernes 1962 : p 171

¹³³ Ibid p 171

death, expressed in an interview with the journalist André Brissaud a year before the author's death: "La mort qui est au bout, seule compte...pour moi, quand elle viendra, je lui dirai que je suis bien content... Salut la compagnie ! vous crèverez tous, comme moi, dans la barque à Caron »¹³⁴ This dichotomy of a personal ideology and medical professionalism is emblematic of the public and professional antinomy Céline presaged when he took on the additional role of writer, conceding that « (La littérature) est très mal vue dans le monde médical, vous ne vous doutez pas à quel point. Il fallait que moi, médecin-romancier, je cache bien mon jeu. Le docteur et M. Hyde.(...) »¹³⁵

In a lucid examination of the part played by death in the creation of Céline's works, Hainge observes that "(...) though death and darkness provide the canvas on which his works are painted, Céline's brush strokes are vibrant slashes of colour brimming with delirious energy and laughter." However, Céline's aesthetic creation is not simply made possible *despite* death, but perhaps

"...because death is his canvas that his palette is so bright, for it is only when death is accepted as the ineluctable end towards which all is traveling on this *voyage au bout de la nuit* we call life, (...) that one is able to live in freedom and lucidity, to take desire/delirium as the guiding principle of existence and not the dissimulating lies proffered by molarity."¹³⁶

This definition of the role of death in the creation of Céline's oeuvre, based on Deleuzo-Guattarian principles, defines death as a positive force, provided that it is accepted and not resisted. Moreover, "If death can be said to constitute the plane of immanence of the Célinian universe, the primary mode of production on this plane is surely delirium (...)"¹³⁷, a state of mind in which emotion predominates, relegating reason to a minor role; in short, the goal of Céline's aesthetic.

In coming to terms with the inevitability of Death in man's life, Céline is in effect privileging Life. His novels may therefore be said to constitute a polemic for the affirmation of a life-giving force that is attained through the act of writing and a

¹³⁴ Brissaud, A : *Voyage au bout de la tendresse* : Cahiers de l'Herne No 3 : Lettres Modernes, Paris 1962 : pp 230-231

¹³⁵ Poulet, R: *Entretiens familiers avec L-F Céline* : Librairie Plon 1958 : p 43

¹³⁶ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and Schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : Peter Lang publishing 2001 : p 13

¹³⁷ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and Schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : Peter Lang publishing 2001 : p 14

conscious acceptance of the inevitability of death. Even the pamphlets, in condemning the various aspects of social ills present in French society (alcoholism, an outmoded education system, capitalism and social injustice), may be interpreted as “a regeneration of the spirit of life”.¹³⁸ This notion is borne out in the dedication of the pamphlet *l'École des cadavres* to Julian the Apostate, as he was the Roman emperor who ejected a corrupt Christian structure and restored the cult of the ancient pagan gods. In this context, the inscription following the dedication – “Dieu est en réparation” is extremely significant, indicating a reformulation of the very idea and function of the Creator.

A happy death

For Céline, music undoubtedly held the power to enliven the conventionally sad business of death, and to disabuse it of its solemnity. This is evidenced in Céline's depiction of a scene where death is enlivened by the unexpected trill of a flute, at least twice in his novels, an occurrence that was probably inspired by the death of the sailor Nielsen who died *singing* in the cell next to his in the Vestre Faengsel. In *Guignol's Band I*, a text that predated and prefigured Céline's prison experience by several years, the author speculates that it would be “(...) ensorcelant, qu'à l'instant même, au moment juste où tout nous cloue, s'échappe, jaillisse hors du cercueil miraculeux trille de flûte ! tout preste, guilleret à ravir !” (GBI p 177), while in the first draft of *Féerie pour une autre fois*, Céline declares « Voilà Nielsen – (...) il meurt en chantant les chansons de marin (...) Tout fait musique dans ma tête, je ne peux plus rien tenir de chagrin, tout part en danse et en musique – Nielsen me donne le coup d'envoi – c'est la paix – (...) »¹³⁹. And in his Preface to *Féerie pour une autre fois*, Godard speculates that Céline would « assiste au miracle » that he had imagined in *Guignol's Band*, a miracle made possible by Nielsen, « qui parvient à cette ultime victoire, et du coup, il désensorcelle Céline, pour qui de nouveau 'Tout fait musique'. (...) il va se mettre à écrire *Féerie*, à transmuier l'horreur en écriture. »¹⁴⁰ (our emphasis) Death thus transformed by (and into) music, has the power to break the spell of the horror of war and its outcome for the author in a prison cell. The image of the trill of a flute rising from a coffin cannot fail to evoke an image of regeneration and renewal,

¹³⁸ Nettlebeck, C : *Journey to the end of Art : the evolution of the Novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: PMLA 87.1 (1972)p82

¹³⁹ 1^{re} esquisse de *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Romans t IV Editions Gallimard 1993 : p 586

¹⁴⁰ *Préface à Féerie pour une autre fois I et II* : Romans t IV Editions Gallimard 1993 : p xiv

and ultimately the eternal cycle of life and death. The poignancy of this notion is enhanced when it is born of man's inhumanity to man in the form of war.

In the same volume, Godard observes that Nielsen's death acted both as an antidote to, and a means of liberation from the baleful spell cast on Céline by the presence of Clémence Arlon and Jules : « C'est, dans l'esquisse des *Cahiers de prison*; l'épisode de la mort d'un compagnon de prison, le matelot Nielsen, qui, mourant en chantant, devait désensorceler Ferdinand, le délivrer du charme maléfique qu'avaient jeté sur lui, le premier jour, Clémence Arlon, Jules, et d'autres agents du mal. »¹⁴¹ We are thus witness to Céline's ability to incorporate and transpose the transgressive act of a joyful, *musical* death into a vehicle for the liberation of his creative power, and in so doing, liberate himself from the restrictive spell of impending doom and moral censure personified by the perceived harbingers of death, Clémence Arlon and Jules. We view the image of regeneration evoked in the trill of a flute rising from a coffin as a symbol of Céline's triumph over the ravages of war and an emergence of his creative power due to his ability to assimilate his experience of its horror and to transpose it through his art. This experience undoubtedly influenced Céline's imagination in a world dominated by « la terreur la plus radicale, celle d'un monde non plus seulement hostile, mais devenu *inhabitable*. »¹⁴² (our emphasis) However, the full horror of the situation lay in the fact that it was self-inflicted : « le fait que cette violence du monde soit l'œuvre des hommes, et qu'avec elle se pose une fois encore (...) la question de savoir si la violence à laquelle l'homme réussit à donner ici des dimensions cosmiques n'est pas le fond de sa nature ».¹⁴³ Horrific as it might appear, and perhaps precisely *because* of its apocalyptic, inchoate nature, an image of war such as that of the bombardment captured by Céline in *Féerie II* conflates destruction with creation in a cataclysmic poetic image which, "avant de rendre le monde inhabitable, commence par le montrer *nouveau*." ¹⁴⁴ (our emphasis)

¹⁴¹ Notice : *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Ibid p 1177

¹⁴² Céline : Romans t IV Éditions Gallimard 1993 *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Préface : pp xxvii - xxviii

¹⁴³ Ibid : pp xxvii - xxviii

¹⁴⁴ Ibid : p xxviii

Bomb

The immense power of bombs to change the fundamental order of the world was not in dispute in the mid-20th century, as their transgressive force was unimaginable : « Elles mettent le jour à la place de la nuit, elles font se lever le soleil à l'ouest, elles solidifient l'air et font bouillir l'eau des fleuves; par elles les ombres ne se projettent plus d'en-haut sur le sol, mais du sol sur les nuages ». ¹⁴⁵ This image of simultaneous destruction and regeneration evokes the initial reaction experienced by Robert Oppenheimer, creator of the first atomic bomb on witnessing its successful detonation in 1945. In an interview twenty years later he recalled : "We knew the world would not be the same. (...) I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture the *Bhagavad Gita*; 'Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds'. I suppose we all thought that, one way or another."¹⁴⁶ This image of Armageddon; of a battle between the forces of good and evil, is emblematic of Céline's work, where the creation of poetic prose takes place both against and within a backdrop of war – an inherently transgressive and destructive phenomenon which is nevertheless intrinsic to the creative process.

Suicide

The presence of death by suicide is discernible in Céline's works from his earliest novel, *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, and indeed even prior to that, in his medical thesis on the Hungarian doctor Philippe-Ignace Semmelweis who deliberately provokes his own death: "Il reprend son scalpel et fouille avec ses doigts en même temps qu'avec la lame une cavité cadavérique suintante d'humeurs. (...) il se coupe profondément."¹⁴⁷ In the *Voyage*, Bardamu's Double Robinson is technically murdered by his fiancée Madelon, but actually engineers the act, by ignoring her ultimatum, provoking what amounts to a staged suicide. "Tu viens pas alors? ... - Non! Qu'il lui a répondu, sans bouger d'un pouce. Fais comme tu veux ! » (..) C'était une réponse. »(V p 494) Robinson's death is significant in that it implies a subversion of the conventional rules of the *Bildungsroman*.¹⁴⁸ In Céline's novel, the "faux suicide d'un anti-héros" leads not to a glorious hero's end, but instead one in which "le 'héros

¹⁴⁵ Céline : Romans t IV : Éditions Gallimard : *Féerie pour une autre fois: Préface* : p xxviii

¹⁴⁶ Encyclopaedia Britannica 2005

¹⁴⁷ *Semmelweis* :Éditions Gallimard 1999 : p116

¹⁴⁸ A novel of self-realisation

s'enfonce dans une nuit toujours plus noire."¹⁴⁹ The next suicide occurs in *Mort à crédit* with that of Courtial des Pereires. The scientist, having failed in an attempt to produce electronically-grown potatoes, faces financial and social ruin, his dream of a 'Familistère de la Race Nouvelle' in tatters, he shoots himself in the head in a gesture that evokes an image of the decapitated « cavalier à pied (qui) n'avait plus sa tête »(V p 17) who is killed in front of Bardamu at the Front.

We posit that the head being traditionally viewed as the seat of reason, it is targeted by Céline in a symbolic act of destruction of that part of the body which he saw as an obstacle or threat to the emergence of emotion and a concomitant conduit for aesthetic production.

Although not suicides, other deaths involving cranial damage occur in *Guignol's Band I* when Van Claben is dropped on his head in an attempt to extricate the gold coins he has swallowed, "Pfouff! sur la dalle son crâne si dur! ...que ça ébranle toute la boutique!...(.) sa tête qu'est fendue!..". (GBI pp 222-223) And in *Féerie pour une autre fois II*, Normance's head is used as a battering ram to gain entry into the adjacent apartment. "...ils l'étaient, (...) la tête en avant! ..en butoir: (...)bien la tête contre la lourde : (...) ça serait plaisir que son crâne éclate ! pas que la porte ! »(FII pp 340-341) This thesis is supported by Céline's declaration that « (...) tout se gâte par l'excès de raison, à mesure que la société devient plus rationnelle, plus logique cartésienne.(...) » in an interview with Robert Poulet, adding succinctly in support of one of man's least 'rational' acts : « qu'y a-t-il de moins explicable, de moins justifiable, qu'un coït ? »¹⁵⁰

At this point we are reminded of the suicidal behaviour of Pliny the Elder (the 'Naturalist') to whom, together with Gaston Gallimard, *Féerie pour une autre fois I* is dedicated . The events leading to the death of the Roman emperor while observing the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 are recorded in *La Grande Encyclopédie* "source ordinaire de l'érudition de Céline", which recounts the death of Pliny as follows : "Il monta en un lieu d'où il pût aisément observer ce phénomène ; puis, dans son zèle pour la science, il voulut l'examiner de plus près encore. Il s'avança jusqu'au pied

¹⁴⁹ Rabaté, D : *Poétiques de la voix : 'Qu'on n'en parle plus' (Voyage au bout de la nuit de Céline)* : Librairies José Corti 1999 : p 106

¹⁵⁰ Poulet, R : *Entretiens avec L-F Céline* : Librairie Plon 1958 :p 68

même du volcan. C'est là qu'il mourut, asphyxié par les émanations. »¹⁵¹ Indeed, Céline's admiration for Pliny's action is manifest in the words « (...) personne conteste Pline l'Ancien ! il fait toujours autorité !... » (FII p 469) In the context of the bombardment of Paris he observed from his rue Girardon apartment, « Céline est un Pline l'Ancien qui aurait noté sur le moment les détails de la catastrophe à laquelle il assistait, »¹⁵² thus establishing a parallel between Céline's actions and those of the Roman statesman. This is especially relevant in the context of the journey on which the author and his companions were to embark across a war-ravaged Germany, in full knowledge of the devastation they would encounter. We also cannot fail to take into account the fact that *La Grande Encyclopédie* also carried a citation from Pliny describing death as the “plus grand bien que la nature offre à l'homme”¹⁵³, a notion which could not have failed to make an impression on Céline, as it so closely reflected his own views. Yet another parallel between Céline, Pliny the Elder and Semmelweis is mentioned in Yves Pagès's work *Les Résurgences de la sensibilité anarchiste d'avant 1914 dans l'oeuvre de L-F Céline*, in which the the author cites an article by Elie Metchnikoff published in 1909 « qui à la fois s'étend sur le cas de Semmelweis martyr de la science, et fait de Pline l'Ancien un des premiers exemples de cette lignée. »¹⁵⁴

Sacrifice

Bardamu's observation on death by suicide in the *Voyage* is revealing in terms of both a conscious and unconscious motivation for the act: “La vérité de ce monde c'est la mort. Il faut choisir, mourir ou mentir. Je n'ai jamais pu me tuer moi. Le mieux était donc de sortir dans la rue, ce petit suicide. » (V p 200) This enigmatic statement would seem to indicate that while Bardamu's conscious, rational mind refuses the idea of suicide, his unconscious may be able to accept that possibility – by offering himself up as a victim of chance. Denise Aebersold appears to support this argument, observing that « On voit Céline reprendre, dans les dernières décennies de sa vie le thème de l'oeuvre sacrificielle. Pour lui, la création, la seule digne d'un écrivain et dont il s'approprie la gloire exclusive, se paye par *le don de soi-même*. Elle signifie le

¹⁵¹ Céline: Romans t IV Editions Gallimard 1993 *Féerie pour une autre fois II : Notes et variantes* p1339

¹⁵² Céline: Romans t IV Editions Gallimard 1993 *Féerie pour une autre fois II : Notes et variantes* p 1340

¹⁵³ Ibid p 1340

¹⁵⁴ *Féerie pour une autre fois II* : Editions Gallimard 1993 : Godard, H : Notes et variantes p 1302

martyre, le calvaire. »¹⁵⁵ (our emphasis) For Céline, then, the most noble and most creative form of death is that caused by self-sacrifice, which for the author was a self-fulfilling prophecy, as he expired the day after completing his last novel, *Rigodon*. The complete elimination of self or subjectivity, to the point of self-sacrifice appears to be symptomatic of the “(...) latent phantasm of suicide present throughout Céline’s career as he abjectifies himself to the point of imperceptibility (...)”¹⁵⁶ This course of action was to help Céline achieve his destiny both as a writer and a medical doctor, as “si l’homme a un destin, ce sera plutôt d’échapper au visage, défaire le visage et les visagéifications, devenir imperceptible, *devenir clandestin*.”¹⁵⁷

Death by poetry

In both the *Voyage* and *Mort à crédit*, many instances of “la tentation fusionnelle”¹⁵⁸ occur between both death and a life force, described in some of Céline’s most poetic prose, in itself emblematic of regeneration:

“Ce corps à nous, travesti de molécules agitées et banales, tout le temps se révolte contre cette farce atroce de durer. Elles veulent aller se perdre nos molécules, au plus vite, parmi l’univers, ces mignonnes ! Elles souffrent d’être seulement « nous », cocus d’infini. On éclaterait si on avait du courage, on faillit seulement d’un jour à l’autre. Notre torture chérie est enfermée là, atomique, dans notre peau même, avec notre orgueil. » (V p 337)

Images of lightness and fluidity are expressed in evocations of « L’eau, le ciel, les brumes, le vent, tout un univers fluide de formes transparentes qui se font et se défont (...) »¹⁵⁹, metaphors for dissolution and disintegration that infuse the notion of death with poetry, convincing us that « ‘Mourir de poésie’ restera un fantôme latent dans l’œuvre de Céline, exprimé le plus souvent comme une métamorphose rendant l’être humain assimilable à un souffle. »¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ Aebersold, D : *Céline : un démythificateur mythomane* : Archives des lettres Modernes, 185 : Archives Louis-Ferdinand Céline 3 (Paris Lettres Modernes Minard 1979) p 103

¹⁵⁶ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : Peter Lang Publishing 2001: p 180

¹⁵⁷ Deleuze and Guattari : *Mille Plateaux : Capitalisme et schizophrénie* : Paris : Editions de Minuit 1980

p 209 in Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of L-F Céline* : Peter Lang Publishing 2001: p 180

¹⁵⁸ Debrie, N : *Il était une fois ... Céline* : Éditions Aubier 1990 : p 106

¹⁵⁹ Debrie, N : *Il était une fois ... Céline* : Éditions Aubier 1990 : p 107

¹⁶⁰ Ibid p 107

Portrayals of death and mutilation are frequently imbued with poetry, such as the body of Normance thrown into the lift shaft that emits « une de ces giclées d'étincelles », (FII p 422) or the severed hand in the prologue to *Guignol's Band I* mentioned earlier in this work,¹⁶¹ both of which lead us to believe that it is possible to “mourir de poésie”, a notion developed by Debrie in her work *Il était une fois ...*

Céline:

« Dès *Voyage* commence pour Céline une sorte de cours contre tout ce qui se cristallise, se fige, conçu comme un obstacle à la communication, à la subjectivation. Véritable course à 'contre-courant' peut-on dire de l'existence. Vivre en faisant abstraction de son individualité biologique ? De son identité ? Ce n'est pas sans raison que notre auteur qualifiera l'effort de l'écriture et de toute création comme un genre de 'suicide' »¹⁶²

And an observation by Pierre-Marie Miroux leaves us in no doubt as to the symbiosis between death and creation when, commenting on Normance's death in *Féerie II*, he observes :

« De même que la tête de Normance a éclaté libérant des gerbes d'étincelles semblables au feu féerique, n'est-ce pas, symboliquement, l'écrivain qui explose dans cette œuvre qu'est *Féerie II*, où l'écriture de Céline n'a jamais été aussi éclatée, même s'il s'agit bien sûr d'un délire totalement maîtrisé par le travail destiné à produire cette émotion, qui est la visée de Céline en tant qu'écrivain ? (...) dans cet éclatement se produit un renversement des forces de la mort en forces de production d'une féerie, au sens propre du terme (...) »¹⁶³

Danse macabre

An important dimension in Céline's conception of death is its absurdity; not only did he accept its inevitability, but it also amused him: “Moi, la mort m'habite. Et elle me fait rire! Voici ce qu'il ne faut pas oublier: que ma danse macabre m'amuse, comme une immense farce. Chaque fois que l'image du 'fatal trépas' s'impose dans mes livres, on y entend des gens qui s'esclaffent. Ma Camarde, c'est un effet comique. (...) et c'est pour ça que mes livres sont drôles, et qu'au fond je suis gai. »¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Under the sub-heading *Apocalypse* : p 22

¹⁶² Debrie, N : *Il était une fois ... Céline* : Éditions Aubier 1990 p 56

¹⁶³ Miroux, Pierre-Marie : *Féerie de la mort* in Actes du colloque international de Paris, juillet 1976 pp 183 – 193 (in Hainge, G : *Capitalism and Schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis – Ferdinand Céline* : p 239

¹⁶⁴ Poulet, R : *Entretiens familiers avec L-F Céline* : Librairie Plon 1958 p 165

The Mediaeval Dance of Death or *danse macabre*, was an allegory for the all-conquering, equalizing power of death; an allegory on death's universality. Indifferent to one's station in life, death spared no one, all of humanity being united in the dance of death. The dance itself consists of the personified figure of death leading a row of dancing figures from all walks of life to the grave – typically represented by an emperor, king, pope, monk, child, beautiful girl, all depicted as skeletons. The Hundred Years' War in France, coupled with an outbreak of the plague dubbed the 'Black Death' presented people with the prospect of an imminent death, one which increased the religious desire for penitence, while also evoking a hysterical desire for amusement while still possible; a last dance as cold comfort in the face of death. The first artistic images were produced as a reminder of the fragility of life and the unimportance of earthly possessions and pleasures.¹⁶⁵

Essentially, the *danse macabre* is a dialogue with death, and in this sense Baudelaire's eponymous poem is not a true depiction of the dance, as it is simply an evocation of the figure of Death. Nevertheless, the conclusion of Baudelaire's poem encapsulates the ephemerality and absurdity of humanity which could not fail to appeal to Céline. We can only speculate that at the time he made his statement to Robert Poulet, he was fully cognisant of the implication of Baudelaire's verse:

“En tout climat, sous ton soleil, la
Mort t'admire; En tes contorsions, risible Humanité;
Et souvent, comme toi, se parfumant de myrrhe,
Mêle son ironie à son insanité!”¹⁶⁶

The Dance of Death was also depicted in works by Bosch and Brueghel, whose work Céline admired, and in particular the artist's *Combat de Carnaval et de Carême* which Céline called the “Fête des Fous”.¹⁶⁷ It is this work that most closely approximates the *danse macabre*, where

“Un fou chemine (...) au centre du tableau (...) Il éclaire de son flambeau allumé un couple d'adultes, en dépit de la clarté du jour – signe du monde 'renversé'. Renversé peut-être en

¹⁶⁵ The earliest artistic depiction of the *Danse macabre* existed in the frescoed cemetery of the Church of the Holy Innocents in Paris (1424). The frescoes were destroyed in 1699.

¹⁶⁶ Baudelaire, C : *Les Fleurs du Mal e t autres poèmes* : Garnier-Flammarion 1964 :XCVII-*Danse Macabre* : p 119

¹⁶⁷ « Bref, dans les années trente, après avoir composé *Voyage* et sur le point d'écrire *Mort à crédit*, Céline prend conscience de son affinité avec Bruegel. Il continuera toute sa vie à l'admirer. Cependant, vers la fin de la décennie, alors qu'une nouvelle guerre approche, et puis quand celle-ci l'aura entraîné dans son désastre, Céline s'intéresse également, sinon davantage, à Jérôme Bosch (...) » :Hanrez, Marc : *Tableaux choisis : Magazine Littéraire* 4^e trimestre 2002 : p 37

raison des durs combats auxquels le livraient justement catholiques et protestants, les premiers représentés en maigres figures de carême, les seconds en goinfres avides de plaisir. Autour d'eux, Bruegel déploie une multitude de scènes folkloriques : enfants qui jouent, infirmes qui mendient, marchands de poissons, fidèles sortant de l'église avec leurs chaises, personnages costumés évoquant une procession. »¹⁶⁸ (our emphasis)

The key to Céline's fascination for Brueghel's images undoubtedly lies in the procession, or *farandole*, as "La danse macabre prend plus souvent la forme d'un farandole"¹⁶⁹, a word the author uses in no less than three of his ballets: *Voyou Paul*, *Brave Virginie* and *Van Bagadan* (both incorporated in *Bagatelles pour un massacre*), as well as *Foudres et flèches* (which he intended to include in *Féerie II*). In a more ominous version of the dance in *Scandale aux Abysses*, Céline employs the concept of the *farandole* as 'La Danse du Massacre' performed by Kapitaine Krog's crew. This ballet was Céline's second choice for inclusion in *Féerie II*, but, like its predecessor, was also abandoned.¹⁷⁰

In the first ballet mentioned, *Voyou Paul*, Paul, who has drunk from the 'flacon maudit', blindly follows the "foule endiablée (...) la farandole l'entraîne ... Il disparaît".¹⁷¹ In *Foudres et fleches*, Cyclops, ignored by those engaged in "la farandole du bonheur", steals one of Cupid's arrows and pierces his own heart, crowns himself with Cupid's crown of roses and joins the dance "au milieu des rires et de la farandole!"¹⁷² In *Van Bagadan*, we witness yet another trope of the farandole, as a force capable of deflecting authority. Despite Van Bagadan's injunction to Peter to quell "Cette sarabande insultante!", and recall the workers to their duty, Peter is powerless to carry out his master's wishes, finding himself "...tout éperdu, avec son bâton, (...) contre toute cette foule ... contre toute cette joie, cette folie ... l'immense farandole."¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Hagen, Rose-Marie et Rainer : *Pieter Bruegel l'Ancien vers 1525-1569 : Paysans, fous et démons* : Benedekt Taschen Verlag 1994 : p 50

¹⁶⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica : www.lamortdanslart.com: Danse Macabre p 1

¹⁷⁰ « D'autre part, il mentionne son intention d'achever ce mémoire par le ballet qu'il est en train d'écrire, *Foudres et flèches*, 'comme d'habitude', précise-t-il, (...) comme il l'avait fait dans *Bagatelles pour un massacre*. À partir du début d'octobre, ayant appris que le scénario *Scandale aux A bysses* était resté inédit en 1944 contrairement à ce qu'il pensait, il le substituera au ballet dans ce projet. » : *Notice* : Romans t IV : pp 1113-1114

¹⁷¹ Céline, L-F : *Ballets sans musique, sans personne sans rien* : Editions Gallimard 2001 : p 68

¹⁷² Ibid p 164

¹⁷³ Ibid p 76

The notion of Death, then, is as intrinsic to the production of Céline's poetic prose through the agency of the Double, as is the phenomenon of War in which death is the projected outcome. We believe that the death of two of Céline's protagonists by suicide – Robinson and Courtial des Pereires - is significant in that this form of elected death signals an attempt by the author to contain the uncertainty of natural death in an engineered demise; one over which he had control. Also not indifferent to our thesis is the fact that these suicides were both figures of the Double of the narrator, and as such, a representation of his *alter ego* or shadow self. In turn, we see their elimination from the narrative as an anticipation of the moment when that figure would disappear from Céline's work entirely in *Rigodon*, having become redundant in all spheres of its function. We also note that Life is the natural pendant of Death, in an eternal circle that represents the essence of Céline's creative output. Life is therefore implicit in each instance of death in Céline's works, whether by suicide or from natural causes.

The Double

The evolution of the figure of the Double in Céline's works is closely linked to both the realisation of his aesthetic, creative output, as well as the establishment of “a connective synthesis between text and reader that will not be reterritorialised, but allow the text to operate like a ‘lanterne magique’ which illuminates (the narrator's) past in such a way that it is ‘comme si vous y étiez!’ (R p 731)”¹⁷⁴ Proof that this has been achieved lies in the use of the pronoun ‘nous’(Nous voici! .. hommage au lecteur! révérence!...) (R p 733) which, according to Hainge, was made possible by the narrator through “fully internalis(ing) these processes of abjection and becoming-imperceptible, directing his discourse towards himself”(....)”¹⁷⁵ The synthesis thus produced with the reader is termed a “becoming-reader-text”.

The early novels

Céline's first literary work *Voyage au bout de la nuit* which the author described as « un récit à la troisième puissance ; Céline fait délirer Bardamu qui dit ce qu'il sait de

¹⁷⁴ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline* :Peter Lang Publishing 2001: p 151

¹⁷⁵ Ibid p 150

Robinson, »¹⁷⁶ incorporates two Doubles of the author – Bardamu and Robinson. This statement is underscored by Céline himself, quoted in Jeanne Carayon's work *Le docteur écrit un roman*: "Bardamu? – Ce n'est pas moi, c'est mon double. Mais Robinson aussi."¹⁷⁷ However, as we shall see, the figures of the Double present in Céline's works comprise not only male, but also female figures; those that are, if anything, more terrifying than their male counterparts.

In Céline's first novels, *Voyage au bout de la nuit* and *Mort à crédit*, the role of the Double is linked to an attempt to attenuate the horror of war ; in the first instance through the creation of the figure of Robinson, in the second, in the person of Courtial des Pereires. In both instances, not only does the creation of the Double act as a shield against the horror of war, but also as a protection against individuals who inspire fear, especially if one is traumatized and vulnerable. Although Bardamu does not feel an immediate sense of identity with Robinson, « ce changement dans la disposition de l'ombre » (V p 41) who he meets one night at the Front, Robinson's influence on him is implicit in the remark that « Décidément d'avoir suivi dans la nuit Robinson jusque-là où nous étions j'avais quand même appris des choses » (V p 308). And later, « Robinson était un garçon tracassé par l'infini *aussi* dans son genre, avant qu'il soit arrivé son accident (...) » (V p 354) (our emphasis) Robinson also shares Bardamu's persecution complex which was revealed in the latter's experience aboard the *Amiral Bragueton*, causing the narrator to observe that « (...) il était obstiné comme un bourdon, Robinson, une vraie nature de persécuté que s'était. Il ne voulait pas comprendre, se résigner. » (V p 391) An interesting metamorphosis takes place in Bardamu while working at the Ford factory in Detroit, where « On cède au bruit comme on cède à la guerre » (V p 226) In this instance, Bardamu employs the same defence mechanism that he used to cope with his experiences at the Front to come to terms with the brutalising forces of Capitalism, forcing him to submit to the *status quo* and to assume a new identity: "Alors, à force de renoncer, peu à peu je suis devenu comme un autre ... Un nouveau Ferdinand." (V p 226) This is yet another instance of the assumption of a protective identity in the face of a brutalizing, dehumanizing force – in this case that of capitalism.

¹⁷⁶ Interview avec Merry Bromberger (*L'Intransigeant*) : Cahiers Céline 1 : Céline et l'Actualité Littéraire 1932 – 1957 : Éditions Gallimard 1976 : pp 30 - 31

¹⁷⁷ Jeanne Carayon : *Le docteur écrit un roman* : Cahiers de l'Herne No 3 : Lettres Modernes Paris 1962 :p 22

In both *Voyage au bout de la nuit* and *Mort à crédit*, we observe the author's creation of figures of the Double as a mechanism for dealing with brutality suffered by the narrator, be it as a result of war in the case of Bardamu, or war coupled with a childhood punctuated by scenes of domestic violence in the case of Ferdinand the narrator of *Mort à crédit*. In each case, the Double created performs a transgressive function in that he represents that which the original, pre-war, pre-traumatised personality dared not do. This is particularly true of Robinson who, as Bardamu's *alter ego*, dares to go where Bardamu can only follow; who expresses Bardamu's repressed desires, and is capable of carrying out an assassination, even though his first attempt on the life of the Mère Henrouille ends in failure. Robinson is « une figure décidément aventureuse (...) même une de ces têtes de révolte qui entrent trop vif dans l'existence au lieu de rouler dessus (...) »(our emphasis), an anarchic trait which cannot fail to impress Bardamu, who in a comment which betrays his empathy for the unfortunate of the world concludes: « Celui-ci c'était un malheureux. »(V p 163).

In this commentary on Robinson's adventurous, subversive nature and subsequent condemnation (or at best, pessimism) of those aspects of his nature, we observe an instance of what Hainge defines as the repression of a "schizophrenic, desiring, molecular level in which all is fragmentary, instantaneous and intensive," in favour of a "paranoid, fascistic, extensive molar level (...)"¹⁷⁸ We posit that it is in Bardamu's inability to accept and internalize the creative adventurous aspect of life proffered by Robinson that the author Céline has to dispense with this figure at the close of the novel, leaving Bardamu in a state of autistic limbo reflected in the words "qu'on n'en parle plus." (V p 505) In rejecting the transgressive element proffered by the figure of Robinson; in repudiating an offer to live life not as a "being but as a becoming, a body without organs"¹⁷⁹, Bardamu remains trapped in the hidebound strictures of conventional society. He manifests an inability "to shrug off all of those normalized patterns by which it is almost universally accepted that life is led, instead to live as a supermolecular individual governed solely by desire, by one's own individual

¹⁷⁸ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang Publishing 2001: p10

¹⁷⁹ Ibid; pp 11-12

style.”¹⁸⁰ This is reflected in the novel’s conventional narrative style in which thematics dominate over stylistics; one in which instances of poetic prose are rare.

In *Mort à crédit*, the narrator Ferdinand’s defence against war through a splitting of his personality is less literal than that of Bardamu. The first instance of a divided Self is mentioned during a fever when he is being nursed by his mother and Mme Vitruve. The ‘enemy’ that he flees from is “la folie” which has pursued him “Depuis la guerre (...) tout et plus pendant vingt-deux ans.” (MàC p 536) The cacophony in his head is shared with his “grande rivale (...) la musique”, which is “coincée (...) se détériore, dans le fond de (son) esgourde...” (MàC p 536) A fierce battle ensues during which music “en finit pas d’agonir.. elle (l)’ahurit à coups de trombone, elle se défend jour et nuit,” a battle which is « du travail pour célibataire... Rien à redire. C’est (sa) *seconde vie*. Elle (le) regarde. » (MàC p 537) (our emphasis) The second indication in the same novel of a split identity occurs in relation to the ongoing domestic violence between the narrator Ferdinand’s father Auguste and his mother Clémence where the latter, recounting her misfortune to Mme Vitruve, hypocritically hides the true state of affairs, “Ma mère raconte pas non plus comment qu’il la trimbalait, Auguste, par les tiffs, à travers l’arrière-boutique.(....) Nous sommes dans la poésie (...) on s’aimait énormément.” (MàC p 540) Instead, Clémence blames her son for the family’s misfortune, « Il me chérissait si fort papa, (...) mes périlleuses dispositions, mes *avatars abominables* ont précipité sa mort.... »(MàC p 540) (our emphasis)

It is significant that each allusion to a split identity is complemented by a reference to writing ; in the first instance « C’est un beau suaire brodé *d’histoires* qu’il faut présenter à la Dame » (MàC p 537), while the second indication of a multiple personality is followed by a mention of the legend of King Krogold: « Tant qu’à battre la vache campagne j’aime mieux rouler dans des histoires qui sont à moi (...) je vois le roi Krogold lui-même... Il arrive du Nord » (MàC pp 540-541). The close association between an instance of divided Self and literature seems to indicate that Céline viewed the act of literary creation as a mechanism for coming to terms with trauma experienced in war on a personal level. That mechanism is expressed as a literary device through the creation of the figure of the Double in the author’s novels.

^{180 180} Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang Publishing 2001: p 12

It is also evident in the author's dual identity as novelist and pamphleteer; as renowned writer and reviled individual; as well as his dual vocation as doctor Destouches and Mr Céline.

In *Mort à credit*, the figure of the Double is represented by Roger-Marin Courtial des Pereires, an eccentric inventor and friend of Ferdinand's uncle Édouard with whom the narrator is placed after a particularly abusive bout of domestic violence during which he attempted to assassinate his father, Auguste with a typewriter. Ferdinand feels an immediate sense of identification with Courtial, an affinity which is described in burlesque terms: "Seulement il était comme moi, il cocotait dur des panards." (MàC p 844) Other connections are more profound, as Courtial awakens Ferdinand's interest in scientific discovery and an awareness of Nature¹⁸¹ and its salutary effect on man: "Voilà l'Homme Ferdinand! Toute la nature! une fuite dans l'impondérable! (...) En l'Harmonie Ferdinand, la seule joie du monde! La seule délivrance ! La seule vérité." (MàC p 846)

Given that Céline's literary aesthetic quest was ultimately to create a text that would pass straight into the reader's core, in much the same way that the 'métro-émotif' ran seamlessly below the surface of the city, a goal that remained unfulfilled at the close of both the *Voyage* and *Mort à credit* – the reader is left, if not in a state of absolute detachment, at best in one of objectivity. However, that was to change with the progress of the transgressive action of the Double in effecting the culmination of Céline's literary aesthetic objective, starting with *Guignol's Band*, including *Féerie pour une autre fois I* and *II*, and terminating in the Trilogy where the Double is dispensed with, the narrator Céline-Destouches having *assimilated* and come to terms with the horror of human existence, and therefore no longer requiring the presence of a Double as a buffer against man's inhumanity to man.

The later novels

As a result of this progression, we observe, from *Guignol's Band* onwards, the emergence of thematics in the service of style, and not the conventional opposite of

¹⁸¹ Céline's admiration for naturalists is evident in his dedication of *Mort à credit* to Lucien Descaves, "romancier d'inspiration naturaliste (Romans t I p 1419) and that of *Féerie II* to Pliny the Elder, Roman statesman and naturalist who perished while watching the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79

that literary procedure that had predominated in Céline's early novels. As readers, we are witness to a narrative style that engages us directly, bearing us along on the author's 'métro-émotif'¹⁸² which "intended to carry its passengers along with it as one body, a feat which is only possible once man, with his fixed notions of duty, race, class, creed and subject has been introduced into a smooth space – such as the underground – where stratification can never be complete."¹⁸³ From this moment onward, it is impossible for the reader to remain objective or disengaged; he or she is actively involved in the text, drawn along by the emotional intensity of Céline's poetic prose.

Sheba's arena (l'Arène de Saba)

Female avatars of the Double in Céline's works are characterised by a malice which appears to pose a threat to the narrator's self-confidence and the equilibrium of his ego. They are consequently depicted as menacing, and to a certain extent, grotesque. In the *Voyage*, Lola is described as "comme une charmante *embusquée* (...) à l'envers de la guerre, à l'envers de la vie" (V p 55). (our emphasis) Significantly, this judgement is preceded by a disavowal of Lola's mental faculties as the narrator declares "Je croyais à son corps, je ne croyais pas à son esprit." (V p 55) The use of the word 'embusquée' is particularly revealing as, being derived from the noun *embuscade* (ambush), it suggests the threat of hidden, unexpected violation. Indeed, each female relationship engaged in by Céline's narrators is tinged by the undercurrent of hidden menace, of separation and loss, be it self-imposed as in the case of the benevolent Molly to whom Bardamu declares "Je vous assure que je vous aime bien, Molly, et je vous aimerai toujours ... comme je peux...à ma façon"(V p 235), or by an external factor such as the suicide of the tragic Nora in *Mort à crédit*. Apart from the grotesque female figures of Mme Gorloge or the androgynous Irène des Pereires in *Mort à crédit*, perhaps the most interesting sexual relationship between the narrator and a female figure occurs in *Guignol's Band* in the person of the child-woman Virginie. The significance of this relationship lies in the extent to which it reveals the ambivalence of the narrator's attitude towards women, and consequently the degree to which it expresses a threat to

¹⁸² *Entretiens avec le professeur Y* : Romans t IV Editions Gallimard 1993: p 536 :« J'embarque tout mon monde dans le métro, pardon ! ...et je fonce avec : j'emmène tout le monde ! ... (...) le métro émotif, le mien ! (...) au but ! direct ! dans l'émotion ! par l'émotion ! rien que le but : en pleine émotion... bout en bout ! »

¹⁸³ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001 p 26

Ferdinand's ego. Virginie, initially benign and childlike, a malleable object in the narrator's hands is described successively as "Une fée!" (GBII p 314), "Quelle ange! Quelle gracieuse douceur!" (GB II p 318), but importantly, also as "quelle mignonne *malice* aussi!" (GBII p 318) (our emphasis). In the eyes of her uncle Colonel Collogham, Virginia, "she is shrewd! Elle est ruseée" (GBII p 325) – an epithet that evokes the accusation of demonism and wiliness leveled by King Solomon at the Queen of Sheba, and, by extension, an evocation of the threat of women's power over men.

Initially unthreatening in her apparent innocence, Virginie becomes progressively more menacing to Ferdinand's equilibrium, gradually abandoning a semblance of childlike innocence, starting with the episode involving the degenerate prostitute Bigoudi: "La fée de mon Coeur si coquine Qu'est-ce qu'une pelote de vices! ... avec Bigoudi la crapaude!" (GBII p 45). Her downfall in the eyes of Ferdinand culminates in a scene of debauchery at the *Touit-Touit* club, anticipated by Ferdinand's description of Virginie as "l'ange déchirant en personne (...)" (GBII p 487) From that moment on, the relationship degenerates with Ferdinand's violation of Virginie and her subsequent pregnancy for which the narrator is loath to take responsibility, dreaming of taking flight on a boat, the *Kong Hamsün*. Ferdinand's mental state descends into paranoia, marked by an increasing loss of reason and a recurrence of the nightmare involving the Colonel des Entrayes. In this particular episode, the narrator assumes the identity of a horse ridden by his former army chief in which it is impossible not to discern an image of homosexuality. Although Ferdinand and Virginie are reconciled at the close of the novel, and the narrator renounces his plans to sail away from responsibility, we know that she is destined to die, consumed by fire, in the projected version of the novel. The manner of her death is significant, as it conjures the image of a ritual, purifying form of death by immolation, suggesting a release from the malevolent female character traits attributed to her by the narrator and, by extension, Céline himself. In summary, then, we believe that apart from the external threat and subsequent trauma occasioned by war, the next greatest threat to the psychic equilibrium of both author and narrator arose from the perception of women as a source of disempowerment and destabilisation.

Commenting on the psychiatrist Otto Rank's investigation of the phenomenon of the Double in his work *Der Doppelgänger*, Freud observes that in Rank's view, "(...) the 'double' was originally an insurance against destruction to the ego, an 'energetic denial of the power of death', (...) and probably the 'immortal' soul was the first 'double' of the body."¹⁸⁴ What is more, Freud held that the invention of doubling "as a preservation against extinction, has its counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a doubling or multiplication of the genital symbol."¹⁸⁵ This notion evokes that of the pre-Oedipal triad of Isis, Osiris and Horus, where Osiris is killed and dismembered by Seth, who tore the corpse into fourteen pieces, dispersing them over Egypt. Eventually, Isis wife of Osiris, and her sister Nephthys found and buried all the pieces except the phallus which was believed to have been swallowed by a fish. By magical means, Isis revived Osiris and conceived her son Horus by him. He was later to become king of Egypt, having slain Seth. Isis, defined as "la grande magicienne, celle dont le pouvoir dépassait celui des autres dieux et même Rê le dieu-soleil"¹⁸⁶, was a powerful female mythological figure; one which Céline used to good effect in his novel *Nord*, in the figure of Isis, wife of the legless cripple, « le fils von Leiden, (...) un infirme, et toujours de mauvaise humeur. » (N pp 408-409), thus emphasising the malevolent side of her nature. Importantly, the goddess Isis was also "(...) mère consolatrice, (son culte) répondait ainsi à l'inquiétude morale grandissante des individus en apportant une solution aux problèmes de la survie dans l'au-delà",¹⁸⁷ an indication of Céline's identification with a female divinity who expressed his own concerns regarding death and the after-life.

On a cautionary note, Freud points out that, because the idea of the Double as an agent of preservation has its origin in the "soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which holds sway in the mind of the child (...)",¹⁸⁸ once that stage of development is left behind, the Double assumes a different guise: "From having been an assurance of immortality, he becomes the ghastly harbinger of

¹⁸⁴ Freud, S : *The 'Uncanny' (1919)* : Collected papers Vol IV : The International Psycho-Analytical Library No; 10 : Hogarth Press 1925: p 387

¹⁸⁵ Ibid p 387

¹⁸⁶ La Dictionnaire des noms propres : p 1036

¹⁸⁷ Ibid p 1036

¹⁸⁸ Freud, S : *The 'Uncanny' (1919)* : Collected papers Vol IV : The International Psycho-Analytical Library No; 10 : Hogarth Press 1925: p 387

death.”¹⁸⁹ This reversal of the roles of the double is borne out in the figure of Isis¹⁹⁰ in *Nord* who, far from representing immortality as she does in her incarnation as goddess, has truly become a harbinger of death. She is a woman who is capable of asking Céline, the narrator of the novel to collude with her in an attempt on the life of her husband. Malevolent in the extreme, at once temptress and murderess, this image of a female double is indeed one that fits Freud’s description of a ‘ghastly harbinger of death’. In a scene which is a fusion of sex and cynicism, Isis attempts to seduce Céline by leading him into the woods: “(...) elle retrousse ses jupes! ... haut aux hanches! Elle s’amuse! (...) Elle m’embrasse(....) ‘Vous savez que mon mari me frappe ...(...) Vous savez ce que je vais vous demander ?’ Elle entrouve sa blouse... blouse de soie bleue ... façon que je voie bien ses seins.... Et entre ses seins un papier... bien replié.... Elle me le passe, que je lise....” (N pp554-556) Shocked, Céline realises that Isis intends him to be her courier, sent to procure drugs from Wohlmuth the pharmacist in Moorsburg, “voyons ces produits (...) *dolosal... curare... morphine... cyanure...*” (N p 556) destined to accomplish her husband’s assassination.

The female Double is a figure that finds particular resonance in Céline’s life and work where it appears as a daemonic figure in the person of Isis, as well as a synthesis of both angel and devil in the person of Virginie in *Guignol’s Band*. We attribute this phenomenon to what Freud ascribes to the “extraordinarily strong feeling of something uncanny that pervades the conception (of the double),”¹⁹¹ added to which “nothing in the content arrived at could account for that impulse towards self-

¹⁸⁹ Freud, S : *The ‘Uncanny’(1919)* : Collected papers Vol IV : The International Psycho-Analytical Library No; 10 : Hogarth Press 1925: p 387

¹⁹⁰ Although a detailed study of the relevance of the goddess Isis in the context of Céline’s works is beyond the scope of this study, the author’s use of her name in his novel *Nord* bears some elucidation. In a Preface to Claude Valence’s work on the traces of the Isis cult in relation to the establishment of the city of Paris, Théophile Briant – poet and friend of Céline – notes that on one of the principal doors of Notre Dame cathedral, “Isis Myrionyme, sous l’apparence de Cybèle, port(e) le thyrsus (symbole générateur) (...)”. The thyrsus, a staff tipped by a pine-cone is traditionally borne by Dionysus (Bacchus) and his followers; the divinity in question being the subject of a later chapter in our work in the context of a transgressive element in Céline’s works. We also consider it important that Isis’s cultural emblem was a Vessel or ship; an object which bore particular significance for Céline: “L’objet du culte allégorique d’Isis était un Vaisseau: les noms d’Isis, d’Esès et d’Hesus qui furent donnés à ce Vaisseau, exprimaient également dans le langage des Celtes: “feu-feu; double-feu; ou encore *hymen-création* ». : Valence, C : *Les traces du culte d’Isis dans le Nom, l’Emblème et le Thème Zodiacal de ville de Paris* : Editions du Goéland Parame : 1952 : p 11

¹⁹¹ Freud, S : *The ‘Uncanny’(1919)* : Collected papers Vol IV : The International Psycho-Analytical Library No; 10 : Hogarth Press 1925: p 388

protection which has caused the ego to project such a content outward as something foreign to itself.”¹⁹² The psychiatrist attributes this phenomenon to “a very early mental stage, long since left behind (...) in which (the double) wore a more friendly aspect. The ‘double’ has now become a vision of terror, just as after the fall of their religion the gods took on daemonic shapes.”¹⁹³ In this context, it is impossible not to recognize the parallel Girard draws between the double and the monster: “Le principe fondamental, toujours méconnu, c’est que le double et le monstre ne font qu’un. (...) Il n’y a pas de monstre qui ne tende à se dédoubler, il n’y a pas de double qui ne recèle une monstruosité secrète. »¹⁹⁴ And later in the same text, with reference to the dialogue between Dionysius and Penthée in *The Bacchantes*: « Dionysos est à la fois homme, dieu, taureau ; la référence aux cornes du taureau fait le pont entre les deux thèmes ; les doubles sont toujours monstrueux ; les monstres sont toujours dédoublés. »¹⁹⁵ (our emphasis)

Frequently coupled with a feeling of uncanniness associated with the Double is one of helplessness caused by disorientation and a feeling of dislocation from all that was previously ‘normal’ and familiar in one’s life. Freud ascribes this sensation to one of “involuntary repetition”¹⁹⁶ evoked in the *Voyage* by Robinson’s unexpected appearances at regular intervals throughout the novel. It is precisely the manifestation of this type of repetition which “surrounds with an uncanny atmosphere what would otherwise be innocent enough, and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable where otherwise we should have spoken of ‘chance’ only,”¹⁹⁷ thus underscoring the strangeness of a particular occurrence. This repetition-compulsion, based on instinctual behaviour, is a precept powerful enough to overrule the pleasure-principle which Freud dealt with in his paper *Beyond the pleasure principle*. It is this principle that imbues certain aspects of the mind with a daemonic nature which is present in the tendencies of very young children. And it is this revelation that whatever triggers the memory of the inner repetition-compulsion lends a sense of the

¹⁹² Freud, S : *The ‘Uncanny’(1919)* : Collected papers Vol IV : The International Psycho-Analytical Library No; 10 : Hogarth Press 1925 p 389

¹⁹³ Ibid: p 389

¹⁹⁴ Girard, R : *La Violence et le Sacré* : Editions Bernard Grasset : 1972 : p 223

¹⁹⁵ Ibid p 226

¹⁹⁶ Freud, S : *The ‘Uncanny’(1919)* : Collected papers Vol IV : The International Psycho-Analytical Library No; 10 : Hogarth Press 1925: p 390

¹⁹⁷ Ibid p 390

uncanny to the experience. Indeed, a sensation of uncanniness is in reality nothing new or foreign, but merely something familiar to the mind that has been “estranged only by the process of repression.”¹⁹⁸ We therefore submit that Céline’s attempt to free himself of an early psychic repression is manifest in the creation of figures of the Double in his works.

Death is the human experience that perhaps most easily and frequently arouses feelings of the uncanny within us, and it is this question that is fundamental to Céline’s works; the question of whether “death is the inevitable fate of every living being or whether it is only a regular but yet perhaps avoidable event in life.”¹⁹⁹

Although we are presented daily with the fact of our mortality – especially in time of war – there is no doubt that “no human being really grasps it, and our unconscious has as little use now as ever for the idea of its own mortality.”²⁰⁰

(Un)Heimlich

In a return to the origin of the uncanny, or, as Freud expressed it, the ‘*unheimlich*’, which relates to the feeling of uncanniness inherent in a confrontation with the female genital organs, it is necessary to examine the feelings of Ferdinand, the narrator in *Mort à crédit*, regarding his mother’s deformed leg and, by extension, its proximity to her uterus. This is described by Freud as “This unheimlich place, (...) the entrance to the former ‘heim’ of all human beings, to the place where everyone dwelt once upon a time.”²⁰¹ In this instance, the *unheimlich* was once *heimisch* or familiar and welcoming, where the prefix ‘un’ is a token of repression, reversing the positive sense of the original meaning.

The first instance of Ferdinand’s repressed feelings regarding his mother’s deformity occurs during an episode of delirium caused by a bout of malaria in which his latent fury towards his mother results in his literally vomiting his disgust: “(...) je lui retrousse sa jupe, dans la furie. J’y vois son mollet décharné, comme un bâton, pas de viande autour, le bas qui godaille, c’est infect! ... J’y ai vu depuis toujours, Je

¹⁹⁸ Freud, S : *The ‘Uncanny’ (1919)* : Collected papers Vol IV : The International Psycho-Analytical Library No; 10 : Hogarth Press 1925: p 394

¹⁹⁹ Ibid p 395

²⁰⁰ Ibid p 395

²⁰¹ Ibid: pp 398-399

dégueule dessus un grand coup ! » (MàC p 543) It is clear that his mother Clémence's deformed leg is part of Ferdinand's earliest memory, one which had disgusted him from infancy. The next episode revealing the extent of Ferdinand's revulsion also, significantly, occurs during an attack of meningitis causing delirium. We believe that these episodes of delirium serve to free from the unconscious the repressed (and therefore unacknowledged) images of the daemonic female which could date back to Céline/Ferdinand's earliest memory. This incident involves a gigantic 'Cliente' who, we believe, symbolizes the all-powerful dominant female-figure imbued with a sense of dread and the uncanny, inspiring fear and revulsion in the narrator: "D'abord j'ai vu tout en rouge.... Comme un nuage tout gonflé de sang (...). Il a pris la forme d'une cliente ... Et alors d'une taille prodigieuse!... Une proportion colossale... Elle s'est mise à nous *commander*... Là-haut...(....) Elle a *ordonné* qu'on se manie (...)." (our emphasis) (MàC p 586) Not only does this image conjure up that of a dominant female indicated by the verbs we have italicized, but it also evokes that of a previous dominant female in the *Voyage*, that of the "(...) grande femme qui est là, qui garde l'Île c'est la dernière. Sa tête est bien plus haute encore que les buées les plus hautes. (...) Ses cheveux rouges au-dessus de tout, dorent encore un peu les nuages, c'est tout ce qui reste du soleil. » (p 369) Not only is this 'guardian of the Isle' the image of a supreme female, but, on a more sinister level, she evokes death embodied in the mythical ferryman Charon with her « rame qui est énorme » which occupies her in an eternal attempt to stir tea in a teapot made from a boat's hull.

The menace inherent in this episode involving Clémence, Ferdinand's mother, is heightened by the fact that she leads the narrator towards the Universal Exhibition, a source of earlier horror caused by its display of mechanisation – a symbol of dehumanisation and the death of creativity. Suddenly, the hallucination ends in a tempest caused by a flurry of the 'Client's' skirts, in itself a terrifying image: "Elle a retroussé d'un seul coup tous les volants de ses jupes Son pantalon ... plus haut que la tête... jusque dans les nuages... Une vrai tempête, un vent si glacial s'est engouffré par-dessous qu'on en a hurlé de douleur (...). » (MàC p 591) Uncanny and terrifying as it was, this image is replaced during Ferdinand and Clémence's flight from the giantess by one which evokes a more abstruse horror, one that is as daemonic as that which was anticipated in the Queen of Sheba who was ordered by King Solomon to walk across a glass-covered lake in order to ensure that her feet

were not cloven, nor her legs covered in hair: “Ma mère retroussait ses jupes (...) si poilus en même temps (...) telle une araignée.” (MàC p 591)

We believe that this image of hairiness encapsulates a primary horror felt by the young child for the female form, and in particular for its proximity to the genital organs; a horror that appears to have been shared by Ferdinand’s father Auguste who “piquait des rages horribles quand elle boitait derrière lui” (MàC p 777) However, the culmination of this mixture of dread and revulsion, in which the point of man’s entry into the world is explicitly mentioned, occurs just prior to another instance of delirium, occasioned not by illness but by Ferdinand’s fury directed towards his father; an episode during which he attempts to assassinate him with a typewriter: “Elle tient plus elle sur sa quille (...) Elle se redécouvre toutes les cuisses, le bas du ventre, la fente et le poilu (...)” (MàC p 821) Hairiness, symbolizing a regression to the animal state, appears to be the common denominator in the evocation of a primal horror as well as the revelation of a daemonic element in the female, the perception of which, in the eyes of both Ferdinand and his father Auguste, is judged to be “infect!” (MàC p 821). This comment is revealing in its degree of disgust and fear for the slightest betrayal of the idealized female form.

Primal fear

Given that “the uncanny proceeds from something familiar which has been repressed”²⁰², and that the act of birth is perhaps the earliest and therefore the most ‘familiar’ of a human being’s perception of life, is the transgression of that repressed memory in provoking a recall of the event, not the source of a primal sense of the uncanny? And, as a result, is the necessity to create a Double in order to protect one against that sense of the uncanny with its daemonic association, not a consequence of that transgression? In noting Freud’s observation that in literature, the fantastic or uncanny is “a much more fertile province than the uncanny in real life, for it contains the whole of the latter and something more besides”²⁰³, we conclude that the writer possesses far more freedom to experience and create uncanny situations than those encountered in real life. This is due primarily to the fact that far more means exist to

²⁰² Freud, S : *The ‘Uncanny’ (1919)* : Collected papers Vol IV : The International Psycho-Analytical Library No; 10 : Hogarth Press 1925: p 401

²⁰³ *Ibid* : p 403

create uncanny effects in literature than those that exist in reality as “The story-teller has this licence (...) that he can select his world of representation so that it either coincides with the realities we are familiar with or departs from them in what particulars he pleases.”²⁰⁴ This is the realm of fairy-tale, Céline’s *féerie*, his poetry which we believe is the apogee of literary achievement. It is the world of *Féerie pour une autre fois*, both volumes of which require the reader to suspend disbelief; novels in which the author, through the narrator, transcends the uncanny through transgression – and transposition - of the repression which brought the novel into being. In this pivotal work, we witness the endgame of the Double. Having been unmasked, his *raison d’être* no longer exists, and we attend his demise in a welter of fairy-tale magic peopled by figures and events that defy logic, because “So long as they remain within their setting of poetic reality, their usual attribute of uncanniness fails to attach to such beings.”²⁰⁵

Aïcha

Aïcha von Raumnitz, wife of Herman von Raumnitz in *D’un Château l’autre* is, like Isis in *Nord*, an incarnation of the daemonic female. Of Levantine origin, she is the archetypal ‘Outsider’, with hardly any knowledge of German, “élevée à Beyrouth Elle est de par là (...)” (CA p 149); a genealogy which underscores her ‘otherness’. Even her adopted married surname has a sinister connotation, as it implies a stifling, oppressive non-place diametrically opposed to the chthonic space that lends itself to creativity. This deduction is arrived at in an analysis of her surname, for the German noun *der Raum* (space) coupled with its suffix – *nitz* (closely allied to the German word *nichts* or ‘nothing’) results in the meaning ‘non-space’. Clad in red boots and wielding a yellow whip, she is accompanied by two mastiffs, all of which imbue her image with a feeling of menace: “(...) elle porte bottes bottes cuir rouge.... elle fait cavalière orientale, toujours à tapoter ses bottes, et une très grosse cravache jaune.”(CA p 150). In short, she presents the reader with an almost stereotyped image of the dominatrix, accentuated by the fact that wherever she goes, she demands deference: “Aïcha, ses dogues, on s’écarte!” (CA p 150) At once enigmatic and seductive, she is the daemonic female incarnate as she leads Céline and Lili towards

²⁰⁴ Freud, S : *The ‘Uncanny’ (1919)* : Collected papers Vol IV : The International Psycho-Analytical Library No; 10 : Hogarth Press 1925 404

²⁰⁵ Ibid: p 405

Room 36, symbol of the Gates of Hades through which the insane, infirm and criminal inhabitants at the *Löwen* hotel pass, never to be seen again. “Aïcha parle non plus ... elle va assez langouressement... ondulante ses hanches... pas vite (...) Aïcha a l’oeil!... elle est langoureuse mais précise ! » (CA p150) Unlike the rest of the *Löwen* hotel which has fallen into disrepair, Room 36 is the only structure which has remained intact, perhaps a symbol of the immutability of the power of evil and state control; an image of molarity. Indeed, Room 36, « c’était la seule chambre solide de tout le *Löwen*... Comme fortifiée vous auriez dit, les murs béton, porte de fer, fenêtres à barreaux (...) des ‘super-prison’, je connais (...) *la cellule* absolument nette ! » (CA pp151-152) » (our emphasis) . This, in contrast to all the other rooms in the hotel, which « étaient comme flottantes, ondulantes, jeux de briques et de fissures... tout débinait ! les plâtras, le plafond, les lits, tout ! » (CA p 151) ; the embodiment of molecularity or creativity.

An atmosphere of uncanniness pervades the scene, accentuated by the rumoured disappearance of the inmates of the ‘cell’ in a lorry at night. Curiously regarding their fate, Céline notes that « moi, je l’ai jamais vu ce camion ! » (CA p 152), despite the fact that he « sortai(t) dépendent pas mal à toute heure de nuit ! » (CA p 152). The strangeness of the disappearance is heightened by the fact that « la légende, le ragot, c’était que ce camion devait jamais être vu par personne ... qu’on les embarquait enchaînés (...) » (CA p 152) – an hallucinatory image similar to that evoked earlier in the same novel, of Charon’s phantom barge on which the dead embark for their last voyage, and one which, similar to that episode, evokes the uncanny, the inexplicable.

The Other

A reflection on the phenomenon of mixed race and its implication for French society is provoked by a potentially dangerous incident involving Aïcha’s daughter Hilda at Berlin station. This leads Céline to embark on a racist-inspired polemic regarding Aïcha’s origin and the effect of mixed-blood marriages on the French population, all of which augments the sense of ‘Otherness’ in von Raumnitz’s wife. How was it possible that Aïcha, married to von Raumnitz, « si Dürer, de stature, nature, et de cette

personne Aïcha, si elle tellement Trébizonde !²⁰⁶ ... Beyrouth ! ... ondulante, si *brune, lascive, bovine*, pas Dürer du tout... ait donné une si belle enfant ? » (CA p 173) (our emphasis) The italicized words emphasise the importance accorded by Céline to colour of the skin, lack of moral fibre and an association with the most passive of animals. Céline also implies that in marrying Aïcha, von Raumnitz saved her from the fate suffered by many Levantine women who were condemned to a life of submission in the harem where they were constantly under surveillance by eunuchs: “s’il l’avait pas épousée, ramenée avec lui en Allemagne, elle subissait le sort et coutume! (...) les Grands Jaloux du Proche-Orient vous ont de ces eunuques aux Hautes Oeuvres! ... les harems votaient pas encore... elle l’avait échappé de très juste, Aïcha ! » (CA p 174) Céline’s dread of crossbreeding is encapsulated in his remarks concerning the offspring born of the marriage of von Raumnitz and Aïcha which is the start of a hybrid, and by implication, inferior race :

« Oh, les croisements sont pleins de périls, d’aléas... la petite Hilda avait de l’étrange et *garcerie*....Beyrouth.....Trébizonde...(.) » (CA pp 173-174) (our emphasis) Céline underscores these remarks with those relating to Aïcha herself, who embodies a projected and feared influx of people of her genre who, saved from slavery by von Raumnitz and his ilk, are “ces séduites du Proche- Orient (...) nous en avons avisé bien d’autres des dames du genre Aïcha proche-Orientales, Sino- Arméniennes, Mongolo-Smyrnes, devenues *Landgravines*... Comtesses...(.) » (CA p 174) – a sardonic litany of foreigners in which one discerns overtones of racism provoked by a fear of the dissolution of the pure Aryan race.

The figure of Aïcha therefore represents the epitome of the Other; not only is she a Levantine who has produced a ‘hybrid’ child signaling the downfall of the ‘purity’ of the Aryan race, but she is also, like the Queen of Sheba, an astute, wily and cruel female figure capable of dominating – and, by implication – annihilating not only her male partner but also possibly men in general. A primal fear of the feminine power embodied in the figure of Aïcha is expressed by Céline in a declaration that is based on a comparison with Laval with his “mèche ébène” and his “peau bistre” (CA p174): “hybrides alertes, intelligents, inquiets aussi.... Ils avaient de quoi être inquiets ces hybrides colonels alertes (...) si *les hybrides me font peur*, j’ai des raisons ! »

²⁰⁶ Possibly a reference to the seductress in Jacques Offenbach’s operetta *The Princess of Trébizonde*

(our emphasis) (CA pp 174-175) And in a torrent of hate-speech against a woman who he perceives as the embodiment of all that is alien and destructive, Céline launches into a cathartic invective against all that the narrator perceives as daemonic, not only in the woman herself, but also as a symbol of the corruption of society itself. This verbal tirade is in fact an exorcism of the suppressed anger and fear felt with regard to the uncanny power of women to sow corruption through the temptation and subsequent downfall of men – and its concomitant implication for the fate of Man in general. : “gros cul Aïcha! soubresauteuse, croupe, danseuse aux serpents! ...salut! gamberge, pétasse! que je suis horrible! os et la haine!...Et que je te l’empalerais moi, vif ! t’entends ? olive ! datte ! morue ! 1900 ; je la vois à la porte ! ... danseuse aux serpents comac ! bottes croco rouges, et gros bijoux ! et la cravache ! » (CA p 192)

Guignol's Band

An important aspect of the situation of *Guignol's Band I* in the midst of war - the prologue depicting the bombing of the city of Orléans in 1940 - is that the reader is “plunged into a narrative recounted by a narrator and peopled by protagonists who cannot easily indulge in the death-dissimulating illusions rife in Capitalist society and the preceding two novels.”²⁰⁷ The chaotic, apocalyptic atmosphere that permeates the first pages of the novel are symptomatic of the transgressive agency of war in not only destroying the literal trappings of molar hidebound society, but in reformulating man’s thinking with regard to certain societal norms and conventions he may hitherto have regarded as inviolable. We shall see how the transgressive action of war comes to be embodied in the figure of the Double in both versions of *Guignol's Band*, and the resultant partial liberation from convention of the narrator Ferdinand that ensues, accompanied by a parallel development in the poetics of Céline’s prose.

Délires

The calibre of a text founded in *délire* is emblematic of the centrifugal force of a creative impulse as opposed to the centripetal forces of convention. Based on this premise, by “valorizing *délire* as the foundation for an aesthetic, converting it into a plane composed of and emanating style, the becoming-music of Céline’s aesthetic allows his assemblage to *pass into that of the reader* who must not, cannot provide a

²⁰⁷ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001 : p 26

reading, but must instead dé-lire”²⁰⁸. (our emphasis) In other words, the reader must deconstruct his conventional form of reading in order to be able to participate fully in Céline’s (deconstructed) text, an act that requires the conversion of a passive reader into an active one.

Céline’s style, founded in delirium, his “primary mode of production”²⁰⁹, is increasingly present in his work from *Guignol’s Band* onwards, and far from representing a feigned pathological schizophrenia as a ploy to abrogate responsibility for having written the pamphlets, his is primarily “a style, an organizing principle, a mode of composition”. Indeed, it is the “only possible means of survival and continuance for those refusing to conform to the simulacra of life presented by molarity”²¹⁰. An insufficiency of *délire* sounds the death knell for the authentic artist, the spectre of which leads a despairing Bardamu to declare “Et où aller dehors, je vous demande, dis qu’on a plus en soi la somme suffisante de délire? (...)” (V p 200)

Chaos

The opening scene in the Prologue of *Guignol’s Band* is one of complete chaos, which implies the reduction of all fixed structures to the sum of their individual parts. We are presented with a scene that is propitious for the production of aesthetic creation in that it depends on no prior reference to a fixed state of existence – it simply *is*. The bombardment itself is a transgressive act, as it destroys all preconceived notions of social and personal hierarchy, reducing the citizens of Orleans traversing the bridge to a homogenous mass; a conglomerate of humanity united in a common horror of the event. The image of this bombardment presented to us by Céline is redolent of artistic potential, as we are witness to an event in which “the paranoiac reterritorialising axiomatics of Capitalism crumble, to leave room for the expression of a properly schizophrenic desire that can set up connective syntheses – either thematically between protagonists or stylistically between text and reader.”²¹¹ For the first time in this novel, Céline actively solicits the reader to participate in his work, an invitation that is implicit in the choice offered in the Preface’s suggestion : “Ça sera tout ce que

²⁰⁸ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001 : p196

²⁰⁹ Ibid p 14

²¹⁰ Ibid p 15

²¹¹ Ibid : p 32

vous y mettez! *l'orage ou la flûte!* comme aux Enfers, comme chez les Anges!”²¹² (our emphasis)

From the outset then, the text itself is placed under the aegis of a duality which prefigures a thematic interpretation privileging either the poetic or the apocalyptic aspect of the text. We posit that *both* are possible, being indissoluble one from another; both sides of the *same* coin and a metaphor for the figure of the Double. Although ‘molar’ figures representing Capitalist society *are* present in the novel in the person of Matthew, the policeman, Cascade the pimp who is also in Matthew’s employ and, in retrospective narrative, the Colonel des Entrayes who embodies institutionalized warfare²¹³, other ‘molecular’ characters exist, such as Sosthène de Rodiencourt, Borokrom and even the pawnbroker Van Claben - whose ‘molar’ adherence to commerce and materialism is redeemed by his love for music – Virginie and Mille Pattes represent examples of the ‘flûte’ part of the dichotomy *orage-flûte*. Balanced equally between ‘molar’ and ‘molecular’ figures, the thematics of the text therefore reflect the duality inherent in the figure of the Double.

*Des Entrayes*²¹⁴

Although not actually present in the text except in retrospective narrative, the Colonel des Entrayes who we first encountered in the *Voyage*, is present in *Guignol’s Band* as a fantastical figure who appears three times to Ferdinand on the occasion of the murders of Van Claben and Mille-Pattes, the theft of the Colonel’s mercury and the violation of Virginie, a minor. The appearance of this figure on each occasion of real trauma experienced by the narrator indicates his role as a coping mechanism for both present horror in the narrative as well as retrospective trauma experienced at the Front.

In the first hallucinatory incident, Ferdinand recalls des Entrayes’ battle-cry “Haut les coeurs! ... et au galôôp! Chââârgé!” (GBI p 257) following the murder of Van Claben and Mille-Pattes, prompting the narrator to present himself at the French embassy to join up – proof that he has not yet thrown off the trappings of a molar

²¹² Céline: *Guignol’s Band I*: Romans t III : Éditions Gallimard 1988: p 12

²¹³ As opposed to its positive opposite, the nomadic ‘war machine’ discussed above.

²¹⁴ We believe that Céline’s choice of this name was deliberate, as its phonetic pronunciation evokes the word *entrailles* – innards or entrails – an image of slaughter.

society, and that patriotism is still important to him, albeit prompted by an expedient flight from the horror of the pawnbroker's death. The second hallucinatory appearance of des Entrayes occurs after the theft of the mercury from Virginie's uncle, as Ferdinand waits for her in the vestibule of their building. "Haut les coeurs!" Je reconnais son cri.... (...) j'en ai la bave partout de chevalje croque dans le tapis mors aux dents" (GBII pp 429-430) It is important to note that Ferdinand's identification with des Entrayes is so complete in this episode that he *becomes* a horse, which is no longer the case in the third hallucinatory appearance. In this third and last episode, Ferdinand's guilt arises from the violation and subsequent pregnancy of Virginie, a sense of persecution that he identifies with that of his father, Auguste : "... je suis un martyr des scrupules... je suis en plein supplice.... c'est tout à fait comme mon père... je souffre tout pareil." (GBII p 588) Similar to the previous hallucinations, des Entrayes appears as a result of Ferdinand's guilt and persecution complex, but this time the narrator is no longer a horse itself but *like* one "Toute ma force est revenue! Et bien pire encore *tel un cheval!*" (GBII p 590) (our emphasis), despite the fact that he subsequently imagines himself mounted by the colonel des Entrayes, « La voix tout de suite du colonel... du mien, des Entrayes chef de corps! Il me monte en cuirasse!" (GBII p 593) This hallucinatory episode is interesting in the context of Durand's note on the significance of the link between Evil and Death in the *Apocalypse*,²¹⁵ which leads us to deduce that the Colonel des Entrayes represents Death, mounted on his 'pallid horse' in the person of Ferdinand. We note that at the end of the episode, despite Ferdinand's having initially described himself as *like* a horse, he eventually identifies as completely with the animal, as he had previously: "C'est moi le cheval corps et âme!" (GBII p 594)

As an explanation for Ferdinand's hallucinations involving the Colonel des Entrayes and his horse, Hainge observes that "Obviously realising that molarity can only be fought with molarity, Ferdinand enlists the help of des Entrayes to combat the molar forces that he sees lined up against him, imagining himself - in full-blown paranoid

²¹⁵ Durand, G : *Les structures anthropologiques de l'Imaginaire* : Dunod Paris 1992 p 79 : « D'autres cultes lient encore de façon plus explicite le cheval, le Mal et la Mort. Dans l'*Apocalypse*, la Mort chevauche le cheval blafard (...) Le folklore et les traditions populaires germaniques et anglo-saxonnes ont conservé cette signification néfaste et macabre du cheval : rêver d'un cheval est signe de mort prochaine. »

delirium – to be a horse ridden by his former Army commander.”²¹⁶ While this observation does make sense, we believe it ignores the significance of the transgressive role of the Double embodied in des Entrayes as an expression of Ferdinand’s paranoiac self, in attempting to break free of the strictures of society (in this case represented by the Army), by using an identical element of that society to do so, in much the same way as a vaccination works to counter the spread of a disease with a quantity of the same virus or bacteria that caused it.

Sosthène

Several factors attracted Ferdinand to Sosthène de Rodiencourt the magician who the narrator encountered on being ejected from the French Embassy where he had attempted to enlist in the army. Not only does Sosthène offer the narrator the promise of spirituality through a version of Orientalism, but he also professes to being able to achieve a degree of heightened spiritual awareness through the medium of dance; a genre of artistic expression that Ferdinand admires to the point of devotion. Moreover, the promise that the mystic quest for a magic Tibetan flower, “La Tara-Tohé, Fleur des Songes!” (GBII p 289) will liberate him from the weight of social convention cannot fail to entice the narrator. What is more, Sosthène displays a disdain for patriotism, gently mocking Ferdinand’s misdirection of his life in attempting to enlist in a war that “(...) n’est qu’une pétarde! La Vie est brève!” (GBII p 271) The temptation to free himself from convention is too strong for Ferdinand, and he rapidly falls under Sosthène’s spell.

However, Sosthène de Rodiencourt proves to be a venal sham on several levels; although he professes spirituality, he mistreats his wife, and despite haranguing Ferdinand about becoming ‘initiated’, his religious practice is merely a postiche for authentic spiritualism. Most importantly for Ferdinand, even Sosthène’s dance is farcical. Far from being contemplative, concentrated and self-referential, the form of dance practiced by the magician borders on exhibitionism. To illustrate this point, we refer to an article by Jean-Marie Guinebert²¹⁷:

²¹⁶ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001: p 4

²¹⁷ Guinebert, J-M : *Présences de la danse dans Guignol’s Band et Féerie pour une autre fois in L’Année Céline 1991 (Tusson & Paris ; Du Lérot/IMEC 1992) pp 181-198 ; p 190 in Hainge, G :*

“La danseuse ne renvoie qu’à elle-même. On retrouve ici la distinction majeure qui était faite entre la danse de ballet et la danse orientale incarnée par Sosthène. Dans cette dernière, tournée en ridicule par Céline, le danseur est à interpréter comme une figure symbolique. Par le jeu de son corps, il renvoie à une réalité supérieure. Mais ce ne peut être qu’un échec, une ‘évasion manquée vers un sens évanescent’. Le corps est toujours amené à reprendre ses droits et Sosthène finit toujours par retomber ‘seul subsistant, nu comme un ver, pâle et grisâtre...’ (...). La danseuse de ballet, tout au contraire, ne fait référence qu’au *corps lui-même* et c’est en cela que sa danse peut être une réussite, dans sa dimension a-symbolique. »
(our emphasis)²¹⁸

Ferdinand’s disenchantment with Sosthène culminates in the latter’s inability to stop the traffic in Piccadilly Square²¹⁹ in a farcical *Vega* dance that results in a public beating and ignominy.

By the end of the novel Sosthène’s alleged mysticism has entirely dissipated, and he is depicted in the company of Virginie and Ferdinand on London Bridge, a frail old man devoid of mystery – “Il gèle, il tremble. Je le vois toc.... (...) je le laisse qu’il se repose ...” (GBII p 755) Once more, Ferdinand is disillusioned, his spiritual aspirations in tatters, although at the novel’s end, he does possess a form of hope and regeneration in Virginie who carries his child. In the context of the transgressive role of the Double, we cannot ignore the fact that it was Sosthène who introduced Ferdinand to Virginie, thus setting in motion a dynamism that was to affect him fundamentally in that it made him question his motivation for wishing to board the *Kong Hamsün*, an action he decides to waiver, thus taking responsibility for his actions and in so doing, partially exorcising the guilt that has plagued him throughout the novel.

²¹⁸ *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : Peter Lang publishing 2001 p 223

²¹⁹ Godard’s interpretation of the word ‘Scrum’, as well as Céline’s orthography are both erroneous. “Go way! ... Go way!... Fool! Scrum!”(GBII p 608) The correct word in this context is ‘Scram’ which, in Cockney dialect spoken in London means ‘Go away, clear off!’. Godard interprets the meaning of the word as follows: “Scrum, qui veut dire ‘mêlée (de rugby)’, ‘bousculade’, pourrait être ici une erreur, peut-être de transcription, pour *scum* (« salaud »). Note No 2 : page 1143 *Notes et variantes* : Guignol’s Band II : Romans t III.

Mille-Pattes

Mille-Pattes' appearance is the embodiment of the grotesque, a criterion for transgression - and, by implication, of 'becoming' - as defined in the work *The Politics and Poetics of transgression*:

"The openings and orifices of this carnival body are emphasized, not its closure and finish. It is an image of impure corporeal bulk with its orifices (mouth, flared nostrils, anus) yawning wide and its lower regions (belly, legs, feet, buttocks and genitals) given priority over its upper regions (head, 'spirit', *reason*)(...) To complete the image of grotesque realism one must add that it is always in process, it is always *becoming*."²²⁰

Mille-Pattes embodies an extended definition of the Double, as, of all those figures present in *Guignol's Band I and II*, he is undoubtedly the most transgressive; he is the embodiment of what Deleuze describes as a '*corps sans organes*', a metaphor for creativity. That protean state is one

"...which can be thought of as a reformulation of the Thanatic drive, a model of death in the unconscious, (...) a moment of antiproduction in the process of production, and without which desiring-production would be impossible - the molecular level proceeding only by breaks, by a constant move forwards away from all that is fixed, stagnant, pre-ordained."²²¹

Even though the reader's introduction to Mille-Pattes - the spider-like creature who pounces on Delphine and sells her drugged cigarettes - might evoke an image of an evil, sinister being, he proves to be no more than a projection of Ferdinand's "own persecution complex that sees danger everywhere (...)." ²²² His name alone implies multiplicity - a facet of his being that is underscored by his sleight-of-hand at cards,²²³ while his self-styled moniker '*Physicien du Ciel*' or 'Sky Physician' confers a cosmic dimension: "Je suis le Physicien du Ciel - Le Mage des Âmes! ... Je sais rendre le souffle aux innocents ! » (GBI p 211) ; « I am your friend ! Your friend ! the Sky Physician ! (...) ses propres paroles ! » (GBI p 212)

Despite having initially struck up a friendship with Mille-Pattes, and reluctantly

²²⁰ Stallybrass, P and White, A : *The Politics and Poetics of transgression*: Cornell University Press 1986 : p 9.

²²¹ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001: p 11.

²²² Ibid p 57

²²³ « (...) Mais surtout adroit le nain aux cartes ! ... (...) sa magie ! Ah, tout ce qu'il voulait aux jeux ! » (GBI p 246)

acknowledging an admiration for him - "Il se cache pas d'être intelligent"(GBI p 246) - observes the narrator - his new-found friend also inspires fear in Ferdinand, as he appears to know the circumstances surrounding Van Claben's death, having tried to persuade Ferdinand to return to the *Leicester* to confront Delphine and Borokrom. However, Mille-Pattes endears himself to Ferdinand through a common anarchic ideology based on a contempt for institutionalized power in any form, be it political or educational, mocking Ferdinand for his erudition, "T'as de l'instruction, pote! (...)
C'est pas tout, retiens, l'instruction! Ce qui compte dans la vie c'est l'intelligence naturelle! (...) » (GBI p 252) Finally, Mille-Pattes having persuaded Ferdinand to take the métro with him, they descend to the station where Ferdinand, imagining that he sees the policeman Matthew on the opposite platform, and suspecting that Mille-Pattes has led him into a trap, pushes the dwarf under the wheels of the train. The narrator is so unnerved by this episode that his sense of self becomes fragmented, causing him to exclaim: "Je vois plus rien – et puis je vois tout! Je suis plus moi! ... C'est moi! Je l'ai ballotté le sale nabot ... en l'air le Mille-Pattes! (...)" (GBI p 255)

Nettlebeck sees Mille-Pattes as "a symbol of the widespread power of disintegration represented by the Cascade civilization myth", and the killing of the dwarf as "a metaphor of Céline's attempt to reject completely that decadent civilization, (which) corresponds to the higher level of the pamphlets."²²⁴ It is also significant that Ferdinand carries out the murder in full view of the policeman Matthew, "for here Céline's own need to make his rebellion public appears in a different light. While his anti-Semitism is the attitude of a megalomaniac judge who cannot be held responsible for his actions, his rejection of decadence has more the value of witness."²²⁵ Moreover, in contrast to the murder of Van Claben, "the murder of Mille-Pattes (...) is a vital step in Ferdinand's evolution, for it leads directly to his encounter with Sosthène and the beginnings of creation"²²⁶ through his meeting with Virginie. Unlike Mille-Pattes whose action on Ferdinand is transgressive in that it is fundamentally iconoclastic, releasing him from the bonds of convention, Sosthène is "capable of acting only as a catalyst to initiate Ferdinand into the spiritual dimension."²²⁷ These

²²⁴ Nettlebeck, C : *The Antisemite and the Artist: Céline's pamphlets and Guignol's Band: Australian Journal of French Studies* vol IX No 2 1972 : p 186

²²⁵ Ibid p 186

²²⁶ Ibid : p 186

²²⁷ Ibid p 186

two examples of the transgressive and catalytic role of the Double in Céline's works clearly demonstrate its capacity to act as a trigger for creative production.

Spectre

The return of Mille-Pattes, the *mort-vivant* into Ferdinand's life is an important step in the narrator's evolution towards a 'molecular' state of becoming, founded on a principle of acceptance of the cultural context in which he lives, instead of conducting his life in opposition to it: "In other words, creation, symbolized by Virginia's pregnancy – appears to be possible only within the cultural context."²²⁸ Importantly, "accepting the culture means accepting the death principle which it contains (represented by the living corpse of Mille-Pattes), but paradoxically, the acceptance of death, in so far as it acts as a stimulus for creation, is also a means of transcendence."²²⁹

Mille-Pattes' transgressive power is directly proportionate to his grotesque appearance, as Ferdinand discovers, on examining him closely: « ... je me penche par-dessus la table, tout dessus je le vois bien.... là plein dans l'oreille ... tout vert que c'est dans son cou, et puis arraché des bouts de chair.... Et puis une sorte d'humeur qui coule... et puis des bouts de peau rose et jaune... ah! si c'est immonde !... » (GBII pp 471-472) Ferdinand's incantatory manner of describing Mille-Pattes' grotesque features infuses them with a fantastic, magical quality, thus impressing his image indelibly on the reader's mind. In addition, like Robinson in the *Voyage*, Mille-Pattes emerges from the night spectre-like, an image of Ferdinand's shadow self or *alter ego*. On the point of taking Virginie to supper, Ferdinand notices that she is pale, her gaze fixed on the far side of the lawns, he too straining to detect what has frightened her. At first he sees nothing but, gradually, a form emerges from the gloom: « (...) puis là si, y a un bonhomme ... une forme qu'avance au bout de l'allée (...) les buées dansent autour... il se rapproche ... figé.. puis il remarque

²²⁸ Nettlebeck, C : *The Antisemite and the Artist: Céline's pamphlets and Guignol's Band: Australian Journal of French Studies* vol IX No 2 1972 : p 186

²²⁹ *Ibid* pp 186-187

Des pas lents²³⁰ comme ça... somnambule tout posément (...) c'est une rafale de pluie qui voile ... la flotte reprend qu'on voit plus rien (...) » (GBII p 461)

Mille-Pattes' gait alone cannot fail to recall that of Robinson in the *Voyage*, himself a creature of the night and equally as transgressive. Other intertextual similarities exist between the figures of Robinson and that of Mille-Pattes, indicating their dual role as Doubles *and* mediators in the production of an event that defies the laws of logic and reality. In the first instance, in the *Voyage* Bardamu's encounter with Robinson in the African jungle sees him struggle to place his Double's face, sure that they have met before : "La figure de ce Robinson m'apparut encore une fois avant que j'éteignisse, voilé par cette résille d'insectes. C'est par cela peut-être que ses traits s'imposèrent plus subtilement à ma mémoire, alors qu'auparavant ils ne me rappelaient rien de précis." (V p 169) And in *Guignol's Band II*, Ferdinand is equally puzzled, certain that he has met Mille-Pattes before : « (...) je le reconnais Je le reconnais pas ... je suis pas certain ... il me donne un malaise... c'est lui, c'est pas lui! ». (GBII p 462) Ferdinand is particularly traumatised when the phantom addresses him by name, as though the spectre knew him as intimately as he knew himself: "Comment qu'il connaît mon nom? Je bégaye, je peux pas lui répondre ... (...) Qu'est-ce c'est ? que j'y fais, qu'est-ce que c'est ? » (GBII p 462)

Identity

Even more significant in the context of Ferdinand's evolution towards a sublimation of his ego necessary for him to attain a molecular, creative state of being, is the concurrence between the desubjectifying effect of Robinson on Bardamu in the African jungle, and that of Mille-Pattes on Ferdinand. Pivotal to this issue is that of the affirmation of identity. In the former instance, Bardamu seeks a response from Robinson who fails to reply: "Robinson! Robinson! Appelai-je gaillard (...) Hé mon vieux. Hé Robinson. Aucune réponse. Il était parti," (V p 170), leaving a void into which Bardamu's identity appears to dissipate. In the latter case, in reply to Ferdinand's exhortation to dispense with the play-acting he perceives Mille-Pattes to be guilty of, "Faut que ça finisse! (...)" (GBII p 468), the dwarf *fails to respond*,

²³⁰ We cannot help noticing the similarity between the appearance of Robinson and that of Mille-Pattes in *Voyage au bout de la nuit*: « Il marchait bien pondérément, avec un peu de véritable majesté, comme s'il venait d'accomplir des choses dangereuses et pour ainsi dire sacrées dans la ville. » (V p 233)

provoking in Ferdinand the same traumatized reaction as when he addressed the narrator by name: “Il me répond pas. Il me regarde, il me pose seulement la main sur le bras, sa main, son genre, des petits bouts d’os ... ça y est. *flof!* j’existe plus. Je suis comme vidé net ... je bégaye. » (GBII p 468) Ferdinand is left in the same state of limbo as Bardamu in the *Voyage*, his identity dissipating into a void of non-affirmation.

Eruption

In *Guignol’s Band II*, the dinner at the *Corridor* restaurant ends in an explosion caused by a bomb hurled by Mille-Pattes, the ultimate expression of a centrifugal, iconoclastic –and therefore creative - movement. We posit that this is a metaphor for Mille-Pattes’s capacity to lead Ferdinand away from a static, centripetal way of life to a more liberated, molecular one, defined by the centrifugal forces of creativity. The transgressive act of bombing underscores this function in a literal expression of the meaning of the word ‘iconoclastic’ – ‘shattering the images’.²³¹ Ferdinand’s close identity with Mille-Pattes, revealing that they are in fact Doubles of one another, is disclosed in the phantom’s reply to Virginie’s question regarding the length of his acquaintance with Ferdinand. Mille-Pattes replies “Depuis toujours chère petite! Nobody knows him better! Personne le connaît mieux que moi ! » Moreover, Mille-Pattes claims to have known Ferdinand « Dans un autre monde ! », (GBII p 477) which proves to be none other than the narrator’s birthplace, Paris.

Stammer

When Mille-Pattes describes himself as “Je je suis le plus grand détenteur des passions extra” (GBII p 490), the repetition of the pronoun ‘je’ is deliberate, in counterpoint to the use of the word ‘bégaye’ used twice by Ferdinand in dialogue with Mille-Pattes, and each time in reaction to trauma caused by the spectre. (GBII pp 462 & 468) In stuttering, Mille-Pattes is expressing the “embodiment of Ferdinand’s schizophrenic, emotive side that is still ensnared by the paranoiac molar pole. He is, in other words, that side of Ferdinand that Ferdinand knows *can do him harm* within molar society, that side of him of which, in a moment of excessive paranoia, he tried

²³¹ Greek : **eikonoklastès** from eikon (icon) + **klastès** - breaker

to rid himself by pushing Mille-Pattes under a train.”²³² Mille-Pattes therefore represents that side of Ferdinand that creates “ ‘un autre monde’ from *within* stratified space, being little more than a puddle on the metro rails in death, in his life after death he becomes the *métro’émotif*.”²³³ Mille-Pattes’ reincarnation as a phantom; a *mort vivant/ métro-émotif* represents the vehicle required by Ferdinand – Céline’s magic form of transport capable of removing all obstacles to the smooth passage of emotion:

“ (...) toute la Surface! Embarquée! Amalgamée dans mon métro! Tous les ingrédients de la Surface! Toutes les distractions de la Surface ! (...) jamais le moindre arrêt nulle part ! (...) direct !dans l’émotion ... par l’émotion rien que le but : en pleine émotion... bout en bout ! »²³⁴

It is in *Guignol’s Band* that Céline is finally able to become “(...) un étranger dans sa propre langue. Faire une ligne de fuite,”²³⁵ thus denoting the achievement of a style in the true sense of those “dont on dit d’habitude ‘ils n’ont pas de style...’” - those who have learned how to “bégayer dans sa propre langue”.²³⁶ Deleuze defines this linguistic evolution as « ...être bilingue même en une seule langue, (...) avoir une langue mineure à l’intérieur de notre langue (...) faire de notre propre langue un usage mineur. »²³⁷ And in an allusion to the acquisition of a ‘minor language’ in the creation of poetic prose, Proust clarified it as « une sorte de langue étrangère », a prerequisite for the creation of « Les beaux livres ». ²³⁸

Saturnale

It is at the *Touit Touit* club that Mille-Pattes reveals his true schizoid self in a series of events that are centrifugal in their power to destabilize; the emotional equivalent of a bomb blast or a volcanic eruption. Having apparently consented to board Mille-Pattes’ ‘*métro-émotif*’, Ferdinand and Virginie embark on a journey designed to destabilize their sensibilities by ridding them of every preconceived idea of morality as well as

²³² Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001: p 59

²³³ Ibid : p 60

²³⁴ *Entretiens avec le professeur Y* : Romans t IV Editions Gallimard 1993 : p 536

²³⁵ Deleuze, G and Parnet, C : *Dialogues*: Flammarion Paris 1977 : p10

²³⁶ Ibid p 10

²³⁷ Ibid p 11

²³⁸ Ibid p 11

notions of form, time, space and even gravity. For during what Ferdinand successively terms a “*furie bacchanale*”, “*une satanée pagaye*”, a “*grand sabbat*” and a “*saturnale*” (GB II pp 502-503), Mille-Pattes appears to disregard the forces of gravity by clinging to the ceiling like a spider : “Il leur mimait des rigodons, des gambades de folle araignée... tout au dessus de leurs têtes.” (GBII p 499) The participants at the orgy merge into a homogenous mass, characterized by their incantatory chanting of the refrain ‘*Touit Touit!*’ in unison, “et puis ils hurlent en plus ceux-là... ‘*Touit Touit*’ en refrain en cadence.” (GBII p 497)

We posit that the behaviour of the revelers is a metaphor for Ferdinand’s loss of individual identity, a loss which is intrinsic to his liberation from the strictures of conventional behaviour, and a prerequisite for his entry into a smooth creative space. However, despite his dissolute behaviour at the club, Ferdinand is still caught up in “the paranoid pole with its repressive mechanisms of shame and guilt”²³⁹, until Mille-Pattes betrays the liberating role he has hitherto played in Ferdinand’s life. This comes about through a complete *volte face* that involves Mille-Pattes reverting to his profession of card-player and sleight-of-hand artist, in this instance gambling not with people’s money but worse, with their souls: “Il ramasse maintenant les âmes ... Les âmes aussi jouent tout ce qu’elles ont... les Touit Touit! (...) c’est un peu comme les cœurs ... mais tout pâles et tout translucides.” (GBII p 510) Expressing disillusionment at his role model’s fall from (artistic) grace, Ferdinand cannot help exclaiming « Il a pas volé son métro (...) » (GBII p 510) enraging the narrator to a degree that he threatens to kill Mille-Pattes once more: “Je le ferai repasser sous la rame!” (GBII p 510). Hainge comments that “This misappropriation of the *métro* enrages Ferdinand so much that it liberates him from the paranoid pole that has held him in check up until now (...)”,²⁴⁰ prompting him to exclaim “Je suis guéri!” (GBII p 510) Mille-Pattes is castigated for his behaviour by a curious Camarde-like being – a silent drummer wearing a cap inscribed with the word *Cimetry*, who leads the dwarf away like one of the Pied Piper’s rats, the curiousness of the episode underscored by the words “Ils disparaissent dans la nuit! ... par la porte qui s’ouvre toute seule!” (GBII p 511). Freed from any influence Mille-Pattes might have wielded, the liberation of Ferdinand’s

²³⁹ Hainge, G : Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline : Peter Lang publishing 2001 p 63

²⁴⁰ Ibid p 63

suppressed desire for Virginie culminates in her deflowering and subsequent pregnancy; a symbol of regeneration and creativity born of a transgressive act of violence.

Mille Pattes' name cannot fail to recall Lafcadio's band of villains in Gide's *Les caves du Vatican*, in which « ...d'un bout à l'autre de la bande (elle avait nom le Mille-Pattes) régnaient une entente et une discipline merveilleuses. »²⁴¹ The impression of a gang of ne'er-do-wells is heightened by the appearance, in *Guignol's Band II* of Mille-Pattes in the company of Bigoudi the prostitute and Nelson the pavement artist, intent on sowing as much discord as the eponymous band in Gide's novel, causing Ferdinand to exclaim "Ah! C'est de l'acharnement infect! C'est de la persécution vicieuse... je suis le jouet des machinations..." (GBII p 618)

Pivot

Just as *Guignol's Band* acts as a pivot between two halves of Céline's work, appearing after the pamphlets and therefore necessarily incorporating the legacy of their negative public reception into the text, so too does Mille-Pattes fulfil the same role in this novel, in setting the narrator (Bardamu, Ferdinand) on a course towards artistic liberation and fulfillment. We believe that it is no coincidence that Mille-Pattes is the most grotesque – and therefore the most transgressive – of all the figures of the Double in Céline's work, with perhaps the exception of Jules, in *Féerie I and II* who, though mutilated, does not possess the phantom-like, uncanny aspect of Mille-Pattes who is amorphous, protean.²⁴² It is for this reason that we have accorded the figure of Mille-Pattes such prominence in this chapter. He is the catalyst for Ferdinand's liberation from molar stricture, and a concomitant accession to aesthetic freedom that is paralleled in Céline's text in a heightened degree of poetic prose, and evidenced in the pre-eminence of stylistics and a reversal of the conventional role of stylistics in the service of thematics present in *Féerie pour une autre fois*.

²⁴¹ Gide, A: *Les caves du Vatican* : Librairie Gallimard 1958 : p 786

²⁴² Note : Given Céline's fascination with the sea and ships as an expression of true liberty, it is significant that Mille-Pattes evokes a protean image, as Proteus was a prophetic sea god capable of changing his shape at will.

Féerie pour une autre fois

In *Féerie pour une autre fois*, the two versions of which are mirror-images of themselves, we first observe the centripetal, repressive forces of society at work, followed by the triumph of the centrifugal force of artistic expression. The catalyst for this transition is the transgressive figure of the narrator Ferdinand's Double Jules, the legless artist. Although *Féerie I* and *II* differ substantially with regard to style in comparison with Céline's previous works, his creative aim remains unchanged – "to find that very same inter-polarity sought by Ferdinand, to attain a means of stylistic expression (*and mode of existence therefore*) that lies somewhere between molarity and molecularity, paranoia and schizophrenia, to create a pure aesthetic, a work of the imagination, a centrifugal intensity that does not spin off into a pathological condition (...)"²⁴³

Confinement

Féerie pour une autre fois I, written while Céline was imprisoned under house arrest in Denmark, is dominated by a sense of literal and figurative confinement embodied in a combination of Céline's prison cell in the Vestre Faengsel where he had spent fifteen months, and what Hainge terms the "Centripetal force of History"²⁴⁴, the latter a legacy of social disapprobation with regard to the pamphlets written just before the outbreak of the Second World War and during its early days. The fact that *Féerie I* was written and narrated from within both these repressive environments "can be seen as a chronicle of the effects of an excessive centripetal force on a centrifugal (schizophrenic/desiring) subject."²⁴⁵ This situation could only result in paranoia; in much the same way that a child subjected to excessive discipline becomes paranoid, losing all spontaneity, so too did Céline "(the narrator of *Féerie pour une autre fois*), a molecular being, become excessively paranoid in prison."²⁴⁶ In order to overcome the stricture of censure imposed upon him by the French reading public as a result of his pamphlets, "...in the first volume of *Féerie*, Céline intensifies the centripetal forces to which his narrator is subjected in an attempt to turn them to his advantage,"²⁴⁷, pitting those repressive forces against themselves in the hope that they might self-

²⁴³ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001 p 77

²⁴⁴ Ibid p 81

²⁴⁵ Ibid p 81

²⁴⁶ Ibid p 81

²⁴⁷ Ibid p 23

destruct. However, in *Féerie II*,²⁴⁸ which was written from inside the prison walls, the author changes tack, using as his weapon against repression a splitting of the character Jules into an abject Double. Jules is ideal for this role as he carries no Historical 'baggage' and is thus capable of "emit(ting) a centrifugal desiring force (...) to overcome the inverse force of molarity."²⁴⁹

Jules-the-malevolent

In the face of a concrete manifestation of man's violence towards man, and of a fundamental transgression of all the humanistic norms that had existed thus far, a cataclysm that Céline described as a "seisme de la fin" caused by the explosion of bombs, resulted not simply in the detonation of explosives but also in "explosions des fonds de l'âme."²⁵⁰ Such an immanent destruction of man's being could not remain an abstract concept in Céline's view, and for this reason his only recourse to such trauma was the creation of yet another figure of the double in the person of Jules, the narrator's double "qui incarne cette vacherie du tronc des hommes."²⁵¹ This figure is based on the real-life painter Gen Paul, Céline's neighbour and friend in Montmartre with whom the author conducted an ambiguous relationship, vacillating between admiration for his artistic ability and contempt for his venal nature. « À l'époque où il écrit, Gen Paul lui inspire assez de ressentiment pour qu'il puisse faire de Jules satanique, responsable d'un tel déchaînement d'anti-nature. »²⁵² However, despite the animosity felt by Céline towards the painter, they nevertheless remained bonded by a fraternity dating back to the first World War in which both had been wounded, coupled with a profound admiration for the artist's ability to depict « Les sillage des avions, les trajectoires de fusées en tous sens, les visions d'immeubles décollés de terre et dont les murs ondulent (...) », in which all appeared to Céline as an « extension à l'univers de l'éclatement des formes (...) où les solides n'étaient plus suggérés que par des rencontres de courbes interrompues, jamais d'aplomb, en mouvement. »²⁵³ But most of all, Céline envied « son charme, sa façon de dire, le méchant crochet de ce tordu, comment qu'il allait au cœur, à l'âme des choses

²⁴⁸ Originally entitled *La bataille du Styx* and *Maudits soupirs pour une autre fois* respectively.

²⁴⁹ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001 p 81

²⁵⁰ *Féerie pour une autre fois II* : Romans t IV Editions Gallimard 1993 : p 191

²⁵¹ Ibid : *Préface* : p xxix

²⁵² Ibid p xxix

²⁵³ Ibid p xxix

(...) »²⁵⁴ a fascination that bordered on the hypnotic : « Il me possédait je tolérais tout. Il avait l'ensorcellerie... »²⁵⁵ In his commentary on the ambiguity of this relationship, Godard observes that

« Le pôle négatif est abondamment présent par la reprise périodique d'un énumération infinie, directe ou indirecte, des défauts, vices ou vilenies de Jules. À l'opposé, jamais Céline n'a été aussi loin dans son effort pour cerner ce qui l' 'envoûte', l' 'ensorcelle', le 'hante' dans son ami-ennemi. Le génie de Jules est défini comme une aptitude à *saisir la vérité profonde* d'un être ou d'une situation (...) »²⁵⁶(our emphasis)

Because Jules is the embodiment of transgression, he is thus perhaps better equipped than any of his precursors (with the exception, perhaps of Mille-Pattes) to liberate the author-narrator from the bonds of moral censure suffered as a result of actions that had resulted in his incarceration in Denmark. Jules also serves as the repository of Céline's sexual fantasies regarding his wife and Gen Paul. In transforming Jules from a one-legged war invalid to one who was legless, Céline's objective was no doubt not simply to avoid obvious identification with Gen Paul, but also, more importantly, "dans le sens de sa transfiguration en *figure du mal*. Alors que l'amputé de guerre est un homme que l'on ne peut que respecter, le cul-de-jatte est du côté de la difformité, et par là facilement doté de pouvoirs maléfiques dans l'imaginaire collectif. »²⁵⁷

We posit that the degree to which the figure of the Double is depicted as 'maléfique' is in direct proportion to the weight of guilt, repressed emotion and trauma that Céline wished the figure of Jules to represent as a repository for these emotions. Thus, having accumulated the weight of social disapprobation through the publication of his pamphlets, having witnessed the horror of two World Wars, and finally having experienced physical and mental anguish in his flight from Paris to Denmark via wartorn Germany, Céline was in need of a Double who would be sufficiently 'maléfique' and transgressive to process these emotions and in so doing, to absolve the author of their weight. It is thus fitting that the figure of Jules was to be the most cathartic of all representations of the Double, appearing in a work that, together with *Guignol's Band*, represents a pivot in Céline's oeuvre.

²⁵⁴ *Féerie pour une autre fois: Version D* : p 939

²⁵⁵ *Ibid* p 939

²⁵⁶ *Féerie pour une autre fois : Notice* : p 1156

²⁵⁷ *Ibid* : p 1183

Ambivalence

Completing Céline's feelings of ambivalence towards Gen Paul-Jules is the element of sexual jealousy involving the author's wife Lili – a sentiment which resulted in the scene of seduction towards the end of *Féerie I* and the narrator's subsequent abjection. In this scene, we witness a transposition of Céline's suppressed desire to witness his wife being seduced by Gen Paul, as well as her collusion in the act. However, it is significant that each imprecation regarding Jules's behaviour towards Lili is tempered by a declaration of affinity towards him, thus clearly demonstrating the ambivalence inherent in the relationship between the narrator and his Double: "Lui qu'a le premier remarqué Lucette, il est *mon beau-frère* d'un sens ... il les connaît les sortilèges, c'est *mon frère* d'*amour* et de vacherie (...)"²⁵⁸ (our emphasis) As the seduction scene progresses, Ferdinand observes "... tous les incendies, les rafales du ciel RAF, il les rafflue sur nous *vr vr*. Ah ! il est vicieux au possible ... je *l'adore* de plus en plus... Lucette aussi l'aime, il la hait..."²⁵⁹ (our emphasis) This ambivalence is continued in Version D of *Féerie*, with Ferdinand declaring "Je l'aime bien quand même. Je voudrais pas qu'il meure, *satané* Jules! Il est *méchant* mais je *l'aime*." ²⁶⁰ (our emphasis). And later, « Il m'intimide c'est certain. Je veux dire son culot intime, sa façon qu'il a secrète d'aller à l'âme *en rigolade*, les vanes qu'il envoie, féroces (...) Je voudrais *qu'il brûle, je l'adore*." ²⁶¹ (our emphasis) The following paragraph clearly demonstrates that Jules is not simply the repository for Céline's envy of his intuitive social ease, his creative ability, but also for his sexual fantasies regarding his wife : « J'aurais voulu qu'il suce Lucette ! Je le dis je le dis ça me vient... l'imagination des flammes! *Broum !* je vois là... Je pense à tout de le voir en l'air sur sa petite bascule ! Il est beau. Il me fait signe ! »²⁶²

The relevance of Jules's transgressive behaviour, perched atop the Moulin de la Galette hurling missiles at the sky cannot fail to escape us, as it is the very nature of his behaviour that appears to elicit a poetic response in the narrator Céline who, at the close of *Féerie I* is a despairing figure vomiting in the gutter, reduced to a state of emotional and physical abjection, "Au fond du trou". (FI p 158) The source of his

²⁵⁸ *Féerie pour une autre fois: Version B* : p 721

²⁵⁹ *Ibid* p 722

²⁶⁰ *Féerie pour une autre fois; Version D* : p 938

²⁶¹ *Ibid* p 942

²⁶² *Féerie pour une autre fois; Version D* : p 942

despair is that he has given Lili his wife permission to be seduced by Jules, who wishes her to model for him, effectively ceding his creativity to the legless artist: “(...) Lili, being a dancer, is the incarnation of the affective aesthetic sought by Céline in his writing. By giving Lili permission to pose for Jules, then, Céline effectively hands over his aesthetic to Jules, relinquishing the only thing that enabled him to survive during his times of trouble (...)”²⁶³ To Jules’s cry “Donne-moi Lili! Donne-moi Lili!” (FI p 150), the narrator has no hesitation in replying “Prends-la eh cochon! Prends-la:” (FI p 151). Not content to have Céline’s wife in his possession, (or perhaps for that reason) Jules proceeds to insult the narrator by designating him “Boche!” (FI p 151), an epithet he knows will cut to the quick, evoking allegations of his anti-Semitism, and thus eliciting a bitter response from Céline: “Il savait ce qu’il avait dit! qu’il m’avait désigné traître! Traître les crocs que je voyais! Les crocs des personnes!” (FI p 151), evoking an image of a public prepared to tear him apart like a pack of savage wolves. History thus closes in on Céline once more, evoking the confines of his cell: “The final pages of *Féerie I* thus describe the conversion of the narrator’s poetic voice into a territorializing mechanism as a defence against the *containment of that voice* by the centripetal forces of History – fighting territorialisation with territorialisation.”²⁶⁴ (our emphasis)²⁶⁵

Having assimilated the narrator’s poetic voice in the person of Lili, Jules now becomes the Other, simply by being in possession of that which the narrator has ceded to him. He thus literally and figuratively possesses the narrator’s poetic, aesthetic voice. Moreover, the cession of Lili to Jules is made more insidious through the narrator’s feigned excitement designed to mask the true motive in his apparently benevolent act: “J’étais excité comme tout! C’est tout Excité! *Client!* La vie passé ... le sang passé Il emmène.” (FI p 176) The irony of the feigned excitement in the narrator’s words is contained in the word ‘client’, Hainge drawing our attention to Godard’s notes on Céline’s disdain for the figure of the ‘client’,²⁶⁶ interpreting this as “apparently referring to the narrator himself (this term) would therefore seem to

²⁶³ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001: p 97

²⁶⁴ Ibid: p 100

²⁶⁵ Once more we are confronted by Céline’s penchant for fighting malign forces with their equivalent in an act that resembles its medical equivalent of inoculation or vaccination.

²⁶⁶ Céline : *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Romans t IV Éditions Gallimard 1993 : Note 2 : (...) où Céline parle de son mépris pour les ‘clients’ : : p 1301

express his disgust at his own integration into molarity. This interpretation may also explain why it is that one of the highest insults repeatedly directed against Jules by the narrator is 'artiste', for it is both what the narrator no longer is, and precisely what he still desires to be.²⁶⁷

Brother

The ambivalence and rivalry present in Céline's real-life relationship with Gen Paul as well as his fictional depiction in the person of Jules, is the quintessence of the Double. Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the abundant references he makes to the painter in his personal correspondence. Jules is the quintessential Double embodying the opposing elements in Céline's nature in a transgressive figure that acts as a catalyst for the expression (and processing) of emotions that the author found too painful to acknowledge, suppressing them and giving them textual utterance through the voice of the Double. All the opinions expressed in Céline's correspondence regarding Gen Paul « ont tous en commun de se présenter sous forme *binaires* de qualificatifs antithétiques qui opposent tous les défauts ou vices du monde à un 'génie' qui, de ce fait, peut être dit à l'occasion *génie du mal*, mais qui est plus souvent défini en termes d'intuition, de trouvailles verbales, et de drôlerie irremplaçables. »²⁶⁸ Godard observes that « Ces portraits violemment contrastés sont tous à lire dans la clé essentielle que donne Céline lorsque, dans plusieurs d'entre eux, il ajoute que Gen Paul est 'son frère'. »²⁶⁹ In a letter to Lucette Destouches, Céline refers to Gen Paul as « vil, bas et génial »²⁷⁰, and Paul Marteau is told that the painter is « un enfant gâté du Malheur, bien plus intelligent et plus dangereux encore! Parce que génial »²⁷¹, while for Milton Hindus, Gen Paul is described as « (...) Caliban – toutes les bassesses, toutes les trahisons »²⁷²

We believe that the figure of Jules is the most clearly defined expression of the Double in Céline's works; he is the culmination of a succession of those figures present in the author's works, from Robinson in the *Voyage* to Courtial des Pereires in

²⁶⁷ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001: pp 235-236

²⁶⁸ *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Notice : p 1182

²⁶⁹ Ibid p 1182

²⁷⁰ 8 juillet 1946. Extrait cite dans F Gibault, *Céline* t III p 177

²⁷¹ Sans date. Extrait cité ibid. t II p 110 - 111

²⁷² 30 juin 1947. M Hindus : *Céline tel que je l'ai vu* p 190

Mort à credit, and Mille-Pattes in *Guignol's Band*. Jules's duality and ambivalence are not only expressed by Céline in relation to the real-life figure of Gen Paul on whom he is based, but also, in his fictional depiction, Jules is the figure that most clearly incarnates the author's shadow self, imbued with emotions that are the obverse of his public persona; those that in the *Voyage* Bardamu described as man's "sous-homme claudicant" (V p 418). Significantly, the escape route offered by each figure of the Double emerges as a result of an act of War, and in Jules's case, that of the most extreme form of war – a bombardment with its implication of total annihilation.²⁷³ The figure of the Double personified by Jules is therefore the repository of both the author and the narrator's traumatic reaction to the apocalyptic phenomenon of war. Indeed, in an echo of Freud's theory on war neurosis discussed supra, Blondiaux views the splitting of Jules into the narrator's Double as "une *défense* de type psychotique (qui) consiste en un mécanisme de projection à l'extérieur du sujet du danger qui le menace à l'intérieur." »²⁷⁴ (our emphasis) Jules is thus the receptacle for Céline's fears regarding public censure he invoked through the publication of his pamphlets; it is he who whispers "Boche!" from beneath the sofa in his studio, "trempant dans les glaises, la merde!" (FI pp 151, 154), like a creature from the nether world, one that appears to emerge from Céline's personal shadow world in an embodiment of his *alter ego*.

Féerie pour une autrefois II (Normance)

This novel is almost entirely "a variation on and an intensification of (...) the effects of desire on molar society"²⁷⁵, expressed in the text by Jules's violation of Lili. It is in a state of complete abjection that the narrator, having ceded his muse²⁷⁶ to Jules, watches the bombardment from the window of his apartment at the start of *Féerie pour une autre fois II*. The destructive power of what the narrator terms 'trajectoires' appears to exist in inverse proportion to the poetic images they evoke, leading us to conclude that it is the *inherent* destructive (transgressive) power of the trajectories (as

²⁷³ It is important in this context to note that *Féerie II* was written before *Féerie I*

²⁷⁴ Blondiaux, I : *Une écriture psychotique : Louis-Ferdinand Céline* A.G. Nizet Paris 1985 p 63

²⁷⁵ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001: p 105

²⁷⁶ « Je vis que par elle J'ai plus de corps ! Presque plus d'âme ! » *Féerie I* : p 163 We note that this image of emptiness or a state of limbo resembles that of Ferdinand in *Guignol's Band II* and Bardamu in the *Voyage* when confronted by a non-response from their respective Doubles mentioned supra.

a metaphor for the anger Céline feels towards Jules) that is responsible for the poetic images:

« (...) les panaches partent en paillettes.... Plein le Ciel.... Vertes, ... jaunes.... bleues! En poudre crépitante ! Je vous parlais de feu d'artifice !...féerie d'artifice ! (...) je voudrais être magicien moi-même, dans le moment ! (...) j'irais lui botter le pouet, le Jules ! je l'attraperais par le colbac ! (...) Gniaf ! ivrogne ! satyre ! *Pflouaf* ! j'y ferais prendre une trajectoire ! (...) y en a plein le Ciel !... » (FII p 224)

And later, although Jules is not mentioned, one imagines that he is still the butt of the narrator's anger : « Et que voilà d'autres artifices ! des obus traçants de très loin... des trajectoires originales... spirales! De canons de plus loin que Poissy ! ... l'effet comme s'ils cousaient les nuages... les cousaient ensemble... les ourlaient ! ... en bleu ! ... mauve ! jonquille ! » (FII p 264)

These poetic images, brought about by the destruction wrought by the 'trajectoires' acquire their poetic intensity from the demolition of literal 'molar' construct (ions) in the form of buildings, signaling a metaphorical destruction of their figurative counterpart – the institutions they house. The result is an expression of pure stylistics, these poetic images being "in accordance with Céline's conception of his literary project in which ideas – the preserve of molarity – are nothing and style is everything."²⁷⁷ The poetic scenes of bombardment present at the start of *Féerie II* therefore represent tropes for the destruction of materialistic, Capitalistic society, by the force of molecularity or aesthetic expression present in the poetics of Céline's particular style.

As we noted *supra*, Céline's body of work progressively reflects thematics in the service of stylistics, and this is particularly true of both volumes of *Féerie pour une autre fois*, where the text attains a level of poetics that renders it musical. Indeed, the phenomenon of musicality is succinctly encapsulated in Debrie's observation that

« (...) la féerie, pour Céline, se situe de toute évidence, dans le mouvement d'une image en expansion, la transformation d'un microcosme où l'auteur se situe,²⁷⁸ en un macrocosme qui va bientôt, tout en le comprenant, le dépasser. La féerie se situe dans cet intervalle précis et se

²⁷⁷ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001 p 106

²⁷⁸ The Vestre Faengsel in Denmark

rapproche beaucoup de l'art de la *fugue*. Parfois elle est servie par les thèmes eux-mêmes mer, nuages, ville, nuit. »²⁷⁹(our emphasis)

Underscoring this viewpoint are Céline's observations in conversation with Robert Poulet, where he describes *Normance* as

« (...) la vérité dans l'absurdité. Trois cents pages de température, qui fait voir un événement réel, le bombardement de Paris, dans toute son ampleur et dans ses significations secrètes. (...) 'Au commencement était l'émotion' sous le coup d'une émotion, l'animal se contracte ; l'homme fait des vers, ou la musique... J'ai voulu faire de la prose, qui naisse comme naît la musique, de la prose qui exprime ce qu'exprime la musique (...) »²⁸⁰

Trilogy

As we indicated *supra*, the presence of the figure of the Double as a defence against the horror of war experienced by the narrator Céline, as well as the author Céline-Destouches becomes increasingly redundant as the author's oeuvre progresses. The Double is, in fact, both a defence, a shield²⁸¹ provided by its transgressive power, and a mechanism for the achievement of Céline's goal of "creating an expression capable of passing directly to the reader's emotive core (...)"²⁸² We believe this is an expression of the author Céline's having come to terms with the horror of war, having transgressed it (through the agency of the Double), emerging on the other side of the tunnel into the light. That state of mind is present in the Trilogy, despite its all-pervading backdrop of war. It is present in the humour, the burlesque and the 'operatic' décor present in all three of the later novels, *D'un château l'autre*, *Nord* and *Rigodon*, the title of the latter representing a trope of dance that encapsulates the spirit present in all three of these novels. Having analysed the reasons for the creation of the figure of the Double, we now turn to those leading to his demise.

Vanishing point

Just as the pictorial artist uses the vanishing point to denote infinity, so too does the writer use it for the same purpose, rendering the work universal. Céline's passage

²⁷⁹ Debrie, N: *Il était une fois ... Céline*: Editions Aubier 1990 : pp 144 - 145

²⁸⁰ Poulet, R : *Entretiens avec L-F Céline* Librairie Plon 1958 : p 46

²⁸¹ A shield of which humour is an intrinsic element, hence the absurdity of certain figures of the Double, such as Courtial, Sosthène, Mille-Pattes... « L'humour est son bouclier » declared Jeanne Carayon in her work *Le docteur écrit un roman : Cahiers de l'Herne* No 3 Lettres Modernes Paris 1962 : p 23

²⁸² Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001: p 123

through war-torn Germany and finally to Denmark in the company of his wife Lili, the actor La Vigue and the cat Bébert is a trajectory, a divagation during which the narrator Céline-Destouches is gradually rendered capable of dispensing with all the barriers to a realisation of his poetic style that he encounters on the way. And one of those obstacles to the attainment of aesthetic production was Céline's friend Robert le Vigan, 'La Vigue' whose theatricality is an expression of man's tendency to dissimulate life's most salient truth; the ineluctability of death. Fittingly, he is portrayed disguised as a gaucho collecting money from passengers embarking on *La Publique*, Charon's boat in *D'un château l'autre*: « (...) je vois un personnage, une sorte de chienlit... chienlit gaucho boy-scout, un déguisé quoi! (...) De le retrouver là, quai Faidherbe ! .. La Vigue ! (...) » (CA p 73)

Charon

Charon and his barge – a figure of death requiring the reader to suspend disbelief - is the most significant figure in the first section of *Château*. In fact, Céline “par un de ces tours de magie dont il a le secret, se retire soudain du devant de la scène (...) pour céder place à Caron, et lui confier la tâche de sortir le lecteur de l'impasse dans laquelle il l'avait un peu trop imprudemment fourvoyé. »²⁸³ Through the intervention of Charon then, « avec le Nocher du Styx c'est la mort, et elle seule, qui nous aura permis d'entrer *dans le vif du sujet* »²⁸⁴ (our emphasis), drawing us closer to Céline's ideal of creating the potential for an immersion of the reader in the text. Bonnefis seems to imply that we, the readers should have the courage to embark on Charon's vessel, embracing Death in the interest of living Life to its fullest potential, or, as Hainge speculates, « Could it be, thus that Caron and his boat achieve the avowed aim of a writing which is truly 'féérique' ... one in which a life-affirming expression is positively invested with death; one in which the two terms of Hamlet's question²⁸⁵ are fused into one?»²⁸⁶ Charon appears to be the only one capable of divesting his passengers (readers?) of their egotism: “Caron la façon qu'il leur fera passer leur moimoiisme! Tous! À la sacrée rame plein le museau! *vrang!* d'une oreille l'autre! (CA p18) Intrinsic to this scene is the figure of Le Vigan, “homme de nulle part”

²⁸³ Bonnefis, P : *Céline : Le Rappel des oiseaux* :Presses Universitaires de Lille : 1992 p 34

²⁸⁴ ²⁸⁴ Bonnefis, P : *Céline : Le Rappel des oiseaux* :Presses Universitaires de Lille : 1992 : p 34

²⁸⁵ Instead of the dialectic inherent in Hamlet's question '*To be or not to be*', the question is reformulated as '*to be and not to be*'

²⁸⁶ Hainge, G: *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001 pp 127-128.

(N p 359), who at this stage appears as a Double for the narrator Céline-Destouches, “Ce même le Vigan qu’on verra Céline traîner après lui *comme son ombre* tout au long de la trilogie allemande.”²⁸⁷ (our emphasis) The significance of La Vigue, Céline’s ‘shadow self’ or Double is that the narrator is able to *rid* himself of this figure on reaching a stage of non-dependence on him as a shield or defence against horror arising both from within himself and externally. As we shall see in *Rigodon* the narrator is able to reintegrate himself with both art in the form of Lili and animal intuition in the form of Bébert.

Hainge’s interpretation of the Charon episode concurs with the theme of the Double present in “the various literary guises of Céline, the mythomaniacal (through transposition) vicious hate-filled buffoon”.²⁸⁸ It therefore follows that if Caron is “a hallucinated projection of the narrator himself, his boat – a means of transport which operates in a smooth space²⁸⁹ – would be the text.”²⁹⁰ In a recall of the episode in *Mort à crédit* where the narrator attempted to assassinate his father by hurling a typewriter at his head, it is significant that members of the public embarking on the eponymously-named boat have their *heads* split open by Caron’s oar, thus signifying a destruction of the seat of reason, and the ascendance of emotion over intelligence. This is a significant example of a weapon of death simultaneously employed as a vehicle for liberation and regeneration. It is also important to note that the weapon which kills the passengers, setting them free, is also the vessel’s means of locomotion, “its mode of communication its style.”²⁹¹ However, if this episode approaches the poetic, *féerique* style to which the author Céline aspired, it is curious that the *narrator* Céline does not board the boat at this point. Hainge attributes this failure to embark to the presence of La Vigue, someone who “colludes with molarity by facialising himself”, and more importantly, because of the “antagonism between la Vigue and

²⁸⁷ Bonnefis, P : *Céline : Le Rappel des oiseaux* : Presses Universitaires de Lille : 1992 p 35

²⁸⁸ Hainge, G: *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001 p 130

²⁸⁹ Like Céline’s ‘métro-émotif’ that, according to the professor, runs on “les rails qu’ont l’air tout à fait droits et qui le sont pas! ... que vous avez, vous, biseautés ! ... vous-même ! d’une façon tout à fait magique ! ... vicieuse ! »: *Entretiens avec le professeur Y* : Romans t IV Editions Gallimard 1993 : pp 539-540

²⁹⁰ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001: p 130

²⁹¹ *Ibid* p 131

(the narrator Céline)²⁹², once more signaling the rivalry intrinsic in figures of the Double.

Clandestine

An extreme form of La Vigue's theatricality or tendency to facialise occurs in *Rigodon*, where he imitates Christ: "Il étend le bras droit, vers nous, au-dessus de nous.... Très doucement.... 'La Vigue, je vois tu nous bénis ...'" (R p 801), in an action that reveals his faciality. La Vigue, then, appears to represent a metaphor for Céline's public face, "that facialised part of himself which finds expression in the character of La Vigue, namely Céline, the reviled author of the pamphlets."²⁹³ It also becomes imperative that both the author Céline and the narrator Céline-Destouches 'lose' that public face in order to achieve clandestinity, a prerequisite for achieving the destiny of all mankind, and particularly in the case of the artist, to achieve full creative expression: "si l'homme a un destin, ce sera plutôt d'échapper au visage, défaire le visage et les visagéifications, devenir imperceptible, *clandestin*."²⁹⁴ (our emphasis) It is significant that at the moment of parting from La Vigue, the narrator expresses a desire to envelop himself in clandestinity: "Il me laisse décider ... voilà, La Vigue, lui, restera ici...avec Bébert ... nous on ira à Warnemünde, voir.... (...) si vraiment le ferry marche encore? ... si c'est possible d'embarquer? Et *en clandestins* ? » (R p 733) (our emphasis)

From this moment onwards, the narrational Trinity of Céline, La Vigue and Lili is recomposed to exclude the actor, who is supplanted by Bébert, the cat, a symbol of animality, the other two elements of the 'Trinity' including Lili representing dance, poetry and art, and in Céline, the narration or text itself. The narrator is thus no longer a single being, but a composite entity which faces a new beginning: "nous étions qu'au début! (...) je vous raconterai!" (R p 799) exclaims the narrator Céline, having dispensed with La Vigue, the last of the Doubles to fulfil its role in the author's novels. The trio is thus set free to pursue its journey north, thus entrenching a desire for life and regeneration through art, "Le Nord qu'il ne faut pas perdre, est la direction

²⁹² Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001: p 131

²⁹³ Ibid p 132

²⁹⁴ Deleuze, G and Guattari F : *Mille Plateaux* : Les Éditions de Minuit 1980: p 209

qui rapproche de la vie: c'est encore une métaphore de l'idéal artistique".²⁹⁵ The northbound train journey therefore symbolises the accomplishment of the narrator's foiled attempt to board Caron's boat – without the support of the Double, his presence having been supplanted by Lili and Bébert – twin figures of dance and animality.

Brick

After dispensing with La Vigue, the next liberating event for the narrator occurs when he is hit on the head by a brick, significantly "liberated from its molar structure as a result of the action of the war machine".²⁹⁶ This event marks a turning point in the narrative. Indeed, "Far from destroying the narrative, it is this incident, this internalization of the war machine which provides the necessary conditions for a becoming-imperceptible and thus acts as a catalyst for the production of the Célinian aesthetic, the true expression of his style."²⁹⁷ Proof that the author's aesthetic has been brought to fruition, involving "a dissolution of subjectivity in the narrator and awaken(ing) the text's music, intensifying then both his own and the text's schizophrenic intensity," is evident in the narrator's exclamation

« (...) ce coup de brique m'a pas arrangé! ... soit! Mais nullement déprimé... du tout! je dirais même, au contraire! ... porté à une certaine gaieté! ... un peu spéciale... ainsi les chaumières me semblent devenues assez artistes ... des deux côtés du paysage... je dirais elles font tableaux, elles penchent et gondolent.... Surtout les cheminées... c'est une vision, cest un style... oh, ma tête y est pour quelque chose certainement : ... la brique ! »(R p 832)²⁹⁸

This incident underscores previous events that are referred to *supra*, where the head, the seat of Reason is targeted for injury in order to release emotion and creativity. We posit that the brick in this instance acts as a transgressive agent for the liberation of Céline's creative aesthetic, by destabilising the flow of his life and moreover, the 'missile' having emanated from a molar edifice – one of the buildings in the bombed

²⁹⁵ Nettlebeck, C : *Un Art conscient* p 116 in Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001: p 136

²⁹⁶ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001 p 185

²⁹⁷ *Ibid* p 186

²⁹⁸ The irony of the injury being caused by a 'brique' cannot escape us, as this word has a double meaning in argot, that of a « Liasse de billets d'une valeur de un million de centimes (de francs avant 1960) par extension la somme équivalent » : Le Petit Robert p 296. Irony resides in the fact that Sartre had recently accused Céline of being in the pay of the Nazi government in return for anti-Semitic publications: "Surtout après le coup de la brique! (...) est-ce que le taenia avait des preuves que je touchais de l'argent des Allemands?" (R p 851)

town of Hamburg - heightening the significance of the event. The brick may thus be compared with the action of the Double in previous novels – all of which have achieved varying degrees of success in liberating the narrator from the confines of his Self. Just as we observed an outpouring of poetic prose in *Guignol's Band* and in particular in *Féerie pour une autre fois*, as a sequel to episodes involving the transgressive and catalytic action of the Double on the trauma of war in all its forms, the incident in *Rigodon* offers the reader a somewhat diluted version of lyricism in the narrator's ironic exclamation "(...) depuis le moment des briques, sauf que j'ai bien mal à la tête, je serais porté à rire! (...) ... ah! Le paysage charmant! Enfin un peu flou.. je dirais: *poétique*...." (R p 831)(our emphasis)

At the close of the novel we see the protagonists Céline-Destouches, Lili and the cat Bébert attain Denmark, their 'North' which embodies and exemplifies Life and Freedom. But most importantly, we witness a realization of Céline's aesthetic "in the numerous poetic description of the war-torn landscape of Germany"²⁹⁹. And Céline's poetics transform that death-ravaged landscape into one which is infused with music, rendering Death itself "no longer a reason for sterile fear, but a promise of renewed life and a stimulus for creation."³⁰⁰ Adding poignancy to a reading of the closing lines of *Rigodon*, is the reader's awareness that Céline died the day after writing them, investing them with a special significance; one that denotes the end - and the fulfillment - of a lifelong journey. That journey, undertaken by a dislocated being has ended in a ruptured, war-torn landscape traversed by the author who has eventually arrived at a place where

« On est devenu soi-même imperceptible et clandestin dans un voyage immobile. Plus rien ne peut se passer, ni s'être passé. Plus personne ne peut rien pour moi ni contre moi. Mes territoires sont hors prise, et pas parce qu'ils sont imaginaires, au contraire: parce que je suis *en train de les tracer*. Finies les grandes ou les petites guerres. Finis les voyages, toujours à la traîne de quelque chose. Je n'ai plus aucun secret, à force d'avoir perdu le visage, forme et matière. Je ne suis plus qu'une ligne. Je suis devenu capable d'aimer, non pas d'un amour universel abstrait, mais celui que je vais choisir, et qui va me choisir, en aveugle, *mon double*, qui n'a pas plus de moi que moi. On s'est sauvé par amour et pour l'amour, en abandonnant

²⁹⁹ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: Peter Lang publishing 2001 p 188

³⁰⁰ Nettlebeck, C : *Journey to the end of Art: The evolution of the novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: PMLA 87.1 (1972) p 89

l'amour et le moi. On n'est plus qu'une ligne abstraite, comme une flèche qui traverse le vide. »³⁰¹ (our emphasis)

We believe these words epitomize Céline's sentiment at finally coming to the end of his particular journey; to the end of his own night where his Double awaits him, no longer as an incarnation of the Other, but as *himself*. Reconciliation is complete, and with it the echo of Bardamu's words in Céline's first novel: « C'est peut-être ça qu'on cherche à travers la vie, rien que cela, le plus grand chagrin possible pour devenir soi-même avant de mourir. » (V p 236)

³⁰¹ Deleuze G, and Guattari, F : *Capitalisme et schizophrénie: Mille Plateaux*: Les Éditions de Minuit : 1980 : p 244

Chapter Two

Father-figures as rivals and initiators to the au-delà

In Céline's novels, father-figures represent the prototype of the Double-as-Rival; a triune which is to recur throughout the author's work. Each depiction of a father figure represents an instance of mimetic desire in which rivalry is the intrinsic element. Significantly, father-figures occur in the contexts of Céline's dual vocations: those of medical doctor and writer. In each occurrence of rivalry the object desired is not a woman, as in the case of the classic Oedipal triangle, but an aptitude or skill held by the Other in each of the author's chosen vocations.

Curiously, in several instances Céline caricatures certain of the father-figures that he admired, a penchant that appears to have originated in what Baudelaire, in his essay *De l'essence du rire*,³⁰² defined as an inherent feeling of superiority: « Ce qui suffirait pour démontrer que le comique est un des plus clairs signes sataniques de l'homme (...) est l'accord unanime des physiologistes du rire sur la raison première de ce monstrueux phénomène (...). Le rire, disent-ils, vient de la supériorité. »³⁰³ In emphasising the ambivalence of caricature, the comic form favoured by Céline, Baudelaire underscores the duality present in both the author and his chosen form of expression: « La caricature est double: le dessin et l'idée: le dessin violent, l'idée mordante et voilée (...) »³⁰⁴ Power and transgression are thus intrinsic to caricature through the sentiment of superiority invested in the creator of the comic situation at the expense of its 'victim' as « Le comique, la puissance du rire est dans le rieur et nullement dans l'objet du rire. »³⁰⁵

Céline's caricature of the grotesque in his fellow man – notably Ludwig Rajchman who was depicted as a duckbilled platypus – is defined by Baudelaire as a form of *comique absolu*; this, in comparison with that of a comedy of manners which the poet terms *comique significatif*.³⁰⁶ What is more, the former category of the comic represents man as an inferior being, a 'fallen angel' thus entrenching the creator's

³⁰² Baudelaire, Ch : *De l'essence du Rire* : Œuvres de Baudelaire t II : Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 1932 : p 165

³⁰³ Ibid pp 169-170

³⁰⁴ Ibid p 169

³⁰⁵ Ibid p 172

³⁰⁶ Ibid p 175

status of superiority: "Le comique ne peut être absolu que relative à l'*humanité déchu*e, et c'est ainsi que je l'entends."³⁰⁷ (our emphasis) We believe that the origin of Céline's caricature lies in this context; to 'depose' from their pedestal certain father-figures he had previously admired, in a bid to attain a sense of ascendancy over them by diminishing the perceived source of rivalry; to contain their power to threaten him.

Baudelaire leaves us in no doubt as to the relationship between the form of 'absolute comic' favoured by Céline and an elevated level of aesthetic creation, of which this comic genre is the prerogative: "L'essence très-relevée du comique absolu en fait l'apanage des *artistes supérieurs* qui ont en eux la réceptibilité suffisante de toute idée absolue."³⁰⁸ (our emphasis) Perhaps most revealing in terms of Céline's dual personality are Baudelaire's closing remarks in this essay concerning the type of individual who engages in caricature and the creation of comic situations. They are those people who « (...) ont fait métier de développer en eux le sentiment du comique et de le tirer d'eux-mêmes pour le divertissement de leurs semblables, lequel phénomène rentre dans la classe de tous les phénomènes artistiques qui dénotent dans l'être humaine l'existence d'une *dualité permanente*, la puissance d'être à la fois soi et un autre. »³⁰⁹ (our emphasis)

Laughter is, in the final analysis, a 'correction'. Designed to humiliate, it aims to injure the person who is the butt of its humour by provoking a feeling of discomfort. By its very nature, laughter is cruel, as it is society's way of exacting revenge for life's real or perceived injuries. Indeed, it would become ineffectual if it were to be free of malice. Could one not deduce from this, that Céline's caricature of certain individuals, particularly father-figures, is a bid to take revenge on society through the agency of the Double? In that context, we have to agree with Baudelaire's closing observation in this essay, that "(...) l'artiste n'est artiste qu'à la condition d'être double et de n'ignorer aucun phénomène de sa *double nature*."³¹⁰ (our emphasis)

³⁰⁷ Baudelaire, Ch : *De l'essence du Rire* : Œuvres de Baudelaire t II : Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 1932 : p 175

³⁰⁸ Ibid p 176

³⁰⁹ Ibid pp 182-183

³¹⁰ Ibid : p 183

Initiators

Céline's early works abound in father figures ; men he both admired and feared, and who encapsulated the elements of stability, security, and creative vision he sought. They included those who introduced him to both significant fields of his life – medicine and writing - and in some cases they overlap, forging a continuous chain of figures Céline appears to have used as a mechanism in his quest for fulfilment in his capacity both as a medical doctor and as a writer. However, as we shall see in the course of this chapter, once they had fulfilled their purpose, they were summarily 'killed off', or at least diminished through caricature.

By the time he was 23, Céline-Destouches had met most of the men who were to influence his dual career as medical doctor and writer. In London, he had met Édouard Benedictus who was witness at his first marriage to Suzanne Nebout, and who was undoubtedly the prototype for both Borokrom and Sosthène de Rodiencourt in *Guignol's Band*. And on his return from Africa, he met Raoul Marquis – balloonist and scientist on whose personality Céline modelled the figure of Courtial des Pereires in *Mort à crédit*. Both Benedictus and Marquis thus served as inspiration for Céline the writer. All that remained was to encounter the father figures who were to influence his medical career. Those men included his future father-in-law Professor Athanase Follet and, by extension, Philippe Ignace Semmelweis who was the subject of his medical thesis, as well as Ludwig Rajchman and Gustave Roussy.

Céline's quest throughout his entire life was one of a journey to the *au-delà* – a place where he could assume another form - an avatar of himself that would exist in a state of creative freedom. He thus sought to create a Double of himself through the mediation of various father-figures who were initiators to another state of being. As these encounters occurred during Céline's formative years, we examine this phenomenon in the context of the author's early works *Voyage au bout de la Nuit*, *Mort à Crédit* and *Guignol's Band I and II*, with references to his play *l'Eglise* and the pamphlet *Bagatelles pour un massacre*.

Panacea

« Sans le maréchal des logis Destouches, il n'y aurait jamais eu Céline. Vous verrez, quand vous reviendrez, vous ne serez plus le même. (...) La guerre, ça dessaoule. »³¹¹ These words offer us a clear picture of the profound effect the war had on Céline, an effect from which he was to suffer for the rest of his life, both on a physical as well as a mental level. Although he only spent three months at the Front before being injured, that period was “amplement suffisante pour que l'horreur se soit inscrite dans la sensibilité et l'imagination avant de s'inscrire dans le corps.”³¹² Traumatic though the experience might have been, it nevertheless had a positive outcome, as it was on the battlefield that “s'est définitivement enraciné en lui, au plus profond, le besoin d'écrire. Là s'est ouverte, au moins dans le conscient, cette blessure qu'il n'en finira pas d'essayer de *guérir par l'écriture*. »³¹³ (our emphasis) And what better panacea for that wound than the series of father-figures Céline parades before us in his first three novels, and to a lesser extent in *Bagatelles pour un massacre*? Individuals who offered him security, both financial and emotional, but whom, curiously, he comes to ridicule, as though the intimacy he experienced with them were too painful to bear.

Athanase Follet

The first man to fulfil the role of surrogate father to Louis Destouches in a medical capacity was professor Athanase Marin³¹⁴ Follet who encouraged him to pursue his medical vocation. In 1918 at the age of 24 Céline was engaged by the Rockefeller Foundation to popularise methods of preventing tuberculosis. During that time, he was to meet professor Follet who became Céline's father-in-law on his marriage to Edith Follett in 1919. Céline needed very little encouragement to enter the medical profession, having already, as a layman, gained experience in the dissemination of a public health programme on the prevention of tuberculosis through the Rockefeller Foundation. But in addition to acquired knowledge, Céline viewed his vocation at that point in his life as a medical one:

³¹¹ *Cahiers Céline I : Céline et l'actualité littéraire 1932 – 1957*: Éditions Gallimard 1976 p 130
[Propos recueillis par Pierre Ordioni]

³¹² *Céline : Romans t I : L-F Céline: Voyage au bout de la nuit*: Notice : Éditions Gallimard 1981 p 1183

³¹³ Ibid p 1181

³¹⁴ One of the names of the fictional character of Roger Marin Courtial des Pereires in *Mort à crédit*

« J'étais très médecin de temperament; ma vocation n'était pas littéraire. (...) j'avais la vocation médicale (...) qui consiste essentiellement à rendre la vie plus facile et moins douloureuse aux autres. Ma pratique, si vous voulez, c'est une mystique, - la seule que j'aie, - et qui ne m'a pas réussi !... C'est une espèce d'idéal 'bonne sœur', que j'avais puissamment : me donner entièrement à l'adoucissement des maladies. »³¹⁵

Obstetrics

Another important influence in the field of medicine was that of Professor Brindeau, a colleague of Athanase Follet's and professor of obstetrics at the Tarnier maternity hospital in Paris. It was Brindeau who perceptively remarked to the medical student Louis Destouches: "Vous avez ce qu'il faut pour écrire des romans".³¹⁶ It was also he who encouraged Céline to write his medical thesis on Philippe Ignace Semmelweis, the Hungarian obstetrician who sacrificed his life in an unsuccessful fight against puerperal fever. Brindeau's influence on Céline's medical career is borne out in Gibault's comments on the author's period of initiation into the world of both medicine and literature: "Il semble que ce soit Brindeau qui l'ait beaucoup poussé à choisir un sujet de thèse à caractère plus littéraire que scientifique. Il lui aurait même suggéré une biographie de Semmelweis dont les recherches relevaient de sa spécialité." ³¹⁷ Significantly, that speciality was obstetrics. However, we note that the choice of a thesis subject « (...) avait été inspiré, au témoignage de sa fille Edith, par le professeur Athanase Follet. Selon elle, l'époque comme le milieu familial des Follet-Morvan offrait de nombreux exemples de décès en suite de couches. »³¹⁸ According to Gibault, *La vie et l'oeuvre de Philippe Ignace Semmelweis* was « la première œuvre importante de Louis Destouches. Écrite par obligation, cette thèse prit rapidement un tour littéraire, le médecin s'effaçant devant l'humaniste et devant l'homme de lettres. »³¹⁹

In *Féerie pour une autre fois I*, Céline evokes his stint at Tarnier maternity hospital in a passage that underscores his dedication to the medical profession while revealing his ear for music:

³¹⁵ Hanrez, M : *Céline* : Editions Gallimard 1961 pp 227-228

³¹⁶ Gibault, François: *Céline 1894 – 1932 : Le Temps des espérances*: Mercure de France 1985 p 230

³¹⁷ Ibid p 230

³¹⁸ *Cahiers Céline 3: Semmelweis et autres écrits médicaux* : Editions Gallimard 1977 p 81

³¹⁹ Ibid p 304

«Tous les vagissements me passionnent Pensez, des années à Tarnier! ... Brindeau, Lantuéjou. ... Les premiers cris... le premier cri ! ... tout gras et glaires... mon affaire ! (...) si j'ai aidé des êtres à naître !... (...) J'ai entendu bien des cris... je suis un *homme d'oreille*...mais le *duo d'accouchement* maman le petit gniasse, voilà un *accord* à se souvenir...(...) » (FI p 97)
 (our emphasis)

This passage, written twenty years after Céline's medical thesis on Semmelweis, and nearly as many years since he wrote his play *l'Eglise*, cannot fail to recall the images of delivery present in both these works. The notion of delivery, both in the obstetric sense of assisting at a birth, as well as in *giving* birth, is important in the context of Céline's transition to a more exalted state of life; the *au-delà* he sought to attain in order to attain creative freedom. We therefore posit that he assumed the role of midwife in this process; an androgynous role that in itself assumes the presence of the Double in its maieutic function of intellectual midwifery. In a literary context, it is significant that in *l'Eglise* Céline parodied a medical procedure, thus fantasising it and freeing it of all medical authenticity. In this passage we are witness to Céline's first attempt at transposition through literary obstetrics, as the episode in *l'Eglise* is in fact a parody of the obstetric procedure dealt with in *Semmelweis*. It vaunts the popularity of Dr Mermilleux who, having infected a patient during delivery, finds himself even more popular with his Breton patients than before: « Eh bien! Mon ami, vous le croirez si vous voulez, cette femme-là, elle a fait mon succès, dans trois cantons, une réputation régionale, des gens qui me venaient de partout, qu'elle m'envoyait; (...) »³²⁰

The implication with regard to initiation, delivery and transcendence is clear ; the metaphor for birth and renewal, the creation of new life, is invested in the father-figure as facilitator of the birth process as well as the woman herself, who appears in the examples cited above to be relegated to the status of a vessel ; she is no more than an *outré*; a womb, or vessel in preparation for the passage to the *au-delà*. However, in a literary context, that role is assumed by Céline the author, who both gestates and assists in the delivery of his oeuvre.

³²⁰ Louis-Ferdinand Céline: *L'Eglise* Editions Gallimard 1952 pp245 - 246

Gustave Roussy

However, another medical link preceded the examples cited above. Professor Gustave Roussy, who was to become Professor Bestombes in *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, was encountered by a twenty-year old Louis Destouches while recovering from his war injuries in the Paul-Brousse hospital at Villejuif. « *L'Amiral Bragueton* est de pure invention. Est moins inventé le Dr Bestombes du *Voyage* ; nul autre que le Recteur Roussy sombré actuellement dans une vilaine histoire »³²¹

The tone of Bardamu's response to Bestombes' long ironic peroration on war and class distinction in the *Voyage* is revelatory in the context of a paternalistic relationship. Bestombes, who addresses Bardamu in a tone "devenue paternelle" (V p 94), elicits a response that is meek and conciliatory rather than provocative; a parody of the narrator's former anarchic views: "C'était bien mon avis aussi, à moi Bardamu", followed by the admission "Le patriotisme Maître!" (V p 94) to Bestombes' diatribe on the degree of altruism that could be expected of the elite classes. Even the bizarre suggestion that electro-shock therapy be used to revive patriotism « (...) par l'électricité pour le corps et pour l'esprit, par de vigoureuses doses d'éthique patriotique, par les véritables injections de la morale reconstituante! »(V p 94) merely elicits an asinine reply « - Je vous comprends, Maître ! » which is immediately contradicted in the ironic aside « Je comprenais en effet de mieux en mieux ». (V p 94) This episode is a clear example of how Céline caricatured those he admired, as he held Gustave Roussy in high esteem, and as far as we are aware, never antagonised him.

Ludwig Rajchman

Céline made the acquaintance of Ludwig Rajchman when he took up employment at the *Société des Nations*, at a time when he had become disillusioned by two men he had admired; his father-in-law and the inventor Raoul Marquis (Henry de Graffigny). At 43, Ludwig Rajchman was thirteen years older than Céline, an esteemed medical doctor, « issu d'une famille d'intellectuels polonais, dont le nom se trouve lié à la découverte que fit l'un de ses oncles: la gastrosucchorée, plus connue sous le nom de Syndrome de Rajchman.(...) Il faut évidemment ajouter à ce profil que Ludwig

³²¹ Hindus, Milton: *Louis-Ferdinand Céline tel que je l'ai vu* : Editions l'Herne 1999 : p 153

Rajchman était juif. »³²² By virtue of his medical record alone, Céline could not have failed to be impressed by his employer, which, combined with the age difference between the two men no doubt entrenched a paternal image. However, this did not prevent Céline from caricaturing Rajchman, first in *L'Eglise*³²³ where he appears as the ridiculous figure of Yudenzweck, and later in *Bagatelles pour un massacre* in the person of Gutman, “Confrère de haut parage, Gutman ! ... achalandé comme bien peu... quelles relations ! frayant dans tout le haut Paris”³²⁴, and Yubelblat.

Gibault speculates whether Céline’s employment at the *Société des Nations* (SDN) in Geneva between 1924 and 1925 could have provided the breeding-ground for his anti-semitism; « L’antisémitisme de Céline, est-il né à Genève dans ce milieu international où, venus des quatre coins du monde, les Israélites étaient nombreux ? Est-il issu d’inconflit de style et de mode de pensée ? La lecture de *L'Eglise* et plus encore de *Bagatelles pour un massacre*, conduit au moins à se poser la question. »³²⁵ (our emphasis) Although Céline appears to have been on good terms with his colleagues at the SDN, there was no doubt that he felt an ‘outsider’ due to the cultural and moral differences mentioned above. This paradox may be explained in the text of *Bagatelles pour un massacre* when, dealing with the subject of “cafouillage” by the Commissions, Céline declares: « Plus vous les trouverez élevés, considérés, séparément dans le domaine de l’esprit, de la création, plus ineptes ils deviendront une fois qu’il seront tous ensemble.... Voici une règle, un théorème, une loi de l’esprit... L’esprit n’aime pas les rassemblements. »³²⁶

L'Eglise

Céline probably started work on *L'Eglise* towards the end of 1926 and the start of 1927, given the presence of Elizabeth Craig (Gaiage) in the play. Explaining its title to Max Descaves, Céline declared that it “(...) [lui] semble assez bien résumer la SDN (...) Une église, quoi! Avec ses dirigeants, son personnel, (...) Celle de la religion

³²² Gibault, François: *Céline 1894-1932: Le Temps des espérances* : Mercure de France 1985 p246

³²³ It is in the Third act of *L'Eglise* that Yudenzweck describes Bardamu as “(...) un garçon sans importance collective, c’est tout juste un individu.(...)” [p161] These words were used by Sartre in his preface to *La Nausée*.

³²⁴ L-F Céline : *Bagatelles pour un massacre* : pp 12-13

³²⁵ Gibault, François: *Céline 1894-1932: Le Temps des espérances* : Mercure de France 1985 p 250

³²⁶ L-F Céline : *Bagatelles pour un massacre* : Les Editions Denoël 1937 : p 107

internationale du rapprochement des peuples, enfin l'époque Briand. »³²⁷ However, before sending the manuscript of *L'Eglise* to Gallimard for approval, Céline decided to show it to Rajchman,³²⁸ despite the caricature of the latter that appeared in the play. Not surprisingly, this ill considered act had disastrous consequences which Céline describes in *Bagatelles pour un massacre*:

« *L'Eglise*. Elle était ratée, c'est un fait... mais quand même y avait de la substance... Je lui ai fait lire à Yubelblat. Lui se montrait dans la vie le plus éclectique des youtres, jamais froissé de rien du tout, ce coup-là quand même, il s'est mordu... Il a fait une petite grimace... il a jamais oublié... Il m'en a reparlé plusieurs fois. J'avais pincé la seule corde qu'était défendu, qu'était pas bonne pour les joujoux. Lui il avait nettement compris. Il avait pas besoin de dessin... »³²⁹

The caricaturing of Rajchman in *L'Eglise* effectively spelled the end of Céline's career at the SDN where a disillusioned Rajchman on whom the caricature had "un effet déplorable"³³⁰ made Céline's life untenable. The author's first brush with administrative difficulties dates from this era; indeed, it was to prove a seminal episode in his life that first led to his conception of himself as a martyr, viewing the eventual loss of his post at the SDN as an "acte de courage".³³¹ In *Bagatelles pour un massacre* Céline refers to the incident with a degree of irony, declaring that « (...) c'[était] sur un coup d'héroïsme que j'ai quitté la SDN.. *je me suis sacrifié*, au fond, je suis un martyr dans mon genre... J'ai perdu un bien joli poste, pour la violence et la franchise des Lettres Françaises (...) »

(our emphasis)³³²

Semmelweis

In his medical thesis on Philippe Ignace Semmelweis, a passage appears which encapsulates the attitude of the aspirant Dr Destouches towards his medical vocation – and his tutelage under the wing of professor Athanase Follett: « Par l'enseignement de Skoda, Semmelweis apprit ce que peut l'esprit clinique dans la nature et s'il ne fut jamais dans ce domaine aussi subtil que son maître, ses créations furent plus solides, il

³²⁷ Gibault, François: *Céline 1894-1932: Le Temps des espérances* : Mercure de France 1985 p274

³²⁸ In a conversation we had with Eric Mazet he cautioned that it has never been proved that Céline actually showed the manuscript of *L'Eglise* to Rajchman

³²⁹ L-F Céline : *Bagatelles pour un massacre* Les Editions de Denoël : Paris 1937 pp 102-103

³³⁰ Gibault, François: *Céline 1894-1932: Le Temps des espérances* : Mercure de France 1985 p275

³³¹ Ibid p275

³³² L-F Céline : *Bagatelles pour un massacre* Les Editions de Denoël : Paris 1937 p 73

devait aller beaucoup plus loin dans la Vérité. »³³³ The presence of a capital ‘V’ in this passage renders the word significant, both in the context of the aspirant doctor’s life, as well as that of his literary *persona* ‘Céline’, as the theme which dominates in his first novel, the *Voyage* is no less than a quest for Truth incarnate in Death. That notion is underscored in Céline’s use in the same work of a phrase that was to become a leitmotif in his oeuvre: “Dans l’Histoire des temps la vie n’est qu’une ivresse, la Vérité c’est la Mort.”³³⁴ Also significant is the word ‘maître’ which refers to a father-figure – both in Semmelweis’s life in the person of professor Skoda, as well as in Destouches’ life, embodied in the person of professor Athanase Follet. Like Follet, Skoda was a controversial figure, hence the esteem in which he was held by his pupil, Semmelweis, and, by extension, Destouches-Céline. This is borne out in a description of Skoda whose work on the procedure of medical examination was carried out “avec beaucoup d’audace”, which attracted “des contradicteurs ardents”.³³⁵ In a prophetic and perhaps self-fulfilling observation, Céline notes that the risk inherent in this maverick attitude could “(...) (faire) défaut le plus souvent aux graves carrières scientifiques.”³³⁶

In a passage that could emanate directly from the pages of the *Voyage*, Destouches notes that in his research, Semmelweis discovered that :

« Il n’y a pas de petites ressources pour le génie, il n’y en a que de possibles ou d’impossibles. Dans l’étude du microscope aucune vérité n’allait alors bien loin sur la route de l’Infini, les forces du chercheur le plus audacieux, le plus précis, s’arrêtaient à l’Anatomie Pathologique. Au-delà de ces quelques broderies colorées, sur la route de l’infection, il n’y avait que la *Mort et les Mots...* »³³⁷ (our emphasis)

Death and Words, *en route* to the Infinite ; Céline’s use of capital letters to emphasise the importance of this triune is significant. In words which so closely parallel the ethics inherent in the *Voyage*, Céline reveals the degree to which his work on Semmelweis is emblematic of an initiation into a world of literary creation. Death and Words are depicted in this sense, that they do not, *per se*, attain the Infinite, as they frequently shatter against the figurative brick wall of “L’Anatomie Pathologique”. It

³³³ *Cahiers Céline 3: Semmelweis et autres écrits médicaux*: Editions Gallimard 1977 p 29

³³⁴ Louis-Ferdinand Céline: *Semmelweis* : Éditions Gallimard 1999 : p 38

³³⁵ *Cahiers Céline 3: Semmelweis et autres écrits médicaux*: Editions Gallimard 1977 p 29

³³⁶ *Ibid* p 29

³³⁷ *Ibid* : p 30

would take the transposition, the genius of Céline's writing to permeate that 'wall', thus attaining the *au-delà* of creative inspiration. In yet another prophetic passage, Céline notes that Semmelweis's greatest flaw was « celui d'être brutal en tout et surtout *pour lui-même*, »³³⁸ (our emphasis), concluding that « Humainement, c'était un maladroit. »³³⁹ This character trait of self-sacrifice to the point of self-destruction so closely parallels that of Céline that we need no further proof of the degree of identification the author discovered in the enigmatic character of Semmelweis. Like Céline, Semmelweis "s'en croit persécuté" for social reasons, particularly regarding his Hungarian accent for which he was mocked by other students, to the degree that "il est tout près de l'obsession".³⁴⁰

In a striking evocation of the immanence of Semmelweis's destructive genius – which would prove to be paralleled his own – Céline observes that "On peut aimer la chaleur du feu, mais personne ne veut s'y brûler. Semmelweis, *c'était le feu*. »³⁴¹ (our emphasis) And in an aphorism evocative of the *Voyage*, Destouches-Céline questions the wisdom of ignoring the significance of absurdity in man's life : « Aussi haut en effet que votre génie vous place, aussi pures que soient les vérités qu'on énonce, a-t-on le droit de méconnaître la formidable puissance des choses absurdes ? La conscience n'est dans le chaos du monde qu'une petite lumière, précieuse mais fragile. On n'allume pas un volcan avec une bougie. On n'enfonce pas la terre dans le ciel avec un marteau. »³⁴²

As Destouches-Céline develops his thesis on Semmelweis, we detect a parallel development of his major themes in the *Voyage* and to a lesser extent, in *L'Eglise*. This leads us to conclude that *Semmelweis* represents the blueprint and the vehicle for Céline's body of work which was to continue over a period of nearly 40 years, until his death in 1961. In this sense, it is evident that both the person of Semmelweis and the writing of his biography represent an initiation for Céline in terms of a father-figure whose life so closely paralleled his own that he was able to learn from it and incorporate elements of his predecessor's life into his body of literature. For example,

³³⁸ *Cahiers Céline 3: Semmelweis et autres écrits médicaux*: Editions Gallimard 1977 : pp 30-31

³³⁹ Ibid p 37

³⁴⁰ Ibid p 31

³⁴¹ Ibid p 34

³⁴² Ibid : p 37

in the following passage from *Semmelweis*, Céline outlines some of his major themes concerning the importance of confronting one's destiny, and of plumbing the depths of life's mysteries in order to attain the strength to effect that confrontation:

“Rarissime est celui qui, se trouvant au milieu de cette obsession des ambiances qu'on appelle la Fatalité, ose, et trouve en lui la force qu'il faut pour affronter le Destin commun qui l'entraîne. Dans l'ombre il trouvera la clef des mystères auparavant redoutables. Presque toujours celui qui la veut avec assez de foi la découvre, car toujours elle existe, et devant son audace, le torrent des fatalités se détourne vers d'autres ignorances jusqu'au jour d'un autre génie. »³⁴³ (our emphasis)

We posit that the 'shadow' referred to in this passage is present within the author as his *alter ego* or shadow-self, transposed as the figure of the Double in Céline's novels.

In an unconscious homage to himself and his œuvre, Céline, on describing Semmelweis's discovery of the link between the death of his professor of anatomy, Kolletchka and that of the parturient women he had treated, observes that “Les grandes oeuvres sont celles qui réveillent notre génie, les grands hommes sont ceux qui lui donnent une forme”.³⁴⁴ Céline leaves us in no doubt as to the importance of both a dream and a vision, in the sphere of creative activity, whether it be in the field of medicine or literature, cautioning that there are “Point de grandes créations hors du sentiment, et l'enthousiasme vite s'épuise chez la plupart d'entre eux à mesure qu'ils s'éloignent de leur rêve.”³⁴⁵ And in a passage that both honours Semmelweis for maintaining his dream in the face of adversity while revealing the author's admiration for the obstetrician, Céline notes that « (...) forcer son rêve à toutes les promiscuités, c'est vivre dans un monde de découvertes, c'est *voir dans la nuit*, c'est peut-être forcer le monde à entrer dans son rêve. »³⁴⁶ (our emphasis) However, in an ironic aside that reveals Céline's disillusionment with Man, he observes that « Il n'y a que la guerre dans le Cœur des hommes. »³⁴⁷

³⁴³ *Cahiers Céline 3: Semmelweis et autres écrits médicaux*: Editions Gallimard 1977 : p 41

³⁴⁴ *Ibid* p 51

³⁴⁵ *Cahiers Céline 3: Semmelweis et autres écrits médicaux*: Editions Gallimard 1977 p 52

³⁴⁶ *Ibid* p 52

³⁴⁷ *Ibid* p 56

Pamphleteer

In yet another parallel between Semmelweis's life and that of Céline, we witness the obstetrician-turned-pamphleteer at the Saint-Roch maternity hospital where he has become « plus agressif encore qu'à Vienne »,³⁴⁸ addressing an open letter to "tous les professeurs d'obstétrique" in which he attempts to break a ten-year silence on the reasons for recurrent infection of women during delivery:

« (...) Assassins! Je les appelle tous ceux qui s'élèvent contre les règles que j'ai prescrites pour éviter la fièvre puerpérale. Contre ceux-là, je me dresse en adversaire résolu comme on doit se dresser contre les partisans d'un crime ! (...) il n'est pas d'autre façon de les traiter qu'en assassins. (...) Ce n'est pas les maisons d'accouchement qu'il faut fermer pour faire cesser les désastres qu'on y déplore, mais ce sont les accoucheurs qu'il convient d'en faire sortir, car ce sont eux qui se comportent comme de véritables épidémies etc... »³⁴⁹

Needless to say, « La haine soulevée par ce pamphlet ne fut que l'écho amplifié de celle dont (Semmelweis) avait éprouvé la violence dix ans auparavant à Vienne. »³⁵⁰

We are left in no doubt of the fact that Céline considered Semmelweis to be a mirror-image of himself in an observation that lauds the obstetrician for daring to fly in the face of convention through the dissemination of this pamphlet, while proffering a word of warning as to the consequences of a transgressive act of this nature: « (...) comme s'il avait écrit dans *un miroir* »,³⁵¹ (our emphasis) Céline cautions that "Si ces vérités n'étaient que trop urgentes, cependant il était puéril de les proclamer sous cette forme intolérable."³⁵²

The analogy between the dissemination of Semmelweis's pamphlet, and the resulting furore it caused, cannot fail to evoke Céline's vain attempt to prevent the outbreak of a second world war through the publication of his own pamphlet *Bagatelles pour un massacre*, as well as the persecution he suffered as a result. Although he was yet to suffer the degree of public outcry and fury Semmelweis had incited, Céline's instinctive perception of the depths to which human nature could descend are palpable in the following passage which laments Semmelweis's impotence in the face of man's

³⁴⁸ *Cahiers Céline 3: Semmelweis et autres écrits médicaux*: Editions Gallimard 1977 : p 67

³⁴⁹ *Ibid* pp 67-68

³⁵⁰ *Ibid* p 68

³⁵¹ Gibault, François: *Céline 1894 – 1932 : Le Temps des espérances*: Mercure de France 1985 p 238

³⁵² *Cahiers Céline 3: Semmelweis et autres écrits médicaux*: Editions Gallimard 1977 p 68

inherently bellicose nature: “La bonté n’est qu’un petit courant mystique parmi les autres et dont on tolère difficilement *l’indiscrétion*. Au contraire, contemplez donc la guerre en marche, rien n’est trop doré, trop bruyant, trop immodeste pour elle. La gloire du général est celle qui se comprend immédiatement, elle est éclatante, elle est énorme, elle coûte cher. »³⁵³ One can only speculate that Céline had a premonition of parallel events that were to follow in his own life, having closely identified with Semmelweis’s inherently maverick nature, his humanity and a passion for the truth.

Transgression

Given that Céline’s study of the life and work of Semmelweis acted as a catalyst for the evolution of his creative expression through literature and a concomitant ability to free himself from the societal, moral and emotional strictures that prevented its realisation, the following passage is indicative of the degree to which Semmelweis influenced him in that regard. “Sans doute avait (Semmelweis) *franchi* déjà les sages limites de notre *sens commun*, cette grande tradition de nos esprits dont nous sommes tous les petits enfants attentifs, gentiment soudés par la coutume à *la chaîne de la Raison* qui relie, qu’on le veuille ou non, le plus génial au plus ignare d’entre nous, du premier au dernier jour de notre vie commune. »³⁵⁴ (our emphasis) In this passage, we detect a desire to transgress the censure of convention, and to enter an *au-delà* where ‘common sense’ will not be lauded as an intrinsic component of man’s psyche.³⁵⁵

Semmelweis possessed the courage to « (...) s’(évader) du chaud refuge de la Raison, où se retranche depuis toujours la puissance énorme et fragile de notre espèce dans l’univers hostile. »³⁵⁶ Like Céline, he dared to run the risk of entering a world of chaos where « Il errait avec les fous, dans *l’absolu*, dans ces *solitudes glaciales* où nos passions n’éveillent plus d’échos, où notre cœur humain terrorisé, palpitant à se rompre sur la route du Néant, n’est plus qu’un petit animal stupide et désorienté. »³⁵⁷ (our emphasis)

³⁵³ *Cahiers Céline 3: Semmelweis et autres écrits médicaux*: Editions Gallimard 1977 : p 69

³⁵⁴ *Ibid* : p 71

³⁵⁵ In his work *Céline: Qui suis-je?* Pierre Lainé includes an astrological analysis of the writer which reveals that a lack of common sense : “L’Air étant en excès et la Terre en manqué, il y aura une excitation de l’intellect et du langage auquel sont liés les Gémeaux, s’accompagnant d’un manque de solidité basique, de prévoyance concrète, de sens commun.” [Lainé, Pierre: *Céline : Qui suis-je?* Editions Pardès, Grez-sur-Loing 2005 p 126]

³⁵⁶ *Cahiers Céline 3: Semmelweis et autres écrits médicaux*: Editions Gallimard 1977 p73

³⁵⁷ *Ibid* p 73

Sacrifice

In a state of extreme mental distress, Semmelweis, in an act reminiscent of that of chanoïne Fleury in *Mort à Crédit*, “(...) incise la peau du cadavre et taille dans les tissus putrides avant qu’on ait pu l’empêcher, au hasard de ses impulsions, détachant les muscles par lambeaux au’il projette au loin.(...) Il reprend son scalpel et fouille avec ses doigts en même temps qu’avec la lame une cavité cadavérique suintante d’humeurs. Par un geste plus saccadé que les autres il se coupe profondément. »³⁵⁸

One only has to compare this passage with its counterpart in *Mort à crédit* to discern the profound effect that the Semmelweis incident had on Céline, and the manner in which it is transposed - and caricatured - in his novel: “[le chanoïne Fleury] plonge les doigts dans la blessure.... Il rentre les deux mains dans la viande.... Il s’enfonce dans tous les trous.... Il arrache les bords ! les mous ! Il trifouille ! Il s’empêtre... Il a le poignet pris dans les os ! (...) Le jus fuse ! gicle partout ! Plein de la cervelle et du sant ! Ca rejaillit autour ! (...) » (MàC p 1076)

In a moving and prophetic obituary to Semmelweis that could have been his own, Céline observes that « Quant à Semmelweis, il semble que sa découverte dépassa les forces de son génie. Ce fut, peut-être, la cause profonde de tous ses malheurs. »³⁵⁹ What is more, Semmelweis’s last words « Non, Non... »³⁶⁰, were those that Céline wished to have engraved on his tombstone; a refusal by both men to accept compromise in the face of convention, and to dare to defy it in order to merit a passage to “(...) l’autre côté de la vie.” (V p 5) However, despite Céline’s evident veneration for Semmelweis, he, like many others, did not escape caricature in the form of the chanoïne Fleury in the incident cited *supra*.

Pasteur

The influence of Pasteur in the field of medicine, and the admiration in which Céline held him are evident in *Les derniers jours de Semmelweis*, the author’s reworked concise version of his thesis, in which he observes: “Il fallut pour que la Terre s’éloignât un peu de sa voie maudite l’impulsion d’un génie plus maître de ses dons que ne le fut Semmelweis, une force intellectuelle plus harmonieuse, un homme enfin

³⁵⁸ Cahiers Céline 3: *Semmelweis et autres écrits médicaux*: Editions Gallimard 1977 p 75

³⁵⁹ Ibid : p 78

³⁶⁰ Ibid : p 77

dont les actes soient à la hauteur d'une imagination lumineuse: Pasteur. »³⁶¹ It is indicative of the Céline's admiration for Pasteur that the initial title for *Les derniers jours de Semmelweis* was « *La vie, Pasteur, Semmelweis et la mort* »³⁶² We therefore classify Pasteur among the father-figures and initiators in Céline's life, noting that even the high esteem in which Pasteur was held by the author did not preclude him (and in particular his Institute) from caricature in the form of the "Institut Bioduret Joseph" (V p 279) in the *Voyage*, transposing it in a pastiche "qu'André Lwoff juge plus vrai que nature."³⁶³ Far from the sterile environment one would associate with a research institute of that calibre, « Il ne s'y trouvait encore personne dans ces laboratoires, pas plus de savants que de public, rien que les objets bousculés en grand désordre, des petits cadavres d'animaux éventrés, des bouts de mégots (...) » (Vp279) However this did not deter Céline from joining the Institute in November 1923.

It was at the Pasteur Institute that Céline was to meet two eminent medical men whose transposed characters appear in the *Voyage*. At a crossroads in his career, and on the recommendation of Athanase Follet, "Il fut ainsi tenté par l'Institut Pasteur où il se fit recommander par le professeur Follet qui connaissait Emile Roux dont [Céline] fit ensuite le professeur Jaunisset." ³⁶⁴ On the strength of this recommendation he was also introduced to Serge Metalnikov, « [...]savant russe à deux cents pour cent »³⁶⁵ who served as a model for Parapine in the *Voyage*.

Mort à crédit

The first father-figure we encounter in this novel is that of Ferdinand's fictional father, Auguste, and a transposed representation of his biological father, Fernand Destouches:

« Il n'y a non plus aucune des attitudes ou des réactions d'Auguste' qui n'ait été, à l'ampleur près tout au plus, celle de Fernand Destouches : le sentiment d'une supériorité conférée par son origine 'bourgeoise', en particulier sur la famille de sa femme; la prétention intellectuelle, la mythomanie, le rejet de ses échecs sur les francs-maçons ou sur les juifs (comme lui, 'Auguste' lira *La Patrie*), le mélange de pusillanimité et d'esprit guerrier ou revanchard, de lamentation sur soi-même et de colères (...).»³⁶⁶

³⁶¹ *Cahiers Céline 3: Semmelweis et autres écrits médicaux*: Editions Gallimard 1977 : p 82

³⁶² Gibault, François: *Céline 1894 – 1932 : Le Temps des espérances*: Mercure de France 1985 p 239

³⁶³ Gibault, François: *Céline 1894 – 1932 : Le Temps des espérances*: Mercure de France 1985 p 241

³⁶⁴ Ibid : p 240

³⁶⁵ *Le Figaro littéraire* 7 – 13 avril 1969 p 4

³⁶⁶ Céline : *Romans t I : Mort à crédit : Notice* :Éditions Gallimard 1981 : p 1362

But perhaps the most pertinent character trait that links the fictional 'Auguste' to the factual 'Fernand' – and, importantly to Céline, is that of a man who is «(...) toujours prêt à imputer ses déceptions à des ennemis imaginaires, et à les faire payer son entourage. »³⁶⁷

The fact that Céline's own father, Fernand Destouches, appears in the author's work *Mort à Crédit* as a caricature, both with regard to his physical appearance as well as his social pretensions and prejudices is aberrant, in that he appears *not* to have fulfilled the role of a positive initiator in his son's life. However, as Fernand Destouches was probably Céline's male role model in early infancy, there is a possibility that a bond existed between father and son which was subsequently dissolved as he entered adolescence. We therefore conclude that those father-figures who *do* fulfil that role, and whom Céline appears to have sought out, notably during his youth, were surrogate fathers endowed with the wisdom and maturity the author craved. These figures were idealised versions of the father-figure, and as such, were vulnerable to a subsequent dethronement once Céline became better acquainted with them, thus dispelling the aura of idealism with which they had been invested in an initial, superficial contact.

Henry de Graffigny - Raoul Marquis

The second important father-figure in *Mort à crédit* is that of Roger-Marin Courtial des Pereires, based on an actual inventor and author of 'popular' science articles named Raoul Marquis who assumed the pseudonym of Henry de Graffigny for his published works. This is borne out in a letter to Milton Hindus written in 1947, "Mon inventeur Courtial des Pereires a parfaitement existé. Il s'appelait Henri de Graffigny. Le *Génitron* s'appelait l'*Eurêka*. »³⁶⁸ Parallels between de Graffigny-Marquis and the character he was to inspire in *Mort à Crédit* as Courtial des Pereires are evident, not only with regard to the publication of scientific papers and his career as a balloonist, but also in the context of the assumption of a pseudonym to mask his identity: "(...) Léon-Charles Punais! – Voilà son vrai nom véritable. » (MàC p 1050)

³⁶⁷ Céline : Romans t I : *Mort à crédit* : Notice : Éditions Gallimard 1981 : p 1362

³⁶⁸ Céline : Romans t I : L-F Céline : *Mort à crédit* : Notice : Éditions Gallimard : p 1378

Raoul Marquis - Henry de Graffigny came into Louis Destouches' life quite by chance, when he was at a crossroads, having, at the age of 23, suffered injury and trauma in the war, followed by a sojourn in London where he experienced social and moral freedom. That episode included a first marriage where one of the witnesses was Édouard Benedictus, (another father-figure who was to appear in fictional form in *Guignol's Band* as Sosthène de Rodiencourt), and finally an experience in the African equatorial forest with its attendant paludism from which he was to suffer throughout his life. On his return from Africa, Louis Destouches had no intention of pursuing his former career with the jeweller Lacloche, given his "horreur prénatale pour la contrainte- Encore quelques temps, dans cette Brousse, et j'émigrerais fort probablement pour d'autres continents."³⁶⁹ Raoul Marquis thus became Roger-Marin Courtial des Pereires, one of the "plus formidable héros de toute son oeuvre", ³⁷⁰ with the exception of Bardamu. It was this eccentric inventor and author of a gamut of 'popular' scientific articles who was the inspiration for a "sorte de héros *fabuleux, épique, légendaire*; un monstre."³⁷¹ (our emphasis) An analysis of the adjectives we have underscored reveals an element of transcendence intrinsic in an act of transmutation or initiation into another form of being – that of the *au-delà*. Courtial is not only 'fabulous', an essential element in fantastic literature, but he is also 'épic' and 'legendary', traits which invest him with a dimension of gravity, demanding that he be held in esteem. But significantly, he is also a 'monster',³⁷² a figure of fantasy often portrayed in mediaeval works of art, notably those of Jérôme Bosch.³⁷³ Significantly, the monstrous is also a trait associated with the Double in Girard's *La Violence et le sacré*.

³⁶⁹ Cahiers Céline 4 : *Lettres et premiers écrits d'Afrique 1916-1917* : Editions Gallimard 1978 : Lettre à Simone Saintu le 10 août 1916p 68

³⁷⁰ Gibault, François : *Céline :Première partie : Le temps des espérances (1894 – 1932)* : Mercure de France 1985 p 192

³⁷¹ Ibid p 193

³⁷² **Monstre**: Être fantastique des mythologies et des legends, généralement compose de la réunion en un seul corps de parties et de membres empruntés à plusieurs êtres réels (→ Dragon) : Le Grand Robert de la langue Française : t 4 : Dictionnaires le Robert 2001 p 1616

³⁷³ *Jérôme Bosch et ses symboles : Essai de décryptage* : Jacques Chailley :Académie Royale de Belgique : Mémoires de la classe des Beaux-Arts Collection in-4° -2 série, T. XV – fascicule 1-1978 Bruxelles – Palais des Académies : « Allégories, vies de saints, scènes de l'Évangile, tout est ramené à cette idée-force, qui devient presque une obsession. Nous trouvons donc chez lui, (...) les symboles de l'alchimie, souvent assimilés à ceux de la luxure (...), environnées des signes de malédiction les moins équivoques – diables, démons, monstres, supplices. Mais l'Alchimie n'est pas une simple opération de laboratoire, Elle s'adjoint une mystique et rejoint une cosmogonie, basée sur les Quatre Éléments d'Aristote, Air, Terre, Eau, Feu. Ces quatre Éléments forment la trame de la plupart des grandes compositions de Bosch. » : p 13

In tandem with the fate of other father-figures Céline also caricatured Raoul Marquis whose actual exploits transposed in *Mort à Crédit* might have appeared to the reader that Céline « (...) avait une fois de plus affabulé et que, emporté par son délire verbal, il avait encore outrepassé les limites du raisonnable en forgeant de toutes pièces ce grotesque démesuré. »³⁷⁴ In Gibault's view, assuming the character of Courtial des Pereires to be a product of Céline's imagination would be an error, as « C'était bien mal connaître Céline qui n'inventait pratiquement jamais rien mais *caricaturait* avec une *aisance de plume* qui valait bien le coup de crayon de Daumier. »³⁷⁵ (our emphasis)

Aviation vs Aeronautics

Raoul Marquis' love of astronomy in general and aeronautics in particular, was the key to Céline's attraction for the man and his work. The inventor's most famous work of fiction, *Les Aventures extraordinaires d'un savant russe*, written in collaboration with G. Le Faure and prefaced by the astronomer Camille Flammarion, as well as his "affabulations ingénieuses" were « bien de nature à séduire Louis », particularly through the medium of

« cet appel au rêve lancé par Flammarion qui terminait ainsi: '[...] il est agréable de planer dans les hauteurs éthérées, dans la sphère de l'esprit, d'oublier quelquefois les choses vulgaires de la vie, pour voyager quelques instants parmi les inénarrables merveilles de cet Infini dont le centre est partout, et la circonférence nulle part.' »³⁷⁶

We can only speculate on the degree of creative inspiration Flammarion's words must have held for Céline, particularly the evocation of a journey which bore the stamp of the hilarious mysteries of the infinite ; one which was bounded by no circumference and where the centre was universal. The image is that of a centrifugal force³⁷⁷ inherent in the transgressive power of humour to attain infinity through the dissolution of a fixed centre, thus rendering the circumference obsolete, and in so doing, creating an

³⁷⁴ Gibault, François: *Céline 1894-1932: Le Temps des espérances* : Mercure de France 1985 pp 193-194

³⁷⁵ Ibid : pp 193-194

³⁷⁶ Ibid : pp 199-200

³⁷⁷ **Centrifuge**: Phys; qui tend à éloigner du centre. Force centrifuge: engendrée par un mouvement de rotation, et qui tend à éloigner le corps en rotation du centre. Le Grand Robert de la Langue française t 2 BIP-COUT p 440 1990

Deleuze, in his work *Mille Plateaux* uses the term 'centrifugal' to denote the creative impulse in contrast to a centripetal movement which implies the opposite of creativity; an adherence to the rules of reason and convention.

image which is emblematic of Céline's creative impulse enhanced in a release from repression thus permitting a passage to the *au-delà*.³⁷⁸

In addition to being a balloonist and writer of 'popular' science articles, Marquis was also a playwright as well as "une spécialiste dans le guignol",³⁷⁹ before becoming a puppeteer for the Rockefeller Foundation by whom was also employed in his medical capacity. Gibault speculates that it was probably during this period that the word *guignol* as well as that of *féerie* assumed a special significance for Céline, as they were both words used by Raoul Marquis in his plays *Le Trésor du pôle, comédie-féerie* in five acts and *Culotte rouge ou les Vainqueurs du Kraden, drame-féerie* in four acts and six tableaux. However, we believe that it was Raoul Marquis' fascination with ascension as a balloonist that most appealed to Céline, as the notion of weightlessness – both literal and figurative – was one that the author idealized as a device for the attainment of an altered, creative state of being.

Eurêka-Génitron

When Louis Destouches first met Henry de Graffigny, the latter was a collaborator on the scientific journal "*Eurêka, revue de l'invention*"³⁸⁰ with its offices in the rue Favart, near to both the passage Choiseul and the rue Marsollier where Céline lived. The scientific revue, founded in 1917 by J. R. Gault, was supported by prestigious figures such as Édouard Branly and Edmond Perrier of the Museum of Natural History, and member of the Academy of sciences and the Academy of Medicine. However, the duration of the publication was a mere sixteen months due mainly to "le bricolage infantile et l'exposé de theories de plus en plus abracadrantes."³⁸¹ Although it is difficult to determine Céline's function at the *Eurêka* (transposed as the *Génitron* in *Mort à credit*), we do know that he translated at least one article from the English, entitled "De l'utilisation rationnelle du progress", which reported the "Passages les plus saillants d'un message de l'éminent docteur Nutting à l'Associated Engineering Societies de Worcester Mass. USA.", which he signed as translator 'Louis Destouches'. However, it was in the course of his varied functions at the *Eurêka* that

³⁷⁸ This image evokes that of nuclear fission, where the nucleus of the atom is split, rendering the encircling electrons redundant.

³⁷⁹ Gibault, François : *Céline : Première partie : Le temps des espérances (1894 – 1932)* : Mercure de France 1985 p 200

³⁸⁰ Ibid p 200

³⁸¹ Ibid p 200

the author met several people who were to influence both his life and his work, encounters Céline evokes in *Nord*: "(...) aux temps où j'étais employé, livreur, secrétaire chez Paul Lafitte,³⁸² je cavais à grand gallop (...) entre Gance, Mardrus, Mme Fraya, Benedictus et l'imprimerie de la rue du Temple.... Et Vaschid, des 'lignes de la main' et van Dongen, Villa Saïd. »(N p 519) This significant biographical note evokes Céline's contact with leading practitioners of esoterism and occultism of the day.

Transposition

Céline's employment at the *Eurêka* not only marked him in terms of the contacts he made there, but it was also influential in the development of his style, particularly with regard to the ability to transpose real events into fictional ones. The real-life events and character of Raoul Marquis, a larger-than-life individual unlike anyone Céline had ever encountered, "a certainement marqué Louis, et grâce à lui, on peut étudier l'art de transposition chez Céline".³⁸³ The quality in Marquis which most attracted Céline was no doubt the ability to extend himself literally and figuratively beyond the confines of the earthbound, into the realm of the *au-delà*; to release himself from the 'womb' from which he had emerged into a world that transcended all that had hitherto represented the measurable, the known, the predictable, and to emerge in a dimension diametrically opposed to all that was familiar; one which was emblematic of the infinite.

It is in this sense that we believe Marquis was one of the most important father-figures or initiators for Céline, both as a writer and as a medical doctor. The parallels between the deaths of Marquis, his literary counterpart des Pereires at Blême-le-Petit and Semmelweis are significant, as they evoke an instance of life imitating Art, and in a circular movement, in turn, imitating Life. Towards the end of his life, Marquis retired to Septeuil where, « Comme s'il devait accomplir jusqu'au bout le lamentable et singulier destin de Roger-Marin Courtial des Pereires », he died like Philippe Ignace Semmelweis, « victime de ses propres convictions sinon martyr de la science. »³⁸⁴ We

³⁸² The financier who founded the *Eurêka*

³⁸³ Gibault, François : *Céline : Première partie : Le temps des espérances (1894 – 1932)* : Mercure de France 1985 p 203

³⁸⁴ Ibid : p 203

note however a singular difference between Marquis and Semmelweis in that the former was a charlatan while the latter was utterly sincere in all that he undertook.

Guignol's Band

It is in *Guignol's Band*, written at the start of the second World War, that Céline appears to have achieved a synthesis of the representation of all the father-figures he had encountered up to that point. The fact that this plethora of father-figures-cum-initiators is situated in London, capital city of England, is also significant, as that country "(...) au moment et dans les circonstances où Ferdinand s'y trouve, représente pour lui un paradis (...)"³⁸⁵ (our emphasis), encapsulating all the elements that represented an idealised form of life for a young Céline. That charm included a « grand port en plein ville, ville des bateaux, des brumes, des soleils mouillés, ville asile des exiles, des déserteurs ou des rescapés de la guerre, ville des enfants, ville du plaisir. »³⁸⁶ Setting it apart from Céline's other novels is the fact that *Guignol's Band* is the only one of Céline's works "où la mort soit évoquée sans horreur."³⁸⁷

Benedictus

During Céline's years in London during the First World War, perhaps the most influential figure was that of Édouard Benedictus, « un étrange personnage (peintre, décorateur, musicien, poète et mystique) ; il se disait aussi alchimiste (...), »³⁸⁸ and one of the witnesses at Céline's wedding to Suzanne Nebout in 1916. According to Gibault, « Céline a probablement fait de larges emprunts à Benedictus lorsqu'il a composé 'Borokrom' dans *Guignol's Band II*. »³⁸⁹ Benedictus, like Raoul Marquis, who Céline was to encounter a few years later on his return from Africa, was a polymath, a factor which made him eligible as a contributor to Lafitte's revue the *Eurêka*. He was one of those individuals who remained in one's mind « au-delà du moment de leur fréquentation, comme une de ces figures qui, du fait de leur *plasticité*, se prêtent à une transposition par l'imaginaire (...) »³⁹⁰ (our emphasis) It was no doubt

³⁸⁵ Céline: Romans t III : *Guignol's Band I; Guignol's Band II*: Éditions Gallimard 1988: Notice : p 934

³⁸⁶ Ibid p 934

³⁸⁷ Ibid p 934

³⁸⁸ Gibault, François : *Céline : Première partie : Le temps des espérances (1894 – 1932)* : Mercure de France 1985 p 202

³⁸⁹ Ibid p 202

³⁹⁰ Céline: Romans t III : *Guignol's Band I; Guignol's Band II*: Éditions Gallimard 1988: p 981

this quality that attracted Céline to Benedictus, as he represented the diametric opposite of the stifling confines of morality and social consciousness that had comprised the fabric of Destouches-Céline's life till then. Benedictus was so far removed from the "valeurs de respectabilité d'honnêteté, d'effort, d'économie ou d'abstinence"³⁹¹ that were familiar to Céline as to appear almost supernatural. He was a true 'Renaissance' man – a fact attested to by many who knew him at that time. It is a moniker that evokes the issue of regeneration and a passage to an altered state of being that Céline appears to have been intent on achieving, as "Le nom de *Protée* et l'idée d'homme de la Renaissance (...) reviennent plusieurs fois dans les témoignages qui le connurent." ³⁹² Not only does Benedictus appear to have been the inspiration for the figure of the anarchist Borokrom in *Guignol's Band*; but "il y a quelque chose de lui dans le personnage de Sosthène de Rodiencourt,"³⁹³ whose versatility almost equals that of his avatar. It is probable that Benedictus, and his later encounter with Madame Fraya the clairvoyant and mystic, represented Céline's first contact with the notion of occultism.

The fact that Benedictus, born in 1878, was sixteen years older than Céline when they met, substantiates the notion that he represented a father-figure. He was thus 37 to Céline's 21 years, an age gap sufficient to inspire respect. Claiming to be a descendant of Spinoza, Benedictus's real name was "la transposition latine du prénom hébraïque du philosophe, Baruch."³⁹⁴ Benedictus was clearly the first Jew Céline had encountered, to be followed some years later by Ludwig Rajchman, an irony that cannot escape us, given his treatment of the Jews in the pamphlets. Two of Benedictus's acquaintances at that time testify to the diversity of his social contacts, his activities and, importantly for Céline, his esoteric knowledge : "(...) il faisait songer, (...) aux alchimistes du Moyen Age, donnant l'impression d'un médium plongeant dans l'arcane rythmique du monde et rapportant de son voyage dans l'*au-delà* une sorte de révélation."³⁹⁵ (our emphasis) From this description of the man, we deduce that Céline could have chosen no better catalyst for a journey to the *au-delà* than the master-medium himself embodied in the person of Benedictus.

³⁹¹ Céline: Romans t III : *Guignol's Band I; Guignol's Band II*: Editions Gallimard 1988 p 935

³⁹² Ibid 982

³⁹³ Ibid p 981

³⁹⁴ Céline: Romans t III : *Guignol's Band I; Guignol's Band II*: Editions Gallimard 1988: p 982

³⁹⁵ Céline: Romans t III : *Guignol's Band I; Guignol's Band II*: Editions Gallimard 1988 p 983: in *Catalogue Benedictus, Rythme et Couleur de l'Art Déco* p 21

In a significant elaboration on Benedictus's character, another acquaintance notes that « Sur tout, (...) il a pensé, agi, écrit, sur toutes choses; des sciences humaines et sur celles qui sont au-delà. »³⁹⁶ In short, Benedictus was a “mystique inspiré”,³⁹⁷ who made an indelible impression on Céline, among other practitioners of the esoteric he recalled meeting at that time in a letter to Pierre Monnnier in 1949. In this letter, Benedictus is described as one of those individuals who is “laconiques, énigmatiques, lunaires, inattendus (...) celui qui est là, écoute tout Pensant qu'on ne se doute pas, et arrive, *surgit de Sirius*. »³⁹⁸ (our emphasis) In the phrase we have emphasised, Benedictus's quality of immanence could not have been better described, as Sirius is a star, not a planet or any other astronomical body which depends on reflected light for its visibility, but a *generator* of light and energy in and of itself. In both references to Benedictus dating from the post-war era (1949) Céline emphasises his esoterism, a reference that is underscored in *Nord* with regard to the cabbalistic manner in which the gipsy caravan is decorated: “(...) les signes, les dessins.... Cest tout? ... cabbalistiques, peinturlurés, rose.... Vert..... et alors ? je veux *tout savoir*....”(N p 519) This passage underscores Céline's fascination for the esoteric and an ongoing desire to plumb its mysteries.

Sosthène de Rodiencourt

Another similarity between Benedictus and Sosthène de Rodiencourt is the fact that during the first world war, Benedictus “travaila à la mise au point de gaz de combat et de protection contre ces gaz.”³⁹⁹ This serious scientific work undertaken by Benedictus is caricatured in *Guignol's Band*, with its transposition into pure farce where both the ritual of experimentation and the scientist become figures of fun. The scientist is thus transposed into an archetypal figure of ridicule: the clown.

³⁹⁶ Céline: Romans t III : *Guignol's Band I; Guignol's Band II*: Editions Gallimard 1988 p 983: in *Catalogue Benedictus, Rythme et Couleur de l'Art Déco* p 983 : Note 3: Allocution de Y Rambosson, plaquette citée

³⁹⁷ Ibid p 983

³⁹⁸ Céline: Romans t III : *Guignol's Band I; Guignol's Band II*: Editions Gallimard 1988 :*Notice* p 983 : in Monnier, P: *Ferdinand Furieux* letter du 1e avril 1949

³⁹⁹ Céline: Romans t III : *Guignol's Band I; Guignol's Band II*: Editions Gallimard 1988 :*Notice* p 981

In the wake of the explosion of the *Ferocius 92*, wounded and disorientated by the destruction of his laboratory, Sosthène is nevertheless capable of following the colonel's advice not to call the police, but to celebrate the event instead:

“Ils voulaient prévenir la police (...) Le colonel les a empêchés, il avait retrouvé sa raison (...) ‘England rule the gases !’ le bras droit levé haut comme ça (...) et puis trois fois de suite ‘Hip hurray !’ le Sosthène qu’était tout bleu de bosses (...) et la bouche toute rouge de caillots (...) lui faisait écho de bon cœur ‘Hip ! Hip ! Hurray !’ à plein gosier (...)” (GBII p 408)

In a final flourish of caricature, Céline ironically declares that « Les gaz homicides, *Ferocious* leur avaient appris beaucoup de choses en somme et pour toutes. » (GBII p 408)

Raoul Farcy

One of the most significant transformations effected by Céline in successive versions of *Guignol's Band* relates to the figure of Raoul Farcy. The first mention of Farcy occurs in *Guignol's Band I* in the context of a discussion between Ferdinand and Mille-Pattes, where the latter reports Cascade's words regarding the fact that Ferdinand was sent to London by Raoul Farcy: “Ferdinand nous double!... qu'est venu chez moi en ami! ... qu'était envoyé par Raoul ! ... ce pauvre Raoul !... » (GBI p 249) However, it is only in the ‘confession’ made by Ferdinand that the figure of Farcy assumes his full dimension. Even more remarkable is the fact that he is no longer a young man of Ferdinand's age, but one who “a l'âge de son père”.⁴⁰⁰ What is more, in relation to Cascade, he is no longer a nephew but a “pote”, adding a completely different perspective to his relationship with both Ferdinand and the pimp Cascade.

For Ferdinand, Farcy is, like Princharde in the *Voyage*, and Borokrom in *Bagatelles*, “une incarnation d'initiateur à l'insoumission et à l'anarchie”,⁴⁰¹ both emblematic of a flight to freedom through a rebellion against the strictures of society. In comparing Princharde's anarchic attitude towards the given social order with that of Farcy, we detect parallels in both their viewpoints; “Mon ami, me confia-t-il, le temps passe, et ne travaille pas pour moi... Ma conscience est inaccessible aux remords, je suis libéré... (...) Ce ne sont pas les crimes qui comptent en ce monde, ... (...) ce sont les

⁴⁰⁰ *Céline: Romans t III: Guignol's Band* : Editions Gallimard 1988; *Notice*: p 961

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid* p 961

gaffes... Et je crois en avoir commis une ... tout à fait irrémédiable ...» (V pp 66-67)
 There is an element of the deserter in Princhard, revealed in the explanation that he stole a pot of jam in order to « (se) soustraire à la bataille(...) pour revenir en paix comme on revient, exténué, à la surface de la mer après un long plongeon.... » (V p 67)
 Similarly, Raoul Farcy's subversive ideology is revealed in his words "Mort aux vaches !" » (GBI p 269) as he is carried away by the police, accused of treason.
 However, in version (a) of this incident, what had previously appeared to be simply a period of convalescence in hospital, is revealed as "explicitement d'une invitation à la désertion, dont le fondement est sans équivoque: "L'anarchie! Mon fils! L'anarchie!"⁴⁰²

In the variant (a) of page 269 in *Guignol's Band I*; we learn how Ferdinand met Farcy in an episode that emphasises the bond between them, despite a clear age-difference: "(...) toujours à l'hôpital de Hazebrouck je m'étais fait un ami d'un blessé le lit à côté de moi ... Farcy Lucien ... Exactement les mêmes blessures... aux mêmes endroits...(....) Il était mort dans les souffrances, de la gangrène de son bras. Mais on avait le temps de causer, ... de se faire des projets de convalescence... - On ira tous les deux à Londres chez *mon pote Cascade*, il me disait.(...) »⁴⁰³ (our emphasis) Later in the same passage we learn that « Il m'appelait toujours son fils à cause de la différence d'âge. Il était de la dernière réserve (...) Ca lui faisait [14] au moins *douze ans de mieux*. » (our emphasis) ⁴⁰⁴ We conclude that Farcy represented a father-figure for Ferdinand, both from the degree of bonding and identification that appears to have existed between them, as well as the fact that Farcy was an initiator, both in terms of liberating him from the hospital as well as introducing him to Cascade: "Moi qu'étais un petit cave de naissance, employé et tout, fils de mes parents, <enfance de boulot> dessalé mais soumis à mort, il m'avait drôlement *affranchi* le Lucien de l'hosto. Ça nous avait bien *réunis* la façon qu'on était sonnés nous deux exactement pareils, des blessures juste aux mêmes endroits et dans nos deux lits côte à côté. »⁴⁰⁵ (our emphasis)

⁴⁰² Céline: Romans t III: *Guignol's Band* : Éditions Gallimard 1988; *Notice*: p 961

⁴⁰³ Céline: Romans t III:*Guignol's BandI*: Éditions Gallimard 1988 : p 1091

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid *Notes et variants*: p 1091

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid : *Notes et variantes* : p 1091

Borokrom

The figure of Borokrom is introduced to us near the beginning of *Guignol's Band I* as “un vrai archange au déclin de son aventure, encore tout de même assez fringant, même resplendissant dans un sens.” (GBI p 100) We learn that he is known as ‘Borokrom’ for his knowledge of chemistry and the “bombes⁴⁰⁶ qu’il avait fabriquées” (GBI p 100) during his youth. Borokrom makes Ferdinand laugh – a factor which cannot be underestimated, as it indicates the degree to which Borokrom is an initiator into another way of life, a lighter side where Ferdinand finds release in laughter, freeing him from the constraints of the world he had known up to that point, and an element he was to introduce into his entire body of work. Indeed, in Bergson’s view, « [le rire] fait que nous tâchons tout de suite de paraître ce que nous devrions être, ce que nous finirons sans doute un jour par être véritablement. »⁴⁰⁷

However, Ferdinand, the narrator of *Guignol's Band* advises us from the outset that there is far more to Borokrom than a simple jovial pyromaniac, as we learn that only later was he to come to appreciate “du poids de l’homme, de sa valeur sous des dehors incongrus” (GBI p 100); the narrator also became aware of his own “connerie” in failing to recognise Borokrom’s true value from the outset. According to Godard, the reference to Borokrom’s anarchy, if one compares it with the passage devoted to the figure of ‘Boro’ in *Bagatelles pour un massacre*, associates him with “une philosophe ou du moins à une vision des hommes et de la société attribuée ailleurs à Bardamu.”⁴⁰⁸ The fact that both Borokrom and Bardamu share the same anarchic ideology, coupled with a particularly optimistic nature that is emblematic of anarchy in itself, renders both the individual (Borokrom) and his singular version of that ideology portrayed in *Bagatelles* “un initiateur potentiel à des idées dont la découverte pourrait avoir été décisive pour Céline.”⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ **Note:** 4 p 1023: Les borures de chrome obtenus par combinaison du chrome avec le bore existent bien en chimie; ils n’ont pas de propriété explosive. En revanche, le chromate de baryum associé au bore entre dans la composition de mélanges pyrotechniques.

⁴⁰⁷ Henri Bergson : *Le Rire : Essai sur la Signification du comique* : Ancienne Librairie Germer Baillière : Félix Alcan, Editeur Paris 1900. pp17-18

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid Notice*: p 936

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid*: p 936. Of all the principal figures present in the two published versions of *Guignol's Band*, Borokrom is the only one to survive in the synopsis of the third unpublished version. One can only surmise that Céline intended to make the reader aware of the full “poids de l’homme” in this version, which underscores the notion that he represented an important role as both father-figure and initiator in Céline’s life.

However, in an echo of his treatment of Dr Rajchman in *L'Eglise*, and of Raoul Marquis in *Mort à crédit*, as well as Benedictus, Céline could not resist the temptation to caricature the prototype Borokrom represented: "Dans le cas de 'Borokrom', comme dans celui de Benedictus, l'imaginaire semble *se venger* par la caricature d'une séduction ou d'une *fascination initiale*."⁴¹⁰ (our emphasis) Once more, we witness a symbolic diminution (at best) and an assassination (at worst), of the father-figure whom Céline had initially held in esteem, and who he appears to have wished to reduce to the sum of his individual parts – no more than a sketch, an outline, emphasising all that was ridiculous in the man in an attempt to 'contain' him. The extent of Ferdinand-Céline's admiration for, and subsequent disillusionment with the figure of Borokrom becomes apparent when one analyses the description of him in *Bagatelles pour un massacre*:

« J'ai des idées moi, d'ailleurs sur la monarchie absolue, je les tiens d'un anarchiste, que j'ai connu autrefois à Londres, un anarchiste authentique – un Bulgare- un pachyderme pour le poids. (...) J'étais qu'un petit jeune homme *pas très affranchi* à l'époque. Je l'admirais énormément. J'étais facile à mystifier. » (our emphasis)

This statement is revealing in that it implies that when he first encountered Borokrom (or his prototype), Ferdinand – Destouches was still inexorably tethered to a life of convention from which he sought to escape, and Borokrom thus represented one of the mechanisms to achieve that freedom. However, in his ironic rider to the same paragraph Céline also caricatures himself and his gullibility at the age of 22 when he first visited London, admitting that he was "facile à mystifier", an admission which in itself reveals a desire to be free of the shackles of convention at all costs- even to the point of self-delusion.

Cascade

Of the figure of Cascade, pimp and uncle of Raoul Farcy who Destouches had encountered at the hospital Val-de-Grâce, "le texte ne dit rien qui ne le valorise."⁴¹¹ Between Cascade and Brokrom, these two men reveal to Ferdinand "un monde moral entièrement nouveau" – one which Ferdinand would wholeheartedly embrace. Although details of his life there are sketchy, the degree to which London marked

⁴¹⁰ Ibid Notice p 986

⁴¹¹ Céline: Romans t III: *Guignol's Band I; Guignol's Band II*: Editions Gallimard 1988 : Notice: p 935

Louis Destouches is evident in the passport photograph taken of him at that time, one which reveals a young man who is “(...) hirsute, la chemise ouverte, plus rien à voir avec l’écadier de Saint-Joseph des Tuileries, ni avec le fringant cuirassier de Rambouillet (...)”⁴¹²

Cascade possesses all the characteristics of an idealised father-figure; not only is he an avowed pacifist, his nephew having perished as a result of his war wounds (or having been executed as a traitor, depending on which version of *Guignol’s Band* one reads), he also represents the sensibility and pragmatism characteristic of the archetypal father-figure also portrayed in the figure of Ferdinand’s uncle Édouard in *Mort à crédit*; “Il est d’abord l’homme du recours et de la sécurité calme, la bonne humeur, mais il est aussi l’être sensible, capable après la mort de son neveu d’un chagrin vrai et durable (...)”⁴¹³ But above all, and given Louis Destouches’ experience at the Front, Cascade is a pacifist, an « (...) ancien réfractaire resté intact dans son refus de la guerre, avec laquelle il persiste à ne vouloir avoir aucun contact »⁴¹⁴ In fact, his unshakeable opposition to war in any form represents « une sorte de contre-exemple du Bardamu des premiers pages du *Voyage* ». In his opposition to war and warmongering in general, Cascade’s pacifism extends to his refusal to profit from war-suppliers, also barring from his establishment the *Leicester* “tout journal susceptible de bourrer les crânes” with war propaganda.

Having occupied centre-stage throughout the entire first part of *Guignol’s Band*, Cascade retires to the background during the central episodes, only to reappear towards the end of the novel in association with those relating to van Claben’s corpse. The synopsis of the third version of *Guignol’s Band* reveals that Céline had attributed a major role to Cascade in a version in which he would no doubt have “pris toute sa stature.”⁴¹⁵ In terms of a father-figure, we note that as solid and dependable as Cascade might have appeared to be at the start of the novel, Ferdinand “qui pouvait s’estimer tiré d’affaires, protégé par Cascade et sur le seuil d’une vie nouvelle”,⁴¹⁶ is weighed down by the responsibility of two murders and the impregnation of a minor!

⁴¹² Gibault, François : *Céline : Première partie : Le temps des espérances (1894 – 1932)* : Mercure de France 1985 p 173

⁴¹³ Céline: Romans t III: Editions Gallimard 1988: *Notice*: p 935

⁴¹⁴ Ibid p 935

⁴¹⁵ *Céline*: Romans t III: Editions Gallimard 1988: *Notice*: p 936

⁴¹⁶ Ibid p 937

Above all, he is sought by the police, as well as by Cascade himself, “de *protecteur devenu persécuteur*”.⁴¹⁷ (our emphasis)

Clodovitz

Although Clodovitz occupies a fairly minor role in *Guignol's Band*, we believe he may nevertheless be classified as a father-figure who initiated Ferdinand into another way of life; in this case, his medical career: “C’est comme ça que j’ai débuté, un petit peu ainsi clandestin, au London Freeborn Hospital avec le Dr Clodovitz, dans la carrière professionnelle.” (GBI p 160), where he learns to administer injections as well as the customary medical reassurance “*Soon be over!*” (GBI p 159) Although “Clodovitz ne fait que passer” in the novel, the fact that he afforded Ferdinand “ses premières expériences d’infirmier, (...) *n’est pas rien*.”⁴¹⁸ (our emphasis)

In the synopsis of *Guignol's Band III* in the episode where Virginie is hospitalised at London Hospital, they are greeted by none other than “Yudenzweck” who “nous voit arriver”,⁴¹⁹ the name given to Rajchman in *L’Eglise*. According to Godard, « La mention qui suit de la formule *Soon be over* ne laisse aucun doute sur l’identification de ce médecin du *London Hospital* avec le Clodovitz des parties rédigées du roman. »⁴²⁰ Moreover, « L’étonnant est que ce nom de Yudenzweck, qui souligne l’origine juive du personnage, est celui qui était donné au troisième acte de *L’Eglise* au ‘Directeur des Compromis de la Société des Nations’ inspiré à Céline par celui qui l’avait recruté et avait été son supérieur et longtemps son protecteur (...) le Dr Ludwig Rajchmann » (...) ⁴²¹ We are therefore left in no doubt that Ludwig Rajchman and possibly also Athanase Follet were prototypes for the figure of Clodovitz in *Guignol's Band*.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid p 938

⁴¹⁸ *Céline: Romans t III*; Editions Gallimard 1988: *Notice*: p 935

⁴¹⁹ Ibid : *Appendice II* : p 765

⁴²⁰ Ibid *Notes et variants*: p 1169

⁴²¹ *Céline: Romans t III*; Editions Gallimard 1988: *Notice*: pp 1169 - 1170

Rivals

Death by caricature

But what was Céline's motivation in caricaturing those he most admired? We believe the answer to that question lies in Baudelaire's essay *De l'essence du rire*⁴²² quoted at the start of this chapter. Céline's compunction for caricature appears to stem from a desire to gain ascendancy over those father-figures whose various abilities he admired and, in so doing, to defray any feeling of awe they might have inspired in him. Gaining power over those figures by transposing their actual character traits through caricature inevitably imbued the author with a feeling of superiority over those father-figures who he perceived as rivals in various domains.

In a dual process of reduction and extraction, the 'Other' is demystified through the mechanism of caricature, rendering him tenable through a process of containment that exorcises any element of fear he might have evoked. That fear relates not only to an abject terror of a higher authority represented by class or economic structures, but also to a more fundamental dread of the 'Other'; the unknown – those who differ fundamentally from oneself. It is the "autre vous-même" (V p 63) one's double thus incarnated through the process of "dépouill[ation]" or reduction – a form of crystallisation of the essential elements in man that renders the 'Other' tenable while simultaneously creating a double capable of imbuing the individual with the strength to deal with the vagaries of human nature that would otherwise have been destructive. That process is a shield against destruction. We therefore deduce that the creation of the Double with its attendant function of transcendence to the *au-delà* is emblematic of Céline's desire to develop and restore his creative impulse, and to release it from the element of fear that would necessarily have inhibited its progress.

Céline was to continue this cycle of destruction of successive father-figures through the act of writing, notably in the form of caricature. Not only did he caricature Dr Rajchman in both *L'Eglise* and *Bagatelles pour un massacre*, as Yubelblat and Yudenzweck respectively, but he went as far as showing Rajchman the text of the former work, an act he recounts in *Bagatelles*, comparing his superior at the SDN to a duckbilled platypus: "Il me rappelait du Zoo de Londres, cet animal extravagant

⁴²² Baudelaire, Ch : *De l'Essence du Rire* : Œuvres de Baudelaire t II : Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 1932

l'ornithorynx qui est si habile, le faux castor incroyable, qu'à un bec énorme d'oiseau, qu'arrête pas aussi de plonger, de fouiner, de revenir...."⁴²³ When he shows Rajchman the text of l'Eglise which caricatures him, he is surprised at the response, "(...) une petite grimace... Il n'a jamais oublié...(.) J'avais pincé la seule corde qu'était défendue, qu'était pas bonne pour les joujoux (...) »⁴²⁴

In *Mort à credit*, a similar desire to diminish the father-figure through caricature occurs in the case of Courtial des Pereires. Whereas the real scientist Henry de Graffigny was optimistic regarding the outcome of rivalry between aviation and aeronautics (hot-air ballooning) referred to earlier, his fictional counterpart debunks and mocks this assertion through the person of his transposed character. And in *Guignol's Band*, it is significant that many of the positive elements present in Benedictus are caricatured in the figure of Sosthène de Rodiencourt, in another instance of what appears to be a desire to diminish or 'kill' the power of the father figure, or at the very least, to contain it. We gain the impression that Destouches-Céline, having been disappointed in his natural father, refuses to allow those that in real life approach the ideal image of a father that he seeks, (Rajchman, Benedictus), to supplant Fernand Destouches. Benedictus's authentic scientific knowledge is caricatured on two counts in the person of Sosthène de Rodiencourt – both with regard to the episode of the "gaz de combat" as well as an interest in esoterism. In the caricature of Benedictus transposed as the figure of Sosthène de Rodiencourt, Céline creates "une sorte de frère jumeau de Courtial des Pereires",⁴²⁵ a caricature accentuated by the fact that Benedictus was a man of a completely different calibre to Raoul Marquis, and as such, entirely lacking the aspect of charlatanism intrinsic to Marquis. Godard attributes Céline's difference in approach towards Benedictus compared with that of Marquis to "l'appréciation des réactions de Céline face à l'occultisme,"⁴²⁶ and particularly the fact that at the time he was writing *Guignol's Band*, his contact with Théophile Briant, the poet from St Malo, had renewed his interest in the occult.

⁴²³ L-F Céline: *Bagatelles pour un massacre* : Les Editions de Denoël : Paris 1937 p 102

⁴²⁴ Ibid pp 102-103

⁴²⁵ Céline: Romans t III : *Guignol's Band I; Guignol's Band II*: Editions Gallimard 1988: Notice: pp 984-985

⁴²⁶ Ibid p 985

Paternalism

From the above, it becomes clear that two categories of father-figures appear in the novels we have included in this chapter; those who initiated Destouches into a medical career and those who inspired Céline's literary vocation. The two frequently overlap, as in the case of professors Follet and Brindeau who encouraged Céline to write his medical thesis on Semmelweis, which in turn inspired his literary career.

It must be noted that all the paternal influences in Céline's life were underpinned by the existence of his biological father Fernand Destouches, who represented all that his son wished to escape, hence his unconscious search for an idealised father figure capable of initiating him into a way of life that was free from paternal censure and prejudice, into an *au-delà* where his creative genius could take root and flourish. The incidence of caricature appears to occur in direct proportion to the degree of esteem in which he held a particular figure, Ludwig Rajchman being a case in point.

From the above, we conclude that the father figures present in *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, *Mort à crédit* and *Guignol's Band I and II*, represent a literary mechanism employed by Céline to attain release from both the stifling censure of his early years embodied in the figure of his biological father Fernand Destouches, as well as the societal repression he encountered as an adult in French society. The *au-delà*, characterised by a state of weightlessness, implies an altered state of being that is propitious for the realisation of all artistic creation, and one which Céline sought to attain through the medium of the father figures as metaphors for figures of the Double-as-Rival represented in the works we have discussed.

Chapter Three

Dancing – and singing – with Dionysos

Dionysos, the divinity in whom both comedy and tragedy are embodied, is also one who loved to dance. Fundamentally transgressive, we believe he was the wellspring of Céline's creative impulse, culminating in the radiance of his counterpart, Apollo. Frequently imbued with pessimism, the Dionysian figure in Céline's work is a foil for the divinity's own Double, that of Apollo who is emblematic of immancence; the embodiment of aesthetic fulfilment. In this chapter we explore the interrelationship between the two divinities as an incarnation of Céline's figure of Double in the context of the production of the author's poetic prose.

Céline's love of dance and song is fundamental to his artistic production, underpinning the narrative throughout his œuvre. This is revealed in a letter to the actress Marie Bell written in 1943 where the author underscores the importance of song, in particular emphasizing its ascendance over speech: "Ne jamais oublier que l'Homme *chantait* avant de *parler*. Le chant est naturel, la parole est *apprise*. Les sources à poésie sont au chant – pas au bavardage. »⁴²⁷ We would add that dance is equally important in this equation, and that a combination of dance and song, of Dionysian intervention, is the duality that underpins Céline's poetic prose. It is therefore not fortuitous that Céline's entire oeuvre culminates in a work that bears the name of a dance; *Rigodon*. In addition, this word appears as a verb in a phrase from *Guignol's Band II*, in which the narrator celebrates the spirit of youth in the face of the ineluctability of death: "La Vérité c'est la mort!.... J'ai lutté gentiment contre elle, cotillonée, l'ai festoyée, *rigodonnée*, ravigotée à tant et plus! (...)" (GBII p 341) *Guignol's Band* is infused with Dance, present in the form of the pixie-like Virginia who literally skips her way through the novel, the embodiment of weightlessness, contrasted in that novel with the narrator's tendency to limp in times of crisis, as though encumbered by the pressure of life. And in *Féerie pour une autre fois*, the narrative is suffused with song that is a mixture of *chanson populaire* in the form of operetta and *bal-musette*, and operatic aria. In this novel, song fulfills the role of the chorus in Greek tragedy, encircling the tragic events that are taking place and relaying

⁴²⁷ Céline : *Lettres à Marie Bell* : Lettre du 15 avril 1943 : Editions du Lérot 1991 : p 17

them to the reader/spectator. In each case, the presence of dance and song culminate in a level of lyrical prose that surpasses that of Céline's early novels, with the exception of certain passages from *Guignol's Band* and the pamphlets. The conclusion of *Les Beaux Draps* is a case in point. There is no doubt that the degree of poetic excellence attained by Céline in these works is the outcome of a Dionysian intercession; the production of a dithyrambe⁴²⁸ equal in beauty to that of an Archiloque.⁴²⁹ It is in this context that we choose to interrogate the presence of dance and song – and, by implication, music - in Céline's works.

Ascension, evasion

Man's attempt at ascension may be described as one of his most overtly subversive acts, in that it represents a flouting of the laws of gravity. At the opposite end of the spectrum of the notions of weight and weightlessness depicted in Céline's oeuvre, we are witness to the deformity of the cripple who is, as a result of this handicap, essentially earthbound. Clémence, the mother of Ferdinand the narrator of *Mort à Crédit* is a case in point. However, this form of handicap is not confined to Céline's second novel, as the narrator of *Guignol's Band* is occasionally afflicted by bouts of limping, especially when under duress.⁴³⁰ The notion of flight or evasion necessarily accompanies that of ascension, as it too expresses an attempt at escape from the shackles of everyday life. Evasion could therefore be defined as the horizontal equivalent of a vertical trajectory towards freedom. Images of ascension, of flight and of evasion abound in Céline's works, starting in the *Voyage* with those of phantoms soaring above the Place du Tertre, a juncture where Bardamu and Tanya are well placed to view them, having arrived "au bout du monde", further than which it was impossible to venture, because "après ça il n'y avait plus que les morts." (V p 366) Of all the images of flight and of ascension present in Céline's works, this one in particular illustrates the significance of an attempt to escape the human condition; a projection of the desire of the narrator Bardamu – and of those hero-narrators to

⁴²⁸ **Dithyrambe** : Antique grecque : Poème lyrique à la louange de Dionysos : Le Grand Robert de la langue française p 1595

⁴²⁹ **Archiloque** : Poète grecque (Paros v – 712 – après -648) Le plus ancien représentant connu du lyrisme personnel. Enfant naturel d'un noble Parien, colon de Thrace, et d'une esclave condamné à une carrière misérable de mercenaire, il chanta la vie du guerrier, sa brutalité. Vivant et gai, mélancolique et dédaigneux, frondeur et passionné, il reste essentiellement individualiste.

⁴³⁰ « Me voilà dehors, la chaussée, l'avenue... je boite un peu » (GBII p 349) ; « (...) je boite...ça fait rien je colle ! ils s'occupent plus de moi tous les deux (...) Je la sens ma jambe mon bras tout... je boite, je tangué, roule (...) » (GBII p 467)

follow – to transcend the state in which they appear to be confined. Ascension, and by implication, the dance, are simply degrees in the conquest of verticality and a concomitant liberation from one's earthbound state. In flight, man appears to be weightless and free of mortal constraint, a notion described by Nietzsche in his work *Thus spake Zarathoustra*: «Zarathoustra's supreme wish is to 'dance above the heavens', as he who one day was to teach men to fly would have removed all boundaries; for him those limits themselves would have taken flight into the ether. »⁴³¹ (our emphasis)

Steps

In turn, the notion of ascension is also associated with that of the ladder or staircase which cannot fail to evoke the continual cycle of the narrator's descent and ascent in *Féerie pour une autre fois II*. At the start of the novel he descends seven floors on a staircase that is in ruins, parallel to a lift-shaft that evokes an image of the nether world: "Ah, mais, pas de vertige! la cage, là ouverte! l'ascenseur! le fond, le trou, tout jaune! tout phosphore! ... c'est à se retenir, raccrocher dur! houle... pas houle! (...)" (FII p 232). Shortly after this episode, the narrator falls into the lift shaft – a descent which in itself appears to be a version of flight in reverse: "je vacille, (...) j'aurais chaviré depuis belle! (...) une trombe me happe! (...) m'arrache d'Arlette (...) au trou! Je plonge! (...) la cage ! le vide...(...) où j'ai chu ? (...) sur l'ascenseur ! (...)" (FII p 242)

Later in the novel, Ferdinand is once more precipitated into the lift shaft, from which he is able to extricate himself: "une autre houle m'attrappe, m'envoie l'autre bout sous l'ascenseur dans le trou de la cage! Vous croiriez pas !... J'en sortais ! je m'étais extirpé !miracle ! me voila renfourné⁴³² profond ! » (FII p 321) (our emphasis) Another image of the bowels of the earth appears in the form of a crevasse which Ferdinand succeeds in traversing, only to be smothered by the inert body of Normance. It would seem that images of the nether world appear continually as a temptation to Ferdinand to descend and obliterate himself in their depths; a temptation he resists in his

⁴³¹ « Le grand désir de Zarathoustra est de 'danser par-delà des cieux', car celui qui un jour apprendra à voler aux hommes aura déplacé toutes les bornes; pour lui les bornes mêmes s'envoleront en l'air. » Nietzsche, F : *Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra* : Paris 1936 : p 115 quoted in Brun, J : *Le retour de Dionysos* : Les Bergers et les Mages : Paris 1976 : p 21

⁴³² We believe that Céline's use of this word implies a salvation, embodied in Danté's allegory of a descent into Hell and a subsequent rise to Paradise

continual attempts at ascension and evasion on both horizontal and vertical planes. This is achieved by traversing the crevasse and climbing out of the lift shaft. In an image of sacrifice redolent of rites designed to appease a divinity, the corpse of Normance is thrown in the lift shaft; an event that is accompanied by the emanation of flashes of light, of sparks, as though in recognition of the sacrifice offered: “je croyais pas la fosse si profonde. (...) comme une bombe il fait! une bombe molle ... une bombe de viande (...) un petit silence (...) et fûût une de ces giclées d’étincelles (...) du fond de la fosse ! quelles éclaboussures ! plein le couloir !... bleues ! vertes !... rouges !... juste le temps de *fermer les yeux* ! » (FII p422) (our emphasis) The poetry of this image is heightened, not only by the evocation of sparks of varying colours that issue from the shaft, but also in Céline’s advice to the reader who wishes to embark on an imaginative journey offered at the start of the *Voyage*: “Et puis d’abord tout le monde peut en faire autant. Il suffit de fermer les yeux.” (V p5)

Following this incident, Ferdinand is hoisted onto Ottavio’s shoulders and carried up the ruined staircase, all the while threatened by the menace of the open maw of the crevasse: “heureux qu’ils me culbutent pas au trou!” (FII p 429) Although essentially a positive trajectory, the ascent is perilous, haunted by the continual attraction of the abyss and its implication of human sacrifice: “la fosse! ... s’il dérape, s’il loupe, je plonge avec lui! On ira retrouver le Normance!” (FII p 430), thus accentuating the atmosphere of impending tragedy that pervades the novel. Ferdinand’s sense of relief on regaining his apartment on the 5th floor is palpable, having escaped the abyss, even though the building is in ruins : “je revois tout l’escalier à jour! ... à travers les lattes.... J’essaye de compter les paliers... deux, trois, quatre!” (FII 431) Once again, Ferdinand, carried by Ottavio, descends the stairs, but this time his descent is a slow one, as opposed to his free fall into the lift shaft. This instance of descent appears to be consensual, and therefore not one that requires the ‘redemption’ of an ascent as a representation of a rite of initiation; in Ferdinand’s case, an initiation into a state of freedom from his own figurative weight. : “La mystique apparente l’ascension le long de l’échelle à une ascension speculative permettant à l’homme de *s’initier à une gnose* qui fait de lui la creature ayant retrouvé l’itinéraire à partir duquel elle naquit de son

Créateur.”⁴³³ The narrator is thus enabled, through the cycle of descent and subsequent ascent, to regain his ‘supreme knowledge’, that of artistic creation.

Daemon

Similar to the figure of Mille-Pattes, Jules is a malevolent Double of the narrator, perhaps even more so than his predecessor in *Guignol's Band*. For this reason, his ascent of the Moulin de la Galette and subsequent ignominious descent, assisted by Mimi attains a special significance, as it is the obverse of a descent into the nether world and subsequent rise to a state of redemption. Already tainted in Ferdinand's eyes by his seduction of Lili-Arlette the narrator's wife, Jules, from his vantage point on the platform appears daemonic : « Plus encore qu'un sorcier, qu'un démon au pouvoir nécessairement limité, voire que l'Antéchrist en personne, le cul-de-jatte se révèle être un véritable substitut maléfique de l'autorité divine ; 'il a tout fait au doigt ! son doigt ! autre chose que l'atome ou napalm ! le Déluge au doigt ! à son doigt !' »⁴³⁴ However, gradually he is divested of his power, first losing his crutches, stripping himself naked, to be clothed later by Mimi in a travesty of women's clothing. As was the case in the saturnale at the Touit-Touit club involving the Double Mille-Pattes, the scene of debauchery where Mimi dances the cancan and later urinates on the platform is accompanied by dance and song, redolent of a Dionysian orgy: “Elle relève sa jupe. Encore plus! ... et hop là! La jambe! (...) le cancan au milieu de l'avenue! La bouteille sous le bras ! (...) Mimi ! elle chante et elle danse !” (FII p 385) Here too the image of the ladder assumes an inverse mythical significance, as it is the means to *ascend* to Jules, the source of Evil and a parody of Christ on the cross, an image that is reinforced by Ferdinand's insistence that the cripple is thirsty, just as Christ was offered vinegar to slake his thirst: “... le raidillon ... La grande échelle! Elle y est... elle est à la grande échelle! (...) c'est une hauteur comme échelle ! ... et verticale ! » (FII p 386)

The personification of Evil, Jules observes Mimi's tortuous climb from his vantage point : « Du Crime, là-haut, le Jules l'attend !... il est penché au-dessus de l'échelle... il l'attend, tout nu dans sa caisse. » (FII p 386) Completing the scene of debauchery,

⁴³³ Brun, J : *Le retour de Dionysos* : Les Bergers et les Mages : 1976 : pp21-22

⁴³⁴ Mancel, Y : *Féerie pour une autre fois : la réalité au service de la fiction* : Magazine littéraire septembre 1976 No 116 : p 27

and indeed accentuating the element of Dionysian revelry with which this scene is imbued, Jules grabs the bottle of *vulnérable* from Mimi and drinks it all ! Once on the ‘poop deck’ - the *dunette*⁴³⁵ - Mimi proceeds to strip naked, placing her wig on Jules’ head, and insisting that the cripple dress himself in her clothes, thus completing the travesty of the situation, one which leaves him emasculated and divested of his daemonic power: “...et puis elle veut qu’il s’habille lui! Qu’il reste pas tel quel! Nu du tronc! (...) le boa! La jupe. (...) elle qu’a le droit d’être nu, pas lui ! (...) c’est elle à présent qu’a la loi !il a plus de cannes ! plus de fers ! (...) elle le menace !” (FII p 387) As if on cue, signifying the annihilation of daemonic power through purification inherent in this ritual, dawn brings with it the promise of a new day : “(...) en plein soleil ! qu’on l’admire! Il fait un vrai temps magnifique! Un *soleil de renouveau!*” (FII p 387) (our emphasis) Sounding the death knell of Jules’ daemonic reign, the narrator informs us that « Jules est plus rien (...) »(FII pp 387-388) The demi-god has become a fallen angel, who, from commanding the bombardment of the RAF bombers in the sky, “lui qu’avait mené tout le Déluge!” (FII p 388), has evolved to a pathetic creature, comparable to that of Mille-Pattes in *Guignol’s Band*, in the presence of the ‘Camarde’ who, significantly, also arrives at dawn, as if to signal that these two creatures of the night and the nether world - Jules and Mille-Pattes- are unable to bear the light of day. Just as Mille-Pattes shrinks to no more than a “petit clinquement de bouts de bois!” (GBII p 511), Jules, deprived of his power, “se tient peinard... et même, recroqueville!” (FII p 388).

Accentuating the reverse images of Evil in ascension and Good in descent, Ferdinand observes that « (...) le trou au Ciel s’était refermé... comme sous la voûte , notre crevasse... ! je vous note : *matinée splendide !* » (FII p 388) (our emphasis) The radiance of the day has divested Jules of Evil, thus revealing the Satyr’s original nature as:

“(...) the archetype of man, the embodiment of his highest and most intense emotions, the ecstatic reveler enraptured by the proximity of his god, the sympathetic companion in whom the suffering of the god is repeated, one who proclaims wisdom from the very heart of nature, a symbol of the sexual omnipotence of nature which the Greeks used to contemplate with reverent wonder.”⁴³⁶

⁴³⁵ A nautical term which we examine in our chapter on Shakespeare and Céline

⁴³⁶ Nietzsche, F : *The birth of tragedy* and *The case of Wagner*: Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967 : p 61

Flight

However, superior to an initiation through a form of ascension evoked in this novel, is that of flight, in which man finds himself liberated from the weight of earthbound attachment: « (...) mais l'ascension par le grimper est dépassée par le vol dans lequel l'homme se trouve libéré de la pesanteur le rattachant à sa planète originelle (...) l'homme ne se sent plus perdu dans le labyrinthe de l'existence mais, tel Dédale, il domine ce qui fut le terrain de sa condition itinérante. Il se trouve ainsi comme *ravi à lui-même*. »⁴³⁷ Thus robbed of himself and literally relieved of the burden of his terrestrial condition, he is weightless, and free to transcend all that had bound him to the earth and to pursue his authentic trajectory. In Céline's case, we believe this was aesthetic expression. The dance is a prime example of this form of ascension, the aim of which is a repudiation of the ego through the intercession of Dionysius: "Dans la mesure où le Zarathoustra de Nietzsche peut être tenu pour le porte-parole de Dionysos, il est tout particulièrement instructif de voir en quoi la danse (...) se rattache à la répudiation de l'égo (...) »⁴³⁸

Journey

Inherent in the notions of evasion, flight and elevation is the concept of the Journey which is the matrix upon which the narrative of Céline's oeuvre is founded. It is significant that the title of his first novel includes the word *Voyage*, while that of his last novel *Rigodon*, denotes a dance. Embarking on a journey is in itself a transgressive act, requiring the traveler to forsake all that is known and familiar in a quest for understanding, not only of ourselves, but of the world in which we live. In Nietzsche's description of the traveler, we discover the notion of an ascent in order to gain true insight and perspective of our lives: « il faut (...) se placer en dehors de la morale, grimper, monter, voler jusqu'à quel point de vue au-delà de notre bien et de notre mal et se libérer de toute 'Europe'; cette Europe étant entendue comme une somme de jugements despotiques qui nous sont entrés dans le sang. »⁴³⁹ This citation is emblematic of both Céline's attempt to come to terms with the molar, repressive elements in a society that repelled him, as well as his quest for a more profound knowledge of himself.

⁴³⁷ Brun, J : *Le retour de Dionysos* : Les Bergers et les Mages : 1976 : p 22

⁴³⁸ Ibid p 21

⁴³⁹ Nietzsche, F : *Le gai savoir* Ch Le 'Voyageur' parle : p 213

However, Nietzsche cautions that in whatever context we embark on our own particular journey, the essential element for the attainment of true knowledge is an assessment of our own 'weight'. The implication is that the 'lighter' we are at the outset, the more fruitful the result of our quest: "(...) le principal est de connaître notre 'pesanteur spécifique'. Il faut être extrêmement léger pour pouvoir emporter si loin la volonté qu'on a de connaître (...) »⁴⁴⁰ That quest will necessarily involve severing ties with those objects that impede our journey towards a true knowledge of ourselves and our epoch, as « Il faut s'être détaché de bien des choses qui nous pèsent, qui nous entravent, nous tiennent courbés, nous allourdissent (...) »⁴⁴¹ In order to achieve this degree of knowledge, a degree of heroism is required, one which requires the individual to "Aller en même temps au-devant de sa plus grande douleur et de son plus grand espoir."⁴⁴² It is in this spirit that the the narrator-travelers in Céline's novels in the figures of Bardamu, Ferdinand or Céline-as-narrator, embark on their own particular journeys which are simply tropes of a larger journey undertaken by the author Céline in search of himself through the intercession of the Double.

Dionysos and Apollo

Apollo or Phébus (gr *Phoibos*) whose moniker was the 'Brillant' is the Greek god of light. Son of Zeus and of Létéo, he is the god of divination, of music and of poetry as well as warrior and shepherd. A sun god, he is also vindictive and violent, wracked by transports of anger. He is the divinity who reigns over the plastic arts of painting, sculpture, writing and poetry. In contrast, Dionysos, also called Bacchus, is the divinity who has control over the non-plastic arts of music, dance, song and theatre.⁴⁴³ According to Nietzsche, Dionysos is characterized by an opposition to rationalism and Socratic metaphysics, thus personifying the sincerity of instinct, intuition and laughter in harmony with Apollo's equilibrium. This notion finds its parallel in Céline's vaunting of instinct and emotion over rationalism. We submit that through the

⁴⁴⁰ Nietzsche, F : *Le gai savoir* Ch Le 'Voyageur' parle : p 213

⁴⁴¹ Ibid p 213

⁴⁴² Ibid p 135

⁴⁴³ Torn by his father Zeus from the womb of his mother Sémélé who died in her sixth month of pregnancy, Dionysos is carried to full term by being sown into his father's thigh. For this reason, Dionysos is often referred to as being 'born of Jupiter's thigh'. According to legend, the young Dionysos is delivered by jealous Héra to the Titans who dismember him, consuming the fragments of his body.

transgressive intercession of Dionysos present in Céline's figures of the Double, the author was able to attain an Apollonic degree of poetic prose that might be termed 'brilliant' in acknowledgement of that divinity's presence in the textual outcome of the author's work.

Importantly, the synthesis of both Apollo and Dionysos is the wellspring of artistic creation; a synthesis of both plastic and non-plastic art, which is inherent in Céline's work. That synthesis is evident, not only in the poetic prose and the painterly images it evokes, but also in the music, dance laughter and song with which Céline's works are imbued. This synthesis, which reaches its culmination in *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois*, has gradually been introduced through the *Voyage* and *Mort à credit*, only to slowly fade from sight in the trilogy. Music, dance and song are therefore the mainspring of Céline's oeuvre, as their culmination also coincides with the epitome of his poetic prose. In terms of a symmetry that echoes the cadence of Céline's melodic prose, it is also significant that both *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois* are the only works that comprise two parts, in addition to which they occur midway in the trajectory of the author's literary production.

The Apollo-Dionysos alliance is, however, never complacent or unperturbed, as it is rooted in *productive conflict*, which in turn engenders artistic creation: "These two different tendencies run parallel to each other, for the most part *openly at variance*; and they continually incite each other to new and more powerful births, which perpetuate an antagonism, only superficially reconciled by the common term 'art' (...)"⁴⁴⁴ We believe that the continual conflict present between protagonists in Céline's works – and in particular in the rivalry between the hero and his Double – is an allegory for the fundamental Apollonian-Dionysian conflict which is at the heart of artistic production. Just as the elements of song and dance reach their apogee in both *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois*, so too does the degree of conflict between the protagonists and their Doubles in these novels, attaining an apocalyptic level in the latter work through the intercession of the narrator's Double Jules. Concomitantly, both works display a level of poetic prose unrivalled in both the preceding works as well as those which were to follow.

⁴⁴⁴ Nietzsche, F: *The Birth of tragedy* and *The case of Wagner* : Random House 1967: p 33

Tragedy

Defined in terms of the laws of Attic tragedy which presupposes the ineluctability of Fate and, by implication, an acceptance of death, Céline's works appear to bear the seal of this notion which, in turn, embraces the synthesis of both Apollonian and Dionysian elements in which, "(...) by a metaphysical miracle of the Hellenic 'will', they appear coupled with each other, and through this coupling ultimately generate an equally Dionysian and Apollonian form of art – Attic tragedy."⁴⁴⁵ This definition also explains the plethora of quotations in both *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois* taken from Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. In that work, the figure of Hamlet who, in his indecision, expressed in the phrase '*To be or not to be, that is the question*', embodies the qualities of the Dionysian individual:

"For the rapture of the Dionysian state with its annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence contains, while it lasts, a *lethargic* element in which all personal experiences of the past become immersed. (...) But as soon as this everyday reality re-enters consciousness, it is experienced as such, with nausea: an ascetic, will-negating mood is the fruit of these states. In this sense, the Dionysian man resembles Hamlet: both have once looked truly into the essence of things, they have *gained knowledge*, and nausea inhibits action; for their action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things; (...)"⁴⁴⁶ (our emphasis)

The narrator's conflation of the well known citation from *Hamlet* as « Binotoubi »⁴⁴⁷ (FI p114) in *Féerie I* is a metaphor for this lethargy in the face of the ineluctability of Fate, which is also the hallmark of authentic, Attic tragedy.

Blueprint

In the creative rivalry between the archetypal Doubles, Apollo and Dionysos which results in artistic production, we discern a blueprint for the nature and activity, as well as its artistic outcome, in the rivalry inherent in Céline's figures of the Double. Just as conflict is inherent in the relationship between Apollo and Dionysos, so too is it present in the contention which exists between Céline's narrators and their Doubles. However, as we have seen from the archetypes of Apollo and Dionysos already examined, that outcome is always positive, as it results in artistic production. It

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid p 33

⁴⁴⁶ Nietzsche, F: *The Birth of tragedy* and *The case of Wagner* : Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967: pp 59-60

⁴⁴⁷ Godard, H : *Notes et variantes* :t IV : Editions Gallimard 1993 : « La première partie du vers sera citée plus loin dans le livre, p 114, sous la forme célinisée « binotoubi ». Le même vers sera repris, également en deux fragments dissociés, dans *Féerie II*. » : pp 1226-1227

therefore follows that the degree of rivalry present between the narrators and their Doubles is directly proportional to the calibre of poetic prose present in Céline's works. An example of this is the association between the narrator of *Féerie I* and *II* and the figure of Jules, - perhaps the most malevolent figure of the Double in Céline's entire oeuvre – and the degree of poetic imagery present in a synthesis of both the plastic and non-plastic arts; that of Apollo and Dionysos. While the former divinity is present in the level of poetic prose in the text, the latter's presence is felt in the non-plastic art forms of music and song.

The entire narrative schema of *Féerie pour une autre fois* appears to bear the seal of Dionysos, characterized as it is by an inebriated style expressed in the staccato rhythm of the prose as well as the actions of the protagonists which resemble those of inebriated individuals. Indeed, a literal and figurative state of drunkenness pervades the novel, augmented by the Dionysian revelry of music, dance and song. In contrast, very little of Apollo's characteristic dreamlike state appears to exist, as it is overtaken by the apocalyptic events of the novel. The seal of Dionysos (or Bacchus) is stamped on the events which take place during the period of a single night of bombardment during which the inhabitants of a building are obsessed by the ongoing quest for a bottle of *vulnéraire*, a herbal infusion with an alcohol base or a form of wine. Whether actually inebriated or not, the comportment of the inhabitants of the rue Girardon building display similar tendencies, falling against one another, staggering in their attempt to remain upright and engaging in outlandish acts such as the use of Normance's cadaver as a battering-ram to gain access to an adjoining apartment. This leaves the reader in no doubt that *Féerie II* is literally under the influence of Dionysos. The scenario is one of a drunken orgy, exacerbated by the fact that Lili, the narrator's only stable bastion against chaos continually goes missing, leaving him bereft of his 'compass' to guide and stabilize him. In effect, Ferdinand-Céline has lost his 'North Star': "Lili! Lili! aucune réponse!... pas le moindre écho de sous la table." (FII p 322) The entire narrative is, in fact, a 'spectacle', as suggested by Bellosta in her remarks concerning the figure of Jules in *Féerie pour une autre fois I* and *II* "(...)

Jules est un outil forgé pour la théâtralisation de l'oeuvre plus qu'il n'est un personnage. »⁴⁴⁸

Individuation

It is in contemplating the disruption of the principle of Individuation – man closed to the world and turned in on himself - that, according to Nietzsche, we gain an insight into the essence of Dionysos' transgressive nature and his power to overturn a given *status quo* : “If we add to this terror the blissful ecstasy that wells from the innermost depths of man, indeed of nature, at this collapse of the *principium individuationis*, we steal a glimpse into the nature of the *Dionysian*, which is brought home to us most intimately by the analogy of intoxication.”⁴⁴⁹ Concomitant with that rupture is the emergence of incandescent, immanent nature of man. If we examine the close of most of Céline's novels, we discover that each one terminates on a note of hope; the dawn of a new era, as experienced by each of Céline's narrators; one which is suffused with radiance at the close of a trajectory imbued at best with misery; at worst with horror: “C'est l'aube. L'aube habituelle des fins de romans céliniens, lorsque se dissipent les cauchemars. »⁴⁵⁰

In the *Voyage* we witness a Bardamu contemplating the scenario he finds most inspiring; that of boats on the Seine; the sound of a tug-boat in the distance, inviting the barges, the city, man himself, to join its journey towards a new dawn; the image of flux and of renewal: “Il appelait vers lui toutes les péniches du fleuve toutes, et la ville entière, et le ciel et la campagne, et nous, tout qu'il emmenait, la Seine aussi, tout, (...)” (V p 505). And in the final pages of *Mort à crédit* we see the narrator Ferdinand secure in the care of his uncle Édouard, on the point of making a decisive change in his life after the débâcle experienced in the company of Courtial des Pereires at Blême-le-Petit. This change is symbolized in Ferdinand's new-found confidence in his ability to make a change in his life by resisting the prospect of a comfortable bourgeois life with his uncle; one which was born of his communion with the cosmos

⁴⁴⁸ Bellosta, M-C: *Féerie pour une autre fois 1 et 2; un spectacle et son prologue* : La Revue des lettres modernes. L-F Céline : Paris 1974 : p 44

⁴⁴⁹ Nietzsche, F: *The Birth of tragedy and The case of Wagner* : Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967: p 36

⁴⁵⁰ Vitoux, F : *Louis-Ferdinand Céline : Misère et parole* : Les Dossiers Belfond 1987 : p 183

through the intercession of Courtial des Pereires: “Je veux m’en aller, mon oncle... Je veux partir!... Je veux partir loin! ...”

(MàC p 1096) There is no doubt that Courtial inspired this decision, as Ferdinand had earlier recalled his mentor’s instruction in the names of the celestial bodies; one which had given him a perspective on his own place in the universe: “Quand je me sentais m’étourdir, je regardais plutôt en l’air... Ça m’atténuait les malaises de relever la tête... Le ciel était d’une grande clarté (...) Je reconnaissais toutes les étoiles (...) et je savais bien les noms:... » (MàC p 1087)

Equally optimistic is the ending of *Guignol’s Band II (Le Pont de Londres)* which sees the trio Sosthène de Rodiencourt, the narrator Ferdinand and a pregnant Virginie traversing London Bridge towards the promise of a new era in their lives. The optimism of this episode is underscored by Sosthène’s conflation of song and dance, combining a music-hall song by Mayol, *La petite dame du métro*⁴⁵¹ with a dance that is imbued with laughter and a spirit of freedom, shared by Virginie: “Il gambille, il s’émoustille... Les sautés de vent l’attrappent... l’embarquent. (...) Ils sont aux éclats tous les deux.... (...) Ça y est! C’est le bout ! On arrive ! Le pont franchi ! (...) Ils sont aux anges, ils esclaffent, ils savent plus comme c’est rigolo ! » (GBII p 759) Accentuating the carnivalesque frivolity of the occasion are Ferdinand’s closing words in the novel : « C’est moi le pitre maintenant. » (GBII p 759) On this occasion, the promise of a new dawn is underscored by Virginie’s pregnancy, literally signaling the birth of a new chapter in the protagonists’ lives, although we know from the synopsis of *Guignol’s Band III* that when her baby Angeline is two months old, Virginie is destined to die in a fire.⁴⁵²

Despite the apocalyptic events that precede it, the close of *Féerie pour une autre fois II (Normance)* is equally imbued with a sense of lightness implicit in song and dance⁴⁵³, which sees the narrator in the company of the concierge Madame Toiselle and his wife Lili-Arlette making their way towards the métro in the dawn that follows the horrific events of the previous night’s bombardment of Montmartre: “C’est Estelle

⁴⁵¹ *Céline* : Romans t III *Notes et variantes* : p 1166

⁴⁵² *Céline* : Romans t III : *Appendice II* : *Synopsis de ‘Guignol’s Band II’* ; « Elle se jette dans l’incendie, dans l’immense brasier. » p 768

⁴⁵³ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : Editions du Lérot 2004 : p 406 : « *Véronique* : opéra-comique en 3 actes de Messger, livret de Vanloo-Duval (créé aux *Bouffes-Parisiennes* en 1898, 217 représentations). Céline en extrait le refrain des « couples d’Hélène » au finale du premier acte.... »

et Véronique! Messieurs, prenez-nous!...”⁴⁵⁴ Although not specifically designated as a dance, the manner in which Céline evokes the trio’s halting progress towards the safety of the métro is reminiscent of a dance to the accompaniment of Mme Toiselle’s bell: “...pang! Direling! Direling! j’y arrache sa cloche! (...) et j’y envoie loin! ... aux pavés qu’elle va ! ...cogne !... rebondit !... » (FII p 486) And in a potentially tragic situation in which the narrator loses his manuscripts, the reader nevertheless gains the impression that the loss is cathartic, the relief of a burden, and the acceptance of the inevitability of Fate: « ...on allait au métro, c’est tout !... et l’air était bourré de papiers, voilà!... par tornades! des papiers à moi! (...) voilà les faits, exactement... » (FII pp 486-487) The ironic, phlegmatic tone of the narrator exorcises any sense of tragedy or loss inherent in the situation, once more making way for an optimistic ending to the novel; one which is imbued with hope.

In the conclusion to *D’un château l’autre*, which brings with it the promise of an escape from the stifling enclave at Sigmaringen, the optimism inherent in that deliverance is heightened by the presence of pregnant women on the return train from Hohenlychen, and by the literal delivery of a baby: “(...) tout de suite je propose, où nous en sommes c’est le mieux, qu’elle descende à Siegmaringen, avec nous!... qu’elle accouche à Siegmaringen... j’ai tout ce qu’il faut à Siegmaringen.... » (CA p 286) The positive note on which this novel ends is accentuated by the return from hospital of Céline’s patient Mme Niçois, accompanied by her ebullient friend Mme Armandine who proceeds to celebrate her own return to health by dancing for Ferdinand and Lili: “... ‘vous même! ... et madame aussi peut voir! Votre femme! ... elle est danseuse, il paraît! Regardez !’ Elle se lève du banc, elle part au milieu de la pelouse... et là, elle se retrouse ! et hop !... jupe, jupons ! et elle se renverse !.....à la renverse ! pont arrière ! en souplesse :...et là comme ça une jambe en l’air, toute droite, dardée !... comme la Tour Eiffel !... »

(CA pp 298- 299) In situating this scene just before the novel’s end, Céline ensures that Madame Armandine becomes emblematic of a new start, one that is underscored by her commitment to maintaining a youthful appearance: “On applaudit... elle

⁴⁵⁴ Céline :Romans t III *Notes et variantes* : Note 2 : « Ces vers sont les premiers d’un air célèbre de *Véronique*, opérette de Messager datant de 1898, c’est-à-dire contemporaine de deux œuvres lyriques les plus citées dans le roman, *La Bohème* et *Louise*. Véronique est un nom d’emprunt du personnage qui s’appelle en réalité Hélène. » : p 1353

attendait... la jambe en l'air... et elle se remet debout... en souplesse! Et elle se rafistole... les cils, les yeux, la beauté! (...) *Claudine à l'école ! (...)*"(our emphasis) (CA p 299)

Although the ending of *Nord* is sombre following the murders in quick succession of the Rittmeister, the Revizor, the Landrat Simmer and the legless cripple the 'fils von Leiden', it nevertheless demonstrates the promise of a liberation from the horror of Zornhof, a virtual prison without walls. That liberation is embodied in the arrival of Werner Goering against an initial backdrop of Le Vigan's rendition of *Y avait dix filles dans un pré!*, one of the songs listed by Ferrier under the heading '*Par la grâce de la patrie: les chants de bataille*'⁴⁵⁵ Initially appearing to be ill-placed at that solemn moment, even indiscreet, it is, in fact Le Vigan's rendition of this song that breaks the ice, causing the general to join in the song: "*Mes vœux! Priers à Célimè...è..ne! Toutes mes graces à la Du...mai...ai..ne!*" (N p 697). Goering's suggestion to Harras that they speak French « Alors Harras, parlons français ! »(N p 698), effectively signals the success of the exercise which ends with the authorization Céline had sought, sealing his permission to leave Zornhof for Rostock: "Parlons français! ... La chanson réussit le miracle, à cet instant crucial du récit, de placer la négociation sur le terrain de prédilection du narrateur: la langue française.... »⁴⁵⁶ United in a commonality of *song* the narrator and the German general, who is also a medical officer appear to have entered into a fraternal relationship characterized by a dialogue demonstrating a mutual admiration expressed in the frequency of the word *confrère*: Céline: "L'illustre *confrère* hésite (...); Göring: "Vous aussi voulez-vous (signer) *confrère*." (N p 700) (our emphasis)

The conclusion to *Rigodon*, the last novel in Céline's œuvre, encapsulates a key theme that traverses the author's work: the promise of a regeneration following apocalyptic events, in which we discern a metaphor for the ongoing creative rivalry between Apollo and Dionysos and its outcome in the fullest form of artistic expression: « Through Apollo and Dionysos, the two art deities of the Greeks, we come to

⁴⁵⁵ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : Editions du Lérot 2004 : pp 168-169 : « Nous sommes à Zornhof, où le narrateur et Le Vigan attendent l'arrivée du médecin général Werner Göring , qui doit venir enquêter sur les décès du Rittmeister, du Landrat et du cul-de-jatte. C'est aussi lui qui, finalement, peut leur délivrer l'autorisation de passage pour Rostock, afin de poursuivre ce périple vers le Nord qui donne son titre au roman.

⁴⁵⁶ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : Editions du Lérot 2004 : p 169

recognize that in the Greek world there existed a tremendous opposition, in origin and aims, between the Apollonian art of sculpture, and the nonimagistic, Dionysian art of music. »⁴⁵⁷ That regenerative calm is expressed in the silence that surrounds the trio of Céline, Lili and Bébert in Copenhagen's public gardens, underscored by a quality of animal, instinctual silence that is embodied in the form of Bébert the cat: "Bébert comprend nos conditions, je suis sûr qu'il en sait plus qu'il dit et même sur ce qui va se passer... le silence animal c'est quelqu'un (...)" (R p 922) And although there is no overt presence of song and dance as a liberating element in this final episode of Céline's last novel, it is imbued with one of the most poignant poetic images in Céline's oeuvre, implicit in the presence of the exotic birds, exiles like their human counterparts, and also famished escapees from the 'prison' of a local zoo, one of which, the 'lyre bird' an explicit reference to a musical instrument.: "... et une 'aigrette'... celle là sûrement pas du Danemark! (...) ils viennent exprès! ... et un 'oiseau-lyre' ..; c'est à manger qu'ils voudraient...(les oiseaux) doivent venir comme nous d'en bas, de 'zoos' en Allemagne, bombardés (...)" » (R pp 922-923) The trajectory of the main protagonists in Céline's novels – the hero and his Double – has, after a series of peregrinations reflecting their gradual metamorphosis, culminated in this moment of profound, liberating silence that parallels the conclusion of a journey undertaken by the author himself.

Dance

Dance, coupled with song is perhaps one of the most ancient expressions of carnival. Indeed, « ...la fête se définit toujours par la danse, le chant, l'ingestion de nourriture, la beuverie. Il faut s'en donner tout son soûl, jusqu'à s'épuiser, jusqu'à se rendre malade. C'est la loi même de la fête. »⁴⁵⁸ However, we note that the phenomenon of carnival also embraces that of war in Céline's works, where an apparently destructive force is also one of creation in a reversal of a state of chaos: « La guerre est assimilée, au niveau de l'image, au principe chaotique le plus fondamental : les forces du

⁴⁵⁷ Nietzsche, F: *The Birth of tragedy and The case of Wagner* : Random House 1967: p 33

It is important here to include the French translation of this passage which, we feel, better illustrates the dichotomy between Dionysian and Apollinian art forms: « C'est à leurs deux divinités de l'art, Apollon et Dionysos, que se rattache la connaissance que nous pouvons avoir, dans le monde grec, d'une formidable opposition, quant à l'origine et quant au but, entre l'art plastique – l'art apollinien – et l'art non plastique qui est celui de Dionysos. » : Nietzsche, F : *La naissance de la tragédie* : Editions Gallimard 1977 :

pp 41-42

⁴⁵⁸ Caillois, R : *L'Homme et le sacré* : Editions Gallimard 1950 : p 129

désordre qu'elle met en œuvre offrent un avant-goût de la fin prochaine. Il est clair que la destruction guerrière – principe désorganisateur par excellence⁴⁵⁹ – est chez Céline de nature apocalyptique. »⁴⁶⁰ We believe that Céline's antimilitarist stand is essentially paradoxical, as despite his criticism of the lack of humanism and innate decadence present in war, he nevertheless employs its *evocation* as a creative device, a centrifugal force for the production of his poetic prose in the spirit of a carnival à rebours. The evocation of chaos therefore demonstrates a regression to a primordial pre-mechanised state; one which Deleuze defined as 'molecular' and propitious for creation as opposed to a 'molar' state which represented the opposite:

“Le désordre du champ de bataille préfigure le chaos apocalyptique dont il est l'expression en petit, la mise en abyme. Le thème du chaos – qui ne peut manquer d'évoquer la dissolution finale – rejoint celui de la perte de la spiritualité, cher à Céline. (...) Les images qui évoquent la maladie, la pourriture, la dissolution, la guerre ou la perte de la spiritualité sont donc toutes complémentaires et relèvent de la même hantise du déclin et de la même perspective eschatologique. »⁴⁶¹

It is for this reason that we view the intentional evocation of war in Céline's works as a literary device consciously deployed as a positive force for creation.

For Céline, the dance appears to be the most eloquent expression of life and creativity: “(...) Pour délirer *juste* il faut que cela prenne au trognon de l'Homme de son âme, pas de sa tête et même *le Grand Meaulnes*.... Si vanté... Crottes de biques (...) nous ne dansons plus... Danser tout est là – Nietzsche (si surfait) ne se trompait pas – ‘je ne croirai à un dieu que s'il danse’, s'il raisonne ce cuistre à l'école ! »⁴⁶² And two years later, in a letter to Albert Paraz, on outlining the principle behind his *métro* émotif the author declares: “(...) Je me sers du langage parlé, je le *recompose* pour mon besoin – mais je le force en un rythme de chanson – *Je demeure toujours en danse*. »⁴⁶³ Céline completes the equation with an avowed admiration for the perfect body (and dedication) of the dancer. And at a social level, in his pamphlet *Les Beaux Draps*, Céline exhorts French citizenry to « (...) rapprendre à danser. La France est demeurée heureuse jusqu'au rigodon (...) Si on chante plus, on trépasse, on cesse de faire des

⁴⁵⁹ Dionysiac and transgressive

⁴⁶⁰ Verdaguer, P : *L'Univers de la cruauté : une lecture de Céline* : Librairie Droz 1988 : p 179

⁴⁶¹ Ibid p 181

⁴⁶² Hindus ; M : *Céline tel que je l'ai vu* : Editions l'Herne 1999 : p 147 : lettre du 12 juin 1947

⁴⁶³ *Cahiers Céline 6* : Lettres à Albert Paraz 1947 – 1957 : Editions Gallimard 1980 : lettre du 19 sept 1949 : p 178

enfants, on s'enferme au cinema pour oublier qu'on existe, on se met en caveau d'illusions, tout noir, qu'est déjà de la mort (...). »⁴⁶⁴

Even the highly controversial anti-Semitic content of the *Bagatelles pour un massacre* is, to a certain extent, disencumbered of its polemical content by the presence of ballet scenarios which had not featured in Céline's work since *L'Eglise*, but which were to become "an increasingly important symbol of life in his work."⁴⁶⁵ Life, or rather a life-force is always implicit in death, as they are binary opposites. For Céline, that life-force was symbolized by the dance, embodied in several dancers, including his wife Lucette Almansour, the Lili-Arlette of his later novels. The dancer-cum-life-force is also present in *L'Eglise* as Elizabeth Gaige, based on Céline's then-companion, the dancer Elizabeth Craig to whom the *Voyage* was dedicated.

Ariel

The dance, and its expression in both its formal and informal sense, pervades Céline's work. It is present, not only in the formal ritualistic dance performed by Sosthène de Rodiencourt in *Guignol's Band*, in which the *Vega* dances are performed with the express purpose of initiating its adepts into the mysteries of supernatural forces. Indeed, Sosthène is "Le Roi des danses transcendentes!" (GBII pp544-545) declares Ferdinand the narrator of this novel. It is also present in the innate expression of dance embodied in Virginie's bounding steps: "mais non! Elle reste pas en place ... c'est le mouvement sa nature (...) elle rebondit, pirouette en lutin dans la pièce autour de moi (...) je vois une malice dans ses yeux ! » (GBII pp 333-334) Underscoring the predominance – and the significance - of dance in *Guignol's Band* is the recurrence of the names of specific forms of dance such as "Gambade, Sarabande!" (GBI p 105), "espiègles farandoles", (GBI p 106) and and the verbalization of the word *rigodon* relating to Borokrom's musical performance: "C'est une affaire! ... riguedondonne!..." (GBI p 193) to mention just three examples.

An analysis of the frequency of dance depicted in each of Céline's novels reveals a direct parallel between the extent to which dance is represented, and a level of poetic

⁴⁶⁴ *Les Beaux Draps* : Nouvelles Editions Françaises 1941 p 148

⁴⁶⁵ Nettlebeck, C : *Journey to the end of Art : The evolution of the novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : PMLA 87.1 (1972) p 83

prose attained in the narrative. In the *Voyage*, apart from the images of various sailing vessels on the Seine, there is very little imagery that depicts an attempt to elevate oneself above the constraints of an earthbound existence. Indeed, dance – and song – only appear to fully emerge in Céline’s oeuvre from *Mort à credit* onwards. In this novel, dance, and a desire for elevation are expressed in Courtial des Pereires’ attempts at hot-air ballooning together with the mention of specific dance forms such as the “Gavotte” (MàC p 965) the name of Courtial’s house; the “farandole” (MàC p 960) and the association of the act of dancing with the name of a specific dance: “Les mômes (...) Ils gambadaient avec (Mme des Pereires) un genre farandole.” (MàC p 1033) This dance is accompanied by the singing of a folk song, *La fille à la meunière* or *La Gigouillette*.⁴⁶⁶ Later in the novel, even the Chanoîne Fleury, unaware of Courtial’s suicide, and despite Irène de Pereires’ attempt to break the news to him, continues to perform what becomes a grotesque *danse macabre*: « Lui s’arrêtait pas pour si peu!...Il continuait à gambader! Sautiller! ... Gambiller: ...(...) Il prêtait pas attention... Il faisait de la grande cabriole: et puis encore d’autres petits bonds:.. » (MàC p 1071)

It is through the medium of song and dance that man manifests his affiliation with a superior order to a degree that he is “on the way towards flying into the air, dancing”⁴⁶⁷; an observation that cannot fail to recall Sosthène de Rodiencourt’s mystic ‘danse de Véga’. Moreover, in embracing the essence of a Dionysian power, man is “(...) longer an artist, he has *become a work of art*.”⁴⁶⁸ (our emphasis) This force, incarnate in dance and song is, in effect, an initiation into the secret rites and mysteries of Eleusis, an agrarian cult dating from the 14th Century BC.⁴⁶⁹ The powerful call to initiation embodied in these rites is encapsulated in Nietzsche’s rhetorical question: “Do you prostrate yourselves, millions? Do you sense your Maker, world?”⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁶ Céline :Romans t I *Notes et variantes* : « *La fille à la meunière*, dite aussi *La Gigouillette*, est une chanson du folklore français, sur laquelle on dansait la gigue.

⁴⁶⁷ Nietzsche, F: *The birth of tragedy* : Random House 1967: p 37

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid p 37

⁴⁶⁹ **Eleusis** devint une ville sacerdotale où les Athéniens s’initiaient aux mystères d’Eleusis au cours de rites secrets. : Le petit Robert dictionnaire des noms propres : p 654

⁴⁷⁰ Nietzsche, F: *The birth of tragedy* : Random House 1967: p 38

However, it is *Bagatelles pour un massacre* and, to a certain degree in *Les Beaux Draps*, *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois* that dance and song truly emerge as a liberating force capable of transforming apocalyptic horror into an incandescence reminiscent of Apollo, the 'Brilliant'. This state excludes all possibility of individuation through the dissolution of man's jealously-guarded individuality. In short, the outcome is an example of poetic prose that rivals Archiloche's dithyrambe, and one which is unequalled in most of Céline's work. Indeed, in an apparently improbable pairing, a carnival version of dance serves as a metaphor for war in *Féerie pour une autre fois II*: « La guerre – ou foire de la mort – est l'expression la plus manifeste du délire violent de l'homme. »⁴⁷¹ The link between the *bal musette* or popular fairground dance and war is thus spelled out clearly in the above novel in a description of the bombing of Montmartre witnessed by the narrator and his wife:

«... et broummm! En l'air! Tout vogue.... Toute la girandole ondule entre les étoiles... on voit les étoiles dans le jonquille... le ciel est en mer de jonquille... les moulins aussi quittent le sol! (...) De notre balcon... on est dessous maintenant! (...) mais on domine les jardins... les jardins crépitants, flambants.... On domine.... Les bosquets, charmilles ... les socles des moulins... le bal champêtre... la petite estrade à chansons... » (FII pp 186-187)

While it is one of the most poetic images in the work, this evocation of a bombardment also presages annihilation, in a synthesis of war and carnival noted by Verdaguer:

«L'image du bal-musette (...) évoque clairement l'idée de désordre final: il ne s'agit de rien d'autre que d'une *danse macabre*. Toute danse chez Céline est par définition macabre, puisqu'elle relève des plaisirs illusoire et de l'aveuglement humains. (...) Par perversion symbolique, la farandole et le rigodon évoquent les massacres et les bouleversements apocalyptiques. »⁴⁷²
(our emphasis)

One has only to refer to the last passage of *Les Beaux Draps* to verify this statement encapsulated in a passage which is redolent with dance, song and weightlessness:

« Diaphanes émules portons ailleurs nos entrechats!... en séjours d'aériennes grâces où s'achèvent nos mélodies.... (...) Diaphanes de danse! Désincarnés rigododants! Tout allégresse! (...) Plus rien ne pèse! Plumes d'envol! Au diable lourds cadrans et lunes! plumes de nous! Tout poids dissous! Âmes au vol! (...) Volée d'étoiles!... tout alentour tintent clochettes!... c'est le ballet!(..) pirouette, farandole à ravir! ... ritounelles argentines...

⁴⁷¹ Verdaguer, P : *L'Univers de la cruauté : une lecture de Céline* : Librairie Droz 1988 : pp 193-194

⁴⁷² Ibid p 197

musique de fees!(...) tout s'évapore!.... deux trilles encore ! ... une arabesque !... (...)
fa...mi...ré...do... si!...⁴⁷³

Festivity

The 1940 bombing of the Orleans bridge in the opening sequence to *Guignol's Band* evokes images of both people and objects in defiance of gravity, in turn reminiscent of the dance, in a novel whose very matrix is war and its consequences.⁴⁷⁴ One of those outcomes is that of evasion, a leitmotif that in this novel exceeds the narrator's similar compunction in *Voyage au bout de la nuit* and *Mort à crédit*. It is not surprising that the theme of both world wars should pervade this novel, as Céline wrote it essentially during the early years of the second world war, with the memory of his previous experience of combat still fresh in his mind, and publishing the first part of the novel in 1944 in haste, "because les circonstances si graves qu'on ne sait ni qui vit ni qui meurt!"⁴⁷⁵. These words, evoked in the Preface to the novel heighten a sense of urgency and impending disaster which pervade the work.

In the novel's initial paragraph, the 'dancers' are not human beings but personalised inanimate objects, their lack of humanity dispelled by the nouns and verbs used to describe their 'dance' caused by the bombardment in which we cannot fail to discern the disruptive force of Dionysos: "Un guéridon vogue et fend l'air! ... Oiseau de marbre! Virevolte, crève la fenêtre en face à mille éclats! ... tout un mobilier qui bascule, jaillit des croisées, s'éparpille en pluie de feu! »(GBI p 87) These images, which continue to 'bombard' the reader for several pages, culminate in a passage that is one of the most poetic in the entire novel : « Je voyais plus haut maintenant que les nuages...(...)la vision féerique... une main coupée je voyais (...) aux fêtes du Palais des Nuits. » (GBI p 94) The scene is thus set for Dionysos' dance to perform its magic, transforming a potentially horrific episode into poetry in a novel which culminates in

⁴⁷³ *Les Beaux Draps* : Nouvelles Editions Françaises 1942 : pp 220-222

⁴⁷⁴ *Céline:Romans t III* Editions Gallimard 1988 : « Aussi bien les images de la guerre ne sont-elles pas absentes de ces deux romans. Non seulement le récit fait par Céline en 1957 montre comment la première Guerre mondiale devait devenir le sujet même de *Casse-Pipe* et la justification de son titre, mais cette guerre (...) est comme le cœur invisible des deux romans. (...) Pour le Ferdinand de *Guignol's Band*, la guerre est devenue un passé dont il ne parvient pas à se détacher. Les souvenirs du front le suivent où qu'il aille, (...) Un extraordinaire obsession de la guerre parcourt ce roman d'un bout à l'autre » : p xviii

⁴⁷⁵ *Guignol's Band* : *Préface* : p 83

its chief protagonists, including the narrator Ferdinand dancing and singing as they make their way across London Bridge towards a new life.

We submit that Céline's obsession with war and its omnipresence in the novels *Guignol's Band I and II*, is directly proportional to the degree of lyricism achieved by the author in these works, as war, an inherently transgressive act, evokes a Dionysian force capable of transforming the horror and discord of armed combat into poetic prose. Like a doctor prescribing a cure, did Céline not suggest that the sole antidote to war and 'robotisme' was to a return to man's "rythme émotif propre."⁴⁷⁶ Indeed, the last word of the last part of *Bagatelles*, the ballet 'Van Bagadan' is that of a dance: "contre toute cette joie, cette folie.... l'immense farandole..."⁴⁷⁷, albeit that of a *danse macabre*. The presence in *Bagatelles* of dance, in the form of no less than three ballets, *La Naissance d'une fée*, *Voyou Paul, brave Virginie* and *Van Bagadan* cannot be ignored, as their function appears to be an antidote to the virulence of the narrator's prose which comprises an anti-Semitic tirade directed principally against France's Jewish population. We also cannot ignore the significance of the frequent use of the verb *virevolter* used to describe both the dance of the elves in *La Naissance d'une fée*, and the 'dance' of the inanimate objects in the opening scene of *Guignol's Band*: "Au lever du rideau, les petits esprits de la forêt dansent, sautent, virevoltent..." (BM p 17) and "Oiseau de marbre! Virevolte, crève la fenêtre en face à mille éclats!" (GBI p 87)(our emphasis) Virtually sandwiched between the poetic prose and imagery of two ballets, the vituperative narrative of *Bagatelles* is diminished, and divested of its power to contaminate the reader. Similarly, *Les Beaux Draps* concludes on a note that denotes the dance, lightness of being and magic, thus somewhat attenuating the bile contained in the preceding prose: "Que tout se dissipe! Ensorcelle! Virevole! à nuées guillerettes! (...) à grand vent rugit et qui passe!"⁴⁷⁸

These extracts from *Bagatelles pour un massacre* and *Les Beaux Draps* encapsulate Céline's bitterness towards the Jewish race; one which, on a fundamental level appears to be embodied in the refusal or deprivation of the act of Dance, and which thus extends far beyond the irritation the author felt towards a race who he perceived

⁴⁷⁶ *Bagatelles pour un massacre* : Les Editions Denoël Paris 1937 : p 191

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid* p 379

⁴⁷⁸ *Les Beaux Draps* : Nouvelles Editions Françaises 1941 : p 222

to be intent on leading France into another world war. Significantly, in the context of the role of the dance in Céline's works, and in particular in *Bagatelles* where no less than three ballets are presented, one of the reasons suggested for Céline's rancour towards the Jews was his perception that Jewish theatrical producers were reluctant to stage his works. This sentiment is articulated in the text of *Bagatelles* by the figure of Gutman on his return from the 'Exposition': " 'C'est encore plus juif Ferdinand, que je l'avais imaginé!' Il m'avouait (...) qu'il avait pourtant rencontré des Juifs d'un racisme effrayant... tout bouillonnants de judaïsme (...) » (BM p 40). By refusing Céline the possibility of Dance *per se*, the Jewish race in the person of the author's protagonist Gutman is effectively depriving him of his lifeblood – that of a Dionysian catalyst for the conversion of the horror of war into poetic prose. Human nature is inclined to fear most the deprivation of an element of life upon which it is most reliant for its existence. In Céline's case that element was the Dance, a metaphorical expression of his poetic artistry; hence his fury and terror at the prospect of his lifeblood being denied him.

Heart of darkness – and of light

If *Guignol's Band* provided the setting for war, *Féerie pour une autre fois* is its incarnation. For that reason alone, Céline's prose attains the culmination of its poetic expression in this novel; and, as a corollary, his evocation of dance and song. However, the novel not only expresses the immanence of war, but also anticipates the setting for the Trilogy. Starting with Céline's memories of a prison cell in Copenhagen's *Vestre Faengsel* set in 1947-1948 depicted in *Féerie I*, the author returns to the early years of the war in the period 1942-1944 and the April 1944 bombardment of Montmartre in *Féerie II (Normance)*.

No linear narrative structure exists in either volumes of this novel. Indeed, it would have been inappropriate to have attempted to introduce order into a text which expresses apocalyptic events in which Dionysian intercession predominates. As in the opening scene of *Guignol's Band I*, individuals do not voluntarily go through the motions of the dance; rather, they are *made* to dance, like puppets on a string,

manipulated by the force of the bombardment. Dehumanised⁴⁷⁹, « Ce ne sont plus des voisins en tant qu'individus du genre humain qui dégringolent l'escalier pour aller se réfugier dans les caves : ce sont des *paquets de viandes* agglutinés les uns aux autres, masses amorphes dont les fonctions excrétrices se trouvent décuplées par la peur. »⁴⁸⁰ (our emphasis) In an apocalyptic situation such as Céline describes in *Féerie II*, any action is futile, as it is powerless in the face of the ineluctability of Fate. Just as Pliny the Elder⁴⁸¹ witnessed the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79, impotent when confronted by advancing disaster, and conscious of his imminent extinction, "(...) Céline ne peut remédier à l'Apocalypse. Sa seule mission consiste à en prendre acte. À la décrire, non à la guérir."⁴⁸² To this end, imagery is of prime importance, and it is this factor that dominates in *Féerie II*, in an ongoing pervasive dance that unites both plastic and non-plastic art forms, thus pitting Dionysos against Apollo in a gigantic battle for the soul of the artist – Céline – in a bid to effect a metamorphosis that will see him *become* a work of art in a fusion initiated by Dionysos and achieved in an Apollonian incandescence.

In his work on Céline, Vitoux perceives Bébert the cat as the final figure of the Double of Céline; a figure with whom the author identifies as he would with his own nature – or rather, that part of his nature which is purely instinctive, emotional and animalistic: "Bébert qui apparaît là plus que jamais comme le double de l'écrivain, avec sa fidélité de fauve (...) Bébert qui participe en somme d'une perception poétique du monde (...)"⁴⁸³ While we agree that Bébert, together with the author-narrator's wife Lili – in their gift for intuition - contribute to Céline's perception of an idealized poetic vision of humanity, we cannot agree that Bébert, any more than Lili represents an authentic figure of the Double in Céline's works. While influential in a benign fashion in Céline's life, neither possesses the dynamism essential for the catalytic, transgressive action capable of effecting significant change in the narrator/hero/author. Neither possesses the (latent or kinetic) volcanic force of the Double present throughout Céline's work; a force that is embodied in figures that are

⁴⁷⁹ In a mirror-image of the start of *Guignol's Band* where inanimate objects were humanized, in *Féerie II* the opposite occurs with animate, human beings being dehumanized.

⁴⁸⁰ Mancel, Y : *Féerie pour une autre fois : la réalité au service de la fiction* : Magazine Littéraire : septembre 1976 No 116 : p 27 in Vitoux, F : *Les dossiers Belfond* 1987 : p 202

⁴⁸¹ One of the dedicatees of *Féerie pour une autre fois II* together with Gaston Gallimard.

⁴⁸² Vitoux, F : *Louis-Ferdinand Céline : Misère et Parole* : les dossiers Belfond 1987 : p 231

⁴⁸³ *Ibid* p 229

ultimately expressed in the divine dualism of Dionysos and Apollo, and embodied in the lyrical poet. The author appears to have reached that stage in his art, expressed in lyrical poetic prose, where, "As Apollonian genius he interprets music through the image of the will, while he himself, completely released from the greed of the will, is the *pure, undimmed eye of the sun.*"⁴⁸⁴ (our emphasis) It is clear that assuming a 'solar' identity, the lyrical poet possesses no shadow – and, by extension, no *alter ego* or Double.

Trilogy

Throughout the trilogy, no ascents or descents take place to the degree that occurred in Céline's previous novels. We believe this signals the gradual abandonment of the figure of the Double, who is no longer required by either the author or the narrator, as a refuge from trauma⁴⁸⁵ or as a catalyst to dispel the danger inherent in the burden of individuation. At this point in both his personal evolution as well as that of the protagonists in his novels, Céline has reached a stage of immanence; a fusion of his fragmented nature extant in figures of the Double. Céline the artist, through a metamorphosis brought about by a Dionysian agency and passion has divested himself of what Nietzsche termed "(...) the origin and primal cause of all suffering, as something objectionable in itself."⁴⁸⁶ The abolition of the state of individuation is the only one in which art can truly thrive; one which is so pervasive that the artist *becomes* the work of art in a sublimation of the ego and a concomitant acquisition of artistic mastery in "(...) the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything existent, the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness."⁴⁸⁷

In the trilogy, the frequency of ascents and descents characteristic of Céline's previous novels is replaced by those of the labyrinth, notably in *D'un château l'autre*, in Céline's evocation of the Hohenzollern castle where the protagonists are lodged:

⁴⁸⁴ Nietzsche, F: *The birth of tragedy* and *The Case of Wagner*: Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967: p 55

⁴⁸⁵ As discussed in our chapter on *War, Death and the Double*

⁴⁸⁶ Nietzsche, F: *The birth of tragedy* and *The Case of Wagner*: Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967: p 73

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid* p 74

“D’un tournant l’autre, (...) Lili ou Bébert me retrouvaient ... les femmes ont l’instinct des dédales, des tors et travers, elles s’y retrouvent... le sens animal! (...) Lili allait où elle voulait dans tout l’Hohenzollern-Château... d’un dédale de couloirs à l’autre... du beffroi de tout en l’air, des cloches, à la salle d’armes, (...) colimaçons, bois, pierres, échelles !... remontées, !... demi-tours ! (...) même un plan vous comprenez rien !...” (CA pp 111-112)

The individuals in these works appear to be more concerned with making their way out of a maze and of extricating themselves from their adverse situation than with fighting the forces of evil present both within themselves as well as their environment. In the trilogy, Evil in the form of war appears as a pervasive, tangible force, offering its victims refuge only in underground spaces. In this image of traumatized victims searching for a way out of the labyrinth posed by war and guided by Ariadne’s thread, we discern a link to Dionysos, as according to legend, the goddess was Dionysos’ wife. Like Theseus, guided out of the labyrinth after slaying the Minotaur, Céline, Lili and Bébert endeavour to find an escape route from war-torn Germany, eventually achieving their goal at the close of *Rigodon*.

Song

Song, predominantly expressed in the form of the *chanson populaire* or folk song, predominates in Céline’s work. According to Nietzsche, popular song was none other than a legacy handed down by Archilochus, master of the dithyrambe, a form of lyrical poetry in praise of the divinity Dionysos. Indeed, “(...) (Archilochus) introduced the *folk song* into literature and on account of this deserved, according to the general estimate of the Greeks, his unique position beside Homer.”⁴⁸⁸ In answer to Nietzsche’s rhetorical question “But what is the folk song in contrast to the wholly Apollinian epos?” he answers that it is none other than “(...) the *perpetuum vestigium* of a union of the Apollinian and the Dionysian(?)”⁴⁸⁹, and as such, lends itself to appearing in a context of disruption and conflict. Indeed, a climate of disruption and conflict is a prerequisite for the production and existence of popular song, one which is demonstrable by the fact that “(...) every period rich in folk songs has been most violently stirred by Dionysian currents, which we must always consider the

⁴⁸⁸ Nietzsche, F: *The birth of tragedy and The Case of Wagner*: Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967: pp 52-53

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid p 53

substratum and prerequisite of the folk song.”⁴⁹⁰ Popular or folk song is, in fact, the « musical mirror of the world, as the original melody, now seek(s) for itself a parallel dream phenomenon and expresse(s) it in poetry ». ⁴⁹¹ We believe this definition explains Céline’s predilection for this genre of song as an agent in the production of poetic prose.

In the context of Céline’s gradual metamorphosis towards a state of immanence through the dissolution of individuation, Nietzsche provides us with an indication of how song and musicality accompanied and facilitated that metamorphosis, reaching its culmination in both volumes of *Féerie* which, in the first volume, even contains the musical score of Céline’s own composition *Règlement*. Indeed, the last page of *Féerie I* ends with both the score and the words from the last two strophes of that song: “Que le vent t’emporte, tourbillons et soucis!” (FI p 176) Music expressed in images to the extent that they appear in *Féerie pour une autre fois* is a precondition for the attainment of an ontological state propitious for artistic creation where: “(...) insofar as he interprets music by means of images, he himself rests in the *calm sea* of Apollinian contemplation, though everything around him that he beholds through the medium of music is in urgent and active motion.”⁴⁹² (our emphasis) These words are prophetic in terms of the final scene of *Rigodon*, where Céline, his wife Lili and their cat Bébert experience a moment of calm in Copenhagen’s public gardens, despite the literal and figurative chaos that surrounds them.

Sentiment

When Céline, in a parody of the biblical quotation, declared “Au début était l’Émotion” replacing the word ‘Verbe’ with that of ‘Émotion’, he placed himself squarely in the arena of human emotion, in opposition to that of ideas, ideology and any other form of mechanized thought process. His increased use of song, music and dance in his works only serves to sustain this notion; one which is in turn underscored by Ferrier’s reference to the song Céline used in the Preface to *Guignol’s Band*, namely “*L’Amour c’est tout dans la vie*”⁴⁹³, where Céline substitutes the word ‘Émoi’ for that of ‘Amour’: “*L’Émoi c’est tout dans la vie!*” (GBI p 85). However, Céline

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid : p 53

⁴⁹¹ Ibid p 53

⁴⁹² Ibid p 55

⁴⁹³ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : Editions du Lérot 2004 : p 372

reverts to the original wording in Version A of *Féerie pour une autre fois*, where the title of the song is interwoven with the text: “L’amour c’est tout dans la vie, faut savoir en profiter...”⁴⁹⁴ The conscious transposition of the word ‘Émoi’ serves to define Céline’s poetical ethic: « Quand il remplace ‘L’Amour’ par ‘L’Émoi’ il ne s’agit pas d’une erreur de mémoire mais d’une *transformation volontaire*, qui a valeur d’injonction pour l’art poétique célinien (...) c’est désormais le temps de l’Émotion. »⁴⁹⁵ (our emphasis) Indeed, it is important to note that the degree of emotion espoused by Céline in the narrative of his novels, has nothing in common with the vitriolic anti-Semitic tirades present in the pamphlets. On the contrary, it has everything to do with « une joie de vivre, de sentir, de vivre, de danser, dont la chanson fournit à la fois le *principe et le modèle*. »⁴⁹⁶ (our emphasis)

In this blueprint for the production of Céline’s poetic prose, the presence of Dionysos is demonstrated in a heightened joy in living imbued with a Dionysian spirit and an unquenchable effervescence that persisted in the face of the most difficult circumstances. Aligned to this notion is Nietzsche’s distinction between two categories of artist; those for whom « la souffrance provient d’une *surabondance* de vie; ils réclament un art dionysiaque (...) une vision tragique de la vie », while others suffer from an “*appauvrissement* de cette vie; ils demandent à l’art, et à la connaissance le repos, le silence, la mer d’huile, l’oubli de soi (...)”⁴⁹⁷. There is no doubt that Céline belongs in the former category mentioned. Given the degree of poetic prose attained in his later works – the pamphlets, *Guignol’s Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois*- we have to concur that “In the Dionysian dithyramb man is incited to the greatest exaltation of all his symbolic faculties; something never before experienced struggles for utterance – the annihilation of the veil of *māyā*, oneness as the soul of the race and of nature itself.”⁴⁹⁸

Chorus

In both *Guignols Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois*, song as embodied in these works fulfils the same purpose as that of the Chorus in Attic Greek tragedy.

⁴⁹⁴ Version A : “*Féerie pour une autre fois*” p 624

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid pp 129-130

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid p 130

⁴⁹⁷ Nietzsche, F : *Le gai savoir* : p 204

⁴⁹⁸ Nietzsche, F : *The birth of tragedy* and *The case of Wagner*: Random House 1967 : p 40

Originally, the Tragedy *was* the Chorus, reflecting the events featured at the performance to the audience. Only later were actors introduced, and tradition suggests that “(...) *tragedy arose from the tragic chorus*, and was originally only chorus and nothing but chorus.”⁴⁹⁹ As employed by Céline in his works, we believe that song plays a pivotal, dual role in reflecting the tragic events featured in the narrative back to the reader-spectator, while simultaneously reflecting them onto the protagonists in the narrative, thus permitting them to *act out* those events in a fictional form. Indeed, the chorus represents “(...) the decisive step by which war is declared openly and honorably against all naturalism in art.”⁵⁰⁰, a battle endorsed by Céline in the *féerie* of his prose, and present in varying degrees throughout his *oeuvre*.

In an alternative perspective on the function of the Chorus in Greek tragedy, Schiller suggested that it represented “(...) a living wall that tragedy constructs around itself in order to close itself off from the world of reality and to preserve its ideal domain and its *poetical freedom*.”⁵⁰¹ (our emphasis) We believe that it is in this interpretation of Greek Chorus that Céline’s own ‘chorus’ comprised of popular song most resembles Schiller’s definition. It is in this context that we recognize a similarity with the tragic events that unfold in *Féerie pour une autre fois II*; events that are enclosed (and defined) within the space formed by the ‘chorus’ of popular song rendered by the inhabitants of the building in the rue Girardon. It is within that isolated, enclosed space that the events are afforded the opportunity to unfold to the highest degree of liberty in poetic expression. We therefore conclude that it is the Chorus *per se* which, in elevating the theatrical to what Schiller termed an “‘ideal’ domain”⁵⁰² is responsible for the elevated degree of poetic prose (and a concomitant low level of naturalism) in this novel. In effect, the Chorus provides -

« (...) the scaffolding of a fictitious *natural state* and on it placed fictitious *natural beings*. On this foundation tragedy developed and so, of course, it could dispense from the beginning with a painstaking portrayal of reality. »⁵⁰³

⁴⁹⁹ Nietzsche, F : *The birth of tragedy* and *The case of Wagner*: Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967 : p 56

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid* p 58

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid* p 58

⁵⁰² Nietzsche, F : *The birth of tragedy* and *The case of Wagner*: Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967 : p 58

⁵⁰³ *Ibid* p 58

In short, then, the Chorus affords the author free rein to pursue the creation of a level of poetic prose in the absence of a prerequisite pretension to reality: all *is* fantasy and nothing else! Céline underscores this observation in his epigraph to *Féerie pour une autre fois* when he declares: “L’horreur des réalités! Tous les lieux, noms, personnages, situations, présentés dans ce roman, sont imaginaires! Absolument imaginaires ! Aucun rapport avec aucune réalité ! Ce n’est là qu’une ‘Féerie’ et encore ! ... pour une autre fois ! » (FI p3)

In addition to its function in isolating and condensing the tragic events of the narrative, the Chorus has an additional participatory role, equally effective with regard to spectators at a theatre performance as well as the reader: « Sous l’effet de ce déferlement chansonnier, la littérature cesse d’être un corpus achevé et immuable; elle redevient un ensemble de *processus de création* et de reformulation permanentes auquel le lecteur lui-même est invité à contribuer (...) »⁵⁰⁴ The Chorus’s essential property, then, is that of a reflection, a mirror-image with regard to the *active* spectator or reader, to the extent that in Attic Greek tragedy it was possible for the spectator to “to imagine, in absorbed contemplation, that he himself was a chorist.”⁵⁰⁵ It is in this context that Nietzsche defined the original function of the Chorus as “(...) the mirror image in which the Dionysian man contemplates himself.”⁵⁰⁶ In a double mirror-image then, “The satyr chorus is, first of all, a vision of the Dionysian mass of spectators, just as the world of the stage, in turn, is a vision of this satyr chorus ; (...)”⁵⁰⁷

In Célinian terms, when applied in particular to *Féerie pour une autre fois II*, the chorus of voices raised in popular song is a reflection of the spectators or onlookers engaged in Dionysian revelry, just as the actors or protagonists enacting the drama are a reflection of the Chorus. In turn, the spectator-reader is witness to a reflection transmitted by the Chorus; one that includes a Dionysian interpretation of the protagonists’ actions – a condensed image, transmitted and interpreted by the Chorus, just as the retina, through the agency of the brain, interprets the images entering the

⁵⁰⁴ Ferrier, M: *Céline et la chanson* : p 155

⁵⁰⁵ Nietzsche, F : *The birth of tragedy and The case of Wagner*: Random House 1967: p 63

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid p 63

⁵⁰⁷ Nietzsche, F : *The birth of tragedy and The case of Wagner*: Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967 : p 63

lens of the eye. It is significant that the entire episode depicting the bombardment of the Butte Montmartre takes place against a backdrop of the popular song *Ferme tes jolis yeux*⁵⁰⁸ with its Célinian connotation of war. Composed in 1913; it was part of the repertoire of the 12th Cavalry regiment that Céline joined in 1912. In *Féerie II* the narrator declares: “J’ai été chantonneur aussi moi... une époque... je la chantais à cheval au 12^e celle-là, justement ! *vous croyez...* et pas que celle-là ! des plus modernes ! ... ‘*Je sais que vous êtes jolieâ â â...* » (FII p 309) The bombardment proper is, in addition, interspersed with words from Offenbach’s comic opera *La Périchole*: “*Ô mon bel amant je te jure / titi... ta! Ta! Ta!* And in a description of the bombing of the Renault factory, the narrator has no hesitation in introducing a reference to musical score of this comic opera, as if it were integral to the apocalyptic events taking place :

« Ah, un autre cratère ! pas un!... trois! ... quatre!...Renault! si ils ont annoncé ‘Renault’! (...) on les voit tournoyer au-dessus... en manège... manège d’horreurs... larguer leurs horreurs... (...) ça s’entrecroise... volte ! rejaillit des phosphores... (...) c’est plus à chanter, vous pensez... elle peut écorcher couaquer cette Périchole ! ... elle peut y aller cette Périchole !... les échos ont trop à faire *pour un bémol plus ou moins !* » (FII p 285)(our emphasis)

Just as the songs in Céline’s works are important *per se* in the context of his aesthetic production, so too are the (stage) settings in which they are performed; those that reflect a world which displays a Dionysian influence; a world of anguish and notably that of the horror of war: « Dans l’oeuvre de Céline (...) tous les lieux sont propices à la chanson, les endroits spécialisés bien entendu: les lieux de réunion ou les espaces de plaisir, mais aussi les contrées les plus insoutenablement marquées par le Malheur, la souffrance et la terreur, l’angoisse de la solitude ou la menace imminente de la mort. »⁵⁰⁹ Indeed, these settings are not conducive to Céline’s aesthetic production *despite* themselves, but *because* of them.

Satyr

The figure of the Satyr, essentially a Dionysian figure and implicated in the composition of the Chorus, appears in both *Guignol’s Band* and *Féerie pour une autre*

⁵⁰⁸ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : Éditions du Lérot 2004 : p 378 : « *Ferme tes jolis yeux* : valse lente, paroles de René de Buxeuil et de Virgile Thomas, musique de R de Buxeuil (...) Elle sort, selon le narrateur, du « répertoire au 12^e (12^e Régiment de Cuirassiers). De plus, elle entretient des rapports étroits avec le texte préliminaire de *Voyage*. (V p401), GBII p 634, 706, FII p 279

⁵⁰⁹ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : Éditions du Lérot 2004 : p 28

fois in the persons of Mille Pattes and Jules respectively. He is the embodiment of tragedy and of Dionysian transgression - and wisdom :

“The satyr, as the Dionysian chorist, lives in a religiously acknowledged reality under the sanction of myth and cult. That tragedy should begin with him, that he should be the voice of the Dionysian wisdom of tragedy, is just as strange a phenomenon for us as the general derivation of tragedy from the chorus.”⁵¹⁰

Each seminal representation of these archi-satyrs occurs against a backdrop of chaos ; Mill-Pattes in the episode at the Touit-Touit club in *Guignol's Band II*, and Jules in both the scene of seduction of the narrator's wife Lili-Arlette in *Féerie I*, and his charade on the platform of the Moulin de la Galette in *Féerie II*. Significantly, in each case the scene is accompanied by song. In the first instance, in a prelude to the daemonic chant that is to follow, the crowd evokes the image of the spectators at a *corrida* baying for blood, shouting – “au fond de leur cuve” – “*More! More!*” (GBII p 499). At the climax of the bacchanalia⁵¹¹ the crowd launches into its incantation proper, “(...) la faridondaine de partout, le fatras du cul... La fête bat son comble...*Touit-Touit Mister! Touit-Touit Sister! Youpi Master ! Couac ! Couac ! Couac !* »(GBII p 506)⁵¹² The climax of this scene ends in Ferdinand's abuse of Virginie to accompaniment of the chorus chanting « *Kill her! Kill her !* » (GBII p 512), and once more launching into a feminised version of its previous incantation “*Touit-Touit! Madam! I say! Touit-Touit! Madam! Weep and play!*” (GBII p 512) (our emphasis) The last strophe of this song emphasizes the dichotomy inherent in the bacchanalia where laughter and revelry is allied to tragedy.

Féerie I, a novel that is permeated by Céline's song *Règlement* - a chronicle of vengeance sought for a betrayal - is the musical setting for the depiction of Jules as Satyr in his seduction of the narrator's wife. In addition, Jules is an alcoholic, an association that cements his association with Dionysos in his incarnation as Bacchus god of the vine. Not only is Jules an artist – a talent that Ferdinand covets – but « En plus, y avait l'ébriété qui le rendait buté, agressif! » (FI p 129) observes the narrator. Incurable and amoral, Jules has no compunction in asking Ferdinand for his wife:

⁵¹⁰ Nietzsche, F: *The birth of tragedy and The case of Wagner*: Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967: pp 58-59

⁵¹¹ A word that in itself evokes the presence of Dionysos who was also known as Bacchus

⁵¹² As this song is not identified by Michaël Ferrier in his work *Céline et la chanson*, we assume it to be Céline's own composition.

“Il hurle! Il repique! – donne-moi Lili! donne-moi Lili! » (FI p 150), a scene that is exacerbated in its conclusion with the imagined seduction of Lili-Arlette by her bursting into laughter : « L’Arlette sur le lit-cage, là, nue écartée... elle se met à rire ! Ah mais à rire! Rire! ... les éclats ... et tous les deux! ... rire ! rire ! » (FI p 155) in a parody of a maniacal duet mocking Ferdinand. The finale of this episode which sees Ferdinand collapsing in the gutter coincides with a strophe from *Règlement*, complete with its score: “”Je vomis en ivrogne, moi! (...) tout au fond un petit trou; l’égout! (...) que le vent t’emporte.” (FI pp 158-159) A parallel between this scene and that at the Touit-Touit club is evident in that both are illuminated by glaring light, as bright as stage-lighting. In the former case, the illumination emanated from the nightclub itself, while in the latter, it is supplied by the bombers overhead.⁵¹³ *Féerie II* sees a Jules that is no less demonic than in his previous depiction, mounted on the platform of the Moulin de la Galette and appearing to direct the RAF bombers towards the Butte Montmartre. This scene is also accompanied by a chorus of singing, dancing and drunken revelry, imbuing it with a climate of Dionysiac debauchery that only ends with Jules’ ignominious descent from the windmill’s platform dressed in women’s clothing.

In each of the above instances the events are conducted by the Satyr in question – Mille-Pattes in *Guignol’s Band* and Jules in *Féerie*; a figure who, existing at the heart of tragedy, is inherently Dionysian as « (...) the satyr, the fictitious natural being, bears the same relation to the man of culture that Dionysian music bears to civilization. »⁵¹⁴ Both the Satyr and his music are utterly foreign to ‘civilised’ man; only the poet, attuned to authentic emotion, is able to decipher and identify with both the Satyr and his discordant Dionysian melody. Indeed,

“(...) it is precisely the tragic myth that has to convince us that even the ugly and disharmonic are part of an artistic game that the will in the eternal amplitude of its pleasure plays with itself. But this primordial phenomenon of Dionysian art is difficult to grasp, and there is only

⁵¹³ An echo of this image of glaring acetylene lighting is found in *Nord* on the occasion of the sinister festivities held in the ‘Tanzhalle’ under the patronage of Goebbels.: “(...) une lampe à souder devant la porte!... nous entrons... grand allumé, ce hangar! aux quatre coins! à l’acétylène !(...) ces phares à l’acétylène sont d’une violence ! l’effet noir blanc... vous êtes aveuglé... » (N p 637)

⁵¹⁴ Nietzsche, F : *The birth of tragedy* and *The case of Wagner*: Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967 : p 59

one direct way to make it intelligible and grasp it immediately: through the wonderful significance of *musical dissonance*.”⁵¹⁵

Similarly, the dissonance or discord expressed in Céline’s works is redolent of Attic tragedy, and with it, the satisfaction that this form of theatre evokes in the spectator. It therefore follows that the Dionysian element present in Céline’s works is the source of joy experienced by the reader of his works, as “The Dionysian, with its primordial joy experienced even in pain, is the common source of music and tragic myth.”⁵¹⁶ Indeed, “The satyr chorus of the dithyramb is the saving deed of Greek art; faced with the *intermediary* world of these Dionysian companions, (the feelings of horror or absurdity of existence) described here exhausted themselves.”⁵¹⁷ (our emphasis)

Contrary to received wisdom that portrays the figure of the Satyr in a negative perspective, he is :

« (...) the archetype of man, the embodiment of his highest and most intense emotions, (...) the sympathetic companion in whom the suffering of the god is repeated, one who proclaims wisdom from the very heart of nature (...) The satyr was something sublime and divine: thus he had to appear to the painfully broken vision of Dionysian man.”⁵¹⁸

In summary, this is a description of Ferdinand’s perception of Jules, who possessed all that the narrator envied, being eminently human, endowed with artistic ability, sexual prowess and an innate animal intuition. He is a sylvan being, a synthesis of man and nature, a trait much admired by Céline, and a sentiment transposed to his Double, Jules.

Refrain

In *Féerie pour une autre fois I*, the creative cosmic element in Céline’s use of the refrain is underscored in repeated snatches from *Règlement*, the author’s own composition. In this context, the use of the refrain is essentially ‘molecular’ and therefore embodies creativity, the prerogative of the poet, in direct opposition to

⁵¹⁵ Nietzsche, F : *The birth of tragedy and The case of Wagner*: Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967 : p 141

⁵¹⁶ Nietzsche, F : *The birth of tragedy and The case of Wagner*: Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967 : p 141

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid* p 60

⁵¹⁸ Nietzsche, F : *The birth of tragedy and The case of Wagner*: Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967 : p 61

actions of his pendant, the ‘molar’ ‘assassin’: « Le poète au contraire est celui qui lâche des populations moléculaires dans l’espoir qu’elles ensemencent ou même engendrent le peuple à venir, qu’elles passent dans un peuple à venir, qu’elles ouvrent un cosmos. »⁵¹⁹

In Deleuzian terms, Céline’s use of the refrain falls into the category of popular song , defined as « les ritournelles populaires et folkloriques, elles-mêmes en rapport avec un immense chant du peuple, suiv(ent) les rapports variables d’individuations de foule qui jouent à la fois des affects et des nations (...) »⁵²⁰ However, we believe that in this context, Céline’s use of refrain *also* fits the category of « les ritournelles molécularisées (la mer, le vent) en rapport avec des forces cosmiques, avec la ritournelle-Cosmos. »⁵²¹ This, in the context of the Cosmos itself as an embodiment of the qualities of a refrain, internalised by Man through the labyrinthine conduit of the ear. Sound, and in particular musicality embodied in the refrain, is the fundamental mechanism for ‘deterritorialisation’, the state Deleuze held that was most propitious for the creation of poetic prose, as “(le son) est une ligne phylogénique, un phylum machinique, qui passe par le son, et en fait une pointe de déterritorialisation.”⁵²²

The refrain is therefore a *de facto* representative of the catalytic function of the Double in its capacity to effect the creative process. It is a medium for the transformation of non-tangible elements such as space and time into the concrete form of poetic prose:

« *Glass harmonica*: la ritournelle est un prisme, un crystal d’espace-temps. Elle agit sur ce qui l’entoure, son ou lumière, pour en tirer des vibrations variées, des décompositions, projections et transformations. La ritournelle a aussi une fonction catalytique : non seulement augmenter la vitesse des échanges et réactions dans ce qui l’entoure, mais assurer des interactions indirectes entre éléments dénués d’affinité dite naturelle, et former par là des masses organisées. »⁵²³

⁵¹⁹ Deleuze, G et Guattari, F : *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie : Mille Plateaux* : Les Editions de Minuit : 1980 : p427

⁵²⁰ Ibid pp 428-429

⁵²¹ Ibid p 429

⁵²² Deleuze, G et Guattari, F : *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie : Mille Plateaux* : Les Editions de Minuit : 1980 : p 429

⁵²³ Ibid p 430

In this context, the refrain is indeed Céline's most effective mechanism for involving the reader in his work, as an active interpretation of the refrain's significance is intrinsic to the actualisation of its meaning in the context of the author's work : « La ritournelle reste à l'état de formule évoquant un personnage ou un paysage, au lieu de faire elle-même un personnage rythmique ; un paysage mélodique. »⁵²⁴ Indeed, the potential of the refrain, which lies in the force generated between its two poles, can only be released through the active participation of the reader/listener, as « C'est donc comme deux pôles de la ritournelle. Et ces deux pôles ne dépendent pas seulement d'une qualité intrinsèque, mais aussi d'un état de force de *celui qui écoute*. (...) »⁵²⁵ (our emphasis) The catalytic function of the refrain is also discernible in its ability to make creative sense of chaos ; to tap its potential within the ambit of the interstice between two divergent milieus by creating an ambit of *possibility*:

« Les milieux sont ouverts dans le chaos, qui les menace d'épuisement ou d'intrusion. Mais la riposte des milieux au chaos, c'est le rythme. Ce qu'il y a de commun au chaos et au rythme, c'est l'entre-deux ; entre deux milieux, rythme-chaos ou chaosmos (...) C'est dans cet entre-deux que le chaos devient rythme, non pas nécessairement, mais a une chance de le devenir. »⁵²⁶

This catalytic function of the refrain is borne out in the text of *Féerie pour une autre fois I*, where the refrain from Céline's composition *Règlement* appears at a point when the narrator is at his most abject, vomiting into the gutter, subsequent to the seduction of his wife Lili by the artist Jules, "au fond de l'égout!" (FI p 158) His salvation from the chaos both within himself as well as externally in his milieu appears to lie in the rendition of a fragment of the refrain from *Règlement*, the need for which is expressed by the narrator both to the reader as well as to himself: "Je vogue! Je vogue! Et la chanson! Je vous entends rire! Les notes vous voudriez? Les notes ? Je les ai aussi dans la tête ! Je vais vous les écrire, transcrire ! (...)." (FI p 158) That wish is fulfilled in both the score as well as the penultimate line from the refrain : « que le vent t'empor-te » (FI p 159)⁵²⁷

⁵²⁴ Deleuze, G et Guattari, F : *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie : Mille Plateaux* : Les Editions de Minuit : 1980 : p 431

⁵²⁵ Ibid p 431

⁵²⁶ Ibid : p 385

⁵²⁷ Fragments of this refrain appear, (together with the score without words on page 161) until the end of this novel, on pages 162, 163, 167 (with a version of the last lines of the first verse), 170 (verse 1), 172, 175 and 176. This last featuring the penultimate line of the refrain "Que le vent t'emporte" with its implication of death and anguish contained in its sequel and last line of the refrain: "Feuilles mortes et soucis!" (p 1083)

The refrain does not simply dispel and nullify the chaos, but *contains* and translates it into a poetic, rhythmic device; the nexus of the entire milieu in which the narrator finds himself as a result of the preceding traumatic events. Indeed, « Le chaos n'est pas le contraire du rythme, c'est plutôt le milieu de tous les milieux. »⁵²⁸ It is from this location that rhythm emerges once a coordination of divergent space-time dimensions has been effected : a communication of milieus. We believe that it is in this pivotal space derived from a transmuted chaos that Céline's poetic prose has its origin. The reality of Céline's prose lies as much – if not more – in the interstices created in the narrative fabric itself, just as the significance of lace is inherent in the holes between the network.

Novels

An analysis of the presence of song in Céline's novels reveals a gradual increase in number from *Guignol's Band* onwards reaching an apotheosis in *Féerie II*, only to decline in the novels of the trilogy. In his work *Céline et la chanson*, Ferrier detects a narrative device employed by Céline by containing the events in the novel within the framework of song present at the opening and closing of the work, with the notable exception of the novels of the trilogy where “La trilogie de la guerre introduit (...) une rupture avec ce qui était en passe de devenir un véritable ‘tic’ célinien, ou au moins l'un de ses procédés de prédilection.”⁵²⁹

A résumé of the major songs featured in Céline's body of work reveals that the *Voyage* commenced with the *Chanson des Gardes Suisses (Chanson de la Bérésina)*, citing the words of the song, while indirect reference is also made to the song *Quand Madelon*,⁵³⁰ in both the name of Robinson's fiancée and in the context of Bardamu's relationship with Lola: “La petite Lola ne connaissait du français que quelques phrases mais elles étaient patriotiques: ‘On les aura!... ‘Madelon viens!’...’” (V p 54)

⁵²⁸ Deleuze, G et Guattari, F : *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie : Mille Plateaux* : Les Editions de Minuit : 1980 : p 385

⁵²⁹ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : Editions du Lérot 2004 : p 62

⁵³⁰ Ferrrier M : *Quand Madelon (La Madelon)* : chanson de ‘pioupiou’, paroles de L. Bousquet, musique de C. Robert. Céline l'utilise toujours péjorativement, y compris lorsqu'il donne ce prénom à un personnage capital de *Voyage*. Dans sa réponse à une petite revue, *L'Avant-Poste*, dont le premier numéro reprochait à *Voyage* de ‘râler’ et de s'avachir dans une morne résignation au lieu de s'enflammer par des colères ‘vivantes’, il reprendra encore ce type : ‘On est foutu, confrère, quand on se prend au sérieux. Votre remontage de morale pue la guerre et ‘la madelon’. Ô les colères vivantes ! Viens nous servir à boire !’ (Paris, le 13 juillet 1933 CC7 ; pp 19-20) La Madelon est le symbole de la France guerrière, ivre de bons sentiments et décadente. » : pp 386-387

The symbol of a France at war, decadent and hungry for revenge, Céline's use of this song is entirely appropriate in the context of the *Voyage*.

Mort à credit is introduced by the *Chanson de prison*⁵³¹, and ends with a fragment of song from *Y a d'la goutte à boire*, : “*Y a de la goutte à boire là-haut! / Y a de la goutte à boire !...* » (MàC p 1100) Essentially a « (...) chanson militaire. Elle fait partie du repertoire de l'infanterie, dont Céline était très familier. Il s'agit d'un refrain chanté pendant l'assaut, dont la cadence va s'accélération, avec sonneries de clairon et roulements de tambour.(...) »⁵³² We believe this song signals the narrator's decision to enlist in the war. The novel is also interspersed with references to other songs, notably *Old Black Joe*, : “il joue en bas” l'air qu'il nous faut Black Joe.” (MàC p 542), a minstrel song; and the soldiers' choir from Act IV of *Faust*: “Gloire immortelle!” (MàC p 608), and *Le Père Dupanloup*, an obscene satirical song dating from the Second Empire⁵³³: “.. Ils sont partis sur *Dupanloup* ! » (MàC p 1065)

In *Guignol's Band*, song appears from the outset, in Céline's Preface where he quotes from “*L'Amour est tout dans la Vie!*” substituting the word ‘Émoi’ for ‘Amour’ as we mentioned earlier. And in the closing lines of the Preface, interwoven with the text, he refers to the song *Embrassez celle que vous voudrez*, a variation of the XVth century⁵³⁴ song *Nous n'irons plus au bois*”⁵³⁵, a popular song that Céline uses as a blueprint “pour définir sa propre poétique.”⁵³⁶ Céline appears to underscore this notion by closing the Preface with the injunction: “Ce sera tout ce que vous y mettrez! l'orage ou la flute! Comme aux Enfers, comme chez les Anges” (GB p86), while

⁵³¹ Ferrier, M : Ibid p 375 : Note : *Chanson de prison* : retrouvée par H. Godard, dans les *Notes* de la Pléiade : « C'est la troisième couplet d'une des chansons de détenus recueillies par l'abbé Crozes, aumônier de la Grande-Roquette dans les années 1860-1870. Celle-ci est consacrée à l'avant-grefte, où les détenus nouvellement arrivés revêtaient le costume de la prison. Elle est citée par E. Chautard dans *La vie étrange de l'argot*, ouvrage que Céline connaissait bien (p 889) » (...)

⁵³² Ferrier : *La chanson de Céline* : p 396

⁵³³ Céline Romans: t I : *Notes et variantes* : « *Le père Dupanloup* est une chanson obscène satirique dirigée contre Mgr Dupanloup, personnalité importante de l'Eglise de France sous le Second Empire, dont l'influence s'exerça notamment dans le domaine de l'enseignement. (...) Un couplet évoque le ‘Père Dupanloup’ au passage de la Berezina » pp 1495-1496

⁵³⁴ Ferrier, M : *Nous n'irons plus au bois*... ronde enfantine française du XV^e siècle située dans un cadre agreste. Ses couplets enchaînés, sa rime unique et sa mélodie facile à chanter en ont fait un modèle de chanson populaire, que Céline réutilise pour *définir sa propre poétique*. : p 383 (our emphasis)

⁵³⁵ Céline : Romans t III : Note 2 : p 86 : « Cette formule est une variation sur la phrase finale du refrain de la chanson enfantine ‘*Nous n'irons plus au bois*’ ; ‘*Embrassez qui vous voudrez*.’ : p 1014

⁵³⁶ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : Editions du Lérot 2004 : p 383

simultaneously emphasizing the duality inherent in the influence of Apollo and Dionysos. Just as it had opened in song, so too does *Guignol's Band* close with one, *La petite dame du métro*, sung by Sosthène de Rodiencourt as the trio of protagonists crosses London Bridge: “*Est-ce vous la petite dame? / Qu’éétiez l’autre tantôt? Il chante tout fausset... Tout près de moi dans le métro.* » (GBII p 759) There seems to be some confusion as to its origin, as Godard and Ferrier differ on that score.⁵³⁷ However, there is no doubt that it is a music-hall song dating from the *Belle Époque* which would have held a nostalgic significance for Céline.

Féerie I is punctuated throughout with snatches of Céline’s own composition *Règlement*, in some instances accompanied by the musical score, the first instance occurring early in the novel, in an attempt to appease the prisoner in the next cell; “Je sors ma chanson... (...) j’ai des chansons...(toutes déposés!) tenez, ce couplet: ‘Entre-deux’⁵³⁸: *Je te trouverai charogne! Un vilain soir! (...)* » (FI p 37) The significance of the continued citation of this song throughout *Féerie I* is that its implied violence, evoked in the tale of a settling of scores between gangsters, tallies with the role of the Chorus in Greek tragedy in reflecting and commenting on the events being ‘staged’ in the narrative, while simultaneously transmitting those events to the reader/spectator. A Dionysian/Apollonian element of alternance is inherent in the « (...) opposition de la violence des couplets (...) avec la cessation soudaine de cette violence dans le refrain, après diversion. »⁵³⁹

(our emphasis)

Féerie II follows a different pattern, similar to that of *Guignol's Band*, in opening and closing with a song. In this instance, with a reference to a war song *Marlborough s’en va-t-en guerre*, in which the narrator, Ferdinand, compares himself to the Duke of

⁵³⁷ Céline Romans t III : *Notes et variantes* : p 759 : Note 1 : *La Petite Dame du métro* est une chanson de Mayol. » : p 1166

Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : p 385 : *La petite dame du métro* : paroles d’H Christiné et A : Trébitsch, musique de H.E. Dqarewski et H. Fragon (Ed Christine / Salabert ; 1911)

⁵³⁸ Céline Romans t IV: *Notes et variantes* : p 37 : Note 1 : Céline a écrit deux chansons, toutes deux en effet déposées à la S.A.C.E.M.(Société des auteurs, compositeurs et éditeurs de musique). Le dépôt de la première, *A naïud coulant*, date du 10 octobre 1936 ; celui de la seconde, *Règlement*, du 21 mars 1937. C’est cette dernière que Céline cite à partir de ce point, par fragments, dans le texte de *Féerie I*, sous le titre *Entre-deux (...)* : p 1240

Ferrier, M : *À Naïud coulant!* (premier titre : *Katika*) : cette « chanson de marche », telle que la définissait Henri Mahé, « chanson finnoise » comme l’évoque Céline lui-même, est une création de Céline, sans doute aidé par Jean Noceti pour la musique. : p 372

⁵³⁹ Céline Romans t IV: *Notes et variantes* : p 37 Note 1 : p 1240

Marlborough carried on a bier: “Je vous disais ils m’ont reporté comme Malborough⁵⁴⁰ (...) quand on le porte en terre? ... moi en l’air! ... à quatre... à cinq chevaliers et dames d’atour...” (FII p 179) Céline also refers to this song in Version D of *Féerie pour une autre fois*: “Ils m’ont reporté comme Marlborough... vous savez quand on le porte en terre... Moi en l’air... en l’air... les quatre chevaliers, quatre, cinq et dames d’atour... les quatre étages!” (Version D: p 936) It is significant that *Féerie II*, essentially a novel that is a bombardment from beginning to end, should commence with the evocation of a song that is essentially in praise of a war hero, John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough.⁵⁴¹ However, while the opening of this novel is sombre, it ends on a positive note with a rendition from Messenger’s operetta *Véronique*⁵⁴², as the trio⁵⁴³ Ferdinand, Lili and Madame Toiselle make their way towards the shelter of the métro: “C’est Estelle et Véronique! Je la chante! Je la leur chante! Je la connais un peu la chanson! ah, c’est pas Rose et Clémentine ? (...) C’est Estelle et Véronique ! / Messieurs, prenez-nous !... »⁵⁴⁴ (FII p 486) It is interesting to note that Céline uses the words from the « couplets d’Hélène » taken from the finale of the first act of this operetta to close *Féerie II*, an evocation of the bombing of Paris, as if to signal that it is just the first ‘act’ of a ‘production’ that is to continue throughout the novels of the trilogy.

As mentioned previously, from the Trilogy onwards, Céline appears to deviate from his pattern of opening and closing his novels with song in a musical evocation of a

⁵⁴⁰ Céline Romans t IV: *Notes et variantes*; p 179: « J’ai vu porter en terre/ (...)/ Par quatre-z-officiers. (Malborough s’en va-t-en guerre, chanson populaire. »: p 1303

⁵⁴¹ « (...) plusieurs hypothèses sont envisagés pour la genèse de cette célèbre chanson française, qui date de bien avant la mort du general anglais, John Churchill, duc de Marlborough (1650-1722). La plus communément admise est qu’elle fut compose après la bataille de Malplaquet, dès 1709, où ‘Malborough’ battit les Français à plate couture. Quelle que soit sa date de création, il est certain que cet air guerrier et mélancolique à la fois a été conservé dans les armées (...) elle ne tarda pas à gagner la France entière, portée jusqu’à nos jours par des légendes multiples. (Napoléon la chantait, paraît-il, à chaque fois qu’il partait en campagne), (...) D’abord chanson de soldats, puis chant populaire où la référence militaire s’est estompée jusqu’à être considérée (...) comme une berceuse, c’est un exemple de la ‘circulation’ entre chansons traditionnelles et chansons patriotiques dont Céline aime à jouer. » (our emphasis)

⁵⁴² Ibid: p 406: *Véronique*: opera-comique en 3 actes de Messenger, livret de Vanloo-Duval (créé aux Bouffes-Parisiens en 1898, 217 représentations). Céline en extrait le refrain des « couplets d’Hélène », au finale, premier acte.

⁵⁴³ Note: It is a trio formed by Sosthène, Ferdinand and Virginie that ends *Guignol’s Band*, as well as the trio Céline-Ferdinand, Lili and Bébert that ends *Rigodon*.

⁵⁴⁴ Céline: Romans t IV: Note 2 p 486: « Ces vers sont les premiers d’un air célèbre de *Véronique*, opérette de Messenger datant de 1898, c’est-à-dire contemporaine de deux œuvres lyriques les plus citées dans le roman, *La Bohème* et *Louise*. *Véronique* est un nom d’emprunt du personnage qui s’appelle en réalité Hélène. »: p 1353

‘framework’ for the narrative. However, the transition from the plethora of song in both volumes of *Féerie* to a minimal occurrence in the trilogy is not abrupt. Rather, it is a gradual drift into calmer territory in a movement that suggests a metamorphosis rather than a sudden about-face: “Plutôt qu’un déclin, le point culminant de *Féerie* inaugure plutôt une *dérive*, où l’on peut observer une rupture, mais aussi des rémanences et surtout, une métamorphose.”⁵⁴⁵ The setting for the trilogy is more static than the backdrop to any other of Céline’s works. Indeed, it is more reminiscent of a stage setting with fixed dimensions, than a fluid event such as the bombing of Montmartre.

In *D’un Château l’autre*, the initial description of the Hohenzollern castle underscores this perception: “Siegmaringen? ... pourtant quel pittoresque séjour! Vous vous diriez en *opérette*... *décor* parfait... vous attendez les sopranos, les ténors légers (...) votre *plateau*, la *scène*, la ville si jolie figolée (...) » (CA p 102) (our emphasis)

Accentuating the image of a stage setting is Céline’s mention of the “Cheval blanc” (CA pp 102-103) which Ferrier identifies as as the operetta “*L’Auberge du Cheval blanc* dont la version française (...) date de 1932.”⁵⁴⁶ Other evocations of ‘stage décor’ identified by Ferrier in the trilogy include the Sigmaringen station buffet where “toute la salle et la buvette se passent entre-passent.” (CA p 155); the Bremmer/Zenith hotel in Berlin run by a “moujik (...) barbe, bottes, chemise bouffante.... Et le large sourire” (N p 341)- an improbable host from Siberia, dressed outlandishly in an apocalyptic almost theatrical setting; the bistro and delicatessen at Moorsburg : “question épicerie, une grande chaumière comme les autres, mais là-dedans rien que les étagères (...) Question factorie, j’en ai eu moi-même come ça tout en pailletes, ribambelles d’étagères autour (...)” (N pp 439-440) – an empty stage, as if waiting for actors to fill it. Lastly, we discover the bombed grocery store in *Rigodon*: “(...) où va cette porte? C’est un *décor*, un fond de boutique ...(...) plein d’étagères... et pas rien dessus! Surchargées ...(...) boules, saucissions, et boîtes de lait... » (R pp 869-870) (our emphasis). In this instance, the shelves are filled to capacity, although the structure itself is in ruins, in an implicit evocation of the narrative and scenic finale of the ‘production’ with the entire cast present on stage.

⁵⁴⁵ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : Editions du Lérot 2004 : p 140

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid : p 143

Although considerably diminished with respect to his previous works, Céline's last three novels still discretely resound with song, if not always in actual representation, then in an indirect evocation through reference. A case in point is that of the song *Lili Marlene*,⁵⁴⁷ which is mentioned no less than seven times in *D'un château l'autre*, without actually being sung. (CA pp 155; 158; 162, 164, 166, 168 and 181) Importantly, in the context of the novel set against a background of Germany at war, the *Horst Wessel Lied*⁵⁴⁸ is mentioned twice; "... maintenant c'est plus l'*Horst Wessel!* c'est la 'Marseillaise'!" (CA p278); "... l'officier nous salue de là-haut... très large salut! Son orphéon rejoue l'*Horst Wessel!*!... » (CA p281) The same hymn to Nazism is also mentioned twice in *Nord*: "... le 'Wacht am Rhein', don de l'armée... et 'l'*Horst Wessel!*, don du Parti..." (N p588); "... que la scie tourne, qu'elle fasse bien son ezzz atroce... le phono aussi en même temps...*Horst Wessel Lied!*... » (N p 593)

Although significantly reduced in *Rigodon*, reference is made to song, notably to *La Carmagnole* dating from the French Revolution: "... piteux militants!... ceintures rouges et 1900... guignols, contresens de l'Histoire! *Carmagnoles*, jazz, barricades abstraites..." (R p 726). Also noteworthy is Céline's transposition of the popular German song *Alles neu macht des Mai*: « Et il chante... pour nous... '*Nach Winter kommst doch en Mai!* » après l'hiver, le mois de mai! » (R p 815). This is the only example of a German popular song as opposed to patriotic songs to be used by Céline. We believe this signals an acceptance of the situation in which he found himself and of his reconciliation to the inevitability of war as a phenomenon intrinsic to human nature.

Pamphlets

A brief analysis of the songs that appear in the pamphlets reveals that they are concomitant with Céline's bellicose, vitriolic tone present throughout these works, thus betraying a Dionysian influence. They include the author's own songs, *À Noeud coulant!* – originally entitled *Katika*, described Henri Mahé as a "chanson de marche

⁵⁴⁷ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson : Lili Marlène* : il s'agit à l'origine d'un poème, « Der Junge Wachtposten » (...) écrit par un soldat en partance pour le front russe, Hans Leip (1938). Mis en musique par Norbert Schultze, il est créé par la chanteuse danoise Lale Anderson, et obtient un succès immédiat en Allemagne, avant d'être immortalisé par Marlène Dietrich. La version française est créée par Suzy Solidor en 1943, devant les officiers allemands du quartier de l'Opéra. » : p 381

⁵⁴⁸ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : Editions du Lérot 2004 : « hymne du parti nazi, du nom d'Horst Wessel, militant assassiné : p 379

(...) chanson finnoise”⁵⁴⁹ - and *Règlement*, the lyrics of which describe the settling of a score between two rivals. Both these songs appear in Céline’s first pamphlet *Mea Culpa*⁵⁵⁰ on pages 44 and 8 respectively. Also present in this pamphlet is the song *Ça ira* (MC pp 9 and 33), a French revolutionary song, “chantée pour la première fois à la Fête de la Fédération, le 14 juillet 1790”⁵⁵¹, as well as reference to the *Internationale* (MC pp 31 and 33), “chant politique (...) Céline en extrait souvent l’expression ‘damnés de la terre’ (...) pour désigner les prolétaires, les communistes ou, plus généralement, les miséreux (...). »⁵⁵² Due to a similarity in the lyrics with *Ça ira* mentioned earlier, Céline also cites the song *En voilà un*, « chantée par les ouvriers du chemin de fer pour accompagner le travail. »⁵⁵³

The songs quoted or referred to in *Les Beaux Draps* are slightly less combative, apart from a reference to *La Carmagnole* (BD p 110), and more mocking of the French soldier and, by extension the French citizen, contained in references to the song *Avec Bidasse*⁵⁵⁴ (BD pp 46, 48) composed in 1913. On each occasion Céline directs his rage against the ordinary French citizen who is ridiculed in the person of ‘Bidasse’ a comic figure under the influence of French Jewry: “(...) voici Bidasse promu quelqu’un sur l’asphalte de la Ville Lumière, passé l’objet d’une affection, d’une sollicitude passionnée de toutes les minutes.” (BD p 46) And later, we encounter a hybrid ‘Bidasse’ representing the worst racial combination imaginable in Célinian terms : “(...) Pour tenir la France en haleine, c’est pas fort: Faites reluire Bidasse, mariolle, hargneux, ricanier. La faraute opinion française c’est la laide Symbiose. Bidasse-Youtre. » (BD p 48) In an ironic reference to *La Carmagnole*, a revolutionary song which “Céline utilise toujours dans les pamphlets, quelquefois pour en parodier le titre

⁵⁴⁹ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : « Ce n’est que plus tard qu’on lui adjoint le fameux refrain « les aristocrates à la lanterne », qui fit d’elle l’une des préférées des partisans de la Terreur. « Mixé » avec *La Carmagnole*, et munie de nouvelles paroles anarchisantes, cette chanson donnera, près d’un siècle plus tard, *La Ravachole* » : p 372

⁵⁵⁰ Ferrier, M. : *Céline et la chanson* : p 485 : « (...) il est intéressant de noter que (*Règlement* et *A nœud coulant*) ont certes été utilisés dans un pamphlet, mais significativement, dans le seul de ceux-ci qui ne soit justement pas antisémite. Dans *Mea Culpa* en effet, la dénonciation ne porte pas sur une catégorie d’individus mais sur un système politique en particulier (le communisme) et sur la noirceur de l’humanité en général. »

⁵⁵¹ Ibid p 373

⁵⁵² Ibid p 380

⁵⁵³ Ibid p 378

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid p 372 : « (*Avec Bidasse*) a popularisé le thème du soldat brave et un tantinet idiot (...) que reprend Céline dans ses pamphlets en l’élargissant à l’ensemble des Français. »

(*La Youpignolle*) »⁵⁵⁵, the author once more mocks the French populace in a biting satire on their previously-held sincere patriotic sentiments, and the impending dissolution inherent in their moral dissolution :

“Le grand orchestre entre en délire, tous les musiciens sont payés ! La grande saoulerie grande à plein les carrefours! ... moujiks, bourriques, forçats putains, commissaries youpis, noire mercante, tout ça *farandole* à mort ; à pleins cadavres et c’est la fête ! c’est la nouba pour Pierre et Paul ! Dostoïewsky à la polka ! c’est *le musette* « Marteau-Faucille » à l’abattoir du grand Judas. On rigole bien, on est en sang. C’est plus de la petite *Carmagnole*. C’est la *sarabande* du Tonnerre ! que Dieu lui-même est au plaisir, que le Diable lui passe les cymbales!” (BD p 110)

(our emphasis)

In *L’Ecole des cadavres*, the *chanson populaire* ‘*Au clair de la Lune*’ is savagely parodied by Céline, dispelling any anodyne association its evocation might have aroused in the reader: « La chandelle est morte/ Je n’ai plus de feu!/ Ouvrez-moi la porte, crapauds rouges !/ Entrez merveilleux ! » (EC p 128) This citation is preceded by a diatribe against the proletariat’s loss of a combative fire, replaced by an emasculated version of democracy, and thus doomed to fail: “Boyaux à vides prolétaires contre boyaux contractés bourgeois. C’est toute la mystique démocratique. C’est consistant, mais ça rampe, c’est lourd, ça fatigue, ça pue. Pensez-vous que cette force, cette gangrènerie poussive puisse durer encore très longtemps? Salut ! Nenni mes beaux sires ! Nous y sommes.” (EC p 128)

Apart from four references to *La Carmagnole*, the song most cited by Céline in this pamphlet is the *Chant de guerre pour l’Armée du Rhin (La Marseillaise)*, which is referred to no less than eight times, underscoring Céline’s personal ‘call to arms’ to the French people in the face of an impending deluge of war and a perceived dominance by the Jewish population. And in an evocation of *La Marseillaise* a little further on in the text, we encounter another example of Céline’s rancour towards the perceived decadence of French society caused by its *enjuiverie*: “ ‘Un Français doit mourir pour elles! / Pour elles un Français doit mourir!’ Vociférons à *choeur* que veux-tu cette Marseillaise si maçonnette dont le sens irrésistible se découvre de plus

⁵⁵⁵ Ferrier, M: *Céline et la chanson* : p 373

en plus riche en vertus libératrices à mesure que l'on avance dans la carrière de cadavre. » (EC p 48)

(our emphasis)⁵⁵⁶.

Although no less militant than the other pamphlets, *Bagatelles pour un massacre* is a work in which dance, rather than song predominates, embodied in the presence of three ballets. However, those songs that are inscribed in the text, *La Carmagnole* and *La Marseillaise*, are both quintessentially calls to war and an augmentation of patriotic fervour. An example of the former song is a lament for the diminution of racial purity with its concomitant implication of decadence : “Il n’est pas plus inepte, plus sirupeux, plus écoeurant qu’un autre, de la même intention: ‘enjuivage’; colonisation juive’. Il donne assez bien, je trouve, le ‘la’ général de cette grande musique, tantôt symphonique, tantôt rigodon.... Plus tard *Carmagnole*..... ‘La Carrière et les carrières.’ » (BM p 260) And in an even more vociferous racially-based tirade ending in an ironic call to arms, the narrator declares: « C’est vrai, c’est irréfutable, les Juifs gagnent de tous les côtés. (...) Ah ! comme ils baisent fort.... Ces frisés! Ah! comme ils sont brûlants! Volcans! C’est des vrais coeurs d’amants! Cette bonne Philomène!⁵⁵⁷ Tu penses comme tous les nègres! Braguemards faits hommes! ‘Ils viendront jusque dans nos bras... Égorger nos fils.... Nos compa-a-agnes... Aux armes ! » (BM pp 326-327) Céline’s militant ‘call to arms’ is no less vociferous than the words contained in the patriotic songs of the *Marseillaise*, the *Carmagnole* or the *Ravachole*.

Endgame

The context for the novels of the Trilogy is one of an ‘Opera of the Apocalypse’, where Europe at war is essentially the stage on which the ‘production’ is acted out. All this in the context of a stable internal structure « ... qui fait toujours de la chanson un des foyers les plus importants de texte »; a setting in which « se fait sentir plus que jamais, tout ce que l’art de Céline doit aux spectacles d’opéra. »⁵⁵⁸ In the context of Céline’s declaration « Je fabrique l’Opéra du déluge » (MàC p 536) we

⁵⁵⁶ In emphasising the word ‘chœur’ in this passage we draw attention to its function in Greek tragedy, as mentioned earlier

⁵⁵⁷ Petit Robert des noms propres : 1995 : « *Philomène* : Martyre imaginaire dont le culte se répandit au XIXe. : p1623

⁵⁵⁸ Ferrier, M: *Céline et la chanson* : p 151

believe that both volumes of *Féerie* represent a figurative Endgame, in which a paradoxical deluge of *fire* from the bombers overhead rains down on the inhabitants of the rue Girardon. In the trilogy, Dionysos' presence and influence is felt at a distance, in the form of war as a *stage setting* and not as an actual event, as opposed to that of the previous novels where he was integral to both the plot and the narrative style. It is for this reason that although the implied presence of song, in the form of Opera and military songs cannot be ignored in the trilogy, it acts neither as a force nor a catalyst for the production of poetic prose. The presence of La Vigue the silent-film actor⁵⁵⁹ and friend of Céline's throughout almost the entire trilogy enhances the notion of a theatrical setting, as he is the quintessential *actor*; a supernumary who does no more than reflect the events taking place without initiating any narrative action. He is no more than the facsimile of a flesh-and-blood individual, acting out life rather than living it.

In the trilogy, it is impossible to ignore the fact that a diminution of song coincides with a parallel decline in the degree of poetic prose and of Dionysian intercession, despite the fact that Céline's last three novels take place against a background of *actual* warfare. This is the essential difference between the trilogy and the previous novels, where in the former the 'Chorus' is no longer required to fulfil its purpose in isolating the events of the spectacle/narrative from the reader/spectator in order to produce an imaginary work of fantasy. That fantasy world ended appropriately with *Féerie II*, leaving the reader to witness the horror of a *real* war. However, the author-narrator who leads us through the labyrinth of war-torn Europe has Ariadne's thread firmly in his grasp. Finally we, author, narrator and reader emerge at a common point of fundamental calm, in the silence of a Danish public garden; an echo of the dreamlike state associated with Apollo. As a result, we posit that the poetic prose present in the trilogy differs in rhythm to that of the preceding novels in that it is smoother, less staccato; an embodiment of Deleuze's 'smooth space' that is propitious for creation. The poetic imagery in the Trilogy is more painterly, signaling the presence of Apollo, divinity who presides over the arts of painting and sculpture; a fact that is revealed in a simple comparison between the lyrical image of birds emerging from the shrubbery in the Copenhagen public garden, and the fractured

⁵⁵⁹ Robert le Vigan

poetic images of bombardement in *Féerie II*: “(...) là-bas dans les herbes, un oiseau... mais pas un oiseau habituel... un oiseau je dirais ‘de collection’ de Jardin des Plantes... un oiseau grosseur d’un canard, mais mi-rose, mi-noir... et ébouriffé! Je dirais les plumes en bataille.... Je regarde plus loin.... Un autre ! celui-là je le connais ! (...) un ibis... drôle de piaf ici... et une ‘aigrette’ ! (...) et un ‘oiseau-lyre’ ...(...) cette fois un toucan... » (R pp 922-923)

Dissidence

Dissidence, and its concomitant action, transgression, constitute a fundamental element in Céline’s works and the production of poetic prose. Indeed, so integral is iconoclasm and transgression to the creation of a work of art that “C’est ce qu’on pourrait appeler la *nécessaire* dissidence de la création.⁵⁶⁰” (our emphasis) In order to fully understand Céline’s entire body of work, including the pamphlets, it is necessary to grasp the nature and scope of Dionysian intervention in the production of *all* his works, thus rendering a summary condemnation of the author’s pamphlets as hazardous as it is to ignore them entirely. Thus, in order to gain a full understanding of Céline’s works it is essential to understand the role of a Dionysian presence and intervention in the creation of poetic prose in the author’s oeuvre. A reductive interpretation of the whole of Céline’s body of work is not only superficial and prosaic, but also inappropriate and therefore redundant, as it completely eschews the point that dissidence is the *mainspring* of the author’s creative production, not a barrier to it. Only in assimilating and accepting the diverse elements in Céline’s work is it possible for the reader to acknowledge the Dionysian force at work in facilitating a metamorphosis in both the author and the narrator of his works through the agency of the figure of the Double and symbolized in the creative duality of Dionysos-Apollo. In so doing, the reader will similarly undergo a metamorphosis, thus gaining an insight into Céline’s work that a summary reading and judgement would have denied us; a process which will enable the reader to reach a level where Céline’s works will “nous aid(er) le mieux à résister à la bêtise ambiante, y compris celle du racisme,”⁵⁶¹ thus liberating us to emulate the author’s creative impulse in pursuing our own.

⁵⁶⁰ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : p 269

⁵⁶¹ Ibid : p 269

Chapter Four

The transgressive and maieutic function of Céline's idiolect⁵⁶² in the production of comedy and caricature

The notion of transgression is directly coupled with that of power and the concept of hierarchical difference in varying degrees. An individual such as Céline was able, through the adoption of a unique literary style which incorporated his idiolect and the use of argot, neologisms, vulgarity and an ironic form of laughter destined to caricature and destabilise the established social order and its proponents, to transgress the accepted norms and laws of syntax and narrative. However, the power issues inherent in those of difference are subtle, as carrying them to an extreme degree inevitably results in alienation or 'othering'. This occurred in Céline's case when, after his two initial novels in which he explored transgression on a predominantly thematic level, he embarked on writing the pamphlets which carried this form of transgression to the extreme. The result was that he alienated himself from society, thus assuming the mantle of the 'Other'. The irony of this progression lies in the fact that in addressing the issue of the quintessential 'Other' embodied in the Jew, he came to assume that role, thus becoming the scapegoat for all that he accused the Jew of having inflicted on French society.

Language

The transgressive power of language and the possibility of regeneration in a form which is free from the strictures of syntax, appear to be made possible through Céline's particular use of argot through his idiolect. In adopting his own idiolect, Céline imitates gestation, that phase of the act of procreation which, according to Bonnefis, is « La belle pensée qu'en secret il caresse, son rêve d'écrivain, l'espoir qui est le sien (c'est) de *fuir dans la langue*. »⁵⁶³ It is a return to the 'womb' or source of language; the product of which represents a form of language which is uniquely Céline's; one which is attained by "(Fuyant) à même la langue, en fouillant dans son ventre l'idiome qui la fera balbutier, vociférer, gémir, rigoler, ne pas conclure." What he seeks is « ... quelque part par là, dans l'utérus de mère-langue, jamais là où l'on

⁵⁶² **Idiolect:** n.m. Utilisation personnelle d'une langue par une seule personne ; usage d'une langue que l'on peut induire de l'ensemble des discours d'une seule personne. Le Grand Robert : p 2042

⁵⁶³ Bonnefis, P: *Céline: le Rappel des Oiseaux*: Préface de Jean-François Lyotard : Editions Galilée : 1997 : p ix

croit, moins et plus là que là, 'outré-là'. »⁵⁶⁴ It is in this capacity that Céline's idiolect embraces both transgressive and maieutic functions. It not only transcends the bounds of conventional narrative style but also provides a site for the gestation of a new order of novel; one that is founded in style rather than in thematics.

In itself a neologism, the expression *l'outré-là* is a capital example of Céline's idiolect, which he used for the first time in his last pamphlet *Les Beaux Draps* published in 1941; « Mais je connais des malfamants, des quidams en perversité, des gens qu'ont les esprits torves, des ambitieux tout hermétiques, inouïs de reluisances diaboliques qui sont en véritables pactes avec les puissances *d'outré-là* !... »⁵⁶⁵ This neologism is a word that simultaneously evokes the world beyond that which we inhabit, as well as the one from which we emerged; a conflation of *l'au-delà* and *l'outré-tombe*. Two worlds then; one evoking transgression and freedom, the other enclosure; a safe place of gestation and a necessary precursor to a flight to freedom.

English

In the three novels we discuss in this chapter⁵⁶⁶, England and the use of the English language plays a significant role as a metaphor for freedom and regeneration.

Significantly, it is also the place where, in Céline's view, the dead find asylum :

“Après ça, pour les retrouver, ça devient tout à fait difficile. Il faut sortir du Temps. C'est du côté de l'Angleterre qu'on les retrouve quand on y arrive, mais le brouillard est de ce côté-là tout le temps si dense, si compact que c'est comme des vraies voiles (...). Avec l'habitude et de l'attention on peut arriver à les retrouver quand même, mais jamais pendant bien longtemps à cause du vent qui rapproche toujours des nouvelles rafales et des buées du large. » (V pp 368-369)

England and its language seem to beckon to Céline as an embodiment of a geographical 'uterus'; a call to flight and refuge contained in the English words 'utter us'. In Céline's view that country is a transitional place, a metaphor for the womb; a land characterized by ubiquitous *brouillard*, which in turn symbolizes the amniotic fluid. It is a neutral place, one which represents both the uterus and a lack of it; a

⁵⁶⁴ Bonnefis, P: *Céline: le Rappel des Oiseaux*: Préface de Jean-François Lyotard : Editions Galilée : 1997 : p ix

⁵⁶⁵ Céline: *Les Beaux Draps* Nouvelles Editions françaises : 1941p 218

⁵⁶⁶ *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, *Mort à crédit* and *Guignols Band I and II*

'ne-uter' expressing its quality as a non-place or none of both, a *creux* which fosters creativity.

Voyage

It is in *Voyage au bout de la nuit* that we first become aware of the transcendent and transgressive power of language through the transformation effected on the figure of Baryton in that work. It is through the learning of English and his fascination for the history of England, notably that of the story of Monmouth the Pretender, that Baryton gains his release from the asylum at Vigny-sur-Seine, abandoning both professional and parental security in the person of his daughter, and embarking on a new life. Baryton's flight from the bonds of everyday life through the medium of language is presaged by the words "C'est à partir de ces leçons *d'anglais* que nous entrâmes tous dans une période absolument *trouble, équivoque*, au cours de laquelle les événements se succédèrent dans un *rythme* qui n'était *plus du tout celui de la vie ordinaire*." (V p 433) (our emphasis) The words we have stressed underscore the presentiment of an event that is both subversive and supernatural, transporting both the reader and the character of Baryton into another dimension.

There is no doubt that as a result of his experiences in England as a young and impressionable man, that country for Céline was emblematic of a new world, another state of being. It was a country where young Louis Destouches « A peine échappé à *l'écrasement* des années d'enfance et d'adolescence, aux brimades de l'armée et enfin à l'horreur de la guerre", discovered « la révélation d'une *autre vie*. »⁵⁶⁷ (our emphasis) And to his joy, he found that nothing in this new world was to be more emblematic of the spirit of freedom, adventure and weightlessness that pervaded it, than « la multiplication autour de lui de *figures de pères* : hommes que leur âge, leur savoir, leur expérience ou leur situation, mettent à même de *protéger* Ferdinand ou de *l'initier*." ⁵⁶⁸ (our emphasis)

A mastery of the English language therefore appears both as a catalyst for release from a life of constriction and for the attainment of another form of oneself that is weightless; an Ariel to the former Caliban that he had been, as well as a metaphor for

⁵⁶⁷ Céline: Romans t III : *Guignol's Band I; Guignol's Band II*: Editions Gallimard 1988 : p 935

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid p 935

transgression of the rules of convention. Baryton's action in abandoning all that represents a stable life style is called 'taking French leave', the equivalent of the expression *filer à l'anglaise* in French; a linguistic mirror-image that encapsulates the duality inherent in Baryton's transmutation to another state of being.

Mort

In contrast to the tangible and actualised presence of language in the *Voyage*, Ferdinand is *mute* in *Mort à crédit*, a choice which is significant in Bonnefis's opinion, as a lack of speech implies a transition to ethereality, whereas its opposite, loquaciousness, implies all that is earthbound; an inherent fault or "tare" suggested by lameness: "Une déféctuosité héréditaire, en quelque sort. La tare, c'est *le poids* d'un défaut. Poids qui s'ajoute au poids propre des choses et qui donne leur poids brut." ⁵⁶⁹ In *Mort à crédit* the narrator Ferdinand's mother Clémence has the misfortune to possess this defect, one which elicits revulsion in both her husband and her son. Far from sympathizing with her disability, it is "... la pire calamité !... C'était pire qu'un grave maladie, qu'une typhoïde, un érysipèle !" (MàC pp 777-778) In an evocation of weightlessness inherent in the dancer, and a concomitant heaviness in those who are unable to dance, Bonnefis observes that « Si l'on veut bien se rappeler que la danse est associée au silence, on trouvera, en effet, que c'est de *ne pouvoir danser* que la mère finalement *parle tant* ; pour conclure, non sans raison, que sa boiterie est 'le scandale du corps' » ⁵⁷⁰ (our emphasis) Furthermore, in contrast to the litheness and grace of the dancer who is characterised by silence, « Elle boite. Elle parle, ce qui revient au même. » ⁵⁷¹

Fog

In *Mort à crédit* England is once again invested with a mystical element, accentuated by the fog that appears to permeate the landscape, dissolving everyday objects and people into phantoms ; a dreamlike state which Ferdinand ascribes to magic : « D'abord, ça devenait une magie... Ca faisait un autre monde... Un inouï ! comme une image pas sérieuse (...) » (MàC p 709) This impression of a synthesis of strangeness and ephemerality lasts throughout Ferdinand's stay at Meanwell College, causing him to observe that "Plus tard c'était l'accalmie, le grand domaine des

⁵⁶⁹ Bonnefis, P: *Céline: le Rappel des Oiseaux* : Editions Galilée, Paris 1997 p 87

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid p 114

⁵⁷¹ Ibid p 114

brouillards Ça devenait alors tout magique... Ça devenait *comme un autre monde* » (MàC p 725) (our emphasis) Similar to the incident in the *Voyage*, where the narrator Bardamu and his companion witness phantoms above the Place du Tertre⁵⁷² the fantastic element is accentuated by a mist which « (...) entrainait doucement dans les pièces, il cachait tout (...) C'était un royaume de fantômes.» (MàC p 725) In this context, England represents the Other, the hidden, the mystical that is within Ferdinand, and which he seeks to understand, not as Baryton did, through learning English, but through its corollary: consciously *refusing* to speak it. Silence therefore becomes the subversive / transgressive catalyst for Ferdinand's understanding of himself.

Uterus

Of all Céline's novels, it is in *Mort à Crédit* that England is represented most completely as a 'womb' or 'ventre'; a 'Pays de Cocagne' where food appears to abound, stamping Ferdinand with an indelible impression of abundance after the privations experienced in France. This image of plenty is underscored on Ferdinand's arrival at Folkstone, where he is overwhelmed by a plethora of provisions : « (...) je suis passé d'un bide sur un autre. Je reluquais bien la boustifaille des étalages, tout en hauteur. Des petites montagnes de jambons.... Des ravins en salaisons... » (MàC p 705) Indeed, the narrator's arrival in England is emblematic of what Durand, describing forms of descent that aim to « pénétrer au cœur de l'intimité protectrice », terms a « 'rentrée' plus ou moins coenesthésique et viscérale. »⁵⁷³ ; a sheltered environment heightened by the fact that it is shrouded in perpetual thick fog. In his second work, the psychoanalyst Desoille denotes such dreams of descent as "(...) rêves de retour aussi bien qu'une acclimatation ou un consentement à la condition temporelle,"⁵⁷⁴ which symbolise the source of inspiration Ferdinand discerns in England. Durand observes that in Bachelard's analysis of Michel Leiris's *Aurora*, any enhanced valorisation of a moment of descent is "...liée à l'intimité digestive, au geste de déglutition"⁵⁷⁵, thus demonstrating an unequivocal link between Ferdinand's 'descent' into England's metaphorical 'womb', and a movement towards self-knowledge and

⁵⁷² « C'est du côté de l'Angleterre qu'on les retrouve quand on y arrive (...) le brouillard est de ce côté-là tout le temps si dense, si compact que c'est comme des vraies voiles qui montent les unes devant les autres (...) » (V p 368)

⁵⁷³ Durand, G: *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*: 11^e édition : Dunod, Paris 1992 : p 227

⁵⁷⁴ Desoille, R: *Le rêve éveillé en psychothérapie* : PUF Paris 1945 : p 150

⁵⁷⁵ Durand, G: *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*: 11^e édition : Dunod, Paris 1992 : p 227

self-exploration. However, the inherently precarious act of descent which, in itself is one that requires the courage to « désapprendre la peur »⁵⁷⁶, carries a risk, as « On conçoit qu'en ces profondeurs obscures et cachés il ne subsiste qu'une limite fort mince entre l'acte téméraire de la descente sans guide et la chute vers les abîmes animaux. »⁵⁷⁷ The danger inherent in this descent is mitigated by its « lenteur » ; far from being a chaotic free fall, « La durée est réintégrée, apprivoisée par le symbolisme de la descente grâce à une sorte d'assimilation du devenir par le dedans... La rédemption du devenir se fait (...) par l'intérieur, par la durée concrète. »⁵⁷⁸ In Ferdinand's exploration of England, it is the fog that forces him to proceed slowly ; to *moderate* his descent, thus avoiding the peril of a free fall into disaster. « Le brouillard était bien compact... On s'habitue à trébucher... Faut pas tomber dans la rivière. » (MàC p 705)

Bard

It is in *Guignol's Band* that the significance of England and its language attains its culmination, as the entire work is placed under the aegis of Shakespeare who Céline appears to regard as the purest exponent of that language. Not only is this work permeated by quotes from various works by Shakespeare, but the rallying point for the 'band' of companions is Leicester Square, the focal point of which is a statue of Shakespeare. Indeed, the image of a focal point for the novel could not be clearer, in what appears to be a series of concentric circles with Shakespeare at its fulcrum, around which the action is situated in London, the capital of a country which is also the focal point for Céline's endeavour to achieve a state of weightlessness through the use of language in general, and English in particular, as a catalyst for the transformation of mass into a state of buoyancy.

It is for this reason that Godard notes that « La référence à Shakespeare n'est pas indifférent au seuil de ce roman, non plus que le rappel de la statue du dramaturge située dans Leicester Square, au lieu géométrique de toute l'histoire. »⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁶ Bachelard, G: *La Terre et les rêveries de la volonté* : Corti, Paris, 1948 : p 398

⁵⁷⁷ Durand, G: *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*: 11^e édition : Dunod, Paris 1992 : pp 227-228

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid p 228

⁵⁷⁹ *Céline: Romans t III: Guignol's Band II : Notice* : p 990

The fact that the entire action of *Guignol's Band I and II* is set in England – and significantly in its capital London – appears to act as a catalyst or medium for Céline to reach beyond the level of writing to which he has confined himself up to that point, and in so doing, to attain another dimension of literary creativity, and finally to transcend the boundaries of syntax and vocabulary to reach an *au-delà* attained in a state of *délire*. The influence of Shakespeare is undisputable in Céline's passage to an altered level of creativity, achieved through “La localisation anglaise de l'histoire” which enabled him to “franch(ir) dans *Guignol's Band* un nouveau pas dans cette direction, non sans préparer ou accompagner ce pas par la multiplication des références”⁵⁸⁰ – to Shakespeare.

Indeed, references to ‘The Bard of Avon’ in this work are as much “rencontres” as they are “réminiscences”⁵⁸¹; they are more traces of “une imprégnation” which denotes a deep affinity Céline felt for Shakespeare rather than a simple form of transposition of his thematics and style. Once more, we are made aware of the positive effect the London milieu of the early 20th century had on Céline – one in which he was able to “donn(er) (...) libre cours à son goût pour un certain climat shakespearien (...)”⁵⁸² We submit that in writing *Guignol's Band* nearly thirty years after experiencing the freedom he discovered in London as a young man, Céline was better equipped both to appreciate its value as well as to express what it meant to him in terms of a discovery of freedom, through a literary style that had evolved to that point through his previous novels *Voyage au bout de la nuit* and *Mort à crédit*. The result was the completely liberated text of *Féerie I and II* which was to follow, in a literary representation of the *au-delà*. Beyond this point, the use and expression of English appears to have become redundant in Céline's repertoire, as though it had fulfilled its purpose in delivering him to another state of being; a world in which he was able to envisage death as integral to life. It is in this context that Céline's use of his idiolect in all its forms, including that of argot, parallels that of the role of the Double, in that it suffers the same fate, and for the same reason, as that figure, in the novels of the trilogy, where it is gradually abandoned.

⁵⁸⁰ *Céline* : Romans t III : p 991

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid* : p 993

⁵⁸² *Ibid* : p 993

L'Autre-là: l'Outre-là

In his work *Céline : Le Rappel des Oiseaux*, Bonnefis is explicit in his definition of the origins of Céline's use of the neologism *l'outre-là*: « L'outre-là célinien joue d'une confusion que fait la langue française entre deux outres (...) l'outre qui vient d'*ultra* (qui veut dire au-delà en latin), et qu'il arrive à Céline d'écrire 'oultre' » – the version used by Céline in a letter to Jean Paulhan (le 27 février 1949 ; « Oultre ! Foultre ! » – and the other meaning of « l'oultre » which is derived from *uter* meaning “ventre en latin”.⁵⁸³ The neologism coined by Céline therefore appears to derive from a conflation of both meanings, signifying the ‘beyond’ and either a ‘womb’ or ‘belly’ - both translations of the French word *ventre*,⁵⁸⁴ thus expressing both the transgressive and maieutic elements inherent in the author's use of this word.

According to Bonnefis, Céline's deliberate conflation of the two meanings of the words is motivated by an *obligation*, the reason for which is obscure, but which is nonetheless founded in the confusion inherent in the French distinction between the words – *uter* and – *ultra*. However, the notions of both the womb and the beyond are not as disparate as one might imagine, as “le ventre semble mieux fait pour accueillir des notions comme celles qu'exprime l'en deça.”⁵⁸⁵ In an echo of the sentiments expressed by Bachelard – Desoille mentioned above, Bonnefis expands on the notion of the – *uter* as the *seat* or origin of the –*ultra* when he poses the question “...toutes les choses rentrées n'y trouvent-elles pas naturellement leur place? Le ventre a longtemps dessiné pour l'imagination un *espace d'intimité*, étant le siège des *fonctions les plus secrètes* du corps, du cœur et, éventuellement même de l'esprit.... »⁵⁸⁶(our emphasis)

In both *Voyage au bout de la nuit* and *Mort à crédit*, England and English culture are evoked in a context of semi-exteriority; a place and language that, despite Ferdinand's involvement with it in the latter novel, still remains detached – the consummate ‘Other’. However, in *Guignol's Band* we, the readers, are projected into the heart of all that is English (or rather its definition in the era referred to by Ferdinand / young

⁵⁸³ Bonnefis, P: *Céline: Le Rappel des oiseaux* : Presses Universitaires de Lille : 1992 : p 122

⁵⁸⁴ Le Grand Robert 2001 pp 1747 – 1748: **Ventre** : 4. L'abdomen en tant que siège de la digestion (l'estomac et intestins) 5. Chez la femme, l'abdomen en tant que siège de la gestation et des organes génitaux internes.

⁵⁸⁵ Bonnefis, P: *Céline: Le Rappel des oiseaux* : Presses Universitaires de Lille : 1992 : p 122

⁵⁸⁶ , P: *Céline: Le Rappel des oiseaux* : Presses Universitaires de Lille : 1992 : pp 122 - 123

Destouches). Not only is the novel set in England, but we are also exposed to examples of prose written by its greatest playwright, Shakespeare in plays. In *Guignol's Band* the reader is not only situated in England geographically, but is also confronted with a narrative imbued with the presence of one of its greatest writers, ensuring that both narrator and reader are immersed in English culture. The degree to which this novel is impregnated with all that is English – its people, its climate, its literature – and its implication for Céline's literary creation is attributed to the fact that "Le décor londonien aidant, (Céline) donne ici libre cours à son goût pour un certain climat shakespearien qu'il retrouve jusque dans des aspect inattendus."⁵⁸⁷ In an act that presages an ascent to freedom of expression, Céline immerses himself in England and its culture in a parallel evocation of Ferdinand's descent into the 'ventre' that is England in *Mort à crédit*.

Argot- Idiolect

Like lace, there is nothing as ephemeral as argot that, like a butterfly, emerges from the cocoon of conventional language to scintillate for a brief instant before dying. But, as Céline remarked in an interview, unlike conventional language, it possesses the singular advantage of having truly *lived*, and not merely having existed. It is this unique element in Céline's works that invests them with a brilliance that, contrary to his prediction, has lasted until today. What he believed to be ephemeral has endured without diminishing any of its splendour. In order to explain the origin of this phenomenon we have recourse to a work that, although it refers to Hugo's particular idiolect, is equally relevant to that of Céline: « Il nous plaît de constater que la langue hugolienne trouve à se renouveler à l'entrée du caveau, qu'elle se régénère au moment de pénétrer dans le mystère d'une cavité noire, sombre et humide. Le souterrain *perturbe la langue et réforme le style.* »⁵⁸⁸ (our emphasis) This observation eloquently describes the transgressive and subversive element inherent in the use of a particular idiolect, as Céline's no less than Hugo's caused an irruption in the accepted norms of syntax and style.

Inherent in the transgressive function of argot is the emergence of a repressed element in the writer's divided self; a duality that has its roots in abjection; "une de ces

⁵⁸⁷ Céline : Romans t III *Guignol's Band II: Notice* : p 993

⁵⁸⁸ Chelebourg, C: *Sur un fond de ténèbres quelque bizarre alphabet* – le souterrain et la langue chez Victor Hugo: in *L'Imaginaire du Souterrain* : textes réunis par Aurélia Gaillard : p 130

violentes et obscures révoltes de l'être contre *ce qui le menace* et qui lui paraît venir d'un dehors ou d'un dedans exorbitant (...)"⁵⁸⁹ (our emphasis) The source of Céline's abjection was social corruption in all its forms, a vice against which he waged war armed with his own particular sword of argot; what Hugo termed his "langue de combat."⁵⁹⁰ Given the subversive chthonian nature of argot, it is not surprising that the type of disorder caused by its use "... confirme la puissance du lien qu'il établit entre souterrain et corruption linguistique."⁵⁹¹ And true to form, that language was only to be found

" (...) dans les bas-fonds de l'ordre social, là où la terre finit et où la boue commence, (...) saisir et jeter tout palpitant sur le pavé cet idiome abject qui ruisselle de fange ainsi tiré au jour, (...) ce n'est ni une tâche attrayante ni une tâche aisée. Rien n'est plus lugubre que de contempler ainsi à nu, à la lumière de la pensée, le fourmillement effroyable de l'argot. (...) une sorte d'horrible bête faite pour la nuit qu'on vient d'arracher de son cloaque. »⁵⁹²

It was this « (...) langue dans la langue, une sorte d'excroissance malade (...) un parasite qui [avait] ses racines dans le vieux tronc gaulois et dont le feuillage sinistre rampe sur tout un côté de la langue », ⁵⁹³ that Céline chose as his weapon against social corruption and complaisance as well as man's inhumanity to man expressed in war.

In his inverse evocation of a Tower of Babel, « Construction d'en bas qui cherche les ténèbres, Plonge au dessous du monde et descend dans la nuit, Et, Babel renversée, au fond de l'ombre fuit ! », ⁵⁹⁴ Hugo, like Céline, « renvoie la langue à ses origines souterraines »⁵⁹⁵, thus countering an abject view of societal corruption with a transgressive form of language. Like Hugo, Céline's use of idiolect « se révèle doublement motivé: il l'est, à un niveau objectif, par le fait qu'il emprunte au fonds symbolique et, à un niveau subjectif ⁵⁹⁶ par les traumatismes qui expliquent ces

⁵⁸⁹ Kristeva, J: *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur* : Editions du Seuil 1980 p 9

⁵⁹⁰ Hugo, V: *Les Misérables*: IVe, 7^e, I ; p 778 in Chelebourg, C : *Sur un fond de ténèbres quelque bizarre alphabet* : p 129

⁵⁹¹ Chelebourg, C: *Sur un fond de ténèbres quelque bizarre alphabet" – le souterrain et la langue chez Victor Hugo*: in *L'Imaginaire du Souterrain* : textes réunis par Aurélia Gaillard : p 130

⁵⁹² Hugo, V: *Les Misérables*: IVe, 7^e, I ; p 776 in Chelebourg, C : *Sur un fond de ténèbres quelque bizarre alphabet* : pp 130-131

⁵⁹³ Hugo, V: *Les Misérables*: IVe, 7^e, II ; p 781 in Chelebourg, C : *Sur un fond de ténèbres quelque bizarre alphabet* : p 131

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid (v 387 – 390; p 543) Chelebourg p 134

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid p 134

⁵⁹⁶ In Kristeva's terms, the *semiotic*

emprunts », ⁵⁹⁷ an embedding of motivations, not of signs but of symbols, which defies comprehension in terms of a decoding on the level of meaning alone.

In this context, it is important to consider the distinction made by Kristeva between the symbolic and the semiotic addressed in her work *Powers of Horror* in which she examines the productive, creative role of repression. Much of the work addresses an exploration of literature as a mechanism for the deployment of unconscious forces into acceptable forms of expression without finally being eclipsed. For Kristeva, the *semiotic* is a pre-linguistic, pre-symbolic space; the realm of the *non-dit* or unspeakable, the unnameable. It is associated with a pre-Oedipal state when the infant is in a symbiotic state with the mother. It also predates sexuality, and what Lacan termed the 'mirror stage' at which the child is able to distinguish its own reflection in a mirror. By contrast, the *symbolic* is the realm of language understood as a rule-governed system of grammar and syntax; it is also the realm of the repressive institutions of social order and law. In Deleuzian terms, then, the semiotic represents a molecular state propitious for creation, while the symbolic may be associated with molar or repressive structures.

Anima - Animus

Broadly speaking, "where the semiotic is dominated by the figure of the mother, then the symbolic is governed by the law of the father. (...) For children of both sexes, rejecting the mother and, for Kristeva, the maternal sphere of the semiotic, is crucial in allowing the child to enter the symbolic sphere, the sphere of language and paternal authority."⁵⁹⁸ It follows that a subject who was to remain in a pre-linguistic or semiotic state would remain outside language and society, implying that he or she would be psychotic, and, should that person be a writer, he or she would necessarily produce works that reflect a psychosis through an

« (...) écriture morcelée, éclatée comme l'univers qu'elle veut raconter, comme l'homme dépersonnalisé qui ne parvient plus à situer sa place dans le monde, dans l'espace et dans le temps, qui ne parvient plus à se constituer en tant que personne en face d'autres personnes, comme l'homme écrivant qui ne peut admettre le divorce constitutionnel entre son *moi propre*

⁵⁹⁷ Chelebourg, C: *Sur un fond de ténèbres quelque bizarre alphabet* – le souterrain et la langue chez Victor Hugo: in *L'Imaginaire du Souterrain : textes réunis par Aurélia Gaillard* : p 139

⁵⁹⁸ Lloyd, M: *Julia Kristeva*: in *Contemporary Critical theorists*: Edinburgh University Press 2004: pp 139 - 140

et le moi qu'il projette dans ses écrits, fou d'angoisse parce qu'il 'sent surgir en lui, à côté de l'homme qu'il était, un être nouveau, l'écrivain'⁵⁹⁹(..), *double diabolique* qui échappe à toute tentative de maîtrise (...) pour, au bout du compte, toujours le soumettre s'il ne parvient pas à l'aliéner, cette écriture, c'est l'écriture psychotique. »⁶⁰⁰(our emphasis)

However, we believe that it would be simplistic (and dismissive in terms of his creative aesthetic), to categorise Céline as psychotic, as he is « (...) un écrivain qui *négoce* avec la psychose pour construire son écriture », which is « ... indissolublement une certaine représentation du monde et des hommes et une manière de dire, un style, ces deux aspects étant soumis à une même logique. »⁶⁰¹ Céline's work is *founded* in abjection, not simply because it is dominated by the themes of pain and horror, but because « (...) toute la position narrative semble commandée par la nécessité de traverser l'*abjection* dont la douleur est le côté intime, et l'horreur le visage public. »⁶⁰² Significantly, particularly in the context of the many triangular situations that arise in his works, Céline's writing is an attempt « (...) de situer un être parlant entre ses *désirs et leurs interdits*,⁶⁰³ bref à l'intérieur du triangle oedipien. »⁶⁰⁴(our emphasis)

Because the relationship between the semiotic and the symbolic is a dialectical one, it is inevitable that from time to time the semiotic should erupt through consciousness, "disrupting symbolisation with heterogeneous unconscious contents",⁶⁰⁵ which is a frequent occurrence in Céline's poetic prose. According to Kristeva, poetic language, through its emphasis on musicality or rhythm "exposes the subject's link with the pre-linguistic realm or semiotic *chora*",⁶⁰⁶ an instance of what Freud referred to as 'the return of the repressed'. The dialectical nature of the relationship between the semiotic and the symbolic has profound implications for subjectivity, or what Kristeva termed the "subject-in-process/on trial"⁶⁰⁷ which suggests a fluid identity of the speaking subject. In aspiring to a stable identity, he or she is constantly in the

⁵⁹⁹ Lalande, B: *Voyage au bout de la nuit* : coll.'Profil d'un œuvre' Hatier p 7

⁶⁰⁰ Blondiaux, I: *Une Ecriture psychotique: Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: A G Nizet : Paris, 1985 pp 13 - 14

⁶⁰¹ Ibid p 14

⁶⁰² Kristeva, J: *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur*: Editions du Seuil 1980 : p 165

⁶⁰³ Between the semiotic and the symbolic

⁶⁰⁴ Kristeva, J: *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur*: p 165

⁶⁰⁵ Lloyd, M: *Julia Kristeva*: in *Contemporary Critical theorists*: Edinburgh University Press 2004: p 140

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid p 140

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid p 140

process of seeking identification with figures of authority – and, in Céline’s case, particularly father figures - while simultaneously being seduced by the pre-oedipal maternal space of the semiotic. This implies that the subject is always in the process of renewing his or her identity – a creative process for both the individual and his work. In both cases, the importance of moments of transgression and negativity cannot be underestimated, and it is in this context that we believe Céline employed his idiolect as a transgressive, creative mechanism designed to achieve immanence on both a literary as well as a personal level. In expressing his semiotic pre-linguistic self he was able to correlate both his female *anima* and his masculine *animus* in a single creative entity.

Abjection

Abjection is a key element in Céline’s works. Like the semiotic, it is both a “precondition of, and an element that disrupts subjectivity and the symbolic.”⁶⁰⁸ In early infancy, in the context of the Oedipus complex where the child is able to distinguish its own reflection in a mirror, abjection also relates to the process of separation that renders a shift from the semiotic to the symbolic possible. It signifies that which needs to be expelled in order that a “clean and proper body” can be established. This relates not only to the individual but also to the collective body – and in Céline’s case, the social fabric which he viewed as corrupt. His literary efforts to purge that fabric of its perceived decadence culminated in his writing of the pamphlets between 1937 and 1941.

We posit that Céline’s idiolect was the vehicle chosen by him expressly to attain a state of emptiness, of *emptying out*, in order to create a space in which music and dance might assume their rightful place. Céline believed this state could be achieved through « (...) la *mutation du langage en style*, sans l’impulsion d’une altérité innommable », which, « passionnelle pour commencer, se rythme ensuite, avant de se *vider*. »⁶⁰⁹ (our emphasis) It is to this objective that Céline referred in a letter to Milton Hindus in 1947: “Je ne me trouve bien qu’en presence de rien du tout, du vide.”⁶¹⁰ It is in an attempt at the scription of this state of emptiness that Céline employs idiolect

⁶⁰⁸ Lloyd, M: *Julia Kristeva: in Contemporary Critical theorists*: Edinburgh University Press 2004: p 141

⁶⁰⁹ Kristeva, J: *Pouvoirs de l’Horreur*: Editions du Seuil 1980 p 226

⁶¹⁰ Lettre to Milton Hindus 29 May 1947 : L’Herne : p 113

as his chosen device. The realisation that a state of abjection is intrinsic to man's state of being, and indeed fundamental to his *raison* for being, creates this imperative. We believe that the conscious use of idiolect in his works lent Céline the courage to confront the abyss of the realisation that abjection lies at the very core of one's being: "(...) l'impossible, c'est son être même, découvrant qu'il n'est autre qu'abject (...)
Rien de tel que l'abjection de soi pour démontrer que toute abjection est en fait reconnaissance du manque fondateur de tout être ».⁶¹¹

In the context of the production of Céline's works, it is important to note that the self-loathing implicit in abjection differs from that of hysteria, which is the symptom of an ego that, "excédé par un 'mauvais objet', s'en détourne, s'en expurge et le vomit."⁶¹² In abjection, there *is* no object, as its revolt lies "(...) tout entière dans l'être. Dans l'être du langage." (our emphasis) Contrary to a state of hysteria which « séduit le symbolique mais ne le produit pas », the subject who experiences abjection is culturally productive, the outcome of which is « (...) le rejet et la reconstruction des langages ».⁶¹³ (our emphasis) What could more eloquently evoke both the motivation for, and the outcome of Céline's use of idiolect as an expression of abjection in his works?

As for its effect on the reader, Céline cautions that argot should be used sparingly, just as one uses condiments in the preparation of a meal. Although capable of "asso(yant) bien le lecteur", it will not be long before "votre lecteur ressaisit!" as its effect wears off. Like the prudent use of a condiment, the use of argot may heighten the enjoyment of the 'meal' of a literary work, "mais un repas entier de piment vous fait un méchant déjeuner."⁶¹⁴ In adopting colloquialism as a stylistic strategy, Céline's use of argot is not only an expression of a deliberate literary tactic, but also of an ideology. It is a safety-valve which permits the signifier to contain « ce trop-plein d'émotion qu'(il) aspire à manifester dans l'ordre du langage. »⁶¹⁵ When Céline rebels against 'ideas', it is in order to advocate the expression of « l'émotion du langage parlé à travers l'écrit »⁶¹⁶, emphasising that « l'émotion ne peut être captée et transcrite qu'à travers

⁶¹¹ Kristeva, J: *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur*: Editions du Seuil 1980 pp 12 - 13

⁶¹² Ibid p 57

⁶¹³ Ibid p 57

⁶¹⁴ Céline, L-F: *Entretiens avec le Professeur Y*: Editions Gallimard 1983 p 60

⁶¹⁵ Kristeva, J: *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur*: Editions du Seuil 1980 : p 227

⁶¹⁶ *Céline : Entretiens avec le Professeur Y* : Éditions Gallimard 1993 : p 537

le langage parlé. »⁶¹⁷ However, Céline emphasised that prescribing the literary expression of spoken language is easier said than done, « c'est pas rien !... c'est infime, mais c'est quelque chose ! »⁶¹⁸

Subversion

Céline's adoption of argot is transgressive, even subversive, in that its aim is to « faire passer le parler dans l'écrit (...) visant à subordonner la dominante logique ou grammaticale du langage écrit. »⁶¹⁹ This strategy is carried out in an attack that rallies thematic, stylistic and ideological elements, using an enunciation that aims to subvert the logic and grammatical rules of written language. It is a subversive movement that is accompanied by what semioticians call a "système modelant secondaire", produced by the counterattack of an emotion that is manifest linguistically in an abundance of "opérations prosodiques et rhétoriques"⁶²⁰ which accomplish the subversion of conventional language. This strategy is effected in what Kristeva defines as two fundamental processes; "la segmentation (avec rejet ou préjet) de la phrase", which is prevalent in Céline's early novels, and "l'ellipse syntaxique"⁶²¹ which is a feature of his later works. This dual process results in a synthesis of melody and logic brought into being by Céline the syntactician.

The transgressive nature of Céline's use of argot is inherent in the fact that it is « un moyen radical de séparation, de rejet, de haine à la limite »⁶²² Indeed, its use denotes sufficient hatred to « assoi(r) bien le lecteur...l'annihile !... »⁶²³. For this reason argot was the author's chosen medium to express his hatred for all that he found hypocritical and fatuous in contemporary French society. The first instance of Céline's use of his idiolect occurs in the *Voyage*, present in Robinson's use of argot when referring to an officer who is wounded, as well as in his vulgar tone which demonstrates disrespect for authority in general and for authority-figures in particular. Indeed, in an echo of the author's use of caricature, this particular use of language is

⁶¹⁷ Céline: *Entretiens avec le Professeur Y* : Editions Gallimard 1983 p 25 in Kristeva, J : *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur* : p 227

⁶¹⁸ Ibid p 227

⁶¹⁹ Kristeva, J: *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur*: Editions du Seuil 1980 p 227

⁶²⁰ Ibid p 227

⁶²¹ Ibid p 227

⁶²² Kristeva, J: *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur*: Editions du Seuil 1980 p 226

⁶²³ Céline, L-F: *Entretiens avec le Professeur Y* : Editions Gallimard 1983 p 59

one of the principal objectives in Céline's novels, as, in a symbolic act of transgression, « (La parole) rabaisse le prestige d'une société qui l'opprime et l'aliène en dégradant les signes qui servent à la dénommer. »⁶²⁴

It was without a doubt Robinson's emancipated manner of speech, his disrespect for authority that was one of the main factors in Bardamu's attraction for this figure of the Double: "L'allure émancipée du parler de Robinson d'une part, l'insistance mimétique de Bardamu-protagoniste d'autre part, constituent une motivation de l'action et de sens symbolique. Robinson prendra désormais aux yeux de Bardamu l'allure d'un *initiateur* sur la voie de la nuit. (...)"⁶²⁵ Bardamu is particularly impressed by Robinson's derogatory manner of speaking about and to his senior officer, remarking first that the injured Captain "était bien amoché le piston!", addressing him with disrespect and ordering him to "Finis ça! (...) Maman! Elle t'emmerde!" (V p 42) Especially impressive in Bardamu's eyes is Robinson's disregard for the *trappings* of war, having « laissé tomber le barda et puis les armes aussi... Dans une mare à canards qui était à côté... » (V p 42)

Another element of the use of idiolect is its ability to caricature not only figures in the novels but also social institutions. This is particularly evident in Céline's description of the Institut Bioduret – a postiche of the Pasteur Institute – and the scientists engaged in research there.⁶²⁶ In using idiolect to caricature people and institutions, we witness Céline's most transgressive use of language, as caricature has the effect of reducing individuals and organizations to *type*, thus divesting them of their authority; their conventional 'molar' exterior, and exposing their vulnerability. In according priority to the use of his idiolect throughout his oeuvre, Céline, in a deliberate act of subversion, adopts « (...) une pratique narrative qui privilégie l'exagération caricaturale, la réduction comique (...) une façon de narrer qui relève davantage de la satire que du roman. »⁶²⁷

⁶²⁴ Racelle-Latin, D : *Le Voyage au bout de la nuit de Céline : roman de la subversion et subversion du roman* : Bruxelles : Palais des Académies 1988 : p 275

⁶²⁵ Ibid p 283

⁶²⁶ Mentioned *supra* in the previous chapter *Father figures as rivals and initiators*

⁶²⁷ Racelle-Latin, D : *Le Voyage au bout de la nuit de Céline : roman de la subversion et subversion du roman* : Bruxelles : Palais des Académies 1988 : p 288

Céline's use of idiolect also has the power to inject an element of lyricism into the most tragic of circumstances, such as that of the death of Bardamu's Colonel at the Front. This episode is described in poetic prose; a subversion of the conventional manner of representing such an incident. In a masterful recounting of the incident, Céline not only invests it with an evocative description of the infantryman's headless body, but also effects a conflation of social hierarchy of the officer and his minion locked in an embrace which is both transient and eternal:

«Quant au colonel, lui, je ne lui voulais pas de mal. Lui pourtant aussi il était mort. (...) C'est qu'il avait été déporté sur le talus, allongé sur le flanc par l'explosion et projeté jusque dans les bras du cavalier à pied, le messenger, fini lui aussi. Ils s'embrassaient tous les deux pour le moment et pour toujours, mais le cavalier n'avait plus sa tête, rien qu'une ouverture au-dessus du cou, avec du sang dedans qui mijotait en glouglous comme de la confiture dans la marmite. »(V p 17)

This is a prime example of the power of Céline's transgressive use of language to overturn social convention. Indeed, « Cette domestication incongrue de *l'horreur sacrée* c'était déjà celle du colonel dans la guerre et, plus absolument encore, celle de la guerre tout entière, ce génocide institutionnalisée. »⁶²⁸(our emphasis)

Poiétikos

Céline's works are enhanced through his recognition of the importance of moments of transgression, of negativity and of abjection in the creative process, resulting in works that are rich in poetic prose. In adopting his idiolect, Céline automatically distanced himself from conventional societal norms so that

« (...) la voix qui parle dans (son oeuvre) conserve-t-elle en permanence l'intonation du sujet marginal tout en s'exprimant dans un langage exhaussé, en raison même de sa facture artistique, au-delà de toute situation sociale. Bardamu parle poétiquement d'un lieu qui est bien de *l'autre côté de la langue* et de la société, et son refus acquiert par là une portée symbolique et *transcendante*. (...) sa vraie résonance célinienne»⁶²⁹ (our emphasis)

Just as the narrative style of the *Voyage* overturns the traditional format of the novel, so too does it aim to invert language « par le jeu des registres et la dislocation de la

⁶²⁸ Racelle-Latin, D : *Le Voyage au bout de la nuit de Céline : roman de la subversion et subversion du roman* : Bruxelles : Palais des Académies 1988 : p 303

⁶²⁹ Racelle-Latin, D: *Voyage au bout de la nuit : ou l'Inauguration d'une Poétique 'Argotique'* :p 63 in *La Revue des lettres Modernes* Nos 462 – 467 : Lettres Modernes Minard 1976

phrase, une langue instituée en reflet du réel établi. »⁶³⁰ The narrative's lyrical quality is achieved through « la surdétermination ironique de la négativité par l'énonciation narrative qui fait basculer le 'réel' de la fiction dans l'irréalité de la satire, » together with an « (...) insistance passionnelle à dénoncer et à exorciser le sens malheureux de la réalité qui entraîne la narration à se recouvrir lyriquement et à mettre ainsi en évidence sa qualité de *discours*. »⁶³¹ (our emphasis)

However, it is the regenerative power of Céline's use of argot that is relevant in the context of our study of the role of the Double; a regeneration that is effected through « un déclassement volontaire du moi, lequel est à l'origine du caractère fictif de son autobiographie . »⁶³² In violating the norms of « beau langage » - symbolic both of a particular class and ideology in opposition to which Céline had placed himself, he brings about « ce *dédoublement régénérateur* que Bardamu annonce comme son ' truc d'imagination ' » namely to « dépouiller les hommes qu'on redoute le plus, du moindre prestige qu'on a encore tendance à leur prêter (...) Ça vous donne un autre vous-même. On *est deux*. »⁶³³ (our emphasis) The relegation of himself on a fictitious level to an inferior level of society is one of the principles underpinning Céline's style, and a manifestation of "l'authenticité de son oeuvre".⁶³⁴ The writer's courage in using his idiolect to create works that become, through the mechanism of abjection and negativity, imbued with poetry, has a spinoff in terms of regeneration for the reader, who, the author's voice rising like a "raz de marée" (...) porte au lecteur l'urgence d'un élan vital à retrouver", while simultaneously communicating "le sentiment d'une nécessaire *refonte de notre art de vivre* dans ce qu'il a de plus essentiel." ⁶³⁵(our emphasis)

⁶³⁰ ⁶³⁰ Racelle-Latin, D: *Voyage au bout de la nuit : ou l'Inauguration d'une Poétique 'Argotique'* in *La Revue des lettres Modernes* Nos 462 – 467 : Lettres Modernes Minard 1976 : p 69

⁶³¹ Ibid p 69

⁶³² Ibid pp 74 - 75

⁶³³ *Voyage au bout de la nuit* : p 64 in Racelle-Latin, D: *Voyage au bout de la nuit : ou l'Inauguration d'une Poétique 'Argotique'* p 74 in *La Revue des lettres Modernes* Nos 462 – 467 : Lettres Modernes Minard 1976

⁶³⁴ *Voyage au bout de la nuit* : p 64 in Racelle-Latin, D: *Voyage au bout de la nuit : ou l'Inauguration d'une Poétique 'Argotique'* pp 74 – 75 in *La Revue des lettres Modernes* Nos 462 – 467 : Lettres Modernes Minard 1976

⁶³⁵ *Voyage au bout de la nuit* : in Racelle-Latin, D: *Voyage au bout de la nuit : ou l'Inauguration d'une Poétique 'Argotique'* pp 74 – 75 in *La Revue des lettres Modernes* Nos 462 – 467 : Lettres Modernes Minard 1976 : pp 75 - 76

Eternity

In adopting his own idiolect through the creation of neologisms and the use of argot, Céline appears to have envisaged a mechanism to transcend time and, while accepting the inevitability of death, to render his works eternal. In the very fact that argot and neologisms are destined to be overtaken by new literary forms, he imitated the cycle of life, thus pre-empting a condition of mortality that he observed in novels written in conventional language. This preoccupation is evident in a letter Céline wrote in reply to André Rousseaux's criticism of the use of argot in *Mort à crédit*, published in the *Figaro* of 23 May 1936. Rousseaux criticised the ephemeral nature of the use of argot, questioning whether "le prodigieux génie verbal de Céline" would not risk becoming "prisonnier de ses propres artifices"⁶³⁶, to the extent that he condemned the author's vocabulary to imminent obsolescence. Céline's reply to this criticism was succinct and impassioned, declaring the use of argot to be "le seul mode d'expression possible pour l'émotion".⁶³⁷ He added that he had no interest in simply narrating events, but wished to "faire RESENTIR" – a task he considered impossible to achieve in conventional academic language. In a development of this argument that encompasses the essence of what Bonnefis termed the "loi de Céline"⁶³⁸, and the possibility of achieving linguistic ephemerality, Céline provides his own answer to the question "Pourquoi je fais tant d'emprunts à la langue, au 'jargon', à la syntaxe argotique, pourquoi je la forme moi-même si tel est mon besoin de l'instant ? » in his succinct reply : « *Parce que vous l'avez dit elle meurt vite cette langue. Donc elle a vécu, elle VIT tant que je l'emploie.* »⁶³⁹

In the summation of his article *Gone are the days*, Bonnefis emphasises Céline's purpose in writing, not to write 'against the clock', hoping to stem the passage of time, but rather to write *with* its flux, assimilating its passage into his creative oeuvre: "Céline n'écrit pas pour une autre raison. Fort de cette assurance que le présent, finalement, ne s'obtient qu'au prix d'un arrachement, ou qu'à défaut, le présent suppose *l'usure* de la présence. »⁶⁴⁰ This implies a wearing down (or out) of the fabric of the present until it is transparent ; until one is permitted a glimpse of the *au-delà*

⁶³⁶ *Céline* : Romans t I : p 1507

⁶³⁷ *Ibid* p 1119

⁶³⁸ Footnote to the article *Gone are the days*: *l'invention de la musique dans l'oeuvre de Céline* : p 810

⁶³⁹ *Céline* : Romans t I: p 1120

⁶⁴⁰ Bonnefis, P : *Gone are the days...: Gone are the days..... L'invention de la musique dans l'oeuvre de Céline* : Modern Language notes : Johns Hopkins University Press : Vol 103 No 4 :p 821

that awaits us. Far from resenting the ephemeral quality of life, we should embrace it, as it is « précisément ce qu'il y a en elle d'attachant. »⁶⁴¹ In this context, Céline's use of his idiolect appears to be a metaphor for that ephemerality.

Towards the end of *Bagatelles pour un massacre*, Céline, in an act that Bonnefis qualifies as a "dépôt de bilan", declares « Cela suffit au fond ces trois mots qu'on répète; le temps passé ... cela suffit à tout. (...) Je lui ferai des conditions ... entre la mort et l'existence ... une situation légère. Nous pourrions sûrement nous entendre ».⁶⁴² It is this 'lightness of being' that in Bonnefis's view is conducive to a passage to the *au-delà*, one which will permit the passage of

« les fantômes ; et avec les fantômes, beaucoup de figures qu'(il) (aurait) (...) éveillées, sorties de l'outre, où elles reposaient. Toute la ronde, la farandole repassant ; et repassant dans un style absolument déchiqueté, une vraie *dentelle de style* ; mots fragiles, bouts de phrases, nuit et brouillard. »⁶⁴³

Through the use of argot, Céline steals a march on language that claims to be « pure, bien française raffinée » - a language that he, however, considers to be "Toujours morte, morte dès le début, morte depuis Voltaire, cadavre, *dead as a door nail*."⁶⁴⁴ He is cognisant of the fact that his novels too, will become obsolete, but with the difference that they will bear the distinction of having "pendant un an, un mois, un jour VECU."⁶⁴⁵ Misquoting Elie Faure, Céline ends the letter to Rousseaux with the declaration that « La plupart du temps les artistes sous prétexte d'art s'arrangent pour faire plus mort que la mort, ils lui ajoutent un poids spécifique que la mort n'a pas. La mort possède encore une espèce de vie. »⁶⁴⁶ Bonnefis observes that « (...) l'expression d'Elie Faure n'allait pas tomber dans l'oreille d'un sourd. Recueillie aussitôt par Céline qui en ferait son miel », concluding that it was exactly « (...) de cette espèce de vie-là qu'avec l'argot (Céline) entendait faire profiter la langue ».⁶⁴⁷ What is more, the very ephemeral nature of argot which is destined to disappear

⁶⁴¹ Bonnefis; P: *Gone are the days....* Modern Language notes: Johns Hopkins University Press Vol 103 No 4 p 821

⁶⁴² *Bagatelles pour un massacre*: 1937 pp 373 - 374

⁶⁴³ Bonnefis; P: *Gone are the days....* Modern Language notes: Johns Hopkins University Press Vol 103 No 4 p 822 - 823

⁶⁴⁴ *Céline*: Romans t I: p 1120

⁶⁴⁵ *Céline*: Romans t I: p 1120

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid* p 1120

⁶⁴⁷ Bonnefis; P: *Gone are the days....* Modern Language notes: Johns Hopkins University Press Vol 103 No 4 p 819

emphasises its life-giving force: "(...) une langue qui se meurt, ne laisse pas de se mourir. Une langue, par cela même, qui survit en somme. Tel est, (...) le mouvement que l'argot a pour charge d'entretenir et de *réactiver* sans cesse. »⁶⁴⁸

In a footnote relating to the quotation from Faure, Godard notes : « La citation est ici approximative. Céline avait au contraire cité le texte exact d'Elie Faure dans une lettre qui semble dater de la publication de *Voyage* adressée à un destinataire non identifié : « Connaissez-vous cher Ami cette admirable phrase d'Elie Faure : 'Toute composition qui n'est pas organique a la raideur, le froid, le vide de la mort. Je me trompe car *la mort vit*. L'homme au moyen de *l'art* a réussi, la plupart du temps, à être plus mort que la mort'. Effrayante condamnation de tant d'efforts : » (Catalogue B. Loliée No 18, novembre 1968)⁶⁴⁹ (our emphasis)

We posit that the reference to a death-that-is-not -death but life itself, captures the essence of Céline's ideology. In the author's viewpoint, death is seen not as an end, a finality, but a beginning, a transcendence, a passage to the beyond (the *au-delà*) that had its seed in the *outré* or womb, and was enabled to transgress the sterility of social, cultural and linguistic norms through the mechanism of the *outré*, the *outrance*, the *outré-là*. It appears that Céline refused the accepted notion of death as a finite end, an entity that was impenetrable. We believe his vision of death was that of a state of ephemeral being, a transparency, as light and fragile as the lace his mother used to repair. In Céline's view, death is "(...) un espace lisse", symbolised by the leitmotif of the bridge that recurs throughout the author's work. The importance of the bridge in Céline's works has already been analysed by Philippe Bonnefis in his article '*Passage Céline*' in which he observes that "le pont et le chaos vont ensemble. Ils tiennent ensemble; ils s'épaulent en quelque sorte (...)"⁶⁵⁰ Hainge develops this notion, remarking that there is « Pas de pont, chez Céline, qui ne flirte avec l'abîme. »⁶⁵¹, underscoring the smoothness of the transition of life to death in a cyclical movement of disintegration and regeneration.

⁶⁴⁸ Bonnefis; P: *Gone are the days....* Modern Language notes: Johns Hopkins University Press Vol 103 No 4 : p 820

⁶⁴⁹ Céline : t I : Éditions Gallimard: p 1508

⁶⁵⁰ Bonnefis P : *Passage Céline*, Revue des Sciences Humaines, 69.198 (1985) p 141

⁶⁵¹ Hainge, G: *Le Prologue de Guignol's Band comme porte vers l'espace lisse* : p 2

The maïeutic function of the use of argot – and the irruption it causes at the seat of conventional language – is clearly defined by Lyotard in his preface to the Galilée edition of Bonnefis's *Céline: le rappel des Oiseaux*. Here, the confusion generated by the use of argot shakes the very foundations of conventional language, bringing forth in a maieutic sense a regeneration of the essence of language:

« À lire Bonnefis, telle est la confusion dont Céline se fait obligation, le désordre dont il s'endette: comme si l'inconsistant outre-là, cet au-delà pourtant logé dans le sac ventru, imposait à son écriture la direction à suivre pour s'enquérir de l'autre chose. Voici comment tu dois la faire entendre, celle-ci, et t'en faire entendre : dans le vacarme que fait retentir sa sarabande au fond de la langue matrice et *qui la crève*. »⁶⁵² (our emphasis)

Ironic laughter

Céline's version of comedy, one which is frequently achieved through the use of his idiolect in general and argot in particular, leads us to ironic laughter or a *rire jaune*, that is often at his own expense. It is a distanced, objective form of comedy which enables us to discern the author's creative impulse, while leading us to the realisation that his comedy goes far beyond the mere desire to amuse his public. His is a comedic genre which is purely theatrical and, on a literary level, supremely creative. It is doubly effective as he is a player on the stage of his unique form of theatre where he poses "comme comédien – avec toutes les connotations théâtrales que comporte le terme, afin de créer une fiction aux confins du théâtre qui dépasse la polémique pure sans en perdre le ton."⁶⁵³ Céline's comedy is ambiguous, encompassing both 'torture et rigolade'; an ancient form of the art where each mask bearing a smiling face has a tragic one as its counterpart.

The author's ironic form of comedy is especially noticeable in the first version of *Féerie pour une autre fois*, where, despite the torments of prison, the narrator's comic voice makes itself heard in order to attenuate the horror he has experienced and, more importantly, to ensure that the 'celebration' of life may continue: "*J'ai plus de peau! J'ai plus de chemises! J'ai plus de dents ! mais j'ai des petits airs en mémoire*. » (FI p 161) But despite the mask of a clown that Céline adopts, his tragic face is still visible ; he is a « clown minable et sur le retour, amuseur qui vit sur les exigences,

⁶⁵² Bonnefis; P: *Céline: Le Rappel des Oiseaux* : Préface de Jean-François Lyotard. Editions Galilée, Paris 1997 p ix

⁶⁵³ C. Tyczka : *Céline et la comédie* : Actes de colloque international d'Oxford 1981 p. 129

applaudissements ou huées de son public... »⁶⁵⁴ Most importantly, this is a character Céline has *assumed*; a theatrical mask he has donned in order to ‘amuse’ us. He acknowledges this role in *D’un Château l’autre*, when he poses the rhetorical question “Où t’en es clown ... combien de pages?” (CA p 147).

Both in real life and in his allegorical guise as clown, Céline may have been banished to the fringes of society, but he capitalises on the public’s indifference or downright hostility (real or imagined, but immaterial from the point of view of creativity), in order to make of it the “moteur de son discours” by knowing how to “profite du sadisme latent du public”⁶⁵⁵ In *D’un Château l’autre*, the author is explicit in this regard when he urges himself onward in the role of a clown dedicated to pleasing his public: “(...) aux agrès vieux clown! et que ça sauté! plus haut! ... plus haut! ... vous êtes un petit peu attendu! le public vous demande qu’une seule chose; que vous vous cassiez bien la gueule!” (CA p 194)

Typecast

The comic element is usually created by a comic *type* – a sort of distillation of Everyman. But if the objective of the comic poet is to present us with ‘types’ – that is, characters capable of being repeated *ad infinitum* - how much more effective would it have been had Céline shown us different versions of the *same* type? We therefore propose that the Doubles in Céline’s work represent different avatars of the same personality-type. If the characters created by the poet evoke an impression of *life*, it is because they *are* the poet himself, as “le poète multiplie, le poète s’approfondissant lui-même”⁶⁵⁶, in an effort to know himself, which is so intense that “... il saisit le virtuel dans le réel et reprend, pour en faire une oeuvre complete, ce que la nature laissa en lui à l’état d’ébauche ou de simple projet.”⁶⁵⁷ We believe that it is in the realisation of this ‘project’ (the actualisation of the poet’s creative impulse), that the role of the Double as catalyst is fulfilled.

⁶⁵⁴ C. Tyczka : *Céline et la comédie* : Actes de colloque international d’Oxford 1981 : p 131

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid p 131

⁶⁵⁶ Bergson, H: *Le Rire : Essai sur la Signification du comique* : Librairie Germer Baillière : 1900 : p 172

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid p 172

In societal terms, comedy occupies a median role between art and life. In the production of laughter, comedy accepts social life as its natural milieu, even conforming to its impulses, and it is at this point that it turns its back on art, which is “... une rupture avec la société et un retour à la simple nature.”⁶⁵⁸ In this hypothesis, we discern the ambivalence present in Céline’s art, in the use of comedy (essentially an anti-art genre) in the production of works that attain the highest degree of artistic achievement in their lyrical prose.

Ferryman

The clown, frequently embodied in the character of Harlequin, is viewed by Starobinski in the dual role of *mediator* - a ‘passeur’ or ‘ferryman’ who facilitates not only the salutary aspect of laughter, but also the *transgression of societal norms*. In so doing, he embodies a force which has the power to promote unity at a cosmic level: “Décrochant une étoile, rapprochant ciel et terre, Arlequin réunit surnaturellement ce qui est naturellement séparé. Un retour magique à l’unité cosmique nous est annoncé .»⁶⁵⁹ In addition, an analysis of Apollinaire’s poem *l’Arlequin trismégiste* by Starobinski draws a parallel between the figure of Harlequin and Hermès⁶⁶⁰, « le dieu qui franchit les portes de l’autre monde et qui conduit les âmes dans les royaumes souterrains »⁶⁶¹. The clown is thus compared to Charon, or the mythical ferryman depicted by Céline in both the *Voyage* and *Château*, a representation which assumes a special significance in the light of Starobinski’s analysis of Harlequin’s role.

Now, Hermès / Harlequin is not only a “conducteur d’âmes, un détenteur de secrets”, he is also a “dieu fripon, un renverseur d’interdits” – hence his dual role as both ‘passeur’ and ‘transgresseur’. In both roles, he facilitates the transgression of the sacred boundaries « ...qui délimitent de régions soumises à des lois contraires, et qu’il n’est pas permis aux mortels d’outrepasser impunément. »⁶⁶² In examining the dual role of Harlequin, we gain insight into Céline’s motivation for the use of the figure of

⁶⁵⁸ Bergson, H: *Le Rire : Essai sur la Signification du comique* : Librairie Germer Baillière : 1900 : p 175

⁶⁵⁹ Starobinski, J : *Portrait de l’Artiste en saltimbanque* : Editions d’Art Albert Skira : Genève 1970 : p 127

⁶⁶⁰ Hermes Trismegistus, or the Egyptian god Thoth, associated with works on mysticism and magic

⁶⁶¹ Starobinski, J : *Portrait de l’Artiste en saltimbanque* : Editions d’Art Albert Skira : Genève 1970 : p 128

⁶⁶² Ibid: p 128

the clown in his works – both as a ‘ferryman’ for the passage of his ideas transformed into art, and as a device for the transgression of societal norms. We therefore conclude that the element of transgression is intrinsic to the figure of the Double, as embodied in the clown figure in Céline’s works.

However, Harlequin⁶⁶³ was never a character invested with the attributes of a saviour; on the contrary, he was depicted as a diabolical figure. It is in creating a comical figure from one which is the antithesis of humour and goodness that society reveals its power to transgress the taboos of an accepted social order with its entrenched conventions. In this act of transformation which substitutes derision for horror, the image of the demon is delivered up to the whim of a masked actor who summarily deals with (the demon) by “(décomposant) en bavardage cocasse ce qui fut hurlement inhumain”⁶⁶⁴. As a result, “L’effroi se convertit en rire; les terreurs primitives se perdent dans la farce profane: les grimaces obscènes et grotesques opèrent un exorcisme qui *transforme les forces de mort en puissance de fécondité* ».⁶⁶⁵
(our emphasis)

We believe that this ‘fertile power’ is no less than the creative force which Céline sought throughout his oeuvre to stimulate through the use of carnivalesque humour in general, and the transgressive figure of the clown in particular, as an integral element in the use of his idiolect. It is therefore likely that Céline consciously created situations which were burlesque, reverting to the carnivalesque for the express purpose of amplifying and promoting his creative impulse. Characters who, in the course of the narrative might merely have been amusing (Bardamu, Borokrom, Titus von Claben, Sosthène de Rodiencourt), don a clownish mask in the burlesque sequences where Céline’s creativity and imaginative power reach their apogee, expressed in poetic prose.

⁶⁶³ Known in his previous incarnation as *Hellekin* – a demon with the face of an animal

⁶⁶⁴ Starobinski, J : *Portrait de l’Artiste en saltimbanque* : Editions d’Art Albert Skira : Genève 1970 : p 129

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid p 129

The clown-victim, in whom Starobinski detects a “simulacre du Christ”⁶⁶⁶ – appears to have nothing in common with the figure of Harlequin-the-transgressor, identified by the critic as a “succédané du diable”⁶⁶⁷. However, in identifying first with the one, then with the other, the artist signals a possible concurrence between the two, inasmuch as Satanism and Angelism resemble one another: “... ce sont les directions inverses et complémentaires que prend le désir de dépasser le monde”. More precisely, their purpose is to « introduire dans le monde le témoignage d’une passion venue d’ailleurs ou visant un ailleurs... »⁶⁶⁸ Once more, we approach the creative impulse embodied in the figure of the clown who encapsulates all that is human – both angel and devil; good and evil – of which we simultaneously embody both the dual aspect and neither one in its entirety. We may therefore deduce that the clown symbolises the figure of the Double in Céline’s works, and that his actions, immobilised in the mechanical external aspect of the clown’s appearance, represent the catalytic agency which actualises Céline’s creative impulse.

Non-sense

It is worth noting that the component of non-sense inherent in the clown has another significance: that of a calling into question of our accepted convictions. Because the clown represents an *absence* of meaning, he is able to attain the “très haute signification de contradicteur.”⁶⁶⁹ He is thus able to negate all pre-existent systems of affirmation, introducing into the predominant coherence of the established *status quo* a blank space – a vacuum – in which the spectator (or the reader), “enfin séparé de lui-même peut rire de sa *propre* lourdeur.”⁶⁷⁰ (our emphasis) One may therefore conclude that the liberating laughter induced in a reading of Céline’s works *involves his readers* to the same extent that it does his characters, thus allowing the reader to partake in the dynamism of his art, which is perhaps one of the hallmarks of true artistic achievement. Using the clown as a vehicle to effect such a degree of participation in his work is one of Céline’s masterstrokes, demonstrating the writer’s

⁶⁶⁶ We are reminded of the ‘facialisation’ or theatricality of the actor Le Vigan who assumes the posture and mien of Christ in *Rigodon*: “La Vigie se lève... les bras en croix.... La tête tombante.... Ça y est! ... le Christ ! » (p 801)

⁶⁶⁷ Starobinski, J : *Portrait de l’Artiste en saltimbanque* : Editions d’Art Albert Skira : Genève 1970 : p 135

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid : pp 135-136

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid : p 143

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid pp 143-144

intimate knowledge of human nature. For the clown is no less than *each one of us*. Once social norms have been abolished, the role of the clown diminishes, his work having been accomplished. It is at that moment that he « descend (alors) dans la rue; c'est chacun de nous. » The obstacle of societal norms having been transgressed, failure to comply with its rites becomes redundant. Nothing remains but ridicule: “Subsiste la dérision.”⁶⁷¹

Céline's 'thanatologie'

Céline's genre of comedy, though undoubtedly salutary in its production of laughter, is based on the notion of death, in that it represents the *universal death instinct* present in all human beings. According to G. Ferroni, comic effect derives not from isolated subjects, but from « ... a gamut of intentions (frequently also unconscious) that do not reside simply in specific subjects, but derive from ideological and social strata. »⁶⁷² Céline's comic genre clearly demonstrates this theory: with the exception of a few individuals mentioned *supra*, the brunt of his caustic humour is directed against society – and in particular those societal aspects which he despised as being conventional, hidebound, moralistic and above all, hypocritical. We deduce that this was Céline's prime motivation for writing the pamphlets; not to ridicule Jews as individuals, but rather to target them as a scapegoat for a corrupt society which the writer feared would involve France in a destructive war in Europe. The height to which poetic expression rises in the pamphlets is one of the clearest manifestations of ambivalence in Céline's work. While overtly 'political' tracts in their anti-war theme, they are, nonetheless, a plea for a return to pure emotion - and man's humanity. As a result, in *Bagatelles pour un massacre*, « Tricheurs et imposteurs peuvent se définir (...) comme ceux qui n'ont pas payé à la réalité le tribut de l'émotion. »⁶⁷³ Céline's plea is for a society where the artist is « libre de rêver une mélodie; une musique ayant un trace singulier, un dessin, par opposition au rythme uniforme du tam-tam ou de la standardisation. »⁶⁷⁴ In fact, *Bagatelles* might be considered Céline's *Ars Poetica* in

⁶⁷¹ Starobinski, J : *Portrait de l'Artiste en saltimbanque* : Editions d'Art Albert Skira : Genève 1970 : p 144

⁶⁷² Ferroni, G : *Il comico nelle teorie contemporanee* : « ... lo status comico deriva sempre da un fascio di intenzioni (spesso anche inconscie) non situate semplicemente in singoli soggetti, ma risalenti a stratificazioni ideologiche e sociali ».

⁶⁷³ Debrie, N, : *Quand la mort est en colère* : l'enjeu esthétique des pamphlets de Céline : Editions Nicole Debrie, Paris 1997 : pp xi - xii

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid* pp xi-xii

that apart from his criticism of French society in general and the Jews in particular, this work contains a profound reflection on his poetry and literary creation.

Céline's 'thanatologie' reveals a profound anguish, expressed in an attitude of revolt against the human condition living their lives in a state of "morts en sursis".⁶⁷⁵ However, the author soon realised that this form of societal rejection was largely ineffectual in realistic terms. He recognised that any idea of literature as a « véhicule d'un message contribuant à une prise de conscience de la part du lecteur et, par là, à sa transformation »⁶⁷⁶, was no more than an illusion. His experience with the pamphlets appears to have confirmed this view, as "(...) on ne peut pas parler aux hommes. Si le langage ne permet pas de communiquer des idées, (...) si la fonction référentielle est au fond refusée par le narrataire (lecteur) (...) il ne reste à l'artiste qui veut rester tel, que l'emploi du discours littéraire dans une *dimension théâtrale*, c'est-à-dire *grotesque, ludique, gratuite* »⁶⁷⁷ (our emphasis) – a goal Céline achieved through the conscious use of his idiolect.

Mask

Desperate to communicate his message, Céline began to "faire le pitre", transmuting himself into a "lyrique drôle". His utterances became antics and grimaces, and he favoured a form of comedy dominated by "Pretence, spectacle, allegory, in place of existence; of the 'concrete reality' of the illusion of life."⁶⁷⁸ This explains the change in narrative style in the postwar novels which tend to « perdre toute valeur énonciative pour s'articuler sur des cadences rapides ; sur des pauses, des fugues, des arrêts, sur des rythmes syncopés qui imitent le jazz. »⁶⁷⁹ As a result, the narrative becomes increasingly farcical, resembling a Punch and Judy show where characters lose their individual psychological profile and become transformed into 'types' – or clowns. These novels contrast sharply with the pre-war ones in that Céline's dread of death, of corruption, and his acute sense of the tragic is transformed into the grotesque; denunciation becomes mockery, and the "vacherie universelle" which he despised becomes the subject of an absurd "carnaval catastrophique qui s'élève vers la pure

⁶⁷⁵ Poulet, R : *Entretiens familiers avec Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : p 165

⁶⁷⁶ Carile, P: *Pour une approche du comique célinien* :p 83

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid p 83

⁶⁷⁸ G. Celati: *La scrittura come maschera* : « ... finzione, spettacolo, allegoria al posto dell'esistenza, della 'realtà concreta' dell'illusione di vivere»

⁶⁷⁹ Carile, P : *Pour une approche du comique célinien* : p 84

gratuité du spectacle pour le spectacle, vers la sublimation de la 'féerie' 'verbale'⁶⁸⁰, encapsulated in the eponymous novel *Féerie pour une autre fois* I and II.

We believe that Céline fought to establish his own 'popular culture' and, by extension, his particular form of humour through the use of his idiolect, as a rebellion against the hierarchical social system he encountered. While official culture is an expression and a justification of power in the broad sense of the term – a phenomenon which produced class distinction - popular culture on the other hand, manifest in carnival, farce and particularly satirical farce, is transgressive and thus capable of abolishing difference.

Free spaces

Popular culture disparages the humanist concept which imposes an idealised image of Man, and advocates, in its place; a "réalisme grotesque" where values, norms and taboos (both religious and political) are abrogated. In their function as transgressors of social norms; clowns and fools (or madmen) assume a role which is an expression of a particular form of life. They are « ...l'expression des *espaces libres*, des comportements, des manifestations non assimilables à l'intérieur du cadre d'une société extrêmement hiérarchisée »⁶⁸¹. (our emphasis) What is more, the laughter provoked by such characters is essentially *ambivalent*: it is « l'effet d'une parodie du monde 'sérieux', officiel, vu 'à l'envers', et aussi le résultat d'une auto-dérision. »⁶⁸²

Ambivalence is the hallmark of a world perceived as ridiculous; one in which laughter and mockery intermingle; where joy rubs shoulders with sarcasm; where the comic and satire become one, reflected in "l'endroit et l'envers de la même médaille, aussi que le mélange étroit de la vie et de la mort."⁶⁸³ Such an innovative code of communication necessarily entails the creation of new paradigms of language. The comic in Céline's literature is therefore closely allied to linguistic pluralism in its desire to escape the threat of the dogmatism inherent in institutionalised codes of language. According to Kristeva, in her article *Bakhtine: le mot, le dialogue et le roman*, this form of linguistic protest is not the exclusive preserve of the comic genre,

⁶⁸⁰ Carile, P : *Pour une approche du comique célinien* : pp 84-85

⁶⁸¹ Ibid: p 86

⁶⁸² Ibid p 86

⁶⁸³ Ibid : p 86

but is intrinsic to *all* poetic texts, which she considers to be the breeding ground for all forms of “transgression organisée”. Kristeva emphasises the iconoclastic aspect of carnivalesque and poetic literature within the historico-moralistic infrastructure of literary texts by investing the poetic word with a “logique qui dépasse la logique du discours codifié, et qui ne se réalise pleinement qu’en marge de la culture officielle.” She therefore concludes that « C’est (...) dans le carnaval que Bakhtine ira chercher les racines de cette logique (...). »⁶⁸⁴

The term ‘ambivalence’ implies the insertion of history (of society) into the text and, in parallel, that of the text into history. For the writer, they are one and the same thing. Dialogue and ambivalence prove to be the *only* approach possible for the writer to enter into history “en professant une morale ambivalente, celle de la négation comme affirmation”⁶⁸⁵ Indeed, the combination of dialogue and ambivalence lead to a single important conclusion: “Le langage poétique dans l’espace des textes est un ‘double’.”⁶⁸⁶ (our emphasis)

Flayed alive

In her work *Pouvoirs de l’Horreur*, Julia Kristeva declares that the true miracle of Céline’s work lies in « l’effet de la lecture – fascinant, mystérieux, intimement nocturne et libérateur d’un rire sans complaisance mais néanmoins complice... »⁶⁸⁷ . It is this quality of the carnivalesque – an active invitation to, and an engagement in, the act of reading - that attracts us to Céline’s work, as we would be to a carnival or a fairground. Céline’s work rings with a laughter that is pre-empted by several centuries by that of the mediaeval *Commedia dell’Arte*. It reaches back to the very roots of civilisation, echoing the ‘antique’ smile of Greek and Mycenaen statuary. The effect is one of appealing to what we all know we have in common, but what we often deny – “une communauté basse, populaire ou anthropologique (...) le lieu secret auquel sont destinés tous les masques.”⁶⁸⁸ . The mask, symbol of carnivals since time immemorial, and worn by the Doubles as a *persona* in Céline’s novels, underscores the carnivalesque atmosphere in his works. Indeed, Céline’s engagement in his work

⁶⁸⁴ Kristeva, J : *Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman* : Critique (Revue) No 239 avril 1967 pp 439

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid : p 444

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid : p 444

⁶⁸⁷ Kristeva ; J : *Pouvoirs de l’Horreur* : Editions du Seuil : 1980 : p157

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid : p 158

is so complete that we, the reader, cannot fail to accept his invitation to follow him on his journey, “enfoncés dans ce bout de nuit où il vient nous chercher et oubliant que s’il nous le montre, c’est qu’il se tient, lui, ailleurs: dans l’écrit.”⁶⁸⁹ A reading of Céline has the power to pierce the masks of our social and cultural pretensions, breaking down our resistance to the point that we *feel* his writing as it transcends the barriers we have erected to shield ourselves from the outside world. Our masks and defences crumble in the face of “l’abomination bien-aimée d’un vice innocent.”⁶⁹⁰ We become, like the author, ‘écorchées vives’.

In contrast to the apocalypse, the carnival eschews the rigid moral position of apocalyptic inspiration, “lui oppose son refoulé – le bas, le sexuel, le blasphématoire auquel il adhère en riant de la loi.”⁶⁹¹ In Céline we transcend the carnivalesque laughter of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, or that of Rabelais founded in the pleasures of corporal delights, or even Balzac’s *Human Comedy*. The difference lies in the fact that Céline possesses “le dire de l’horreur” emblematic of apocalyptic or prophetic utterances. However, Celine, who speaks from *within* has no threats to utter, no morality to defend, which is the case with apocalyptic discourse. As a result, his laughter erupts, transgressively, *in the face of* abjection, its origin at the very source of the human psyche perceived by Freud as “l’irruption de l’inconscient, du refoulé, du plaisir réprimé, qu’il soit sexe ou mort.”⁶⁹² And yet, despite its ebullient nature, this laughter is neither jovial nor trustful nor sublime - nor is it influenced by a “harmonie présumée”. On the contrary, it is a laughter that is “nue, angoisée, aussi fascinée qu’effrayée.”⁶⁹³

⁶⁸⁹ Kristeva ; J : *Pouvoirs de l’Horreur* : Editions du Seuil : 1980 p 158

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid p 159

⁶⁹¹ Ibid : p 241

⁶⁹² Ibid: p 241

⁶⁹³ Ibid p 241

II : Midwives

Chapter Five

*Writing as a catalyst for the integration of Céline's divided Self*⁶⁹⁴

In her examination of Céline's writing from a psychotic viewpoint, Isabelle Blondiaux draws attention to the fact that "... le clivage du moi, (...) est une des constantes de l'écriture célinienne", – a fundamental division that is manifest in Céline's assumption of a pseudonym to separate his writing from his medical profession. Not only does this division exist between the author and his narrator, but also between the narrator and his hero, "héros nommé au gré des romans Ferdinand Bardamu, Céline, Docteur Destouches."⁶⁹⁵

« Bardamu ? – Ce n'est pas moi, c'est mon double. Mais Robinson aussi » replied Céline in answer to « quelques timides questions »⁶⁹⁶ posed by his secretary Jeanne Carayon. And in a 1932 interview with the journalist Merry Bromberger of *l'Intransigeant*, Céline again alluded to his divided self when he described his first work *Voyage au bout de la nuit* as "... un récit à la troisième puissance", where he, the author, « fait délirer Bardamu qui dit ce qu'il sait de Robinson. »⁶⁹⁷ We gain a further glimpse of Céline's dual nature in an interview conducted in 1940 by Max Frantel, where he states that « Il y deux Céline : le faux qui est féroce comme un tigre ; et le vrai qui a la tendresse de l'agneau pascal. »⁶⁹⁸ The latter image is dispelled at the conclusion of the interview when Frantel observes Céline's face « se durcir jusqu'à la cruauté le visage séraphique (...) et se tendre pour nous jeter au nez *Les Beaux Draps*, sa main brûlante et crispée de dynamiteur. »⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁴ Given Céline's innovative, iconoclastic style in the use of his idiolect, his particular act of writing could have been considered a transgressive act, rendering the placement of this chapter more appropriate in the previous section of this work. However, its inclusion in the section on **Midwives** is due primarily to what we perceive as its maieutic function, as the *act itself* is the distillation and expression of traumatic transgressive influences in the author's life. In the act of writing, these are transposed at that point in the artist's life when he has made (and kept) what Otto Rank termed 'an appointment with himself' to which we refer later in this chapter.

⁶⁹⁵ Blondiaux I : *Une écriture psychotique – Louis-Ferdinand Céline* Nizet 1985 p 60

⁶⁹⁶ Carayon, Jeanne : *Le docteur écrit un roman* : Cahiers de l'Herne No 3 : Paris 1962 : p 22

⁶⁹⁷ *Céline et l'Actualité Littéraire 1932 – 1957* : Les Cahiers de al NRF Gallimard 1976

Textes réunis et présentés par Jean-Pierre Dauphin et Henri Godard : pp 30 – 31

⁶⁹⁸ *Cahiers Céline 7 : Céline et l'Actualité 1933 – 1961* p 100

⁶⁹⁹ *Cahiers Céline 7 : Céline et l'Actualité 1933 – 1961* : p 100

Although visibly divided in his personal life between his professions as medical doctor and writer, other cleavages in Céline's life were far more profound, and we posit that he sought to reconcile a psychic scission through the act of writing itself. To this end, we believe Céline created figures of the Double to express a fundamental dichotomy within his psyche. The creation of the figure of the Double thus appears to have fulfilled the function of a catalyst both for the expression of Céline's unconscious as well as for the creation of a vessel or container for his divided self in which the two halves of his personality could be reconciled, or at the very least, juxtaposed. The outcome finds its expression in the production of Céline's creative aesthetic which reached its culmination in poetic prose.

The creative act of writing which gave rise to Céline's body of work is none other than « ...le rendez-vous en tant que tel, de l'artiste avec lui-même » ; it is « une expression spontanée de la tendance créatrice dont la première manifestation est (...) la formation de la personnalité elle-même. »⁷⁰⁰ As a catalyst, writing appears to have fulfilled the function of a vehicle for the creation of a universal harmony distilled from the polyphony of discordant voices that inhabited Céline's being. Rank observes that the process of auto-reflection is often synonymous with the production of a major work on which the artist works throughout his life, and which finally becomes "une représentation caractéristique d'eux-mêmes"⁷⁰¹, similar to Rembrandt's series of self-portraits. We submit that Céline's works follow this pattern in response to a similar process of introspection, arriving at an equivalent result. Given that a work of art is the product of a synthesis of creativity and experience, Rank observes that although « toute la psychologie de l'artiste puisse paraître centrée sur 'l'expérience', celle-ci ne peut s'expliquer que par la tendance créatrice – qui s'efforce de transformer la vie éphémère en *immortalité personnelle*. Ce qu'il désire, c'est (...) transformer la mort en vie, bien que, en réalité, il transforme la vie en mort.»⁷⁰² (our emphasis) This observation underscores our hypothesis that through the act of writing, Céline aimed to vanquish the passage of time, replacing it with the infinity of eternity by expressing the mortality inherent in his life experiences through his works, and in so doing, to immortalise them.

⁷⁰⁰ Rank, O : *L'Art et l'artiste* : Créativité et développement de la personnalité : Bibliothèque scientifique : Payot 1998 : p 55

⁷⁰¹ Ibid pp 55-56

⁷⁰² Ibid : p 57

Fantasy

The literary form most suited to accommodate a narrative style based on the dichotomy of the Double is that of fantasy, a literary genre characterized as “.. une intrusion brutale du mystère dans le cadre de la vie réelle.”⁷⁰³ In defining the double, Goimard identifies two versions of this figure, and consequently two distinct themes relating to it :

“Je suis double, et mon autre moi-même me fausse compagnie. Ou encore : Je suis unique, et je rencontre un personnage en tous points semblable à moi. (...) Il s’agit donc d’un thème double : ou bien je perds mon double, ou bien j’en trouve un en surnombre. Disons qu’il y a des doubles par division et des doubles par multiplication (...). »⁷⁰⁴

In Céline’s works we encounter both versions of the double ; the first manifest in the figure of Robinson the narrator Bardamu’s double who in turn is an acknowledged double of the author, continually giving Bardamu the slip throughout the novel by appearing and disappearing like a phantom; the second which appears on various occasions throughout the works, causing the narrator to affirm his affinity with them, both in an interview where the author observed: “La vieille Henrouille c’est moi”, a parody of Flaubert’s words “Madame Bovary, c’est moi”, and within the text, on the appearance of the spectral figure of Mille-Pattes in *Guignol’s Band* who inexplicably knows Ferdinand’s name: “Comment qu’il connaît mon nom?” (GB II p 462), and finally the figure of Jules the legless cripple in *Féerie pour une autre fois* who embodies the hidden desires of Ferdinand the narrator.

Shaman

Céline’s works appear to embody the quintessence of creative art as defined by shamanic wisdom which lists storytelling, music, laughter and silence as key elements, the latter expressed in the “trois points” that the author increasingly used to express the rhythmic cadences in his work. Given that in great literature, and in poetry in particular, meaning is expressed in the spaces separating the words rather than in the text itself, the significance of Céline’s works is to be found in his “trois points” which are a metaphor for the ‘holes’ in the intricate filigree of his oeuvre. We

⁷⁰³ Todorov T: *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* Éditions du Seuil p 8

⁷⁰⁴ Goimard, J et Stragliati R: *Histoires de doubles ; La grande anthologie du fantastique* Édition du Club France Loisirs ; paris 1977 p 17

may therefore deduce that poetic prose became a vehicle for the expression of Céline's *authentic* voice which resonates in the vessel he had created for its expression.

Just as the 19th century English poet John Keats constructed an identity through the consciousness of "dying into life" expressed in his epic poem *Hyperion*, so too did Céline express the mystical experience characterised by the need to *earn* one's death in order for life to be lived to the full. In both Céline and Keats there is a consciousness that death overshadows life, and consequently the works of both men are an ongoing meditation on death, using a mythological framework to examine that particular existential dilemma. In the context of the presence of alchemic symbols in both poets' works, it is significant that Keats was a licensed apothecary, while Céline had an intimate knowledge of pharmacology through his medical practice. Just as Keats expressed a heightened state of consciousness in his poem *Endymion* in the words "Full alchemiz'd and free of space", so too did Céline aspire to a state of lightness, of freedom from material bondage. As a medical doctor, Céline no doubt had a sound knowledge of chemistry and, by extension, alchemy of which chemistry is a derivative, having been born of the "décomposition de l'idéologie alchimique"⁷⁰⁵ However, the derivation is far more complicated than this simple definition. Within the context of an intellectual process, this transformation assumes a different perspective, as « (...) l'alchimie se posait en *science sacrée*, tandis que la chimie s'est constituée après avoir vidé les substances de leur sacralité. »⁷⁰⁶

(our emphasis) We are thus confronted with the secularisation of a ritual that was previously deemed sacred, and it was this trivialisation of a sacred ritual which, we believe, Céline attempted to revoke through his art. Indeed, the author underscored his interest in the esoteric in a letter to Pierre Monnier in 1949 which sketched his involvement with various leading figures in that field : « J'ai connu aussi de même le mage Papus, d'Encausse, il donnait aussi dans l'entre-terre-et-je-ne-sais-où... J'ai illustré son almanach ésotérique, et Fraya, et Vaschide et Peladan c'est une vieille école. J'en connais des trucs de ce genre ! à très gros effets. De 1910 à 1926 à peu

⁷⁰⁵ Goimard, J et Stragliati R: *Histoires de doubles ; La grande anthologie du fantastique* Édition du Club France Loisirs : Paris 1977 : p 8

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid p 8

près ce fut autant la vogue que l'enculage aujourd'hui... Cagliostro... Dr Mardrus (...)»⁷⁰⁷

Author-narrator

Through the act of writing – and especially in the writing of his life experience through transposition – Céline is in the process of dying to himself, a sublimation or an effacement of his ego which Jacques Derrida in *L'Écriture et la différence* describes as an absence of the writer; writing's "complication primaire".⁷⁰⁸ When one writes, one is already in the process of disappearing, a process in which "Les traces ne produisent donc l'espace de leur inscription qu'en se donnant la période de leur effacement."⁷⁰⁹ However, the author is not completely effaced, as his essence remains in "une constitution différente du sujet".⁷¹⁰ This division of the "Moi" (the subject who writes) into two units that are both unrecognisable and irreconcilable, separates the "I" who writes from the "I" the author describes in his works. This disturbing phenomenon culminates in an interrogation of the "I"; the "I" who speaks is also the "I" who questions himself: "Le moi: c'est un être passager que le narrateur tâche de saisir" – an act that expresses Céline's attempt to contain the duality of his being through the act of writing. We believe that this dialogue between Céline the author in the person of the narrator, and the figures of the Double in his works is emblematic of his quest to reconcile a psychic schism caused by trauma; a quest he implemented through the creation and agency of various figures of the Double – both male and female - in his works.

Poetic space

In Maupassant's tale *Solitude*, the narrator reveals himself to be torn between « le désir de garder et d'affirmer le moi et le désir de franchir les frontières apparemment insurmontables (...) entre le moi et l'autre »,⁷¹¹ a dilemma that appears to echo the one faced by Céline in attempting to reconcile the disparate halves of his divided self. This observation assumes a special significance in the context of Céline's works when

⁷⁰⁷ Monnier, P : Ferdinand Furieux : avec 313 lettres inédites de Louis-Ferdinand Céline Editions l'Age d'Homme : Lausanne 1979 : Lettre du 1^{er} avril 1949 : pp 52-53

⁷⁰⁸ Katherine D Wickhorst Kiernan: *L'entre-moi: Le Horla de Maupassant ou un monde sans frontières* Littérature No 139 Sept 2005: p 51. Jacques Derrida : « Freud et la scène de l'écriture » in *L'écriture et la différence* Paris, Le Seuil 1967 p 334

⁷⁰⁹ Derrida Ibid : p 334

⁷¹⁰ Kiernan, Katherine D Wickhorst : Emory University : Littérature No 139 2005 : p 51

⁷¹¹ Kiernan, Katherine D Wickhorst : Emory University : Littérature No 139 2005 : p 53

underpinned by Durand's observation that « L'espace devient la forme *a priori* du pouvoir euphémique de la pensée, il est le lieu des figurations puisqu'il est le symbole opératoire du distancement maîtrisé. »⁷¹² In his work *L'Imaginaire*, Sartre asserts that imaginary space demonstrates a « caractère beaucoup plus qualitatif que l'étendue de la perception: toute détermination spatiale d'un objet en image se présente comme une propriété absolue ... »⁷¹³ In defining imaginary space as « plus euclidien » than its perceptive equivalent, Sartre concludes that « dans le cas de délire, de rêve ou de psychose, c'est l'élément topographique et perspectif qui est supprimé et remplacé par une *homogénéité illimitée*, sans profondeur et sans lois, sans plans successifs selon la troisième dimension... »⁷¹⁴ (our emphasis) It would appear that by its very nature, fantastic literature provided Céline with an ideal vehicle to attain the objective of an 'unlimited homogeneity'.

In his work *Poétique de l'Espace*, Bachelard examines the "espace poétique" which "detemporalises" time and defines a "*coexistentialisme*" (recognized as such by Leibniz) in which the temporal laws of precedence are effaced, to the point where "l'horizon a autant d'existence que le centre".⁷¹⁵ Given that the hallucinatory predominates in Céline's works, Bachelard's description of that genre resonates in the context of this study when he observes that "On croit parfois se connaître dans le temps (un être qui) veut suspendre le vol du temps. Dans ces milles alvéoles l'espace tient du temps comprimé. L'espace sert à ça. »⁷¹⁶ Commenting on this notion, Durand observes that « L'espace sert à ça parce que la fonction fantastique n'est que ça, *réserve infinie d'éternité contre le temps.* »⁷¹⁷ (our emphasis), a notion that could not have failed to resonate with Céline in his quest to attain the eternal through his works.

Hesitation

The hallucinatory aspect present in Céline's works allows for a dualistic interpretation of the fantastic in relation to the figure of the Double. It is the illusionary, the hallucinatory that predominates; the outcome of the first category of the fantastic defined by Todorov in which "il s'agit d'une illusion des sens, d'un produit de

⁷¹² Durand, G : *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* Bordas Etudes Paris 1969 p 473

⁷¹³ Sartre J-P : *L'Imaginaire* p 165 in Durand G : op cit

⁷¹⁴ Ibid p 165 in Durand op cit pp 473 - 474

⁷¹⁵ Bachelard G : *Poétique de l'Espace* : p 184

⁷¹⁶ Ibid p 27

⁷¹⁷ Durand, G : *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* Bordas Etudes Paris 1969 : p 474

l'imagination et les lois du monde restant alors *ce qu'elles sont*." This, in opposition to the second category of the fantastic in which "l'événement a véritablement eu lieu, il est partie intégrante de la réalité, mais alors cette réalité est régie par des *lois inconnues* de nous."⁷¹⁸ The essence of the fantastic lies in the *hesitation* that is produced in the reader relating to the choice presented by this dilemma : « Ou bien le diable est une illusion, un être imaginaire; ou bien il existe réellement, tout comme les autres êtres vivants : avec cette réserve qu'on le rencontre rarement. »⁷¹⁹ On making that choice, on opting for one or the other explanation, we leave the realm of the fantastic and enter that of « l'étrange ou le merveilleux . » As we mentioned, Céline's prose fits Todorov's first category of the fantastic where the imagination predominates; a state of *délire* from which his poetic prose emanates. Examples of this are evident throughout the author's oeuvre, with the exception of *Nord*, which is perhaps the least poetic of his works. From the hallucinatory episode in Montmartre experienced in the company of Bardamu's companion Tania involving a procession of phantoms who "passaient juste au-dessus des Galeries Dufayel", (V p 366) including the navigator La Pérouse and a giantess, guardian of the British Isles, to those involving Ferdinand the narrator in *Mort à crédit*, as well as *Guignol's Band*, Céline in *D'un Château l'autre* Ferdinand in *Féerie pour une autre fois* and Céline-Destouches, the narrator of *D'un château l'autre*, each episode concurs with Todorov's definition based on the premises of a 'sensory illusion, a product of the imagination.'

The last hallucinatory episode in Céline's work that concurs with this definition occurs in *Château*, depicting a 'bateau-mouche' *La Publique*, which symbolises Charon's barge across the river Styx. The illusionary aspect of the incident is heightened by the presence of Céline's friend Le Vigan who had emigrated to Argentina, but who, with his wife Anita, appears to be employed on the barge as a "soutier", collecting payment for the passage across the Styx on behalf of Charon: "cher Le Vigan! ... receveur? Il me tape, il me secoue sa sacoche, une sacrée besace ! ballante sur le ventre (...) il me montre ! (...) pleine de pièces d'or ! ... » (CA p 74). The fact that Le Vigan's bag is « plutôt une gibecière !... » - a gamebag - signifies the dehumanization of those who board *La Publique* as they are reduced to the level of

⁷¹⁸ Todorov, T : *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* : Editions du Seuil 1970 : p 29

⁷¹⁹ Ibid p 29

animals culled during a hunt. On examining the illusionary episodes in Céline's works we can only concur with Todorov's observation that « Le fantastique, c'est l'hésitation éprouvée par un être qui ne connaît *que* les lois naturelles, face à un événement en apparence surnaturel. (...) L'hésitation du lecteur est donc la première condition du fantastique. »⁷²⁰

Reality

D'un Château l'autre is the last of Céline's novels to depict a truly hallucinatory episode. In *Nord*, although the atmosphere is sinister, the tone of the narrative is lucid, the horror almost excessively real, unmitigated by illusion and for that reason, perhaps the least poetic of Céline's novels. That poetry is to return in *Rigodon*, with the essential difference between the events represented in the former novels as hallucinatory, while in this case we are confronted by events that "(ont) véritablement eu lieu", but which are directed by "des lois inconnues de nous"⁷²¹ – the transgressive forces of evil embodied in man's inhumanity to man in the form of war. But despite the many episodes of horror experienced during the journey across Germany to Denmark which evoke those of the first World War, Céline never loses the creative ability to transpose abject terror into fantasy. This is particularly evident in the first bombardment which takes place over the railway tunnel where the rail carriages are invested with a human aspect: "Luna Park! ... pas pour rire!... l'accordéon ferroviaire! (...) Les wagons pourtant 'tout métal' et hauts et larges on peut dire, tout à fait costauds, prenaient de ces jetons, contrecoups, accordions, qu'ils gémissaient... (...) de ces brutalités qu'il allait rendre l'âme, s'ouvrir en deux, ce dur, naufrage corps et biens... » (R pp 765-766) The second bombardment which occurs just outside Hamburg sees Céline injured by a flying brick, the implied seriousness of which does nothing to diminish the poetic description of the incident: "...*vlac!* une bombe ! ... pas une petite, une énorme à éclaboussures et *raoumb !* (...) défaillir ? pas beaucoup mon genre, mais là endormi je dirais, un peu mal et du sang... au cou... je dégouline. » (R pp823-824) Despite his injury caused by « la brique qui (lui) a attrapé entre tête et cou » images of the bombardment are almost as captivating as those in *Féerie pour une autre fois* in their « feux girouettants, (...) feux de chaque décombre... jaillissant plus haut... plus retombant ! comme l'œuf sur le jet, (...) mais

⁷²⁰ Todorov, T : *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* : Editions du Seuil 1970 : pp 29 and 37

⁷²¹ *Ibid* p 29

là en vert... en rouge... (...) vraiment la féerie ! » (R pp 824-825) What is more, despite – or perhaps because of - the evocation of an earlier trauma experienced during World War I at the Front, “les grandes manoeuvres de cavalerie, 1913, du camp de Cercottes, déploiements, mouvements tournants en fourrageurs, sept divisions ! ... à la trompette.. »(R p 825) Céline regains his ‘music’ : « ci !... là ! ... shrapnels ! ... aux nuages ! et entre... bouquets d’obus, ... vraiment le grandiose panorama... selon moi !... et tout ceci dans la musique... je cherchais un air... un accompagnement... » (R p 825). However, Céline is the only one conscious of the melody, both Lili and Félipe being oblivious to its charm, “(Lili) entend les sirènes... c’est tout! (...) Félipe? .. il écoute.. il entend pas de musique non plus...” (R p 825), a melody capable of investing devastation with a lyrical beauty – a gift born of past suffering, both during the first World War and later, in a Danish prison: “... dès 1916 et beaucoup plus tard au Ryshospital Copenhague... le crâne et le rocher en villain état... Dieu sait si j’ai l’habitude! Sifflets! ... tambours.... Jets de vapeurs... bien!... mais un air! (...) somptueux! Somptueux comme le panorama... un air je dirais symphonique pour cet océan de ruines... ruines folichonnes... ‘houles de flammèches’ ... roses... vertes....et petits bouquets crépitants... les âmes des maisons(...) dansantes...”(R p 826)

This definition of the function of space in fantastic literature is emblematic of Céline’s figurative bulwark against the inexorable ravages of time by reaching for eternity through his literary creation. We cannot fail to agree with Durand when he declares that « Bien loin d’être une forme *a priori* ‘plutôt’ de l’altérité matérielle, l’espace s’est découvert comme la forme *a priori* de la créativité spirituelle et de la maîtrise de l’esprit sur le monde. »⁷²² Indeed, imaginary space is that which « constitue librement et immédiatement en chaque instant l’horizon et l’espérance de l’Être en sa pérennité. »⁷²³

Time and Space

The nature of the *chronotope*, defined by Bakhtine as “une fusion du temps et de l’espace dans l’art et la littérature” is relevant to our discussion in its function as a unifying textual element :

⁷²² Durand, G : *Les structures anthropologiques de l’imaginaire* Bordas Etudes Paris 1969 :p 500

⁷²³ Ibid : p 500

« Dans le chronotype de l'art littéraire a lieu la fusion des indices spatiaux et temporels en un tout intelligible et concret. Ici, le temps se condense, devient compact, visible pour l'art, tandis que l'espace s'intensifie, s'engouffre dans le mouvement du temps, du sujet, de l'Histoire. »⁷²⁴

According to Bakhtine's hypothesis, it follows that literature has the capacity to conflate the barriers between time and space, and in so doing, possesses the unique capacity to « donner lieu à une *unification du moi* à travers sa façon de concilier le temps et l'espace et de les présenter comme tout à fait unis. »⁷²⁵ (our emphasis)

However, it must be noted that « Le mécanisme chronotopique de l'art littéraire ne fonctionne qu'au niveau du texte, ou plus précisément, qu'au niveau de la littérature », hence its relevance to our theory that the act of writing functions as a unifying mechanism for the reconciliation of the disparate elements of Céline's divided self. Similar to Maupassant's figure of the *Horla* as the quintessential 'Other', Céline's figures of the Double appear to aspire to « un rêve d'existence sans limites, sans les frontières infranchissables de la vie, une sorte de rêve d'écriture. »⁷²⁶

Alchemy of poetry

“Mais le Mercurius est le divin Hermès ailé se manifestant dans la matière, le dieu de la révélation, seigneur de la pensée, psychopompe par excellence”.⁷²⁷

Given the qualities of duality invested in the divinity Hermès-Mercury, it is not surprising that Céline should choose to consecrate his entire oeuvre to his sign. Indeed, in the context of Proust's work *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Hermès represents the catalyst, the « principe unificateur dans cette élaboration du Grand Oeuvre qu'est la *Recherche* »⁷²⁸. We believe that the catalytic action produced by Hermès in Proust's work is emulated in Céline's oeuvre, where truth is revealed « dans le silence intérieur d'un retour à soi et d'une conscience de l'unité »,⁷²⁹ - within the closed spaces that symbolise both refuge and creative impulse in the author's work. This dual process is emblematic of “la véritable alchimie intérieure”; a manifestation of true spirituality that Proust « distingue de la pensée logique et qui est

⁷²⁴ Bakhtine M : *Esthétique et théorie du roman*. Paris Gallimard 1978: p 237

⁷²⁵ Kiernan, Katherine D Wickhorst : Emory University : Littérature No 139 2005 : p 56

⁷²⁶ Ibid : p 57

⁷²⁷ Jung C G : *Psychologie et alchimie* : in Durand G : *Figures mythiques et visages de l'oeuvre* : L'île verte Berg International 1979 p 243

⁷²⁸ Robin, Chantal : *L'imaginaire et le Temps retrouvé, hermétisme et écriture chez Proust* : Lettres Modernes, Minard 1977 : p 99 in Durand, G : *Figures mythiques et visages de l'oeuvre* : p 291

⁷²⁹ Durand, G : *Figures mythiques et visages de l'oeuvre* : p 290

transfiguration de soi et transfiguration de l'univers (...) »⁷³⁰ This notion resonates closely with what we believe Céline aspired to achieve through the act of writing, and more especially by consecrating his creative endeavour to the dual divinity of Hermès-Mercury.

Messenger

Hermès, the Greek name for the Roman god Mercury, is described as “the messenger and herald of the Gods, the divinity of commerce, cunning, theft, travellers and rascals.” He was represented as wearing winged sandals.”⁷³¹ The dictionary definition of the adjective *hermétique* which is derived from the name Hermès gives us a clue as to Céline’s predilection for the divinity, as it is “Relatif à l’alchimie ⇒ alchimique”, as well as “Relatif à la partie occulte de l’alchimie ⇒ hermétisme.” The meaning of the adjective also implies that which is “impénétrable, difficile ou impossible à comprendre ⇒ obscur.”⁷³² In literary terms, the dictionary describes as *hermétique* a style “si personnel qu’il est à peu près hermétique”, which is representative of the idiolect present in Céline’s works in the form of neologisms incorporated in a *parigot* which was intelligible only to those who had lived at a particular time and place in history, and unusual turns of phrase, punctuated by exclamation marks and finally silences – spaces – in the text created by Céline’s ‘trois points’.

In the context of artistic production, we cannot fail to ignore the parallels between Céline’s use of the dual figure of Hermès-Mercury as a catalyst for the generation of his creative impulse, and that of the alchemist, for whom “le Fils-Hermès serait le personnage culminant, serait bien une véritable culture artificielle des métaux”, designed to “engendrer la lumière”⁷³³. We conclude that Céline’s objective attained through the writing of his oeuvre figuratively emulated that of the alchemist, and that the light thus engendered illuminated the writer’s being and, by extension, that of his readers. The ambivalence inherent in Céline the writer and Céline the medical professional, and his efforts to synthesise his dual nature appears both to originate and to find its solution in what Durand terms “le thème du Fils”.⁷³⁴ Whether the figure of

⁷³⁰ Durand, G : *Figures mythiques et visages de l'oeuvre* : pp 290 - 291

⁷³¹ Collins English dictionary p 717

⁷³² Le Petit Robert : p 1216

⁷³³ Durand G : *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* : Bordas Etudes 1969 p 349

⁷³⁴ Ibid p 351

the Son be embodied in the figures of Hermes, Tamuz, Hercules or Christ, this theme always appears as a « précipité dramatique et anthropomorphe de l'ambivalence, une traduction temporelle de la *synthèse des contraires*, surdéterminée par le processus de la genèse végétale ou 'chymique' ». ⁷³⁵ (our emphasis) This theme is extant in Céline's relationship with the various father figures ⁷³⁶ that existed in his life; one that despite (and *because of*) the rivalry inherent in the father-son relationship, frequently resulted in a high level of aesthetic production.

The significance of the presence of the divinity Hermès-Mercury in Céline's works is relevant not only in its representation as a pivotal alchemic figure, but also in the incarnation of *Hermès Trismégiste* (thrice-greatest) which denotes "une triple nature et une triple action dans le temps". What is more, he is « le principe du devenir, c'est-à-dire selon l'hermétisme, de la *sublimation de l'être*. » ⁷³⁷ Derived from the Egyptian words Thot or Toout, Hermès' title signifies in the former case "mêler, adoucir par le mélange" while the latter signifies "rassembler en un seul, *totaliser*." ⁷³⁸ (our emphasis) The *conscious* sublimation of oneself – to the point of self-sacrifice - in the interest of achieving the unification of one's Self appears to encapsulate the essence of Céline's creative endeavour. This notion is borne out in the comments of both Ole Vinding, a friend Céline made in Denmark, and by Michel Beaujour in an article entitled *La quête du délire*. Vinding observes that « Il était un perdant, quoi qu'il fût, tel fût son comportement, et ce sort pouvait apparaître sous forme d'une volonté désespérée de perdre, de détruire, de rendre l'amertume encore plus amère. Ce fût un martyr. » ⁷³⁹ Although these remarks were no doubt accurate, Beaujour's observations with regard to Bardamu, one of Céline's Doubles, appears to be more profound in describing the sacrificial aspect of the author's nature :

« ... ce tempérament déséquilibré pour qui le mal seul semble émerger du néant pour y rentrer, cette terreur hyperbolique d'incompromis persécuté semblent pourtant nous reprocher l'épaisseur de notre peau. (...) il souffre pour nous, il assume toute cette souffrance que nous savons mal ressentir. *Bardamu c'est encore nous*. » ⁷⁴⁰ (our emphasis)

⁷³⁵ Durand G : *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* : Bordas Etudes : p 351

⁷³⁶ Examined in Chapter Two of this work

⁷³⁷ Durand G : *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* Bordas Etudes Paris 1969 p 347

⁷³⁸ Ibid pp 347-348

⁷³⁹ *Cahiers de l'Herne No 3 : Lettres Modernes* Paris 1962 p 70

⁷⁴⁰ *Cahiers de l'Herne No 3: Beaujour M : La quête du délire* p 280

The figure of Hermès-Trismégiste is symbolic of the sum total of the phases of evolution. In alchemy, Hermès is represented as the son of Zeus and of Maia; Astaroth “la grande mère des cabbalistes”.⁷⁴¹ He is depicted as the *Filius philosophorum* within the egg, at the nexus of the sun and the moon. Jung frequently interrogated “ce caractère mixte de l’Hermès alchimique”, as alchemy tends not to practice « l’isolement, mais la *conjunctio* – le rite nuptial auquel succède la mort et la résurrection. De cette *conjunctio* naît le Mercure transmué, appelé hermaphrodite à cause de son caractère complet. (...) »⁷⁴²

It is significant that the divinity Mercury was to undergo a « double avatar chrétien bien significatif de sa nature synthétique »⁷⁴³ by sublimating himself partly as Saint Michel « messenger du ciel et *psychopompe* », while « en partie il se dégrade en diable. »⁷⁴⁴ (our emphasis) The incarnation of Mercury as *psychopompe* – one who ferries the souls of the dead to their destination - adds weight to the long sequence in *D’un château l’autre* which involves Charon and his ship of phantoms, *La Publique*, which is pure illusion and thus part of the fantastic element that infuses this sequence: “... j’étais trop vieux et fatigué pour trouver une chose impossible – tout de même une chose sûre certaine, j’allais foutre le camp! Rame, pas rame ! ... Caron, pas Caron ! ... tout ça bien anormal oui ! bizarre ! »(CA p 81) The narrator hesitates between reality and fantasy when he questions whether the events were « tout imaginaire », and it is in this hesitation before the improbable that characterises the episode as pure fantasy, according to Todorov’s definition of the fantastic mentioned *supra*. It appears that this incarnation of the divinity Hermès-Mercury as Charon acts as a catalyst for the production of fantasy in this episode in particular and for Céline’s work in general as it was written under the aegis of that divinity.

Hermès-psychogogue

An examination of the etymology of the term *psychogogy* – an instrument of maieutic – which requires the teacher to determine first each student’s individual needs and level of achievement in order to guide him towards (self)understanding – reveals a link to the divinity Hermès-Mercury. The word *psychogogy* is derived from the Greek

⁷⁴¹ Durand G : *Les structures anthropologiques de l’imaginaire* : Bordas Etudes 1969 p 348

⁷⁴² Ibid p 348

⁷⁴³ Ibid : p 349

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid p 349

psûché (mind) and *agôgôs* (leader), or *agogê* (abduction) which describes a ‘manner of life’.

In turn, the word *psûchagogeô* refers to the function of the divinity Hermès which is “to lead souls to the nether world” or “to lead, win, or entertain souls”.⁷⁴⁵ This encapsulates the Socratic maieutic method, to lead the mind, through dialectic, to self-discovery. How ethically different a method of instruction is this alternative to filling the mind with facts and ideas – a form of instruction which was anathema to Céline. Significantly, in the context of Céline’s medical vocation, the practice of *psuchagôgikos* also signifies that of “restorative medicine” which has “the power to arouse or restore consciousness or mental activity.”⁷⁴⁶ In his *Dialogues*, Plato characterizes his Socrates as *ho pharmakôs* or *ho pharmakeus* – the sorcerer with the power to heal or cure. In yet another association adduced by Plato between Socrates and Hermes, the latter is the leader-of-souls after death to the underworld; a conjurer with the power (*pharmakeuô*) to enchant or to bewitch. In an irony that cannot escape us, Socrates had need of his pharmaceutical knowledge to carry out his own execution through the ingestion of hemlock.

In the practice of psychogogy – a maieutic activity, the *Maieûtikos* or midwife conducts the passage of the body in order to deliver a new life. It therefore follows that the *psuchagôgikos* is a conduit by virtue of his power to lead the mind in the delivery of a new idea. We therefore posit that just as Socrates and his mother embody both the literal and figurative sense of *maieûtikos*, Céline and his works mirror that association with the author in the role of figurative midwife while his works express that role in the literal (literary) sense.

Element

We believe that it was not purely by chance that Céline consecrated his oeuvre to this particular divinity and his avatars, as Mercury is not only “la planète de Paris”⁷⁴⁷, but also because “le dieu Mercure, qui gouverne le signe des Gémeaux a l’air pour

⁷⁴⁵ Pocket Greek dictionary p 417

⁷⁴⁶ Oxford English Dictionary p 1549

⁷⁴⁷ Charles Barlet : (Faucheux, Albert) *L’astrologie et la guerre* : La Sirène (1918) p 21 in Derval, A : *Le récit fantastique dans l’œuvre de Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : p 291

élément, soit l'élément sur-positif chez Céline."⁷⁴⁸ The use Céline makes of the chemical mercury and various incarnations of the divinity Mercury underscores the duality inherent in his nature, and we speculate that the author employed both the chemical and the divine forms of mercury as catalytic figures for the unification of his divided self; a duality to cure a duality, in much the same way that a clinical vaccination works by infecting the patient with a small dose of the illness itself. There is no doubt that mercury was one of the principal catalysts in the production of transmuted gold which alchemists believed could be obtained from a mixture of sulphur and mercury. It is therefore possible to speculate that the divine avatar of the element could fulfil the same function in producing a figurative (literary) version of the philosopher's gold in the form of the Grand Oeuvre – of which Céline's body of work is an irrefutable example.

Mercury as a chemical element also has a relevance in the context of Céline's *délire*, his preferred state of mind for aesthetic expression. Given that mercury was frequently used by alchemists, Derval refers to Pauwels and Bergier's work *Le matin des magiciens* in which the assertion is made that the inhalation of mercury could produce "...les textes démentiels (...) Sa vapeur est toxique et l'empoisonnement chronique provoque le délire. »⁷⁴⁹ As a medical doctor, the author must have been familiar with the use of mercury as a cure for syphilis, and Derval points out that "Montretout", the name of the Pereires' residence in *Mort à Crédit* is Parisian argot for the St-Lazare hospice "où les filles publiques contaminés devaient avoir leurs papiers en règle avec mercure."⁷⁵⁰ The use of mercury as a cure for syphilis was discovered by the philosopher-chemist Paracelsus in the 15th century.

References to mercury are significant in the context of Céline's works in that they are made by the scientist Courtial des Pereires in *Mort à Crédit* and the magician Sosthène de Rodiencourt in *Guignol's Band I*. The first reference to the element is made in the wake of the destruction of Pereires' laboratory when, in a state of high

⁷⁴⁸ Charles Barlet : (Faucheux, Albert) *L'astrologie et la guerre* : La Sirène (1918) p 21 in Derval, A : *Le récit fantastique dans l'œuvre de Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : p 291

⁷⁴⁹ Pauwels L et Bergier J: *Le matin des magiciens* Introduction au réalisme fantastique : Gallimard « blanche » 1967 p 119 in Derval, A : *Le récit fantastique dans l'œuvre de Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : pp 489-490

⁷⁵⁰ Note 73 Alexandre, U J : *L'Argot de la prostitution*, Nigel Gauvin 1987 Clichy pp 54 – 56 in Derval A op cit

tension he exclaims; “Je vois Lanémone et ses deux paires de lunettes! ... qu’a trouvé le chauffage au mercure :...” (MàC p 960) ; the second occurs when, in a state of near-delirium, de Rodiencourt attempts to explain the mysteries of the « Vega secret » to Ferdinand. Having already referred to “les quartz mercurés”(GBI p 285) for which he was prospecting in Tibet, he emphasises the value of the element by exclaiming “Une fortune! De mes isocènes mercureux! ...” (GBI p 286) However, it was in a letter written to Milton Hindus in 1947⁷⁵¹ that Céline most eloquently acknowledged his debt to Mercury, divinity of both eloquence and the dance : « Comme je suis heureux d’avoir trouvé en vous mentor, Pollux et Mercure : Foutez-moi bien la paix ! A vous les harpes! Les nues. Mercure ! Apollon ! les rossignols ! »⁷⁵² And in *Nord*, the divinity Hermès-Mercury is portrayed in the guise of the god of commerce who presides over the wartime debauchery taking place at the *Brenner Hotel* in Baden-Baden: “Le souk Brenner en plein négoce! ... le vrai du vrai du fond des choses! Un Boukara: cinq kilos de ‘Schlacht Bank’ (...) pourvu que Mercure s’y retrouve ! (...) Mercure est là ! son petit temple ? (...) la vie continue. »(N p 306)

Given the importance attached to alchemic practice in the Middle Ages, where its powers to transmute gold from a mixture of mercury and sulphur were pivotal to alchemists’ occult knowledge, Céline’s avowal to his readers of his attraction to alchemy in *D’un château l’autre* assumes a special significance: “Je suis un petit peu alchimiste, vous vous êtes sans doute aperçu... mais sérieux!...” (CA p 111)

Dragon

In alchemy, the figure of the dragon is synonymous with the “death” of mercury in part of the process which is required in the production of gold: “Sacrifie-le (...) écorche-le de sa peau, sépare la chair des os et tu trouveras ce que tu cherches”⁷⁵³ decreed a tenth-century manuscript. In other words, a prerequisite for the production of “l’or parfait du philosophe” requires the prior destruction of the dual elements mercury-dragon. The most striking images of the tandem figures of the dragon and mercury occur in *Guignol’s Band* where Ferdinand’s theft of mercury from Virginie’s uncle occurs in a scene where the magician Sosthène de Rodiencourt is adorned in

⁷⁵¹ *Cahiers de l’Herne Nos 3 et 5* : p 111

⁷⁵² *Maudits soupirs pour une autre fois* ; Editions Gallimard 1985 p 229

⁷⁵³ Derval, A : *Le récit fantastique dans l’œuvre de Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : Diplôme de Doctorat : Paris 7 : 1990 p 490

robes embroidered with dragons. What is more, Ferdinand is haunted by images of dragons in the home of van Claben during the orgy which ends in the latter's death. At the height of the debauchery, in a state of near-delirium, Ferdinand exclaims "Je vois une grande scène de bataille:... C'est une vision:... un cinéma!... Ah! Ça va pas être ordinaire :... dans le noir au-dessus de la tragédie !... Y a un dragon qui les croque tous !... » (GBI p 217) Towards the end of the work, he once again grapples with dragons in a nightmare at Willesden ; « ... et puis le dragon qui les avale ! un fantastique gluant tout vert, tout grondant les flames! ... comme celui de la robe à Sosthène... » (GBII p 565)

The figure of the dragon that symbolically incorporates « ... tous les aspects du régime nocturne de l'image (...) monstre antédiluvien, (...) une création de la peur », ⁷⁵⁴ is significant in its female embodiment, the figure of la Gorloge, the client who seduces Ferdinand in *Mort à Crédit*. The definition of *la Gorgone* – a name which sufficiently resembles that of *la Gorloge* to be relevant – defines her as a "Monstre mythologique à la chevelure de serpents et au regard pétrifiant, » ⁷⁵⁵ a description that sufficiently resembles that of a dragon to be defined as its female equivalent. The fact that the Gorgon's hair consists of serpents adds weight to Durand's observation that "(...) Rien n'est plus commun que la liaison entre l'archétype saurien et les symboles vampiriques ou dévorants » ⁷⁵⁶ ; an image of the devourer of Ferdinand's innocence in *Mort à Crédit*.

In his work *Poésie et profondeur*, J-P Richard underscores the link between the subterranean, chthonic world represented by the cave, in the context of a « recherche souterraine de l'être » inherent in « des lieux à la fois protégés et ouverts, grottes par exemple, ou bien volcans », ⁷⁵⁷ and the positive aspect of refuge sought in a cave, the advantage of which is that it « recueille une existence sans tout à fait la faire disparaître. » In addition, in the sedimentation and mud present in the cave, and « dans la paix de ses eaux internes, elle couve les germes du future, les *dents du dragon*. » ⁷⁵⁸ (our emphasis) This description of a site of self-discovery and creation

⁷⁵⁴ Durand G: *Les structures anthropologiques de l'Imaginaire* PUF 1960 p 94

⁷⁵⁵ Le nouveau Petit Robert : 2001 : p 1153

⁷⁵⁶ Durand op cit p 95

⁷⁵⁷ Richard J-P : *Poésie et profondeur* Editions du Seuil 1955 p 32

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid p 32

presents us with another, more positive, aspect of the figure of the nascent dragon which may be interpreted as a metaphor for the birth of Céline's emerging creative impulse. Indeed, the link made by Céline between mercury (in all its forms) and, by extension, gold transmuted through the 'death' of mercury symbolized by the imagery of a dragon appears to reveal "... une clef verrouillant l'herméneutique célinienne."⁷⁵⁹ This notion is supported by the fact that Céline appears to have *consciously* employed alchemic imagery in the full knowledge of its implication, as "... il est difficilement concevable que le hasard soit seul responsable des associations présentes dans le contexte, qu'il s'agisse du poison, ou de l'absorption répétée de l'or (par van Claben et Mille-Pattes)."⁷⁶⁰ We also cannot ignore the astrological significance of Mercury based on astronomical fact. On Ferdinand's return to Paris after the suicide of Courtial des Pereires, he pores over an astronomical chart in an attempt to conquer his grief by musing : "Pour pas se gourer sur 'Ophiuchus' ... c'est déjà un peu plus coton... On la prendrait bien pour Mercure, si y avait pas l'astéroïde ! »⁷⁶¹. In the context of Céline's medical profession, it is significant that the star Ophiuchus is in fact « ... une constellation équatoriale appelée aussi Serpente et Esculape, en allusion au savoir médicinal transmis par un serpent. »⁷⁶² We note too that the emblem adopted by the medical profession is that of Hermes's staff entwined by two serpents.

Initiation

Initiation ceremonies are pivotal in myths of the Son, and Céline's works abound with examples of a modern version of the Passion in the original sense of suffering⁷⁶³ to such a degree that pain and abjection become a leitmotif present throughout his oeuvre. From Bardamu and the horror he encounters on the battlefield in the first World War, as well as his experiences as a doctor in Paris, to young Ferdinand's suffering at the hands of his parents and clients, followed by those of Ferdinand the young man in London, and finally the ordeal of the second World War and the

⁷⁵⁹ Derval, A : *Le récit fantastique dans l'œuvre de Louis-Ferdinand Céline* :Diplôme de Doctorat : Paris 7 : 1990 p 491

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid p 491

⁷⁶¹ The asteroid referred to is no doubt a small one called Hermes that passes within 353 000 kilometres of the earth

⁷⁶² Derval, A :*Le récit fantastique dans l'œuvre de Louis-Ferdinand Céline* :Diplôme de Doctorat : Paris 7 : 1990 : p 491

⁷⁶³ Le nouveau Petit Robert : 2001 : p 1801: *Passion* : n.f. « passion du Christ » 980 lat ; imp. *Passio* « souffrance » →pâtir

bombardment of Paris, with its aftermath in persecution and flight from France to Germany and finally imprisonment in Denmark, we are ceaselessly confronted by the image of a human being in search of himself, *despite*, and perhaps *because of* the obstacles he encounters in the process. We are thus reminded that “L’initiation est plus qu’un baptême: elle est un engagement, un envoûtement (...) l’initiation est plus qu’une purification baptismale, elle est transmutation d’un destin.”⁷⁶⁴ A transmutation of this nature was no doubt what Baudelaire had in mind when he wrote:

*“Car j’ai de chaque chose extrait la quintessence.
Tu m’as donné ta boue et j’en ai fait de l’or.”*

Mediator- Catalyst

According to Jung, « C’est pourquoi la Pierre qui est née du Dragon est considérée comme un Sauveur et un Médiateur puisqu’elle représente l’équivalent d’un Rédempteur surgi de l’Inconscient. »⁷⁶⁵ We believe that the ‘Pierre’ (or philosopher’s stone) in this case is a metaphor for Céline’s oeuvre, and as such, fulfils the role of mediator or catalyst in the ongoing production of his work. In turn, the creative act in itself acts as a redemptive force born of Céline’s unconscious, which frees him from all that he considered ‘lourd’ or earthbound; the antithesis of creativity. It was in a state of hard-won freedom thus attained that he would discover, and finally reconcile, in the presence of both “rythme ou d’un silence”, his “grandeur d’écrivain et sa vérité d’homme,”⁷⁶⁶ the disparate facets of his being.

However, in order to attain that redemption, Céline, in common with other great poets such as Nerval and Baudelaire, was compelled to “traverser la profondeur et d’en ressortir, délivré fraternel.”⁷⁶⁷ Similar to the experience of both his predecessors, Céline was compelled to undergo the paradoxical experience of “s’enfon(cer) dans l’innomable, dans l’impossible, dans la mort, pour ensuite, ou pour en même temps en ressurgir vivant,” – an experience which would culminate in “une familiarité active du néant.”⁷⁶⁸ In common with other art forms, an authentic act of writing and, by extension, a similar act of reading, is essentially paradoxical in that it contains the elements of creation and actualisation of both the individual and the work of art. In

⁷⁶⁴ Durand G: *Les structures anthropologiques de l’Imaginaire* PUF 1960 :p 351

⁷⁶⁵ Jung C G : *Mysterium conjunctionis* in Durand G *Figures mythiques et visages de l’oeuvre* : p 245

⁷⁶⁶ Richard J-P: *Poésie et Profondeur* :p 9

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid p 12

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid p 12

alchemic terms, for Céline the act of writing appears to have fulfilled what Georges le Breton defined as a kindling of “un feu intérieur par le moyen d’un feu extérieur, de provoquer ouvertement et de manifester l’occulte.”⁷⁶⁹ Although referring to the origin of Nerval’s creative impulse, Richard could have been alluding to Céline when he declared that “... ce que tente (le poète) ce n’est hors de lui qu’une transmutation du monde, en lui qu’une *alchimie de son propre destin*”.⁷⁷⁰ (our emphasis)

According to Durand, it appears that the intrinsic duality inherent in the nature of great artists - of which Céline is undoubtedly one - is that quality which acts as a catalyst for the dissolution of his own individuation, or a sublimation of his ego in a quest for authentic artistic expression: “Le ‘Médiateur’, c’est bien le bourreau de soi-même qui, en lui, accomplit toutes les oxymores possibles. Et le ‘bourreau de soi-même’ qu’est-il donc d’autre, sinon l’artiste, le poète (...)»⁷⁷¹ What is more, the poet – and by extension, his work – « est le creuset vivant où le terrestre, le trop humain, le spleen se mixe avec la céleste (...) Il est bien le ‘parfait chimiste’. »⁷⁷² That Céline was his own ‘executioner’ is indisputable, given the virulence of the pamphlets written just after the publication of *Mort à Crédit* when he had established his reputation as a writer – albeit a controversial one, given the moral censure that greeted his second novel. Political notoriety was quite another issue, which would lead to his exile and post-war tribulation. However, the binary elements of Good and Evil are intrinsic to the struggle for individual perfection – whether it be personal, moral or artistic – and in Céline’s case, Durand’s definition of that struggle, although written with Baudelaire in mind, appears to resonate with Céline’s inner struggle: “... le Mal, le cachot, le couvercle sont nécessaires au Bien. La nécessité va jusqu’au bout de sa course et se sature pour ainsi dire: les fleurs – et il y a des fleurs!- ne peuvent nécessairement pousser que sur le Mal.»⁷⁷³ Similar to the *moi conscient* depicted in Baudelaire’s poem *L’Héautontimorouménos*, who recognises that he is both “la plaie et le couteau”, - “victime et le bourreau”, and that of *L’Irrémédiable* who avows that he has achieved « La conscience dans le Mal », Céline too fulfils the Manichean role of “médiateur qui accomplit en lui-même, avec conscience, tous les oxymores

⁷⁶⁹ Richard J-P: *Poésie et Profondeur* p 47 ; le Breton G: *Fontaine nos* 44 et 45 année 1945

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid p 48

⁷⁷¹ Durand G: *Figures mythiques et visages de l’œuvre* : Berg International 1979 : p 252

⁷⁷² Ibid p 252

⁷⁷³ Ibid p 253

possibles ». We are left in no doubt as to the intrinsically paradoxical nature of the artist, if we consider that « l'artiste n'est artiste qu'à condition d'être *double* et de n'ignorer aucun phénomène de sa double nature. »⁷⁷⁴

An acknowledgement of the essentially dual nature of the authentic artist appears to encapsulate and justify the use Céline made of his divided self in manifesting it in both male and female figures of the Double in his works. These figures therefore appear to act as catalysts for the reconciliation of Céline's inherent duality; they represent the means to attain what the alchemists termed the *Grand-Oeuvre*, both in terms of his literary output as well as within himself as an individual. Clearly, « C'est par l'intermédiaire du poète (...) que s'opère l'alchimie de l'oxymoron », - the justification for which is « l'or, c'est-à-dire pour le poète la beauté, cette vertu de l'œuvre qui à la fois l'arrache à la trivialité, au quotidien, mais l'incarne et la soustrait à la pire idée. »⁷⁷⁵ In the context of his work, Céline's reiteration of his disdain for 'ideas' in favour of a pure creative aesthetic underscores this viewpoint.

Doubles

Although the act of writing *per se* acts as a catalyst for the reconciliation of Céline's divided self, it is the presence of figures of the Double (figures that we believe Céline created in his own image) that underscore the catalytic action of the writing. They are the activators or 'executioners' that set the process of a sublimation of the ego in motion. Each figure of the Double contains an element of the dichotomy present within Céline himself, the protagonists he created to express that warring duality merely being avatars of various facets of his divided psyche. In turn, these inherently ambiguous figures represent various stages which the author underwent in order to achieve his goal of a united self. Frequently represented by female figures who appear to embody both the *anima* and the *animus* present within Céline, (here, the significance of Céline's adoption of a female name, that of his grandmother, and one of his mother's names, as his pseudonym is relevant) the female Doubles may be separated into the two categories mentioned above. In the first, the *anima* which represents Céline's female side, include: Molly, Lola, Musyne, Tania, and Sophie from *Voyage au bout de la nuit*; Nora Merrywin, the grandmother Caroline,

⁷⁷⁴ Durand G: *Figures mythiques et visages de l'œuvre* : Berg International 1979 :p 254

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid p 256

Gwendoline and Clémence in *Mort à Crédit*; Virginie, la Joconde and Delphine in *Guignol's Band*; Lili-Arlette, Mimi and Delphine in *Féerie I and II*; Mme Niçois, princess Hermilie de Hohenzollern, Mme Bonnard, Clotilde and various pregnant women in *D'un château l'autre*; Lili, Mme von Seckt and Marie-Thérèse von Leiden in *Nord* and Lili and Odile Pomaré in *Rigodon*.

The *animus* that represents the male facet of Céline's nature, includes the figures of the grandmother Henrouille and Mme Hérote in *Voyage au bout de la nuit*; la Gorloge and Irène des Pereires in *Mort à Crédit*; Bigoudi and Pépé in *Guignol's Band*; Clémence Arlon, Mme Toiselle, Toinon Murbate and Hortensia in *Féerie I and II*; Aïcha von Raumnitz in *Château*; Isis in *Nord*, while curiously, in *Rigodon* no figures conform to this category. We speculate that this could indicate Céline's acknowledgement and acceptance of his *anima*, rendering the presence of a female version of his *animus* redundant. In a letter to his childhood friend Simone Saintu in 1916 he acknowledged a desire both for a feminine component in his nature as well as an artistic vocation : "... (vous) qui êtes femme ce que je regrette de ne point être, et qui êtes artiste surtout, ce que je ne serai jamais (...)"⁷⁷⁶ (our emphasis) It is significant that Céline achieved the latter through the act of writing, while manifesting the former desire in the figures of female Doubles in his works. This letter is also an expression of what Girard termed 'mimetic rivalry'; the desire for something possessed by another simply *because* they possessed it.

Reader

The function of the reader as an integral part in the creative literary cycle is fundamental in enabling the narrator to ignore the schism within himself in order that "le lecteur hors du texte remplira le rôle du double, une troisième personne déjà située dans l'avenir, dont la constitution en dehors du texte peut servir à nier l'existence du moi dédoublé."⁷⁷⁷ It therefore follows that « Si le moi peut créer un être autre pour occuper la position de ce double, le narrateur peut ne pas admettre le dédoublement de son propre moi. » In this context, we begin to understand Céline's need to continue to write until the last day of his life as a need to constitute himself through his writing

⁷⁷⁶ Cahiers Céline 4: Lettres et premiers écrits d'Afrique 1916-1917: Editions Gallimard 1978 pp123-124

⁷⁷⁷ Kiernan, Katherine D Wickhorst : Emory University : Littérature No 139 2005 : p 60

when we consider that « (...) la chose la plus effrayante pour chacun est-elle la reconnaissance oblique que son moi puisse n'être rien d'autre qu'une configuration textuelle, et que *sans l'acte d'écrire ni l'acte de lire*, il cesserait tout à fait d'exister. »⁷⁷⁸ (our emphasis) The Self is thus defined as an entity that is only able to construct itself in dynamic terms « au moment même de parler, ou bien, d'écrire. »

Proof of the success of Céline's creative endeavour lies in the involvement of the reader solicited through the dynamism of his texts. Part of the enchantment felt by the reader is that one is never left indifferent, and we are inspired by an energy that appears to emanate from his work. « Il éclaire le chemin; il nous mène, (...) au-delà des barrières de sécurité que nous craignons de dépasser habituellement. »⁷⁷⁹ Céline's work is born of a quintessential « homme parfaitement libre (...) Son confesseur, c'est le lecteur. »⁷⁸⁰ We as readers are thus complicit in the *délire* which fed his oeuvre. If, in the process of creation, Céline sought to unify his divided self, to reconcile the dichotomy inherent in his being, that intention cannot fail to be transferred to, and assimilated by, his readers. In absorbing that influence, his readers are inspired to complete the circle by undertaking the act of writing themselves and, in so doing, to seek and achieve their own creative actualisation.

Although referring to Proust's works, Durand's remarks in this context are equally relevant to those of Céline: "Car Proust est l'un des premiers (...) à avoir génialement éprouvé que l'essence de la 'littérature' et même de l'art c'est, bien plus que la fabrication par l'écriture, la vision – la révélation – par la *lecture*. »⁷⁸¹ The writer himself is no more than a reader of a « livre intérieur », and the creative act is accomplished in the act that involves « plonger », « amener », « faire sortir » and finally « remonter »⁷⁸² - all of which conveys a telluric image of regeneration : « minière cette fois, et qui confirme bien l'adéquation de la création et de l'oeuvre du 'chymiste': l'esprit du créateur renferme un 'trésor'(...) »⁷⁸³

⁷⁷⁸ Kiernan, Katherine D Wickhorst : Emory University : Littérature No 139 2005 : p 60

⁷⁷⁹ Stromberg R: *La source qui ne rafraîchit pas* in *Cahiers de l'Herne No 3* :p 269

⁷⁸⁰ Morand P: *Céline et Bernanos* in *Cahiers de l'Herne No 3* :p 257

⁷⁸¹ Durand G : *Figures mythiques et visages de l'oeuvre* : p 285

⁷⁸² Ibid p 285

⁷⁸³ Ibid p 285

As readers of Céline's works, we cannot fail to be captivated by the level of passion or *délire* with which Céline's works are imbued. We are thus the beneficiaries of Céline's efforts to master intense psychological conflicts through "consciemment et délibérément cherch(ant) à mettre en prise sur eux toute son invention Romanesque."⁷⁸⁴ In every neologism, in every illogical turn of events and in each disjunction of syntax or unusual juxtaposition of words, and especially in the silences between phrases created by the "transports", the reader who « s'y prête peut avoir le sentiment qu'il touche du doigt ce qui par définition, se dérobe à toute prise de conscience, à plus forte raison à toute explication (...). »⁷⁸⁵ As attentive readers of Céline's texts, we are at best left fundamentally changed ; at worst never indifferent : « on ne lit pas Céline dans l'indifférence, en maintenant son quant-à-soi (...) Ce qu'il atteint en lui, (...) l'atteint en même temps en nous ». Indeed, his works « ne nous laissent pas intacts », thus conforming to what Godard terms a « précepte kafkaïen », a principle on which he believes French literature has modelled itself: « qu'un livre soit 'la hache qui brise la mer gelée en nous'. »⁷⁸⁶

Art and the artist

In his analysis of the creative personality in his work *L'Art et l'artiste*, the psychoanalyst Otto Rank emphasises various facets of that individual which appear to approximate those of Céline. For this reason, we highlight those characteristics which are most relevant to the author's work.

The reciprocal influences of life and a re-creation of life's experiences transposed into literature are fundamental to the artist's creative endeavour, and resonate with the entire body of Céline's work which is based on pivotal life experiences. These include his childhood in Paris (*Mort à crédit*), his engagement in the first World War and his practice as a medical doctor (*Casse-Pipe* and *Voyage au bout de la nuit*), his brief sojourn in London as a young man (*Guignol's Band*), the bombardment of Paris, persecution and his subsequent flight from Paris (*Féerie pour une autre fois I and II*), the journey through war-torn Europe ending in imprisonment in Denmark and finally his return to Meudon on the outskirts of Paris (*D'un Château l'autre, Nord, Rigodon*).

⁷⁸⁴ *Céline: Romans t I: Préface* : p xxxvi

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid* p xxxviii

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid* p xxxviii ; *Kafka Correspondance* p 40

Literally and figuratively, he had come full circle. Rank observes that the authentic artist does not so much create his work based on his life experience, as, like Goethe “plutôt malgré elle.”⁷⁸⁷ The significance of this remark in the context of Céline’s work is the fact that his life was a series of challenges with which he appears always to have done battle, overcoming various vicissitudes at each state of his development by transposing them through the creative act of writing, and thereby interpreting them through the creation of a literary *persona*. However, we believe that Céline was motivated by a higher ideal than simply expressing and containing his life experiences in his work; a more significant aspiration that has its roots in “la tendance à l’immortalité” which acts as a powerful force in order to “se protéger contre l’expérience transitoire, dévoratrice de son moi.”⁷⁸⁸

Although Céline frequently described himself as a ‘*névrosé*’, he does not appear to fall into this category of creative artist described by Rank, who asserts that “le névrosé (...) s’avère (...) incapable de dissocier de sa personne l’ensemble du processus de création et de le *transposer* en une abstraction idéologique” (our emphasis) – the antithesis of Céline’s avowed stylistic method of transposition. The objective of the “artiste réalisateur”, on the other hand, is also to re-create himself, culminating in a “moi idéologique édifié” – one that contrary to the reworked ‘moi’ of the ‘névrosé’, would be capable of transferring “sa puissance de volonté créatrice, de sa propre personne, à des représentations idéologiques de cette personne et, par là même, de l’objectiver.”⁷⁸⁹ Given that this description echoes the qualities of Céline’s work, despite (or perhaps because of) the state of *délire* under which he wrote much of his work, as well as his frequently repeated description of himself as a *névrosé*, we believe that it is possible that this was a disguise, a mask behind which he took cover in order to (re)-create himself in a private space hidden from the world’s gaze. It is in this sense, we believe, that Céline’s act of writing was essentially maieutic. His *délire* was undoubtedly real; his *névrose* was probably a fiction, given the lucidity of the remarks made to the reader, remarks that demonstrate a logic and profundity that would appear incongruous if they originated from a true *névrosé*.

⁷⁸⁷ Rank, O: *L’Art et l’artiste : Créativité et développement de la personnalité* : p 56

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid p 56

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid : p 58

Examples of this type of statement include – « On est puceau de l'Horreur comme on l'est de la volupté » (V p 14) ; « Quand on n'a pas d'imagination, mourir, c'est peu de chose, quant on en a, mourir c'est trop. » (V p 19) ; « La vérité, c'est une agonie qui n'en finit pas. La vérité de ce monde, c'est la mort. Il faut choisir, mourir ou mentir. Je n'ai jamais pu me tuer moi ». (V p 200) ; « Le bonheur sur terre ça serait de mourir avec plaisir, dans du plaisir ... Le reste, c'est rien du tout, c'est de la peur qu'on n'ose pas avouer, c'est de l'art. » (V p 380) ; « Il y a un moment où on est tout seul quand on est arrivé au bout de tout ce qui peut vous arriver. C'est le bout du monde ». (V p 328) and finally,

« La grande fatigue de l'existence n'est (...) cet énorme mal qu'on se donne pour demeurer vingt ans, quarante ans, davantage, raisonnable, pour ne pas être simplement, profondément soi-même, c'est-à-dire immonde, atroce, absurde. Cauchemar d'avoir à présenter toujours comme un petit idéal universel, surhomme du matin au soir, le sous-homme claudicant qu'on nous a donné. »

(V p 418)

Rank defines the authentically creative artist as one who is characterised by a « dualisme intérieur de la pulsion et de la volonté, » of which the latter is the most important for a creative personality, as « ... la volonté conduit à la création et, par là même, à l'immortalité. »⁷⁹⁰ (our emphasis) Clearly, creativity experienced in isolation is finite, while a synthesis of both impulse and creativity will culminate in a work that is eternal. Céline's works are testimony to the active presence of both creative elements within his being – an interior duality - which we believe produced works which are truly universal. Rank also distinguishes between artists who suffer from what he terms an “angoisse de la vie” which leads to a neurotic repression and those who suffer from an “angoisse de la mort” who are capable of creating works which reach for immortality, a literary category which appears to apply to Céline. We believe that the predominance of Death as a theme in Céline's works was shaped by this type of anguish ; indeed « Le roman (...) de Céline peut être considéré comme la description des rapports qu'un homme entretient avec sa propre mort (...) il ne diffère pas fondamentalement de la méditation monacale devant un crâne. »⁷⁹¹

⁷⁹⁰ Rank, O: *L'Art et l'artiste : Créativité et développement de la personnalité* :p 60

⁷⁹¹ Bataille G : *Une signification Humaine : Louis-Ferdinand Céline : Voyage au bout de la nuit* in *La Critique Sociale* : Paris janvier 1933

Unlike the true *névrosé* who seeks to defer death, Céline embraces it to the extent that he regards it as a reward for a life lived in the fullness of man's creative impulse. The title of his second novel, *Mort à Crédit*, bears testimony to this notion, as does this declaration in the same work : "C'est pas gratuit de crever! C'est un beau *suaire brodé d'histoires* qu'il faut présenter à la Dame. C'est exigeant le dernier soupir (...). Moi je serai bientôt en état... ». (MàC p 537) And earlier in the novel the narrator exclaims « Le jour où il le faudrait, j'aurais presque de quoi en moi me *payer la mort* ... » (MàC p 518) (our emphasis) Not surprisingly, in *Mort à Crédit* death is in fact « en position de clé de voûte », ⁷⁹² and Godard cautions that if the reader were to fail to take this theme into consideration, one would be deprived of an essential element in a full comprehension of the way in which the novel affects us. In a 1960 interview shortly before his death with Guénot and Darribéhaude, Céline elucidates his concept of death as a reward for life: "Pour moi, on était autorisé à mourir, on entraît, quand on avait une *bonne histoire à raconter*. Alors on la donnait, et puis, on passait. *Mort à Crédit*, c'est symboliquement ça. La récompense de la vie étant la mort. » ⁷⁹³ (our emphasis) We may deduce from these two declarations – the first made as narrator, the second as writer – that Céline considered his debt to life settled through the production of his works; through the act of writing *per se*, and that he was thus enabled to 'buy' his death. Indeed, his works were the currency that permitted him to embrace death knowing that he owed nothing to life.

Romantic

In his work *The crippled giant*, Milton Hindus concluded that "Céline might one day be regarded as the last of the Romantics (...)", having "planted himself squarely on the conviction that unrestrained feeling and the untrammelled though not undisciplined expression of it were redemptive both for the individual and for society." ⁷⁹⁴ Contrary to the Cartesian maxim *cogito ergo sum*, Céline had discovered the wisdom of elevating emotion above reason, encapsulated in the precept *sentio ergo sum*, which he used to "unlock his own heart and those of millions of common readers (...)." ⁷⁹⁵

⁷⁹² Céline: Romans t I : *Mort à Crédit* : Notice p 1325

⁷⁹³ *Cahiers Céline 2* : p 166

⁷⁹⁴ Hindus M: *The crippled giant* : Brandeis University Press 1986 p 78

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid* p 78

This assessment of Céline the artist resonates with Rank's description of the typically romantic artist, which he distinguishes from his classic counterpart. While the latter "fait sans cesse usage d'une vie que n'est pas la sienne – et qui est, en fait la nature", the former « ne peut créer qu'en *sacrifiant constamment sa propre vie.* »⁷⁹⁶ (our emphasis) Rank concludes that while the work of the 'classic' artist is « essentiellement de l'ordre de la partie, l'œuvre du romantique, procédant de l'intériorité est de l'ordre de la totalité. »⁷⁹⁷ The notions of both self-sacrifice and totalitarianism are emblematic of Céline's work ; the first being manifest in the author's passion for life at all levels and in diverse situations, and his dedicated engagement in medical, political, philosophical and personal causes at the expense of his health and mental stability. The other is demonstrated on a more qualitative level in the *extent* to which the author became involved with various causes, including those which were to lead to his ostracism and ultimately his exile.

Ideologically, the romantic artist employs "sa puissance personnelle de volonté" to create an ideology which is independent of social norms as is the case with ideologies in general. Céline's is therefore an ideology incorporating unmitigated artistic qualities – a highly individual and unique perspective on human nature, devoid of any subjugation or deference to social norms, being based on a faith in oneself as the sole creator of one's life and the trajectory it followed. No 'higher power' was ever invoked, either in his works or in his personal capacity; a fact that was underpinned in an interview with Albert Zbinden where Céline confessed to a total lack of belief in God. His ideology was that of the morally, spiritually and physically self-made man who espoused an ethic of hard work and aesthetic living. He therefore embodied the characteristics of an individual capable of creating himself in his *own image* instead of that of an image of a divinity or any other authority figure. Céline, who was continually engaged in stylistic innovation through the creation of neologisms and variations on metre and rhythm in his prose, is the embodiment of the "romantique (qui) est à la recherche de nouvelles formes et de nouveaux contenus qui lui permettent d'exprimer plus complètement son *soi personnel.*"⁷⁹⁸ (our emphasis)

⁷⁹⁶ Rank, O : *L'Art et l'artiste : Créativité et développement de la personnalité* p 64

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid p 64

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid :pp 65 - 66

Muse

The figure of a muse has, particularly for a romantic writer, always been an essential factor in the creation of his works. Céline is no exception, and we believe that for the author, Death was his principal muse and a continual source of artistic inspiration. This was underscored in an interview conducted by Georges Cazal in which Céline exclaimed “C’est la mort inspiratrice de tout!”⁷⁹⁹ As for women as a source of inspiration, the key lies in a remark made during an interview with Lilika Nakou: “La Femme est mon dieu. La femme c’est tout dans ma vie! (...)”⁸⁰⁰ And in an earlier interview with Merry Bromberger in response to the journalist’s question as to the main influences in his life, Céline replied that although he admired certain medical colleagues, including his former father-in-law Athanase Follett, the source of his inspiration was undoubtedly “.. aussi une danseuse américaine qui (lui) a appris tout ce qu’il y avait dans le rythme, la musique et le mouvement.”⁸⁰¹ This description is no doubt a veiled reference to Elizabeth Craig, the dancer to whom Céline dedicated the *Voyage*.⁸⁰²

However, within the novels themselves, we submit that apart from the figures of women who appear as symbols of what we believe to be the *anima-animus* facets of Céline’s personality, the figures of the Double, both male and female, also appear to fulfil the role of Muse. The key to this notion may lie in Rank’s declaration that as a source of inspiration “... l’exaltation idéaliste de soi-même en la personne d’un autre puisse revêtir une apparence physique, comme dans l’homosexualité grecque (...) comme Muse.”⁸⁰³ The characteristics of the prototype of the Double in Céline’s works, found in the figure of Robinson, resonate with Rank’s definition of the Muse as one who possesses a « ressemblance aussi étroite que possible (...) dans son propre sexe. » Alternatively, his observation that « l’autre sexe est ressenti, biologiquement comme un élément de trouble, à moins qu’il puisse être idéalisé comme Muse »⁸⁰⁴ bears a striking resemblance to the figure of Madelon who kills Bardamu’s Double,

⁷⁹⁹ *Cahiers Céline 7: Céline et l’Actualité 1933-1961* p 418

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid* : p 24

⁸⁰¹ *Cahiers Céline I: Céline et l’Actualité littéraire 1932 – 1957* : p 32

⁸⁰² Given Céline’s predilection for dancers, it is significant that the dictionary definition of the word ‘Muse’ lists Terpsicore, goddess of the dance, as one of the nine daughters of Zeus who are considered as muses.

⁸⁰³ Rank, O : *L’Art et l’artiste : Créativité et développement de la personnalité* : Bibliothèque scientifique Payot :1998 : p 69

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid* p 69

Robinson. Indeed, the Muse appears to fulfil an essential role in the artist's life as a 'vital necessity' as it is essential for the authentic artist to project onto his « (...) bien-aimée sa tendance bissexuelle à la création – tendance à engendrer et à enfanter ou à se faire procréer et à se faire renaître (...) ce n'est pas seulement son droit le plus strict mais une nécessité vitale pour lui. »⁸⁰⁵ We believe this definition of the role of the Muse encapsulates the pivotal catalytic role played by the figure of the Double in Céline's works.

The theme of the Double is, in fact, intrinsic to the very nature of literature, a form of artistic creation which is in itself a Double – a « trompeuse imitation de la réalité »⁸⁰⁶ In this sense, it emerges that the theme of the Double is not restricted to fantastic literature, as writers such as Dostoïevski and Pirandello have incorporated the figure of the Double into their work with no reference to the supernatural. We cannot fail to concur with Borges that the theme of the Double (his reference was that of mirrors, which amounts to the same thing) is one of those which “renversent le principe d'identité” which, in *sowing the seed of doubt* regarding perceived reality, allows one to “cerner le phénomène littéraire dans toute sa spécificité, sans recourir à un référent plus ou moins imaginaire.”⁸⁰⁷ The theme of the Double is thus tautological; in depicting the Double, literature is, in fact, depicting itself.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid p 291

⁸⁰⁶ Jacques Goimard et Roland Stragliati : *Histoires de Doubles : La grande anthologie du fantastique* : Édition du Club France Loisirs : Paris 1977 :pp 30-31

⁸⁰⁷ Jacques Goimard et Roland Stragliati : *Histoires de Doubles : La grande anthologie du fantastique* : Édition du Club France Loisirs : Paris 1977 : p 31

Chapter Six

Ambiguity and the grotesque in subterranean space as a metaphor for the Double

We have chosen to limit this examination of the role of subterranean space as both a metaphor for the Double and as a catalyst for creative expression, to *Guignol's Band I and II* and *Féerie pour une autre Fois I and II*, works in which Céline's poetic prose is most in evidence. In this context, the subterranean refers to both the spatial and emotional dimensions. Within the former, we will examine the circumstances under which Céline wrote each of these works, while the latter will be examined in its context as an internalised reflection of the spatial and emotional dimension. With regard to its role as catalyst, the subterranean space represented in Céline's works will be explored in the context of what Gaillard describes as "un sas, étanche mais communicateur."⁸⁰⁸ As such, the nature of this space plays a pivotal role in facilitating "la traversée", a hypogeal journey on both a spatial and emotional level which is, for the traveller, "largement initiatique".⁸⁰⁹

Essentially ambiguous, the subterranean world is the seat of an archetypal Mother Earth that is both regenerative and fertile; the site of germination as well as that of death, the abject and the diabolical. Above all, it is the place of « l'enfouissement, celui qui dégénère et corrompt, le lieu entre tous inquiétant des puissances chthoniennes de l'obscur. »⁸¹⁰ Ambiguous in both structure and function, the subterranean thus possesses the power to develop « un imaginaire ambigu, principe mâle et femelle à la fois »⁸¹¹ - an androgynous quality which is emblematic of a state of equivocation on several levels. These include that of the sexes, of conventions and morals as well as that of a spatial differentiation between the earth's surface and its hidden spaces. However, this regressive classification of subterranean space is no more than a prelude to "une renaissance initiatique", as it is only as a consequence of a state of complete *tabula rasa* that "l'édifice peut s'élever"⁸¹² - in an image of Phoenix rising from the ashes. The spaces within ourselves, as well as those within the earth are therefore not to be feared, but rather to be welcomed as unknown

⁸⁰⁸ *L'Imaginaire du souterrain* : Textes réunis par Aurélia Gaillard : Université de la Réunion : Éditions l'Harmattan 1997: p. 5

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid p. 5

⁸¹⁰ Ibid p 5

⁸¹¹ Ibid p 5

⁸¹² Ibid : p 5

territory to be explored. They serve as a space for regeneration, in the process of which we will discover the truth on as many levels as is humanly possible. Summoning the courage to take such a risk will bring its reward, « car la descente au *secret des mondes et de soi* n'est pas sans risque, mais néanmoins nécessaire, que réclame la vérité pour advenir. »⁸¹³ (our emphasis) It is a search for the Truth that makes the journey fruitful, a notion which lends special significance to Céline's declaration that "La vérité de ce monde c'est la mort. Il faut choisir, mourir ou mentir. Je n'ai jamais pu me tuer moi. » (V p 200)

Whether they be denoted as a cave, cavern, lair, labyrinth, sewer, cesspit, crypt, crevasse, hole or gallery, or as is particularly relevant in Céline's case, a prison cell, these spaces traditionally connote obscurity, mystery, fear of the unknown, abjection and essentially all that inspires fear in man. Flying in the face of convention, Céline welcomed them as a place of refuge, regeneration and ultimately creation.

Céline's lair

Images of subterranean spaces abound in Céline's works, but it is noteworthy that they increase in intensity with *Guignol's Band I* and *II*, reaching their culmination in both versions of *Féerie pour une autre fois*. Céline started writing *Guignol's Band* just before the start of the second World War, shortly after he had completed *Bagatelles pour un massacre*, and during the early months of the war engaged in a prolific correspondence with several right-wing publications⁸¹⁴ while completing his last pamphlet *Les Beaux Draps* which he published in 1941. We may therefore assume that the work was informed by the political and emotional climate at that time – one in which the fear and trauma of impending war predominated, coupled with the hostility, controversy and public criticism surrounding the publication of *Bagatelles pour un massacre*.

The first part of *Guignol's Band* was printed in March 1944 under circumstances which for Céline went against the grain, as he was reluctant to go to print before having thoroughly edited and revised a manuscript. In the Preface to this version, he indicates to his readers that at least two versions are to follow the current one, and that

⁸¹³ *L'Imaginaire du souterrain* : Textes réunis par Aurélia Gaillard. Université de la Réunion : pp 5-6

⁸¹⁴ Notably the journal *Je suis partout*

they should not be too quick to judge him on the strength of this version alone, issuing the *caveat* “Ne me jugez point de sitôt!”⁸¹⁵

The second version of *Guignol's Band* was written in circumstances that were even more hazardous, during the months Céline spent in Germany after his flight from Paris in June 1944, passing through Baden-Baden and Kraenzlin before reaching Sigmaringen. When he left France, the typed edition of version B of the manuscript already comprised “pour les séquences 18 à 36, soit plus de la moitié de la second partie”.⁸¹⁶ At that time, Céline was engaged in rewriting sequence No 37, the longest in the book, and one which includes, after sequence No 28, the most nightmarish images of a Ferdinand transformed into a horse, ridden by the Colonel des Entrayes – a name which in itself evokes horror as it is pronounced ‘entrailles’ (intestines); an image of disembowelment. There is no doubt that this episode is a transposed version of the actual circumstances Céline experienced as a ‘cuirassier’ during the first World War when he was wounded at Poelkapelle. Céline’s work on *Guignol's Band II* extended throughout his stay in Germany in 1944 and continued into the entire year of 1945 spent in Copenhagen, until his arrest and incarceration in December of that year.

The introduction of the figure of Virginie in *Guignol's Band* is significant in the context of Céline’s ballet ‘*Voyou Paul, brave Virginie*’ in which the title denotes the negative aspect of the male character. Written no doubt as an antidote to the sentimental and sanctimonious nature of the characters in Bernardin de St Pierre’s novel, the parallel between the ballet and *Guignol's Band* is evidently a reflection of Céline’s state of mind at this period, as « La vision angélique de la nature humaine présentée par Bernardin de St Pierre irrite tant Céline qu’il n’a de cesse de l’avoir mise en échec dans un décor semblable et en se référant au même objet symbolique. »

⁸¹⁷ The character description of the protagonist, Paul, is unequivocal. He is « maudit... l’esprit du mal est bien en lui. »⁸¹⁸ This image remains constant throughout the ballet until its close where we see an unredeemed Paul who « suit la

⁸¹⁵ Céline: Romans t III: Éditions Gallimard 1988: *Guignol's Band I*: p 83

⁸¹⁶ Ibid *Notice*: p 953

⁸¹⁷ Céline : *Guignol's Band* : Éditions Gallimard 1988: Romans t III :*Notice* : p 994

⁸¹⁸ L-F Celine *Ballets sans musique, sans persnone, sans rien* : Éditions Gallimard 2001 p 65

foule endiablée », ⁸¹⁹ an image we can only surmise is a reflection of Céline's assessment of his own fate – and, no doubt, of his state of mind.

The parallel between Ferdinand in *Guignol's Band II*, and Paul in the ballet is heightened by the transposition and incorporation of the exotic ambience of Bernardin de St Pierre's novel into Céline's description of an imagined journey undertaken with Virginie: "(...) mer de Corail! mer Caraïbe! une île là-bas presque rien? (...) Je veux une île avec des arbres, mais abritée par tous les temps! à triple barrière de récifs! (...) un vrai éden j'en ai besoin ... je reviens moi de la guerre ! » (GBII p 454) We believe that this imagined Eden is the representation of a subterranean world shielded from actuality and isolated from human contamination, where Ferdinand is able to heal himself from both physical and mental wounds. If we assume that the motif of the shipwreck necessarily implies a form of hypogeal isolation from the outside world, this description is an unequivocal example of that phenomenon which occurs precisely at the two moments when Ferdinand's passion for Virginie reaches its culmination: (...) les deux moments où le désir de Ferdinand monte (...) sont des moments qui rappellent le *nauffrage* du Saint-Géran par une pluie diluvienne: 'cataractes de déluge' à Hyde Park, pluie 'à torrents' à la sortie du Touit-Touit club.'⁸²⁰ (our emphasis) Underscoring the image of a shipwrecked couple is the fact that "(...) la robe de Virginie 'toute ruisselante' à Hyde Park, 'en loques' une première fois à la sortie du Touit-Touit club, avec, à la page suivante, la conclusion: 'elle n'a plus de robe!'"⁸²¹

It is important to note that both passages depicting violence and delirium which occur in sequences 28 and 37, were rewritten by Céline between the spring of 1944 in Paris and that of 1945 in Copenhagen. This was a period when he was the object of « (...) de la menace des uns et de l'abandon des autres, puis, à travers l'Allemagne, poursuivi partout par les dangers les plus immédiats et les plus concrets. »⁸²² The material circumstances of his life during this period conspired to create the author's emotional state which is reflected in the violence of these sequences. Céline's internal

⁸¹⁹ L-F Celine *Ballets sans musique, sans persnone, sans rien* : Éditions Gallimard 2001 :p 68

⁸²⁰ *Céline: Romans t III: Guignol's Band I* Editions Gallimard 1988 : Notice: p 994

⁸²¹ *Ibid: Notice: p 994*

⁸²² *Ibid: Notice :p 962*

hypogeal emotional state thus finds its release in sequences which depict the most violent images in the entire novel.

Another aspect of the subterranean forces present in human nature is manifest in Sosthène de Rodiencourt's pursuit of the occult through the medium of dance – in itself a significant motif, given Céline's preoccupation with dance and dancers. The most striking example of this occurs in sequence 37 which Céline rewrote and modified. Initially, « (...) cette danse sacrée et Sosthène lui-même apparaissent aux yeux de Ferdinand à la hauteur de leur ambition de maîtrise des forces occultes. »⁸²³ However, the 'sacred' dance quickly degenerates into a general mêlée during which, following the intervention of fire engines, leaves Sosthène, Ferdinand and the spectators in disarray, and Piccadilly Circus in chaos. Given the violence of the images present in an episode which is unquestionably one of the focal points of the narrative, we cannot ignore the fact that it was written at a time when Céline "(...) ne cesse de se sentir traqué d'une manière ou d'une autre, et où qu'il aille."⁸²⁴ We therefore conclude that in order to exclude the outside world, Céline took refuge within himself to an increasing degree at this period in his life, and in so doing, experienced a resurgence of his imaginative creative powers.

Castaway

There is another aspect to Sosthène's dance in Piccadilly Circus which is significant in the context of our exploration of subterranean space. Observing Sosthène throwing himself into an enterprise which, apart from some moments of admiration, Ferdinand regards as foolhardy and ridiculous, « Ferdinand se dit que cette folie pourrait bien cacher une sagesse en ce sens que se faire arrêter *précisément comme fou* pourrait être une manière d'échapper à des ennuis plus graves. »⁸²⁵ (our emphasis) This notion of madness as a mask is repeated several times in the novel, investing it with the quality of a leitmotif. Godard notes that the notion of hiding behind a mask of insanity « (...) prêtée avec tant d'insistance au Ferdinand personnage et narrateur de *Guignol's Band*, pouvait avoir une résonance, consciente ou inconsciente, pour le Céline de

⁸²³ Céline: Romans t III: *Guignol's Band I* Editions Gallimard 1988 : Notice p 964

⁸²⁴ Ibid p 964

⁸²⁵ Céline: Romans t III: *Guignol's Band I* Editions Gallimard 1988: Notice: p 964

1944. »⁸²⁶This figurative mask is just one more manifestation of the manner in which Céline protected himself from a world that had grown untenable, by retreating into the inner world of his imagination.

This mechanism of 'masking' is also a figurative example of what Nadia Minerva, in her essay on Jules Verne terms '*robinsonnades*'⁸²⁷ - or an attempt to retire from the actual world through evasion, in masking one's true nature, and thus inhabiting a hypogeal space which is invisible to the outside world. Ferdinand's fantasy is thus a figurative representation of "L'image paradigmatique de l'isolement protecteur"; of what Barthes termed a « jouissance de l'enfermement »⁸²⁸ In a study which, although applied to Jules Verne, is equally relevant to Céline, Minerva refers to the phenomenon of *robinsonnades*, which "a souligné la signification fantasmatique de lieu de régression, de repliement, d'oubli."⁸²⁹ In this context, Deleuze, in his *Postface* to Michel Tournier's novel *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*, states that « Robinson s'enfonce jusqu'au centre intérieur de l'île, et trouve une alvéole où il arrive à se recroqueviller, qui est comme l'enveloppe larvaire de son propre corps. »⁸³⁰ We believe that this image echoes Céline's retreat within himself; a deliberate, conscious 'castaway' that isolates him from the world and his fellow man in order to heighten his creative powers. This emotional retreat finds expression in the numerous references to subterranean space in his works.

Féerie pour une autre fois

This work, written over a period of nine years between 1945 and 1954, was conceived at a « (...) période de difficultés et de souffrances réelles »⁸³¹ in Céline's life which was a legacy of his political stance and the views expressed in his pamphlets between 1936 and 1944. Seventeen months of this period were spent in Copenhagen's Vestre Faengsel, followed by isolation in Klarskovgaard on the edge of the Baltic under house arrest, before finally returning to France in 1951. Nevertheless, as a result of his

⁸²⁶ Céline: Romans t III: *Guignol's Band I* Editions Gallimard 1988: *Notice*: p 965

⁸²⁷ Nadia Minerva *Fragments d'un discours utopique: l'imaginaire souterrain de Jules Verne entre utopie et dystopie* in *L'imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l'Harmattan 1997 pp 167 and 176

⁸²⁸ *Ibid* p 171

⁸²⁹ *Ibid* p 171

⁸³⁰ Deleuze, G : *Postface* à Michel Tournier, *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*, Paris : Gallimard, 'Folio' 1972 p 274

⁸³¹ Céline : *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Editions Gallimard : 1993 :Romans t IV *Notice*: p 1105

inability (or unwillingness) to gauge or admit to his participation in the “mal auquel il a ainsi indirectement participé”,⁸³² he regarded himself as a victim of injustice, both as a writer and a citizen. In fact, « ses écrits des années 1936 à 1944 ont fait de lui une sorte d’incarnation de l’antisémitisme désormais hors la loi. »⁸³³

Given the social and emotional context in which the novel was written, it is not surprising that subterranean images of vaults, sewers, cavities, crevasses and simple holes are all emblematic of this work, underscoring the atmosphere of damnation which pervades both sections of the novel. It therefore comes as no surprise to learn that Céline’s first choice of a title for *Féerie II*⁸³⁴ was *La Bataille du Styx*, with its obvious connotation of death. Equally significant was his second choice, *Maudits soupirs pour une autre fois*.

Prison is perhaps one of society’s most striking manifestations of institutionalised subterranean space, where man is isolated from the world, his family and his friends. It was within this cloistered environment that a major portion of *Féerie II* was written. However, despite the fact that all the subsequent versions (Version A) as well as the finalisation of *Féerie I* were completed outside the prison, in the cottage at Klarskovgaard, and finally in France, “cette première partie n’en aura pas moins la cellule de Vestre Faengsel pour cadre de rédaction, et finira par se transformer (...) en un véritable *livre de la détention*.”⁸³⁵ (our emphasis) In other words, although written outside the walls of Céline’s prison cell, *Féerie I* bears the hallmark of subterranean space embodied in the images of incarceration that it evokes. We note that this novel was written subsequent to *Féerie II (Normance)*.

In March 1945, having arrived in Copenhagen after a harrowing journey from Germany, Céline had the impression that he had reached “(...) l’autre côté de la vie,”⁸³⁶ as though he had died and arrived at another world, if not the netherworld. In an echo to these sentiments, he declared that he and his wife had been “(...) tellement

⁸³² Céline : *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Editions Gallimard : 1993 :Romans t IV Notice p 1105

⁸³³ Ibid p 1106

⁸³⁴ Written before *Féerie I* : « Le titre donné au mémoire dès sa première mention est ‘*La Bataille du Styx*’ ; il restera désigné ainsi, sous la forme abrégée ‘Bataille’ jusqu’au mois de décembre 1945, c’est-à-dire jusqu’à l’arrestation de Céline. : Romans t IV : Notice : p 1114

⁸³⁵ *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Editions Gallimard : 1993 :Romans t IV p 1108

⁸³⁶ Ibid p 1114

brutalisés, malmenés, terrorisés depuis des années que l'on perd l'aptitude à souffrir davantage. L'on est déjà parmi les morts.”⁸³⁷ Feeling himself increasingly isolated from both his country and his countrymen, he wrote shortly afterwards that « (...) un épais rideau de chagrin et de feu s'est abattu entre nous et notre vie et les nôtres (et de mort hélas !) »⁸³⁸ An image of death and, by implication, that of the river Styx which was to form part of the original title for his novel, and which haunted Céline is, in Godard's opinion, “à mettre en relation avec les adresses à Charon dont Céline va tenter plusieurs rédactions dans ses *Cahiers de Prison*.”⁸³⁹ A notable example of one of these ‘addresses’ occurs in the long sequence focused on Charon in *D'un Château l'autre*, while other references to the mythical ferryman who brought the dead across the river Styx to Hades are more implied than textually denoted. In several letters written to his wife from prison, Céline emphasises the ‘damned’ aspect of his life that was to pervade his work and, by implication, its association with the underworld. « J'ai commencé notre récit des Maudits – par le bombardement de la Butte (...) *l'esprit du mal* que tout le paysage gondole, enfle, gonfle, les maisons perdent leurs formes – tout chahute – (...) C'est le Sabbath [sic] à Popol (...) »⁸⁴⁰ (our emphasis)

Antidote

The image of Céline incarcerated in the Vestre Faengsel is that of a caged bird, its wings clipped, its vitality curtailed, but not its spirit. For him, imprisonment must have been the epitome of Hades, compounded by the weight of the disapprobation of his countrymen, both as a writer and a citizen. We can only assume that living in close proximity to numerous strangers must also have been a nightmare experience for someone with so high a regard for his solitude and seclusion. Accentuating the lack of privacy was the inevitable cacophony of sounds concomitant with life in a confined space; the inevitable and unceasing sounds of a singular world which reach the prisoner alone in his cell – “cris des autres détenus (parfois cris de putois), choc d'un crâne sur la paroi, aboiements des chiens, bruits des coups à l'arrivée d'une rafle nocturne (...) tout ce à quoi cette *architecture creuse* de coque de bateau à l'envers sert de caisse de résonance.”⁸⁴¹ (our emphasis) This reverse image of a vessel rendered

⁸³⁷ *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Editions Gallimard : 1993 : Romans t IV : p 1114

⁸³⁸ *Ibid* p 1115 *Lettre à Marie Canavaglia du 12 octobre 1945*

⁸³⁹ *Ibid* p 1115

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid* p 1116 *Lettre à Lucette Destouches* le 28 mars 1946

⁸⁴¹ *Céline* : Romans t IV : Editions Gallimard 1993: *Féerie pour une autre fois: Préface*: p xxiv

incapable of sailing, and therefore deprived of its essential function, is perhaps the most striking metaphor for Céline in prison – a free spirit grounded and deprived of physical mobility in a “faux vaisseau immobile qui n’est qu’une ‘nef à manger le temps.’”⁸⁴² The fabric of this universe left its indelible imprint on Céline to such a degree that even when he was no longer physically incarcerated, he continued to “(..) porte en lui cet univers.”⁸⁴³

Perhaps the most striking example of refuge taken in a hypogeal world – ironically by someone already enclosed in a form of subterranean space – was Céline’s reaction to the cacophony of sounds that abounded within the prison walls. Instead of allowing the din to deprive him of his creative ability, his antidote to prison noise and his refuge from it, the author transposes his situation: “Céline le trouve dans les bruits *absents*: des bruits qu’il a ‘dans l’oreille’, mais dans une oreille cette fois *intérieure*, une mémoire d’oreille.”⁸⁴⁴ (our emphasis) This supports the notion that a retreat to a hypogeal space, be it spatial or emotional is both necessary and salutary for creative expression. It is also an expression of the power to *reinvent* the world, no matter what its actual circumstances might be; it is the prerogative of the poet, “tel un mage visité par l’inspiration”, not only to reveal the world’s hidden meaning by interpreting it, but also “le réinventer, le recréer par les mots.”⁸⁴⁵

Refuge

Each era may be defined by the individual and collective forms of death that it invents. Since the early days of the 20th Century, ours has been marked by aerial bombardments, reaching the epitome of horror with the mid-century destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Bombardment has therefore become emblematic of our epoch in which hand-to-hand combat has yielded to an abstract, more insidious form of death – “cette mort venant du ciel, mobile, imprévisible.”⁸⁴⁶ This sinister form of death, although a human invention, is so far removed from the sphere of human comprehension that its agents, the aeroplanes, have been baptised “‘mystères’,

⁸⁴² *Céline : Romans t IV* : Editions Gallimard 1993: *Féerie pour une autre fois: Préface* :p xxv

⁸⁴³ *Ibid* p xxv

⁸⁴⁴ *Ibid* p xxv

⁸⁴⁵ Françoise Dupeyron-Lafay *L’imaginaire du souterrain: cryptomania in L’imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l’Harmattan 1997 p 117

⁸⁴⁶ *Féerie pour une autre Fois* : Editions Gallimard 1993 : *Romans t IV* : p xxxi

‘mirages’ et ‘fantômes’⁸⁴⁷ – names which give voice to our inability to grasp their supernatural power. Our only hope of escaping them is to “rentrer sous terre”,⁸⁴⁸ like terrified animals going to ground.

While entire populations built and used air raid shelters during the second World War as their spatial refuge from aerial destruction, there were artists like Céline who, although equally traumatised by the violence of a bombardment, took refuge within himself, storing the experience in his subconscious in order to transmute it into the poetry we encounter in both versions of *Féerie*. We therefore discern a direct correlation between the violence of the experience and a high degree of poetic prose. Just as the earth, as refuge, exemplifies the dual qualities of both womb and tomb, the seat of both “initiation et de purification”,⁸⁴⁹ so too do the mental spaces of refuge within us possess similar qualities of regeneration and renewal.

No matter how many years passed after the actual events of the bombardment of Paris in 1944, Céline never succeeded in purging himself of images and sounds which were simultaneously horrific and incomparably beautiful. The sight of the bombardment which Céline viewed from his eyrie in the 5th floor apartment in the rue Girardon high up in Montmartre, was “une vision faite pour lui.”⁸⁵⁰ Although he initially spoke of the bombardment with detachment in the days immediately following the event, and while it was only one of several occurrences which conspired in his decision to leave Paris in June 1944, Céline was continuously reminded of it during the nine months spent in Germany : “De Baden-Baden à Berlin; de Berlin à Kraenzlin, de Kraenzlin à Rostock, de Rostock à Sigmaringen, de Sigmaringen à Flensburg, il n’a cessé d’avoir des avions au-dessus de la tête, et d’entendre sirènes et explosions se succéder sans fin (...).”⁸⁵¹ Images of destruction, of “incendies, fumées, décombres, images irréelles, ou rien,”⁸⁵² – all of them apocalyptic - haunted his mind. How could such an intensity of violence *not* have appealed to his imagination? All the elements were there – not only the most abject terror of a world rendered inhabitable, but also the dawning

⁸⁴⁷ *Féerie pour une autre Fois* : Editions Gallimard 1993 : Romans t IV : p xxxi

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid* p xxxi

⁸⁴⁹ Nadia Minerva *Fragments d’un discours utopique: l’imaginaire souterrain de Jules Verne entre utopie et dystopie* in *L’imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l’Harmattan 1997 p 177

⁸⁵⁰ *Céline :Féerie pour une autre Fois* : Éditions Gallimard: Romans t IV : p xxvii

⁸⁵¹ *Ibid* xxvii

⁸⁵² *Ibid* p xxvii

realisation that the violence unleashed by man himself might well be a manifestation of his basic nature. Part of the nightmare for Céline was that a suspicion he had long held appeared to be vindicated: « les petites et grandes agressions des hommes, le plaisir qu'ils prennent à la vue, ou simplement à l'idée, de la mort et du supplice de leurs semblables, sont-ils autre chose que le *monnayage* au jour le jour d'une violence fondamentale que seuls quelques-uns mènent jusqu'à son terme, *le meurtre* ? »⁸⁵³ (our emphasis) For Céline, this « séisme de la fin n'est rien d'autre que 'la vacherie du tronc des hommes' devenue visible et audible. »⁸⁵⁴ Far from being merely explosions governed by the laws of physics and chemistry, they represented something far more sinister – « explosions des fonds d'âme. » (FII p 191)

In an attempt to master his horror of the situation, Céline required a scapegoat, which he created in the person of his erstwhile friend Gen Paul, transposed into the figure of the legless Jules. Having quarrelled with the artist, he felt sufficient resentment towards him “pour qu'il puisse faire de Jules l'être *satanique* responsable d'un tel déchaînement d'anti-nature.”⁸⁵⁵ (our emphasis) In this sense, the creation of the figure of Jules as a demonic Double represents yet another form of refuge taken by Céline in an attempt to abate the horror he had experienced. It is significant that Jules is a satanic figure, one who represents the underworld and seat of the refuge sought by Céline at this time. The creation of this figure of the Double is also symptomatic of its catalytic role in assisting in the author's transposition of horror into poetry.

Cryptogram

We submit that Céline's poetic genius was, to a large degree, fostered by the circumstances under which he wrote *Féerie II*, namely a prison, the archetypal enclosed space where man is removed from society. Indeed, it was within this space that he was able to realise what Barthes termed the “poétique de la clôture”⁸⁵⁶ by transposing the horror into a work in which “Au fracas des explosions et les déflagrations s'oppose note à note une petite musique”.⁸⁵⁷

⁸⁵³ *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Éditions Gallimard 1993 : Romans t IV : p xxviii

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid* p xxviii

⁸⁵⁵ L-F Céline *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Éditions Gallimard: Romans t IV : p xxix

⁸⁵⁶ Nadia Minerva : *Fragments d'un discours utopique: l'imaginaire souterrain de Jules Verne entre utopie et dystopie* in *L'imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l'Harmattan 1997 p 170

⁸⁵⁷ L-F Céline *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Éditions Gallimard Romans t IV p xxx

Faced with a complete reversal of the world order he had known all his life, Céline's challenge lay in capturing the fragmentation of his altered situation which appeared to defy any attempt to express it "dans une langue régulière."⁸⁵⁸ There is no doubt that Céline was equal to the task of conveying the image of a world "mise en pièces"⁸⁵⁹ through his emotive style, where spaces are as important as the words themselves; words "qui se détachent sur le blanc de la page par l'intervalle des trois points, comme sur le vide les noeuds de fil de la dentelle: [...] c'est des filigranes la vie" (FI p 76) Given that Céline's mother was a lace purveyor, and that he was therefore familiar with its various forms, it is no wonder that this influence is embedded in his literary works to the extent that it is reflected in their structure. Indeed, particularly in *Féerie I*, « Ces images de dentelle, de trame, de broderie (...) sont autant d'ébauches d'un part poétique. »⁸⁶⁰ There is no doubt that this new conception of a reversed world order « est fait pour son écriture non moins que pour son imaginaire »⁸⁶¹, compounded by the fact that the author's imagination was stimulated by his hypogeal experience in prison.

The regenerative force of subterranean spaces was clearly at work in the creation of *Féerie II* in which Céline was to realise his emotive style designed to appeal directly to the reader's emotional core :

« (...) jamais Céline n'avait autant misé sur le seul style et sur le seul plaisir que le lecteur peut y prendre ligne après ligne. Ce style lui-même est devenu dans *Féerie* ce que Céline appelle 'purement émotif', c'est-à-dire complètement affranchi des enchaînements du français écrit. »⁸⁶²

The regenerative force at work here, inspired by the dynamism of Céline's creative mastery, evokes Bachelard's words, quoting Novalis : « Au centre sont les germes; au centre est le feu qui engendre. Ce qui germe brûle. Ce qui brûle germe (...) »⁸⁶³ An essentially ambiguous hypogeal space, the prison where Céline was incarcerated is the seat of the complementary forces of both death and resurrection: « Image archétypale, le souterrain évoque un faisceau de significations contradictoires et l'imagination se

⁸⁵⁸ Céline *Féerie pour une autre fois* : Éditions Gallimard Romans t IV : p xxix

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid p xxix

⁸⁶⁰ Céline *Féerie pour une autre fois I et II* Gallimard Bibliothèque de la Pléiade t IV : p xxiv

⁸⁶¹ Ibid p xxix

⁸⁶² Céline : Romans t IV *Féerie pour une autre fois* : : Préface : pp x-xi

⁸⁶³ Gaston Bachelard : *La Psychanalyse du Feu* : Éditions Gallimard 1949 p 76

représente aussi bien un lieu angoissant d'ombre et de mort qu'un refuge et un sanctuaire où se prépare la résurrection. »⁸⁶⁴

Féerie pour une autre fois displays an idiolect characterised more by style than by the use of argot as was the case in *Guignol's Band*. In these novels, Céline has recourse to "Un mouvement jamais interrompu de passage d'un sujet à un autre, de saut entre les mots; de rebondissement à la pointe d'un signifiant" which is « le seul ensemble dans lequel pouvait se recomposer une réalité pareillement éclatée. »⁸⁶⁵ A unified style thus paradoxically captures the fragmentation of Céline's world as well as that of the 'village' of Montmartre during the bombardments. This results in the "fracas des explosions et des déflagrations" being underscored by the notes of "une petite musique"⁸⁶⁶ transforming horror into poetry.

Hugo

Céline's idiolect, whether it be represented by a fragmented, emotive style as is the case in *Féerie*, or by the pervasive use of argot in *Guignol's Band*, is a form of hypogean language in which the writer takes refuge. It is also the place where his creativity flowers. Referring to Hugo's use of argot – the preferred language of the people – Christian Chelebourg points out that through the use of this mechanism, Hugo "(...) esquisse, ce faisant, une des règles de sa créativité: substituer à la langue des élites celle du peuple ou, plutôt, compléter l'une par l'autre."⁸⁶⁷ In his '*Réponse à un acte d'accusation*', Hugo was to acknowledge and systemise "cet art poétique."⁸⁶⁸ Pursuing this argument, Chelebourg observes that « (...) la langue hugolienne trouve à se renouveler à l'entrée du caveau, qu'elle se régénère au moment de pénétration dans le mystère d' 'une cavité noire', sombre et humide. Le souterrain perturbe la langue et réforme le style. »⁸⁶⁹ (our emphasis)

⁸⁶⁴ Geneviève Laigle *L'imaginaire du souterrain à travers trois romans anglo-saxons contemporains : L'imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l'Harmattan 1997 p 197

⁸⁶⁵ L-F Céline *Féerie pour une autre fois I et II* Gallimard Bibliothèque de la Pléiade t IV p xxx

⁸⁶⁶ L-F Céline *Féerie pour une autre fois I et II* Gallimard Bibliothèque de la Pléiade t IV : p xxx

⁸⁶⁷ Christian Chelebourg '*Sur un fond de ténèbres quelque bizarre alphabet*' – *le souterrain et la langue chez Victor Hugo : L'imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l'Harmattan 1997 p 130

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid p 130

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid p 130

This description of both the cause and effect of Hugo's idiolect parallels that of Céline's unique use of language, both as a refuge in the 'caveau' of his emotions, and as a source of poetic regeneration and inspiration.

Hugo's description of the use of argot in his work *Le Dernier jour d'un condamné* underscores Céline's use of this form of language:

« C'est toute une langue dans la langue, une sorte d'excroissance malade, une greffe malsaine qui a produit une végétation, un parasite qui a ses racines dans le vieux tronc gaulois et dont le feuillage sinistre rampe sur tout un côté de la langue »

(*Les Misérables*, IV, 7^c, II, 781)

And in recalling his conversations with other prisoners, Hugo observes that

“Ils m'apprennent à parler argot, à *ruscailler bigorne*, comme ils disent. C'est toute une langue entée sur la langue générale comme une espèce d'excroissance hideuse, comme une verrue. Quelquefois une énergie singulière, un pittoresque effrayant [...] »⁸⁷⁰

(*Le Dernier jour d'un condamné*, v. 436)

What is more, Hugo's reference to popular idiom in *Les Misérables* as « cet idiome abject qui ruisselle de fange (...) ce vocabulaire pustuleux dont chaque mot semble un anneau immonde d'un monstre de la vase et des ténèbres (...) »⁸⁷¹, resonates with the almost magnetic attraction felt by Céline for the nether world ; a telluric yearning for a place of hibernation and regeneration which is expressed throughout his work. This notion is underscored by Minerva in her essay on Jules Verne, in which she observes that

“Le sous-sol n'est pas un ailleurs quelconque: le monde souterrain a longtemps joué le rôle de lieu inaccessible et a représenté l'inconnu (...) La caverne est un archétype complexe, avec ses connotations sexuelles et ses significations sacrées. Dans l'imaginaire, la fascination du sous-sol est liée à des sentiments populaires d'attraction-répulsion à l'égard de la terre considérée à la fois comme matrice et tombe. »⁸⁷²

This emphasises the ambiguous nature of subterranean space which to a certain degree explains its attraction for Céline, himself a divided personality.

⁸⁷⁰ Christian Chelebourg 'Sur un fond de ténèbres quelque bizarre alphabet' – *le souterrain et la langue chez Victor Hugo : L'imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l'Harmattan 1997 : p 131

⁸⁷¹ Ibid pp 130-131

⁸⁷² Nadia Minerva *Fragments d'un discours utopique: l'imaginaire souterrain de Jules Verne entre utopie et dystopie* in *L'imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l'Harmattan 1997 : p 169

Chthonic voice

Although referring to Dostoïevski's work *Le Sous-sol*, Girard's definition of the protagonist's behaviour as that of a « héros souterrain » who « (...) se précipite (...) dans les aventures humiliantes, [qui] tombe d'autant plus dans la réalité qu'il est monté plus haut dans le rêve »⁸⁷³, could equally apply to Céline. In both *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois*, the figures of Ferdinand and Céline manifest a tendency towards the abject in their daily lives, only to alternate with a state of ecstasy in a form of delirium that resembles a dream-state.

In *Féerie pour une autre fois*, the equivocal states of abjection and elation experienced by Céline pervade the thread of the narrative. From the novel's inception, they are also present within the narrative structure itself, a striking example of which occurs when, on observing the bombardment, Céline exclaims "Ah! celles-là c'est les pires présages! ... on en a assez parlé!... en sorte de forme d'arbres de Noël ... elles annoncent l'annihilation ... pure et simple! (FII p 194) The ambiguity of this phenomenon is underscored by the observation that the 'Xmas trees' are « pas des arbres de Noël dans le sens ! non! à l'envers!" (FII p 194) (our emphasis) We believe this textual example of ambiguity is emblematic of the hypogean element in Céline's work, as it illustrates the intrinsic essence of the chthonic voice of the protagonist in both *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois*.

In this context; we cannot fail to recall the voice of Dostoïevski's hero in his work *Le sous-sol*, who inhabits the space between the floorboards and the foundations of a dwelling, in an environment described as "hors nature et hors culture."⁸⁷⁴ It is the voice of one who the Greeks, in referring to the installation of Philoctetus in a cave, described as an " *apêgriomênos*, d'ensauvagé."⁸⁷⁵ This is the primitive chthonic voice in which Céline chooses to express himself. It is the voice of the Double within himself; that of the Other, the rival. Nabokov, referring to Dostoïevski's protagonist in *Sous-sol*, observes that « 'l'homme-souris' sait toujours parfaitement suggérer à son

⁸⁷³ Girard, R: *Dostoïevski : Du double à l'unité* : Librairie Plon 1963 : p 46

⁸⁷⁴ Serge Meitinger *De l'immonde ou la voix du souterrain – à propos du Sous-sol de Dostoïevski* in *L'imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l'Harmattan 1997 p 103

⁸⁷⁵ Colombe Couëlle-Dezeuze *Lieux infernaux et grottes dans le monde gréco-romain. De l'effroi au divertissement* in *L'imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l'Harmattan 1997 pp 13 - 14

lecteur 'qu'il a superchérie de sa part' »⁸⁷⁶, et, en effet, c'est bien là l'essentiel : *tout le récit est doublé, clivé comme le personnage (...)* »⁸⁷⁷ (our emphasis) As is the case with Céline – and the figures of the Double in his works - we are confronted by a character in which « (...) les deux moitiés de la conscience souterraine se sont rejointes. Ce n'est pas leur impossible synthèse que nous présente l'écrivain mais leur juxtaposition douloureuse *au sein du même individu.* »⁸⁷⁸ (our emphasis)

Girard goes on to remark that « Ces deux moitiés dominant, alternativement, la personnalité du malheureux héros, déterminant ce que les médecins appelleraient son tempérament *cyclique.* »⁸⁷⁹ This cyclical phenomenon is particularly noticeable in *Guignol's Band* where Ferdinand oscillates between the demonic and the angelic or, if not exactly angelic, at least displaying the temperament of a smitten young man with regard to Virginie in the rare moments when he is overcome with tenderness. In *Féerie* it is the narrative itself that displays this ambiguity rather than Ferdinand-Céline, the protagonist. Moments of elation at the juxtaposition of beauty and horror inspired by the bombardment alternate with those of abjection when the corpse of Normance is thrown into the lift-shaft like a "bombe de viande." (FII p 422) This image, more than any other in the novel evokes the underworld, underscored by Céline's remark that he "croyai(t) pas la fosse si profonde." (FII p 422)

Rival

In both *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois*, the archetypal figure of the Other is represented by figures whose nature is either directly or indirectly referred to as 'satanic', an evocation of the nether world. In *Guignol's Band* it is the figure of Mille-Pattes, and to a lesser degree, that of Sosthène de Rodiencourt who Ferdinand perceives as rivals capable of seducing Virginie.

In *Féerie I*, the artist Jules fulfils this role, depicted in the scene where he attempts to seduce Lili by asking her to pose for him in an indecent manner: "Ecarte-toi! Ecarte ça large ... bien les cuisses" (FI p 154) But perhaps the greatest act of treachery and

⁸⁷⁶ Vladimir Nabokov *Littératures II* traduction française Fayard 1985 p 173

⁸⁷⁷ Serge Meitinger *De l'immonde ou la voix du souterrain – à propos du Sous-sol de Dostoïevski* in *L'imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l'Harmattan 1997 p 109

⁸⁷⁸ Girard, R. : *Dostoïevski : Du double à l'unité* p 59

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid* : p 59

source of abjection for Céline in this episode arises from Lili's implied complicity with Jules, by appearing oblivious to Céline's distress and sharing laughter with Jules : "L'Arlette sur le lit-cage, là nue, écartée ... elle se met à rire!" (FI p 155) This episode ends with Céline's flight into the metro like an animal taking refuge in its lair "Au métro! au métro!" (FI p 158) However, it is the state of delirium in which he attempts to gain that refuge that images of the nether world are evoked, as he makes his way towards the métro in a semblance of intoxication, stumbling and vomiting until he finally collapses in a stream, a "gouffre qui remonte ... et qui renforce (...) tout au fond un petit trou, l'égout!..." (FI p 158) This scene abounds with hypogeal images, invoked by words such as 'égout', 'trou' and 'gouffre', resulting in a tableau which, perhaps more than any other in the work, evokes a malign image of the nether world. The culmination of the horror experienced by Céline is the nightmarish image of the whole of Paris being engulfed in the sewer : "(...) tout Paris! l'égout ... au fond de l'égout!" (FI p 158)

Free will

It is evident, from the inextricable fabric of both Céline's life and his work, that freedom, free will and especially his predilection for suffering and humiliation were intrinsic to his life. This echoes the mindset of Dostoïevski's 'souriceau' who *chose* to « récuser si violemment le déterminisme et l'utilitarisme qui conduisent à l'utopie du 'palais de cristal'. »⁸⁸⁰ It is this conviction that led Céline to reject the sentimentality in the scenario of Bernardin de St Pierre's novel *Paul et Virginie*. It follows that those who share this viewpoint will always prefer 'caprice' and the vagaries associated with a rejection of determinism, despite the fact that this may lead "...à la ruine et à la souffrance; et que la liberté ne se divise pas plus que la conscience ne se réduit."⁸⁸¹ This, in Meitinger's view, is the quintessence of the "voix du souterrain qui parle."⁸⁸² Quoting Dostoïevski in *Sous-sol*, it is the expression of one who is "(...) un être léger, sans noblesse", one who is aware that man's true aim in life is none other than "...ce processus sans fin; autrement dit, *dans la vie elle-même*."⁸⁸³ (our emphasis) Choosing the opposite of this approach – the goal rather than the process – would amount to "le

⁸⁸⁰ Serge Meitinger *De l'immonde ou la voix du souterrain – à propos du Sous-sol de Dostoïevski* in *L'imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l'Harmattan 1997 p 106

⁸⁸¹ Ibid p 106

⁸⁸² Ibid p 107

⁸⁸³ Ibid p 107

commencement de la mort.”⁸⁸⁴ Those, like Céline, who are endowed with this type of hypogeal logic, one where «L’homme du ‘sous-plancher’ se refuse à envisager quelque finalité que ce soit et la logique de *l’immonde* ne préserve ainsi, outre la conscience, qu’une seule capacité humaine: la liberté ou libre arbitre, le libre choix du meilleur impliquant la possibilité de *choisir librement le pire* (...)»⁸⁸⁵, is one who is truly free. It is this freedom which pervades Céline’s works and makes them not only universal but unique in a world where so many gravitate towards the mythical ‘crystal palace’ for want of the courage to choose its less attractive opposite.

Ariel

The reference to the quality of ‘lightness’ in the Dostoïevski quote *supra* has particular resonance for Céline as, in an interview in 1957 with the journalist Pauwels, he condemned heaviness as one of the worst human characteristics, comparing those who were endowed with this quality with Shakespeare’s Caliban, while his praise was reserved for those who displayed the characteristics of an Ariel and the lightness of being this implies.⁸⁸⁶

In the context of the above, Céline’s embrace of the subterranean world and its salutary effect on his creativity, becomes clear when translated into the author’s profound identification with humanity in general and, by extension, with all that invests the individual with humanity. The significance of the abyss as a motif (or leitmotif) in Céline’s works thus becomes clear:

“La liberté dévolue à l’homme qu’elle soit employé à ne rien faire (...) ou à mal faire (...), qu’elle soit une liberté généreusement créatrice; qu’elle travaille à s’accroître ou à se nier, reste égale à son ‘fonds’ *qui est un abîme* mais seul un tel ‘sans-fond’ assure à l’homme ce qu’il continue à appeler son humanité et sa vie.»⁸⁸⁷ (our emphasis)

⁸⁸⁴ Serge Meitinger *De l’immonde ou la voix du souterrain – à propos du Sous-sol de Dostoïevski* in *L’imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l’Harmattan 1997 p 107

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid : p 107

⁸⁸⁶ Both Caliban and Ariel feature in Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest* which, in its turn; resonates with much of Céline’s work. We discuss this in the following chapter in the context of an acquisition of artistic aesthetic. .

⁸⁸⁷ Meitinger, Serge : *De l’immonde ou la voix du souterrain – à propos du Sous-sol de Dostoïevski* in *L’imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l’Harmattan 1997 : p 107

Indeed, these qualities are so firmly rooted in this type of man that they exert on him a « rapport mystérieux et abyssale' – vide, déhiscence ou faille – avec la 'terre' »⁸⁸⁸

This telluric form of identification is evident in the plethora of references to underground spaces in Céline's works, be they man-made spaces such as the métro, sewers or vats, or natural ones such as holes, crevasses, abysses or caverns. However, in all their manifestations they serve the same purpose; that of a catalyst for the regeneration of Céline's creative impulse drawn from that which is most profound both the earth and in man. For we carry within ourselves the seeds of both the pure and the impure – *mundus* and *immundus*. It is in choosing the abyss rather than the peak that we discover our true humanity. Indeed, « le libre choix du *pire* n'est pas seulement une menace; il est aussi le garant de l'humanité comme telle. »⁸⁸⁹ As both a doctor and a writer, no one understood better than Céline the wisdom of adhering to that prescription.

Janus

In Aebersold's view, *Guignol's Band* signals the advent of the antinomy of a "monde à l'envers" where the opposing factions of heaven/hell, light/darkness, assumption/fall are embodied in the two facets of Virginie's Janus face. It is she who leads Ferdinand "rivé à elle comme à son *anima*"⁸⁹⁰ to a space *between* the two irreconcilable poles of his being. We cannot help detecting an autobiographical link between Céline and the figure of Ferdinand in this instance, as Aebersold points out that it is the dancer (in this case Virginie who imitates the movements of dance rather than actually dancing) who "dit les conflits et les variations de l'être de Céline dont elle est, en quelque sorte, le régulateur à un moment donné de l'oeuvre."⁸⁹¹ The autobiographical relevance of the Janus-faced woman to Céline is significant, as « les deux natures de la femme correspondent à ses dispositions intérieures »⁸⁹², underpinning the notion of a double nature, *anima-animus*, within the author himself.

The double-faced image of woman embodied in the character of Virginie - a synthesis of both Eve and Lilith – is common in occultism and has been used by

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid p 107

⁸⁸⁹ Meitinger, Serge : *De l'immonde ou la voix du souterrain – à propos du Sous-sol de Dostoïevski* in *L'imaginaire du souterrain* Editions de l'Harmattan 1997 : p 107

⁸⁹⁰ Aebersold D. : *Entre Satanisme et 'Catharisme'* : p 14

⁸⁹¹ Ibid : p 13

⁸⁹² Ibid p 16

Hugo, Nerval and Baudelaire to “(reproduire) la figure de la tête magnifique de Zohar; une tête lumineuse, droite, sur un fond noir, l’autre ténébreuse, renversée sur un fond blanc.”⁸⁹³ According to Eliphas Levi, writing in his *Le Grand Arcane ou l’occultisme dévoilé*, “La femme noire c’est Eve déçue, c’est la forme passive, l’infernale Hécate (...) la femme blanche, c’est Maïa ou Maria qui tient à la fois sous son pied le croissant de lune et la tête du serpent noir »⁸⁹⁴ This double-faced image of woman is discernible in Céline’s works in the figures of Virginie, Lilli -Arlette and Pryntl of *Scandale aux Abysses*, as well as the dancers in *L’Eglise* or *Progrès*. They are the literary transposition of the two faces of Sophia/Zohar, « l’une rayonne de lumière, l’autre est nocturne et sauvage. »⁸⁹⁵

In *Guignol’s Band II*, an interesting inversion of the traditional Good-Evil notion occurs, where it is the figure of Mille-Pattes, undeniably a grotesque and malevolent figure, who becomes weightless, while Ferdinand is earthbound; discovering that he has developed a limp : “Je suis pas bon, moi, je claudique”(GB II p 491) Later, following on the heels of Mille-Pattes’ headlong dash through the streets of London in search of the Touit-Touit Club, Ferdinand remarks that he has “... mal à la jambe..” (GBII p 495) Ferdinand’s revulsion for Mille-Pattes – heightened by his jealousy regarding the latter’s behaviour towards Virginie at dinner – is compounded by the realisation that the strange grotesque creature is evil: “C’est au sabbat qu’il nous livre! Il a tout ourdi!” (GBII p496) The narrator’s worst fears are confirmed on arrival at the club which is situated in « une longue *cave* tout en en lumière – des miroirs tout partout tournant ... (GBII p 497) (our emphasis) Crammed with 300 people, and illuminated by “un éclairage terrible” (GBIIp 496), it is a grotesque vision of the underworld.

During the debauchery that follows, Mille-Pattes becomes progressively weightless and correspondingly more grotesque – an inversion of the roles of Good and Evil. Accentuating Mille-Pattes’ satanic nature is the fact that he clings to the ceiling *head down*, an image that is repeated in *Féerie pour une autre fois* where Jules’s paintings are displayed in this way. “Il flotte, c’est un paquet de guenilles au-dessus de

⁸⁹³ Aebersold D. : *Entre Satanisme et ‘Catharisme’* : p 15

⁸⁹⁴ Levi, E : quoted in Aebersold D.: *Entre Satanisme et ‘Catharisme’* : p 15

⁸⁹⁵ *Ibid* p 15

‘assistance (...) des gambades de folle araignée (...) et tête en bas pieds aux glaces, une vraie mouche en l’air trottinante (...) » (GBII pp 498-499) Mille-Pattes exerts what can only be described as a hypnotic effect on the revellers by whirling like a dervish above their heads, « il tourbillonne si vite si vite si rotatif que ça chante, que l’air piaule au-dessus des têtes ... c’est un vertige toupie vivante (...) il devient lui la vitesse, l’élan comme une grosse boule de lueur bleue (...) » (GBII p 501) His unearthly aspect, already presaged on leaving the restaurant earlier that evening, when he slips through a closed door like « une feuille d’une espèce de gélatine » (GBII p 491), is once again highlighted when he mutates into a sort of ectoplasm above the dancers’ heads, dissolving into a “lueur bleue”. (GBII p 501) We believe this image is a clear expression of a ‘monde à l’envers’ which characterises the grotesque in that the values of Good and Evil are reversed through Mille-Pattes’ weightless performance where good is conventionally associated with lightness and weightlessness expressed in Céline’s works by the images of dancers, whereas evil is traditionally represented by earth-bound, often crippled figures.

Grotesque

Both the noun and the adjective ‘grotesque’ are derived from the Italian ‘grottesca’ meaning ‘cave’. As a noun, ‘grotesque’ means “Ornements fantastiques découverts aux XVe et XVIe siècles dans les ruines des monuments antiques italiens (appelées *grottes*). » As an adjective, the word means « Risible par son apparence bizarre, caricaturale, burlesque, extravagant. »⁸⁹⁶ In a literary context; the noun ‘grotesque’ is defined as « le genre grotesque; le comique de caricature poussé jusqu’au fantastique, à l’irréel », while Victor Hugo saw the grotesque as « la plus riche source que la nature puisse offrir à l’art. »⁸⁹⁷ In turn, the *Novissimo dizionario della Lingua Italiana* defines ‘grottesca’ as “A type of decorative painting featuring bizarre and monstrous figures, so named for first having been discovered in certain caves among the ruins of Rome”⁸⁹⁸ These definitions therefore imply an association between the subterranean world and the grotesque.

⁸⁹⁶ Le Nouveau Petit Robert : Dictionnaires Le Robert Paris 1993 : p 1180

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid p 1180

⁸⁹⁸ « ...sorta di pittura decorativa, con figure bizzarre e mostruose ; così detta per essere stata dapprima trovata in certe grotte che erano tra le rovine di Roma. » : *Novissimo Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*: Palazzi: Fratelli Fabbri Editori :1977: p 637

In his work *La vie des plus remarquables des peintres, sculpteurs et architectes italiens*, Giorgio Vasari notes that those artists capable of creating works representing “des difformités monstrueuses créées du caprice de la nature ou de la fantaisie extravagante (...)”, and of inventing “ces formes en dehors de toute règle”, were those who were the most gifted, being possessed of ‘l’imagination la plus folle’⁸⁹⁹.

However, it is perhaps the definition of German theoretician Wolfgang Kayser that most succinctly encapsulates the grotesque in terms of what Céline aimed to achieve in using this motif. Kayser describes the grotesque as « la destruction progressive [de] la prise de conscience de l’abolition, de l’ordre, de la cohérence et du sens. » At the start, this would be accompanied by a « sentiment d’étrangeté, d’exclusion hors de l’univers organisé, pour s’achever dans une expérience de vide et de néant. »⁹⁰⁰ This definition is relevant in the context of Céline’s works, where, for various reasons, he was an observer rather than a participator in life and, latterly, while in prison, physically excluded from his world. These sentiments were expressed in a letter to his friend Henri Mahé, claiming that he was a “voyeur oui, acteur jamais ...”⁹⁰¹

In *Voyage au bout de la Nuit*, it is the first World War that acts as an alienating force, setting Céline apart from an existence that had previously been relatively uneventful. *Mort à Crédit* deals with the sense of dislocation and antipathy the author felt as a child growing up in an environment which was punctuated by uncontrollable outbursts of his father’s anger. And both versions of *Guignol’s Band* recount the author’s first years of true freedom as a young man in London during the latter part of the first World War, an experience that although happy, signalled a complete change of environment from that of his youth in Paris. At each of these definitive stages in his life, Céline was compelled to assume a distance, both to protect himself from emotional damage and to observe more acutely the incidents comprising his life in order to describe them objectively in his capacity as a writer.

As the second World War became imminent, Céline made increasingly impassioned attempts to avert it by promoting a Franco-German *entente* while simultaneously

⁸⁹⁹ Schaffner, A : *Une enfance à crédit : Mort à Crédit : Récit d’enfance et démesure* : p 283 : Cité par André Chastel dans *Le Grotesque* p 31

⁹⁰⁰ Schaffner, A : *Une enfance à crédit : Mort à Crédit : Récit d’enfance et démesure* : p 283 : quoted by Dominique Iehl in *Le Grotesque* p 13

⁹⁰¹ Aebersold D.: *Entre Satanisme et ‘Catharisme* p 13 ; Mahé, H. *La Brinquebale avec Céline* p 111

denigrating the Jews *en bloc* for what he saw as their tacit support for the war through their capitalistic endeavour. Once more, the order of Céline's life was disrupted, leading him to write the pamphlets, starting with *Mea Culpa* which dealt with his disillusionment over the failure of the communist ideal, followed in quick succession by *Bagatelles pour un Massacre*, *L'École des Cadavres* and *Les Beaux Draps*.

Caverns, cripples

Central to our hypothesis regarding a representation of the grotesque in Céline's works is the fact that it usually occurs in some form of subterranean space, and that the events taking place are frequently embodied in characters who possess some form of disability. Grotesque figures of both sexes in Céline's works are most often crippled. They either '*boite*' or '*claudique*' in varying degrees, thus rendering them earth-bound. This, in contrast to those figures capable of defying gravity, of literally rising above the earth - an ability emblematic of the dancers Céline so admired for their superbly-toned muscular legs. This is a characteristic possessed by Virginie in *Guignol's Band II* - one which leads Ferdinand to worship her to a degree not encountered anywhere else in Céline's work. Her beauty, which for Ferdinand lies mainly in the superb musculature of her legs, entrances him to the degree that on meeting her, he literally loses his direction, exclaiming " Ah! je perds le nord! la mémoire!" (GBII p 343) In contrast to, and perhaps highlighted by Céline's admiration for the superb limbs of the dancer, Clémence's crippled leg in *Mort à Crédit* appears even more grotesque to the point that the image of her massaging her leg appears positively indecent, filling the reader with revulsion rather than pity. "Elle retrouse tout le haut, toutes ses cottes... Elle se découvre toutes ses cuisses, le bas ventre, la fente et le poilu... Elle se tord dans les douleurs ... Elle se masse comme ça tout doucement... Elle en est repliée en deux." (MàC p 821)

In *Voyage au bout de la Nuit*, the only cave-like space is that of the "cave aux momies" (V p 390) presided over by Madame Henrouille, who goes to considerable trouble to divest them of their grotesqueness. « Pendant la saison; les touristes n'en finissaient pas. Ils traînaient au caveau et la mère Henrouille parvenait à les faire rigoler. »(V p 393) As for the narrator, although Bardamu has been wounded in the war, he hardly qualifies as a 'grotesque', despite admitting that "(sa) tête n'a jamais été très solide. »(V p 102) If anything, it is Robinson, Bardamu's *alter ego*, « Ce changement

dans la disposition de l'ombre(...) » (V p 41) who qualifies for this epithet. However, although manifest in Robinson in particular, in this novel the grotesque is implicit in *all* men, as expressed by Bardamu towards the end of the story while meditating on “la guerre et la maladie, ces deux infinis du cauchemar.” (Vp 418) The ultimate nightmare facing man is his inability to be “soi-même, c'est-à-dire immonde, atroce, absurde. (...) d'avoir à présenter toujours comme un petit idéal universel, sur-homme du matin au soir, le sous-homme *claudicant* qu'on nous a donné. » (V p 418) (our emphasis)

In *Mort à Crédit*, the Passage des Bérésinas represents an underground space – itself containing a *gigogne* underground space; the cellar to which Ferdinand's father Auguste retreats in times of stress. It is home to the grotesque life of the narrator's family – his mother crippled, his father frustrated at not having ‘become’ someone and consequently venting his anger on Ferdinand and his mother Clémence. The grotesque in this novel is more societal than that of an individual, confined to a figurative subterranean space represented by the Passage Choiseul. The office of Courtial des Péreires, though not strictly speaking a ‘cave’, nevertheless has the appearance of one as it is “en fait de terrible désordre, de caphernaüm absolu, de payage totale” (MàC p 845) However, as Courtial's behaviour becomes progressively grotesque after the accident involving his balloon the ‘Zélé’, “Il préférait de beaucoup sa cave”, abandoning his mezzanine which had become “trop exposé, trop facilement accessible” (MàC p 904) But if Courtial des Péreires is grotesque in his behaviour and surroundings, it is his wife Irène whose appearance and behaviour is truly grotesque. She is a “mutilée” (MàC p 912) having had her ovaries removed, as a result of which she has grown a moustache which she “voulait pas se faire épiler... Et c'était pas une petite ombre!” (MàC p 912) This disfigurement forces her to wear thick makeup and an outrageous hat with a veil “Elle s'était poudrée... plâtrée... fardée tant et plus! Elle se faisait des cils d'odalisque (...)” (MàC p 912). Accentuating the grotesqueness of this androgynous figure, after replacing her « volumineux papeau, avec son massif d'hortensias », she nonchalantly takes out “une grosse pipe en bruyère” (MàC p 912), and proceeds to smoke it in the office, despite Ferdinand's protestations.

In this novel, the scene of Courtial's last agronomic disaster is Blême-le-Petit, a desolate village, no more than a « hameau croulant », inhabited only by “deux vieux

croquants si agés qu'ils pouvaient plus quitter leur piaule ..." who bizarrely "se pissaient tout le temps l'un sur l'autre..." (MàC p 996) Though not strictly a cave, the dwelling inhabited by Courtial and his assistants bears the characteristics of one, including lack of warmth and light thus qualifying it as an underground space. The epitome of the grotesque in the experiment is attained when the potatoes are ridden with maggots, to the extent that "le champ grouillait, même en surface" resulting in the irony of having created a "race tout à fait spéciale d'asticots entièrement vicieux (...)" (MàC pp 1028-1029), capable of infecting the world. The novel ends with the suicide of Courtial des Péreires, reduced to "une espèce de gros paquet" (MàC p 1040) in the middle of the road, his head "qu'un massacre! ... Il se l'était tout éclatée ..." (MàC p 1040) The grotesque meets the ridiculous when Ferdinand and Irène des Péreires attempt to move the body to the side of the road, only to find it is frozen to the ground. Even in death, des Péreires lacks dignity, thus accentuating the grotesqueness of his life.

It is in both versions of *Guignol's Band* that the grotesque reaches its culmination and, concomitantly, where its depiction is set against the backdrop of subterranean spaces. In the first version, the death of Titus van Claben is grotesque on both a literal and a figurative level, as he dies at the hand of his life's work, as much in the thrall of swallowing the coins as he was in amassing them. Avidly, he fills his mouth, « les pièces par poignées ... comme ça de force! Il avait beau suffoquer il en voulait encore, toujours ! davantage ! (...) le goulou ! » (GBI p 220) However, his actual demise comes even more bizarrely in an attempt to *retrieve* the coins by turning him upside down « Il dégueule pas ! rien! Il dégurgite pas une seule pièce! » (GBI p 223) during which he is dropped on his head, fracturing his skull "sa tête qu'est fondue." (GBI p 223) Compounding the grotesqueness of the situation, to the chagrin of Ferdinand, Boro and Delphine, "Il n'a pas dégueulé un rond! ... pas un seul petit 'sovering'" (GBI p 223). At this juncture, with apparent indifference to the deed that has been committed, Delphine falls asleep "là, vautreée contre le vieux" (GBI p 223) grotesque in her indifference to her employer's fate.

This incident takes place in Titus van Claben's lodgings-cum-pawnbroker's shop, the description of which resembles that of Courtial des Péreires' cavelike premises in *Mort à Crédit*. Surrounded by junk, piled so high it threatens to engulf anyone sitting

beneath it, « Titus lui se trouvait bien à l'aise au *creux* de l'énorme cafouillis! au coeur du négoce – en pleine forme, en raison d'être en plein sanctuaire, derrière son globe, sa lampe à eau. » (GBI p 196) (our emphasis) Although not strictly a cave, the premises are cave-like in their obscurity, where a lamp burns throughout the day .What is more, the pawnbroker is a creature of darkness who “se ratatinait râleux au fond de sa boutique, calfeutré, sournois; il se méfiait de la radieuse saison (...) Il sortait jamais de chez lui.” (GBI p 190) This is the image of a figure who is a cave *unto himself*; someone who inhabits his own subterranean space, hermetically sealed within his own being, and for that reason, all the more grotesque. In terms of our hypothesis regarding the link between caves and the grotesque, it is not surprising that his death mirrors his life in its grotesqueness. While his outward appearance was more bizarre than grotesque, being introduced as an exotic rather than a grotesque figure, “en grand costume de pacha (...) tout paré de soie jaune et mauve avec un turban colossal et puis une canne toute en pierreries et une grosse loupe de bijoutier.” (GBI p 181), both his lifestyle – and his death – undoubtedly qualify for the epithet ‘grotesque’.

In *Guignol's Band II*, the grotesque appearance of characters is linked to subterranean spaces in a more literal manner, especially with regard to the strange ‘nabot’ Mille-Pattes who “incarne sans doute le plus abouti chez Céline de ces personnages inquiétants.”⁹⁰² and the bacchanalian episode at the Touit Touit club. This sequence represents not only the culmination of the grotesque in the novel itself, but also that of its representation within the body of Céline’s work. The ‘cave’ in question is actually a ‘cuve’ or tank or vat which evokes an image of alchemy; of disparate elements thrown together and subjected to a chemical change through the action of a catalyst, to produce an entirely different substance. The catalyst in question is the malevolent dwarf Mille-Pattes – the sorcerer who leads Ferdinand and Virginie into what appears to be a “grand sabbat” (GBII p 502) celebrated in the “Profondeurs de la Terre”. (GBII p 443)

In *Féerie pour une autre fois*, Jules is the ultimate grotesque, being legless and therefore completely earth-bound and compelled to transport himself on a ‘gondole’. According to Miroux, “Le caractère dangereux du boiteux est encore plus accentué si

⁹⁰² Miroux, P: *Danser et boiter dans l'oeuvre de Céline* p 209

la difformité de la jambe est portée jusqu'à son point qu'une gadoue saturne ! »⁹⁰³
 Compounding Jules's grotesque image is the fact that all his paintings are hung upside-down « ... son plafond était à se souvenir ... tout des paysages à l'envers... toutes ses toiles fixées au plafond... » (FI p 130) Like Mille-Pattes, he is « ... le carabosse malgré tout ! ... bien dégueulasse, bien féroce, bien roublard, cabotin, abject, mais tout de même cul-de-jatte dans sa merde ... scié de 14 (...) » (FI p 134)

Within the context of the link between the grotesque and underground spaces, it is interesting to note that true to the image of a double-sided feminine entity, in this novel, "le rôle équilibrant et réparateur est attribué à une (...) femme : Mimi. Elle seule peut monter à l'échelle, détrôner Jules et faire cesser les bombardements. Fidèle à l'image d'une *entité féminine double*, Céline la fait aussitôt disparaître dans la caverne du métro en compagnie du cul de jatte maléfique retombé en enfance.»⁹⁰⁴
 (our emphasis)

Trilogy

In the three novels of the trilogy, the setting for the grotesque becomes more figurative; metaphorical in that the cave-like spaces are represented by the horror of wartime Europe in its entirety. With regard to the narrator and the characters in these novels, if we accept that the grotesque is represented by various forms of deformity or disability, a significant instance of the grotesque occurs in *Nord* at Berlin Station – a place emblematic of arrival and departure made even more poignant in wartime. It is here that Céline first perceives his inability to walk normally, "j'ai commencé à zigzaguer ... et houer." (N p 331), to the extent that he "n'(a) pas lâché la rampe ... mais (il n'a) plus jamais marché droit (...) Il (lui) faudrait une canne! » (N p 331) The grotesqueness of this incident is heightened by the fact that it occurs in the cavernous setting of Berlin-Anhalt station, a place that is "tout à fait indiqué pour devenir fantôme."⁹⁰⁵ Germany itself (together with all other European countries engaged in war) had become grotesque at this stage of the war, so it is not surprising that the narrator, Céline, "...boite précisément quand il est en état de passage dans ce Styx

⁹⁰³ Miroux, P: *Danser et boiter dans l'oeuvre de Céline* :p 209

⁹⁰⁴ Aebersold D. *Entre Satanisme et 'Catharisme'* p 16

⁹⁰⁵ Miroux P-M : *Danser et boiter dans l'oeuvre de Céline* p 213

qu'est l'Allemagne à la fin de la guerre, prise dans l'apocalypse des bombardements.»⁹⁰⁶

However, the narrator is just one of the characters in the first novel of the trilogy who is afflicted with a disability. Dr Harras, a former colleague of Céline's, describes the Landrat Otto von Simmer, former colonel during the first World War, wounded at Douaumont, as a cripple, a nihilist and a racist, who « boite, voux verrez, il n'aime pas du tout les Français, ni les Russes, ni les nazis, ni les Polonais, ni personne (...) » (N p 402) The reader is thus effectively warned : « en l'occurrence, boiter équivaut à désirer la mort d'autrui .»⁹⁰⁷ As for the strange character of Dr Pretorius who Céline and his companions meet in Berlin, he not only seems a little deranged, but he too « boite un peu » (N p 351), lives in the only surviving apartment in a ruined block and is a fanatical admirer of Hitler. According to Miroux, « Le caractère dangereux du boiteux est encore plus accéléré si la difformité de la jambe est portée jusqu'à son point extrême quand la jambe n'existe plus que par son absence. ». In this novel, that definition applies to the 'cul-de-jatte' in the person of the 'Fils von Leiden' who qualifies for the epithet of a character who is particularly "véneux dans la thématique célinienne."⁹⁰⁸ It is he who, perched on the shoulders of his companion Nikolas, attempts to shoot the narrator who is contemplating the cul-de-jatte's wife Isis "allongée assez pour que (il) lui voie les jambes, même un peu les cuisses". (N p 479) Adding to his grotesqueness, « ce fils von Leiden est épileptique » (N p 481)

Although Dr Harras himself is not physically handicapped, a sinister air surrounds his arrivals and departures, infusing Céline and his companions with a sense of uncertainty. It is his headquarters however which lend grotesqueness to the situation, as they are situated in a tunnel, where "... ils doivent demeurer au fond... ça doit être une grotte confortable." (N p 368) Harras is also grotesque in his lack of emotion and his eerie foreknowledge of the trio's arrival; no doubt part of his SS activity muses the narrator : « les pays à dictature, même en ruine, avant que vous alliez quelque part, on sait qui vous êtes (...)» (N p 368) However, Harras is not without his "échappées de clown" (N p 370), which, far from alleviating his darker side, only serve to accentuate

⁹⁰⁶ Miroux p-M : *Danser et boiter dans l'œuvre de Céline* p 213

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid p 209

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid p 210

it. In the face of the trio's misery, "son rire qu'était un peu trop..."(N p 371), seems cynical, almost mocking the gravity of their situation : «... nous bien difficile de rire depuis notre départ de Montmartre ... la rigolade était cuite ! » (N p 371) Harras's offices and laboratory are even more sinister than Céline had imagined – "une grotte, un peu de jour – une autre – et des bureaux dans les parois – au moins vingt metres sous terre"(N p 374), a subterranean space that supports our hypothesis regarding a parallel between instances of the grotesque and a chthonic milieu in Céline's works.

Representation of the grotesque in *D'un Château l'autre* is relatively benign, as the only figures who appear in any way disabled are Alphonse de Chateaubriant, "le voici! il boite! (...) notre dernière rencontre à Baden-Baden, il boitait moins (...) ».(CA p 229), and the princess Hermilie of Hohenzollern. Only the latter lives in an underground space among the bombed ruins of the city. The narrator can hardly believe his eyes when, waiting for bread to be distributed, he sees the princess emerge from her cavern, shaded by a pink parasol carried by her lady-in-waiting. « ... oh, mais je gafais mon trou! le cratère ... comme certain que par là... ça y est ! ... j'en vois sortir comme deux gros rats ! ... deux personnes très emmitouflées ! ... des femmes... deux femmes... (...) elles sortent du fond de la crevasse... (...) elles doivent vivre dans les catacombes... » (CA p 120) While her companion is fairly young, the princess is "extrêmement carabosse! tordue!" (CA p 120), with a nose covered in warts, a distinguishing feature of the Hohenzollern family the narrator had observed in portraits hung at the Chateau. "... le nez busqué comme, et terminé par un bourgeon... tous une, deux... trois verrues violettes!" (CA p 122). Failing to obtain the rations they sought, both women disappear as abruptly as they emerged, into the « trou par où elles étaient venues... » (CAp 123)

The other grotesque female figure in this novel is neither physically grotesque, nor does she inhabit an underground space. However, neither of these previously qualifying factors diminishes her grotesqueness, inherent in a demonic quality that made more sinister in its dissimulation. This is Aïcha, wife of Baron von Raumnitz, "... élevée à Beyrouth". [Ibid p 149]. Always accompanied by her two huge mastiffs, she is the epitome of strangeness and menace – a metaphor for the Château as a whole.

The hallucinatory episode of *La Publique* at the start of *D'un Château l'autre* is emblematic of the trilogy in general, which recounts Céline's apocalyptic journey with Lili and Le Vigan through Germany in the last months of the war. Peopled by phantoms, including Le Vigan dressed as a gaucho, his wife Anita who Céline has never met and Emile, the mechanic at a garage frequented by the author in Montmartre, the boat is captained by Charon; the Seine has become the river Styx. Charon himself is grotesque; a giant, "au moins trois... quatre fois comme (lui)! ... un Bibendum ! (CA p 79), with the head of a monkey, "un peu tigre! moitié singe... moitié tigre.." (CA p 79) and dressed in a silver-embroidered redingote, wearing a helmet "formidable comme lui! et d'amiral... haute, large! brodée or!" (CA p 79) Even for Céline, who admits to being "né curieux, vous l'êtes pour toujours" (CA p 80), the tableau becomes untenable, and in a decisive movement, he leaves. Nevertheless, he is tempted to join the *Publique's* passengers ; to assume their grotesqueness, « que je remonte là-haut tout morpion? ... en sorte de mi-araignée? comme Emile, concassé comme! ... brisure !... » (CA p 85)

The reader is left with the impression that Céline, though tempted by Death, refuses it, despite reliving his near-death experiences. He ultimately chooses life – and to continue writing: "Oh! c'était à pas s'endormir!... réfléchir... oui !... méditer... mais foutre le camp ! même moi là, très diminué très avachi, presque knockout, je me rendais compte... c'était pas à rester du tout !... d'abord et d'un ! »(CA p 85) The author had clearly not yet reached the end of his own particular 'night' on a journey leading towards an encounter with himself.

Chapter Seven

My Bard-à-moi : Shakespeare and Céline

Blueprint for another time

Céline's reflection on Shakespeare, his works and their methodology discussed earlier in this work⁹⁰⁹, is underscored in a letter written to the playwright Charles Dullin in 1929; the first public literary text signed by Louis Destouches. The dialogue that ensues through Dullin's response to Destouches' letter is indicative of the aesthetic to be adopted by the aspiring writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline. Moreover, the text of Destouches' letter proves that his interest in theatre extended far beyond a simple frequentation by a neighbouring Montmartrois of *L'Atelier*, the theatre founded by Dullin, and where he staged his works. But if that letter is instructive, so too is Dullin's astute reply, enumerating and analyzing each issue raised by Céline, to the extent that « Ce devoir de conviction, le romancier Céline s'en souviendra assez pour se l'appliquer à lui-même et, jusque dans ses dernières oeuvres, en faire un leitmotiv de sa propre poétique. »⁹¹⁰

Significantly, the subject of this seminal correspondence was another playwright, Shakespeare, Céline observing that in his opinion only two types of play existed, both resembling saurian creatures: « celles qui vont quelque part et celles qui se mordent la queue. » He believed that this was a metaphor for the progression of the world, presenting only an illusion of immobility present in the image of a snake biting its own tail. In turn, the positive image of a world in progress symbolized for Céline all that was desirable in theatre: "Les vraiment bonnes pièces vont quelque part", towards "l'avenir du monde, et c'est leur rôle." What is more, declared Céline, this calibre of theatre was inherent in Shakespeare's works, as: "Presque tout Shakespeare va quelque part, c'est un feu d'artifice, une délivrance (...) C'est ça: une bonne pièce doit être une délivrance."⁹¹¹ In contrast, « tout ce qui ne finit pas est du music-hall. »⁹¹²

⁹⁰⁹ **Transgressors:** Chapter Four : The transgressive and maieutic function of Céline's idiolect in the production of comedy and caricature

⁹¹⁰ *Cahiers Céline 7 : Céline et l'Actualité 1933-1961* : Éditions Gallimard 1986 :Annexe 1 :Louis Destouches au théâtre (1929) : pp 71-72

⁹¹¹ Ibid pp 72- 73

⁹¹² Ibid p 73

Dullin, some nine years Céline's senior, is cautious in his reply, proffering advice while careful not to dampen the enthusiasm of the aspirant writer. While acknowledging that all great works originate in a source that is "étincélante et inconnue", a "foyer d'étincelles capable de transmettre le feu, ce feu ignoré, créateur de beauté, qui va (...) quelque part"⁹¹³, he would like to believe that the destination of this creative process was one that was worthy of receiving it. The playwright also cautions that, contrary to Destouches' belief, the last act of a well-written play is *not* necessarily its conclusion, as "les grandes oeuvres vont *au-delà* de leur dénouement (...) "⁹¹⁴ What is more, Dullin believed that many potentially excellent plays were ruined by a fabricated ending designed simply as a ploy to gain public support. And in a passage that cannot have failed to make a lasting impression on Destouches, the playwright points out that great theatrical works of art address fundamental human issues which are enacted by protagonists that are "les vivantes énigmes humaines"; those who in general are "des questionneurs et des revendicateurs",⁹¹⁵ for whom no concrete finality exists. One has only to recall Hamlet's words before dying to appreciate the veracity of Dullin's statement: "The rest is silence"⁹¹⁶ – words which simultaneously evoke the last words spoken in Céline's novel *Voyage au bout de la nuit* – "qu'on n'en parle plus"(V p 505) – the image of a void, and an impression of the eternal, cyclical nature of life and death.

Finally, Dullin critiques Destouches' impassioned observation that Shakespeare's works not only 'go somewhere', but they also resemble a fireworks display, a metaphor for deliverance, tempering the young writer's words with reason, and vowing to « retourner tout Shakespeare contre (lui) » by cautioning against the rash use of the words "c'est un feu d'artifice." In Dullin's view, a 'fireworks display' was a transitory thing, a "brilliant velléitaire, (qui) s'éteint dès qu'il retombe sur le sol."⁹¹⁷ However, Dullin agrees with Destouches' use of the word 'délivrance', without which a theatrical experience would be devoid of meaning, shallow, like a music-hall production. In contrast, *authentic* theatre possesses « une âme et une parole, et quand

⁹¹³ *Cahiers Céline 7 : Céline et l'Actualité 1933-1961* Editions Gallimard 1986 :Annexe 1 :Louis Destouches au théâtre (1929) : p 74

⁹¹⁴ Ibid p 74

⁹¹⁵ Ibid p 75

⁹¹⁶ William Shakespeare : *Hamlet* Act V scene 2 :Penguin Popular classics 2001 : p 154

⁹¹⁷ *Cahiers Céline 7 : Céline et l'Actualité 1933-1961* Editions Gallimard 1986 :Annexe 1 :Louis Destouches au théâtre (1929) : p 75

on le quitte on doit en remporter comme après une entrevue avec un ami, un saveur attendri, ou amusé, et parfois un réconfort. »⁹¹⁸ The playwright concludes his letter with words that appear, in retrospect, as a self-fulfilling prophecy with regard to the vicissitudes of Céline's future life : « Si le monde va quelque part, par quel entrelac de complications, et quelles entraves de contingences ne voit-il pas sa route barrée et son trajet ralenti ! Pour moi, je sais que je possède un but que je m'efforce d'atteindre, mais peut-on me demander d'être plus infallible et moins humain que la nature ? »⁹¹⁹ We can only speculate on the effect of Dullin's wise counsel on the nascent writer, who was to absorb and apply its wisdom, to the extent that it became a blueprint for his literary œuvre.

With regard to other literary influences on Céline, Georges Geoffroy, the author's friend and colleague at the French Consulate in London during the First World War, recalls the author's eclectic choice of reading material which included, in addition to certain German philosophers, English authors such as Kipling, Conrad and HG Wells, and importantly, Shakespeare, "the probable origin of '*Féerie*'"⁹²⁰

Initiators

There is no doubt that Shakespeare was the literary pendant of Semmelweis in the development of the schism between Céline the writer and Destouches the medical doctor. Although he frequently denigrated his gift as a writer⁹²¹ by insisting that his true vocation lay in medicine, there is no doubt that his immense literary gift at least equalled, if not surpassed that of his vocation as a medical doctor. Apart from the dialogue with Dullin, other references exist which underscore the thesis that Shakespeare was Céline's literary *alter ego*. In an interview with Georges Altman in the 1930s on the publication of *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, Céline cited Shakespeare and Dostoïevsky as his literary mentors: "L'essentiel, voyez-vous, dans la littérature, c'est poser une question. *Macbeth*, hein, ça pose une question? Dostoïevsky, ça pose

⁹¹⁸ *Cahiers Céline 7 : Céline et l'Actualité 1933-1961* Editions Gallimard 1986 :Annexe 1 :Louis Destouches au théâtre (1929) : p 75

⁹¹⁹ Ibid p 75

⁹²⁰ Hewitt, N : *The life of Céline : a critical biography*: Blackwell Publishers 1999: p 281

⁹²¹ Interview Marc Hanrez in *Cahiers Céline 2* : p 118 : « J'étais très médecin de tempérament : ma vocation n'était pas littéraire.(...) Ma pratique, si vous voulez, c'est une mystique, - la seule que j'aie, - et qui ne m'a pas réussi !... C'est une espèce d'idéal 'bonne sœur', que j'avais puissamment : me donner entièrement à l'adoucissement des maladies. » And again in *Cahiers Céline 7* : p 25 : « Je ne suis pas écrivain, vous dira Céline, je suis un médecin qui écrit. Voilà tout. »

une question, quelques livres, comme ça dans le monde...Le reste, hein? »⁹²² And at the close of the interview, Céline defines the *Voyage* as a pure work of fiction, as presaged in the novel's epigraph which imposes the seal of imagination on the work, "Voyager, c'est bien utile, ça fait travailler l'imagination. (...) C'est de l'autre côté de la vie. » (V p 5). As such, it is a novel which is peopled, not by real protagonists, but by « fantômes. »⁹²³ Astonished by Céline's words, Altman observes :

« C'est lui qui a dit cela, et nous le regardons frappés. ... Oui, des fantômes.... Ces apparitions frénétiques ou misérables, parcourant l'atmosphère un peu hagarde de ce voyage qui se passe toujours, tenacement, désespérément, dans la nuit, qui va jusqu'au fond de la nuit, jusqu'au bout de la nuit. Mais des fantômes plus vivants et plus vrais que des 'héros du roman'. Des fantômes qui résument l'homme, la 'condition humaine' ». ⁹²⁴

Proof that Shakespeare's influence over Céline extended throughout his life is manifest in his reply to Jacques Darribehaude's question regarding Shakespeare's possible primacy over a French classical writer such as Racine. In an interview shortly before the author's death, Céline affirms the interviewer's suggestion with the observation that it is Shakespeare's gift for comedy – or rather the alternation of comedy and tragedy – that sets him above other writers: "Parce qu'il y a de la rigolade (...) que les autres n'ont pas... Il a le rire, ce qui est énorme.... Et, quand vous avez à la fois le tragique et le rire, vous avez gagné (...) Tandis que les autres, dame, (...) c'est un peu monotone..."⁹²⁵ And in reply to Pierre Dumayet's question regarding Céline's preferred last words on his deathbed, the writer makes one of his most significant indirect references to Shakespeare by drawing a parallel between two diametrically opposed aspects of humanity, one personified in Shakespeare's character Ariel, the other embodied in the figure of Caliban, both present in *The Tempest*. Launching into a tirade against the profligate nature of modern man, Céline declares that his last words would be "il était lourd", concluding that "ils ne sont pas du côté d'Ariel, ils sont de plus en plus Caliban, de plus en plus..."⁹²⁶ In a contrapuntal observation to Céline's commentary on the nature of man, Verdaguer observes that « Chez Céline la pesanteur existentielle peut au contraire s'exprimer par le biais des compositions musicales, comme au *Tarapout*. La chose est dite de façon

⁹²² *Cahiers Céline I : Céline et l'Actualité littéraire 1932 – 1957* : Éditions Gallimard 1976 : p 37

⁹²³ *Ibid* : p 38

⁹²⁴ *Ibid* p 38

⁹²⁵ *Cahiers Céline 2 : Céline et l'Actualité littéraire 1957 – 1961* : Éditions Gallimard 1976 : p 153

⁹²⁶ *Œuvres de Céline – Edition présentée par Frédéric Vitoux* : Aux éditions du Club de l'Honnête Homme 1981 : Interview avec Pierre Dumayet : pp 121-122

non équivoque par Bardamu : 'Faut entendre au fond de toutes les musiques l'air sans notes, fait pour nous, l'air de la Mort' »⁹²⁷ Verdaguer emphasises that man is responsible for his unhappiness, for which he assumes guilt : « La lourdeur naturelle de l'individu se double d'un phénomène d'alourdissement par lequel il est tenu coupable. Céline est de ce point de vue, d'abord un moraliste. »⁹²⁸

Interviewed by Robert Poulet in 1958, Céline quotes Shakespeare when referring to death, and particularly the fact that in general, mankind is « un mort en sursis », adding that most men, unaware of their semi-moribund state, are no more than “des ombres qui marchent” in Shakespearean terms.⁹²⁹ At the start of the interview, Poulet draws the reader's attention to the fact that in order to appreciate and understand Shakespeare and Céline completely, one has to accept that “Shakespeare divague et Céline rabâche”⁹³⁰, thus drawing an implicit parallel between playwright and writer. And in an interview with Robert de Saint-Jean Céline emphasizes the emotional level of *délire* which he has to attain in order to equal that of his muse:

“Il faut que je touche au plan Shakespeare car je suis incapable de construire une histoire avec l'esprit logique des Français... (...) Ce que je peux faire facilement, c'est la chevalerie, le roman d'apparition avec des rois, des spectres.... Mais impossible pour moi de tracer l'épure d'un roman.... Il faut que je sente une résonance, que je travaille *dans le nerf*, (...) Je ne m'occupe jamais de logique. Je cherche à suivre la bonne piste, à toucher, (...) à ne pas lâcher, à arriver jusqu'à l'entrée de la grotte, puis à entrer dedans et alors le moindre son de ma voix appelle mille échos... (...) Je fais 'Ho' et ça me répond.”⁹³¹ (our emphasis)

Shades of Shakespeare

Although Shakespeare is not quoted directly in *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, his presence is felt through references to England, its language and its people encapsulated in Baryton's desire to acquire a mastery of the English language. There is, however, a tenuous link to Shakespeare in the tale of James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, Pretender to the British crown, and the Battle of Sedgemoor where the Duke's troops were massacred by King James's troops in 1685. That link is revealed

⁹²⁷ Verdaguer, P : *L'Univers de la cruauté : une lecture de Céline* : Librairie Droz : Genève 1988 : p 127 ; *Voyage au bout de la nuit* p 377

⁹²⁸ Ibid p 127

⁹²⁹ Poulet, R : *Entretiens familiers avec L-F Céline* : Librairie Plon : 1958 : p 127

⁹³⁰ Ibid p 10

⁹³¹ *Cahiers Céline I : Céline et l'Actualité Littéraire 1932-1957* : Gallimard 1976 : 22 février 1933 : pp 51-52

in the biography of King Henry V, the subject of one of the Bard's eponymous plays written at the height of his creative output, as King Henry was born at Monmouth in Monmouthshire, Wales in 1387. The significance of this link is the association of transgressive behaviour manifest both in Baryton daring to break free of the confines of the Vigny asylum, as well as that of the Duke of Monmouth in defying royal protocol by attempting to wrest the throne from King James II. By extension, the comportment of Shakespeare's figure of Henry V is transgressive in the extreme, wielding power over his courtiers and rivals, eventually triumphing at the battle of Agincourt and in so doing, subjecting the French to a humiliating defeat.

The figures of Baryton, Monmouth and Henry V all demonstrate iconoclastic tendencies inherent in figures of the Double present in Céline's works. We therefore posit that English, England and its culture symbolized by its emblematic playwright Shakespeare in turn represent a metaphor for the transgressive agency of the Double in Céline's oeuvre. This necessarily includes the theme of Doubles-as-Rival, as manifest in many of Shakespeare's plays.⁹³² Indeed, in the *Voyage*, Céline cautions the reader regarding the power of words to unleash violence, and in the incident cited below, to cause the death of the narrator's Double, Robinson: « Avec les mots on ne se méfie jamais suffisamment, ils ont l'air de rien les mots, pas l'air de dangers bien sûr, plutôt de petits vents, de petits sons de bouche (...) On ne se méfie pas d'eux des mots et le Malheur arrive. »⁹³³ The power of words as a metaphor for the transgressive agency of the Double is again demonstrated in the Baryton episode when « C'(était) à partir de ces leçons d'anglais que nous entrâmes tous dans une période absolument trouble, *équivoque* », a cycle during which life was to take on a rhythm « qui n'était plus du tout celui de la vie ordinaire. » (V p 433) The above quotations leave us in no

⁹³² These include *A Midsummer night's dream*, *Much Ado about nothing*, *As you like it* and *Twelfth Night*. Unfortunately the scope of this study precludes an in-depth study of the parallels between Céline's figures of the Double-as-Rival and those of Shakespeare. We intend to approach this subject at a later date in the context of René Girard's work *Shakespeare: A theatre of envy*. (*Shakespeare: Les feux de l'envie*)

We detect another intertextual reference between Céline and Shakespeare in the name Pyram or Piram for the dog belonging to the young girl Toïnon in *Maudits soupirs pour une autre fois* as well as in *Féerie II (Normance)*. In turn, Shakespeare is believed to have been influenced in the creation of *A Midsummer night's dream* which was probably based on Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with which Shakespeare was familiar: "Shakespeare knew his Ovid well, in both Latin and English. Several details of (*A Midsummer night's dream*) are influenced by the *Metamorphoses*, and Shakespeare's whole treatment of the Pyramus and Thisbe story may have been sparked off by his reading of it in Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid, published in 1567." : *A Midsummer night's dream*: Penguin books 1978: Introduction p 15

⁹³³ *Voyage au bout de la nuit* : Romans t I : Editions Gallimard 1981 : p 487

doubt that for Céline, words – and in particular a mastery of the English language – incorporate an inherently transgressive element which, when taken to extremes, may at best lead to an altered state of being; at worst, to death, as borne out in Robinson's fate. In his choice of the typically English name 'Robinson' for the Double of *his* avowed Double Bardamu, Céline demonstrates a proclivity towards English culture in general, the English language in particular and, by extension, to its best-known playwright Shakespeare. An acquisition of the mastery of words may therefore be deemed to be directly proportional to their transgressive agency. In aspiring to what Céline appears to have considered the epitome of literary expression embodied in Shakespeare's works, we may therefore conclude that this ambition implied a concomitant desire for textual transgression primarily manifest in the author's stylistics present in both *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois*.

Mort à Crédit

In Céline's second novel *Mort à crédit*, Shakespeare is once more not quoted directly, but is present *en filigrane*, in a veiled reference through an evocation of the power of words on two levels; that of its corollary silence, and allegorically through a typewriter, a *machine à écrire* capable of translating thought and emotion into text. Because Céline's violence is verbal and not physical, "...it is language which is the instrument of power, and not physical force. Why else should Ferdinand, in *Mort à crédit*, attempt to kill his father using a typewriter; a 'machine à écrire?'"⁹³⁴ In the first instance, the conscious mutism of Ferdinand the narrator which verges on autism, appears to be an extension of the closing words of the *Voyage*, "qu'on n'en parle plus" (V p 505) Significantly the narrator's refusal to speak occurs on English soil, at Meanwell College where he has ironically been sent by his parents to learn English! We posit that this occurrence is by design, the author thus manifesting a mirror-image of the power of language in its corollary, silence; a demonstration carried out in the birthplace of a playwright he had appropriated as his literary muse.

Immured in his mutism, Ferdinand discovers a degree of peace, a retreat from the violent domestic situation he had experienced in France: "Pendant trois mois j'ai pas mouffeté, j'ai pas dit hip! ni yip! (...) J'ai pas dit rien! (...) Je causais à personne. Je

⁹³⁴ Hewitt, N : *The life of Céline : a critical biography*: Blackwell publishers: 1999: p 285

me trouvais joliment bien. (MàC p 735) Silence is a refuge for Ferdinand, particularly in times of crisis, and the author's choice of words in describing such an occasion (when Merrywin takes it upon himself to write to Ferdinand's father to divulge the narrator's refusal to learn English) reveals the degree to which he has removed himself from social intercourse: "Je me *cloisonnais* dans mon silence – Je lui en voulais horriblement." (MàC p 736) (our emphasis) However, in a play on words which creates a metaphorical reversal of his mutism, Ferdinand returns his pent-up language to the single English female to whom he has formed an attachment – Nora Merrywin. « Je lui renforce dans la goulette, tout ce que je me trouve de *langue* (...) » (MàC p 769), in an act that was to end in tragedy with Nora's suicide, in itself a demonstration of the power of 'langu(e)age'. In consciously withholding the power of speech, the narrator in *Mort à crédit* thus presents the reader with a metaphorical pendant of the power of words expressed in the *Voyage*. Indeed, Ferdinand's silence in *Mort* evokes Suarès's description of the role of silence in the poet's life: « Tout est silence pour le suprême poète en attendant que tout soit grâce et harmonie. Il garde le silence, parce qu'il est tout musique. »⁹³⁵

The incident involving Auguste's typewriter occurs on Ferdinand's return home after a night of dissipation at the Tuileries, having lost the provisions he was sent to purchase that morning. Building slowly like an approaching storm, Auguste's anger rises, culminating in insults that his son can no longer ignore, until finally losing his head, Ferdinand puts an end to his father's tirade by dropping the latter's typewriter on his head. « Je soulève sa machine, la lourde, la pesante... Je la lève tout en l'air. (...) Je la lui verse dans la *gueule* ! (...) Je veux plus qu'il *cause* !... Je vais lui crever toute la *gueule*... » (MàC p 822) (our emphasis) Silenced through the agency of an instrument of writing, Auguste, deprived of his voice, becomes a French mirror-image of his son's voluntary mutism in England.

England

England, and his experience with the English language, has a profound, irreversible effect on Ferdinand, one which we view as an expression of the degree to which Shakespeare's birthplace left its mark on Céline. On Ferdinand's return to France,

⁹³⁵ Suarès, A : *Poète tragique : Shakespeare ou le portrait de Prospéro* : Editions François Bourin Paris, 1990 : pp 235-236

Uncle Édouard, who longed to visit England, greets Ferdinand with “un vrai *shake-hand* à tout rompre»(MàC p 785); an expression which betrays an allusion to the Elizabethan playwright in the first syllable of the anglicized form of greeting.⁹³⁶ As usual, Uncle Édouard comes to Ferdinand’s defence in the face of family criticism of his rebellious behaviour at Meanwell College, namely his failure to speak or to make any attempt to learn English, prompting the uncle’s bid to expiate his nephew’s ‘crime’ by explaining : “Que l’Angleterre tout spécialement pour ceux qui en reviennent, ça les *transforme*, du tout en tout! Ca les rend plus *laconiques*, plus réservés, ça leur donne une certaine distance, de la distinction pour tout dire... » (MàC p 786)(our emphasis) In this passage we are left in no doubt as to the transgressive – and catalytic - agency of England to effect permanent change in the individual. Just as Ferdinand returns to France indelibly stamped by his cross-Channel experience, we can only speculate that Céline was equally transformed by his contact with Shakespeare’s works. And later, when the author returned to London as a young man of twenty marked by his war experiences, it was a return marked by happiness and a sense of liberation from the literal and figurative confines of family life he had experienced in the Passage Choiseul. It was in this environment and in this state of mind that Céline was to begin to retrieve, heal and liberate his fractured self in a setting that was to form the backdrop and nexus of his next novel, *Guignol’s Band*.

Guignol’s Band

In his article, *Céline, Sand, Shakespeare*, Marc Hanrez, focusing on *Guignol’s Band*, remarks that “Shakespeare domine en esprit cette fantaisie londonienne comme sa statue en bronze trône au milieu de Leicester Square”⁹³⁷ In *Guignol’s Band*, it is this statue that is the cynosure of Ferdinand’s gaze, where “on gafait extra bien le Shakespeare en bronze.”(GBII p 434) Unlike his previous two novels, where Shakespeare’s presence is implicit, the playwright is liberally quoted in both versions of *Guignol’s Band*, in extracts from *Macbeth*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Richard III*. On the death of Van Claben the pawnbroker, his servant Delphine virtually re-enacts Scene 1 Act V of *Macbeth* where a somnambulant Lady Macbeth tries unsuccessfully to cleanse her hands of Duncan’s blood under the gaze of her

⁹³⁶ We interpret this as a deliberate inversion of the English greeting ‘handshake’, in order to emphasise the allusion to Shakespeare.

⁹³⁷ Hanrez, M: *Céline, Sand, Shakespeare*: in Roman 20-20 No 17 juin 1994: Morand-Perec: p 194

doctor and lady-in-waiting, declaring: “Here’s the smell of blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh! Oh! Oh!”⁹³⁸ And in Céline’s novel *Delphine* cries “*But I am Lady Macbeth! ... Mais je suis lady Macbeth! Never! Never! Jamais je ne serai plus propre! Jamais plus! Never more ! ...*” ((GBI p 230)

Like *Macbeth*, a play in which the climate of war and fear is immanent, (Macbeth himself is a soldier, expert at battlefield killing who commits the most heinous form of murder – regicide), so too has Ferdinand, the narrator of Céline’s novel, seen and experienced the horror of war which has marked him indelibly, resulting in a psychic and corporeal imprint of terror in its most abject form. Beyond obvious references to the Elizabethan playwright’s works, Love and Death; Eros and Thanatos are the common intertextual backdrops to both Shakespeare’s play and Céline’s novel.

In the context of war, which is the backdrop to *Guignol’s Band*, amply demonstrated in the novel’s Prologue in the description of the bombing of the Orléans bridge, it is pertinent to emphasise that *fear* is the dominant emotion in *Macbeth*, the Shakespeare play that is most frequently cited in Céline’s novel. Indeed, “(...) *Macbeth* is Shakespeare’s most fear-full play, his *anatomy of fear*.”⁹³⁹ (our emphasis) Indeed, the word ‘fear’ appears in this play more often than anywhere else in Shakespeare’s work, together with its “now-redundant seventeenth-century synonym ‘doubt’ which means not only ‘to be uncertain’, ‘to hesitate to believe or trust’ but also “to dread, fear, be afraid of”.⁹⁴⁰ So too is fear the dominant emotion in Céline’s work; an emotion which plagues the narrator of *Guignol’s Band*. Fear and its concomitant emotion guilt, reach an apotheosis in *Guignol’s Band II* when Ferdinand, perceiving himself as a horse to be mounted by the Colonel des Entrayes exclaims “Qu’on me monte! Et je m’emporte! Un cavalier pour un empire!” (GBII p 593) in a parody of King Richard’s declaration “A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!”⁹⁴¹ in Shakespeare’s play *Richard III*.

For Ferdinand, as was the case for *Macbeth*, fear and guilt are the sequels to murder – an act which leaves them tainted, no matter how hard they try to rid themselves of the

⁹³⁸ Wm Shakespeare : *Macbeth* :Penguin Shakespeare series 2005 : Act V scene 2 p 78

⁹³⁹ *Macbeth* :Penguin Shakespeare series 2005:Introduction : p xxi

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid p xxii

⁹⁴¹ Wm Shakespeare : *Richard III* Act V, Sc 4: Wordsworth Classics 1993: p 138

stain of crime. Both men suffer a hallucinatory episode as a consequence of their crimes – Ferdinand having murdered Van Claben and Mille-Pattes, while Macbeth had committed regicide in killing Duncan:

Macbeth: “Whence is that knocking?
How is’t with me when every noise appalls me?
What hands are here! Ha – they pluck out mine eyes!
Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.”⁹⁴²

As guilt-stricken as is Macbeth, Ferdinand is similarly as disorientated and tainted as a consequence of the murders he has committed:

“Je retombe des nuées... Où avais-je la tête encore ? (...) Et les tracas ! ils grouillent, ils tournent dans ma tête, ils m’attrapent au cou, ils m’étouffent, ils sont des tas et des masses... tout un poids là de serpents... Ils me ligotent, ils m’enserrent fort, ils me laisseront jamais sortir (...) C’est le Mille-Pattes qui sort des rails (...) »⁹⁴³

Towards the end of *Guignol’s Band II*, on the occasion of the reappearance of Van Claben’s corpse, Delphine once more declaims from *Macbeth*, again assuming the *persona* of Lady Macbeth who accuses her husband of weakness when he is incapable of returning the daggers he has used as murder weapons to the king’s chamber : “Hear Macbeth! Hear! Impotence of purpose!” And later, “Give me the Dagger! The sleep of the dead” (GBII p 722) Godard notes⁹⁴⁴ that both the quotations cited above differ from traditional translations of Shakespeare, suggesting the possibility that Céline quoted from memory, which is in itself an indication of how thoroughly he had internalized at least certain passages of the Bard’s works. Delphine also declaims what are perhaps Lady Macbeth’s best remembered words “*Wash your hands! Lavez vos mains. To bed! To bed!*” (GBII p 725), the correct version of which is:

⁹⁴² *Macbeth* : Penguin Books 2005 : Act II scene 2 : p 29

⁹⁴³ *Guignol’s Band II* : Romans t III : Editions Gallimard p 1988 : p 428

⁹⁴⁴ *Céline* : Romans t III : *Notes et variantes* : p 722 1. *Macbeth*, Acte II, Sc 2, v 52-54. Lady Macbeth accuse son mari de faiblesse lorsque après le meurtre, il refuse de retourner dans la chambre du roi porter les poignards.

Infirm of purpose ! Give me the daggers ; the sleeping and the dead Are but as pictures.

Le texte cité par Céline diffère sur deux points des éditions courantes de Shakespeare: *Impotence* au lieu de *Infirm* et *the sleep of the dead* au lieu de *the sleeping and the dead*, ce qui suggère la possibilité d’une citation de mémoire. : Romans t III : p 1161

“Here’s the smell of the blood still.
All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.(...)
To bed! To bed! There’s knocking at the gate.”⁹⁴⁵

And in another example of how closely Céline recalled the English playwright’s words from memory, Delphine proclaims: “Macbeth! Macbeth! What’s the business? Such a hideous trumpet calls to parley!” (GBII p 726), the correct version of which is:

“What’s the business,
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley.
The sleepers of the house? Speak! Speak!”⁹⁴⁶

Féerie pour une autre fois

If *Macbeth* and its connotation of war, fear, guilt and death was the leitmotif in *Guignol’s Band I and II*, with quotes from the play interwoven in the narrative, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* fulfils the same role in *Féerie I and II*, with *The Tempest* serving as a backdrop to the action, particularly in the latter novel. While quotes from the former play abound as variations on a theme of Hamlet’s well known monologue in Act III, scene 1, as well as Hamlet’s lament for Yorrick,⁹⁴⁷ no explicit quotes are present from *The Tempest*, though its intertextual reference is implicit throughout both volumes of *Féerie pour une autre fois* in the image of an allegorical tempest and its outcome in the survival of castaways on an ‘island’.

An analysis of Hamlet’s soliloquy beyond the initial phrase ‘To be or not to be, that is the question’, reveals the origin of the existential dilemma common to both Céline’s narrator and Hamlet; whether to accept public censure as a martyr in a gesture of self-sacrifice, or to oppose it:

“Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them: to die to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep, to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to? ‘tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish’d.”⁹⁴⁸

⁹⁴⁵ *Macbeth* : Penguin books 2005 : Act V scene 1 : p 78

⁹⁴⁶ *Macbeth*: Act II scene 3: p 33

⁹⁴⁷ « Zalas! Zalas! Yorrick l’autre! Un os sec et mots! » (FII p 252). *Hamlet* : Act V scene 1 p 138: “Alas poor Yorick, I knew him Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest;” Wm Shakespeare : *Hamlet*: Penguin Books: 2001

⁹⁴⁸ *Hamlet*: Act III, scene 1: p 81

On another level⁹⁴⁹ we believe that the interpolation of conflated quotes from *Hamlet* throughout both volumes of *Féerie pour une autre fois* is symptomatic of the narrator's hesitation and resignation in the face of the ineluctability of Fate in the form of war (and its implied outcome, death), of which the narrator's question 'Binotoubi'? (FI p 114) is an example. In this context, it is not indifferent to note that one of the dedicatees of *Féerie II* was Pliny the Elder, the Roman statesman who observed powerless as fate in the the form of an eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79, overtook him, leading to his death. Like *Hamlet*, Céline's narrator in *Féerie* is riven by a choice between taking up the (literary) cudgels against the public censure he incurred as a result of the publication of his pamphlets, resulting in charges of collaboration and anti-Semitism, and that of simply accepting "The slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune". Clearly, Céline chose the first - and most difficult - option, culminating in his fantastical poetic prose present in both versions of *Féerie pour une autre fois*. The degree to which Céline was haunted by Hamlet's fundamental existential question becomes apparent when we list the frequency with which versions of it are employed throughout *Féerie I* and *II*: (FI – pages 21, 24, 65, and 114; FII: pages 313, 333, 480). It is also cited in *Entretiens avec le professeur Y*.⁹⁵⁰

Although *The Tempest* is never quoted directly in any of Céline's works as is the case of Shakespeare's other plays such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Richard III* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the textual and semantic parallels between *Guignol's Band I* and *II*, *Féerie pour une autre fois I* and *II* and Shakespeare's last play are too conspicuous to ignore. In the Prologue to *Guignol's Band* the pedestrians on the Orléans bridge are as disorientated by the bombardment as are the inhabitants of the rue Girardon in *Féerie II* suggesting an analogy between the victims of a bombardment and those of a shipwreck. Initially the sole intertextual link between *Guignol's Band* and *The Tempest* appears to lie in the name of Prospéro, the public house owner of *À la croisière pour Dingby*, and the name of the magician in Shakespeare's play. However, this link proves to be merely onomastic, with a more significant intertextual reference existing between Ferdinand, the narrator of Céline's novel and his passion for the adolescent Virginie, and the couple Ferdinand and Miranda in *The Tempest*. Both

⁹⁴⁹ Interrogated in Chapter Three: *Dancing – and singing – with Dionysos*

⁹⁵⁰ *Céline: Romans t IV: Entretiens avec le professeur Y*: p 535

Virginie and Miranda are young women under the tutelage of an older man, an uncle and a father respectively; the former present in the figure of the Colonel O'Collogham, the latter represented by the magician Prospero. Both couples experience difficulty in legitimizing their relationship, finally achieving accord in the absence of parental censure.

Despite Céline's parody of Shakespeare's words in both versions of *Féerie pour une autre fois*, the Elizabethan playwright's influence is perhaps more fully present in this novel than in any other of Céline's works. Indeed, a lack of direct quotes does nothing to diminish the Shakespearian element present in the text on several levels⁹⁵¹ which include a degree of theatricality extant in the exaggerated gestures of the characters, black comedy in the face of tragedy and most importantly, a degree of fantasy which pervades the work. In the same way that Shakespeare called upon his audience to suspend disbelief in the face of implausible events taking place on the stage in *The Tempest*, so too does Céline appear to solicit a similar response from his reader in *Féerie pour une autre fois*, especially in the second volume of the novel. Then there is the 'tempest' itself – one which results in a 'shipwreck' in Shakespeare's play, while an equally extravagant depiction of a bombardment of Paris dislocates and disorientates the inhabitants of the building in the rue Girardon to the extent that they resemble the survivors of an allegorical shipwreck.

Referring to *Normance*, the original name of the work, Vitoux describes the novel as « ..un cauchemar qui n'en finit pas (...) Des bombes qui explosent sur Paris et la banlieue; un peintre cul-de-jatte, Jules, qui orchestre le ballet des avions, la butte Montmartre qui s'effondre, la ville à feu et à sang, les locataires de l'immeuble de Céline projetés les uns sur les autres, (...) Chacun gémit, appelle, vocifère. (...) La folie balistique et langagière atteint son comble. *Normance* trahit un grand désordre.»

⁹⁵² In Shakespeare's play, the harrowing effect of the tempest is articulated in the words of Gonzalo the councillor, who declares:

⁹⁵¹ On the contrary: we believe the 'silence' in the absence of quotes from Shakespeare is as evocative as Ferdinand's mutism in *Mort à crédit*, thus heightening the impact of language through its corollary, silence.

⁹⁵² Vitoux, F : *Céline* : Paris : Pierre Belfond 1978 : p 176 in Hainge, G : *Tempest in another time* : Shakespeare, Greenaway, Céline : p 25

“Mercy on us! – We split ! we split!
 Farewell, my wife and children! – Farewell brother! (...)
 Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground.
 Long heath, brown furze, anything. The wills above be done,
 but I would fain die a dry death.”⁹⁵³

Magicians

In both Shakespeare’s work and Céline’s novel, both ‘tempests’, whether they originate from the sea or the air, evoke the image of Robinson Crusoe shipwrecked on his island; that of the archetypal solitary castaway. In both cases the events are staged by ‘magicians’; Prospero who has staged the shipwreck which is pure artifice, and Céline, the narrator of a fictional depiction of the April 1944 bombardment of Paris – a magician whose powers equal those of Shakespeare’s character Prospero. Just as the theatre audience, convinced that the shipwreck really had taken place, remains secure in its grasp of the actual reality until they are, without warning, cast adrift by Prospero’s revelation to Miranda that the episode was an illusion, so too is the reader of Céline’s novel ‘cast adrift’ or disoriented by the uncertainty of whether the events recounted have actually taken place. It is therefore left to the reader or audience to decide whether what they have witnessed or read is a product of the imagination in which the laws of existence remain unchanged; or whether the event really *did* take place in a reality that is governed laws unknown to man. It is the uncertainty and the resultant hesitation that these events provoke in both reader and audience that is at the root of a dilemma in which

« Le fantastique occupe le temps de cette incertitude; dès qu’on choisit l’une ou l’autre réponse, on quitte le fantastique pour entrer dans un genre voisin, l’étrange ou le merveilleux. Le fantastique, c’est l’hésitation éprouvée par un être qui ne connaît *que* les lois naturelles, face à un événement en apparence surnaturel. »⁹⁵⁴ (our emphasis)

The diegesis of *Féerie pour une autre fois* is unrelentingly hallucinatory throughout the entire narrative, unlike Céline’s previous novels which were simply interspersed with illusory episodes. This reminds us that *Féerie II* was written while Céline was incarcerated in a Danish prison, awaiting extradition to France on charges of collaboration. Fantasy therefore represented his exodus from an untenable reality, hence his insistence that the novel be endorsed with “L’horreur des réalités!” and that

⁹⁵³ *The Tempest* : Act I scene 1-2 : p 63

⁹⁵⁴ Todorov, T : *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* : Editions du Seuil 1970 : p 29

“Tous les lieux, noms, personnages, situations, présentés dans ce roman, sont imaginaires! Absolument imaginaires! Aucun rapport avec aucune réalité! Ce n’est là qu’une ‘Féerie’... et encore! pour une autre fois ! »⁹⁵⁵ Evidence of Céline’s hallucinatory state of mind at the time of writing *Féerie* is depicted in the apparent fluidity of his prison walls which “...découlent, j’éponge les flaques.... De quatre pattes, je me relève vraiment mal...” (FI p 27) ; walls which are apparently rendered porous and traversed through the fantasy of the author’s text.

In *Féerie II (Normance)*, the reader is once again required to suspend disbelief regarding a series of events that take affect the inhabitants of the building in the rue Girardon where Céline and his wife inhabit an apartment on the fifth floor. Firstly, the reader is presented with the spectacle of a legless Jules who has implausibly climbed onto the platform of the Moulin de la Galette, apparently directing the RAF bombers overhead towards Montmartre as their target – an incarnation of Evil: “Le Mal c’est pas tout le monde qui l’a! je le connais moi le Mal dans sa caisse! Là-haut! (...) ivrogne, pissat, cochon, satire! Tronc! Scélérat! ... là-haut sur le Moulin qu’il est! » (FII p 193) This incident evokes the shipwreck in *The Tempest*, as not only the mill, but the entire building facing it appears to pitch and roll like a ship in a storm: “Ah! Le moulin incline! et nous-mêmes ! tout notre immeuble!... un fameux remous d’air! Lui, là-haut, il tangué à la rampe, je crois qu’il va passer à travers... non! Il bute contre, et redingue l’autre bord!” (FII p 200) Nowhere in this novel does the text so eloquently portray a ship buffeted by a storm, and, by extension, evoke the images in Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest*. In the following passage we have highlighted the nautical terms which underscore this notion:

« Ah! Il est en plein manège! Sa petite plate-forme *houle, tangué, roule*,
Et lui là-dessus en *gondole* ! d’une *rampe*, l’autre ! ... et dans quel *vent* !
Ça souffle de vers l’usine Renault ! d’ouest, vraiment un four ! *tornade*
sur *tornade* ! (...) il prend tout, le Gugusse dans sa caisse, ... *en pleine*
face! il est beaucoup plus dans le *vent* que nous ... tout le moulin en
incline au *vent* ! il *roule aux houles, tangué* et repart ! oh, c’est l’acrobate
d’éléments ! il serait pris d’une rage, il se jetterait ! (...) il *louvoye*,
redresse à la houle. (...) y a des forces, des *ondes* et bien plus ! » (FII p 201)

⁹⁵⁵ *Féerie pour une autre fois I* : Prologue : p 3

Sorcerers

Not only does Céline fulfil the role of magician in *Féerie*, but magicians who evoke Shakespeare's Prospero are also present in *Mort à credit* and *Guignol's Band* in the figures of Courtial des Pereires and Sosthène de Rodiencourt. While Courtial, as a committed positivist, holds that the forces of Good will always triumph, Sosthène's fundamental belief in the forces of Evil leads him to use his handbook *Véga des Stances* to perform the 'Véga' dances in an attempt to diminish the power of Evil. In embodying the 'light' and 'dark' side of occultism, Courtial and Sosthène are clearly Doubles of one another. Interestingly, projects embarked upon by both magicians based on the above divergent premises depend on the power of 'waves' for their success. But while Courtial's magical technique is employed for the common good of mankind, Sosthène's is used in a negative sense in attempting to ward off evil. In embarking on his project for the creation of '*La Familistère de la Race Nouvelle*', Courtial aims to produce agriculturally-enhanced produce through the induction of radio waves. While Courtial's project aims to eliminate famine, « Question d'abondante nourriture avec notre 'radio-tellurie' le problème n'existait pas! ... Il ne subsistait en somme qu'un seul véritable écueil... La saturation des marches par nos pommes de terre 'ondigènes'! » (MàC p 1009), Sosthène's objective is to ward off Evil, by using his handbook *Véga des Stances* as an instruction manual to teach him the 'danse des Végas' designed to attain successively high levels of competence, as well as the possession of a flower with magical powers, the *Tara-Tohé*: "Tara-Tohé! Charme de l'Etre! Le poids s'échappe de votre corps! Vous avez saisi la fleur... Les Ondes vous saisissent (...) elles vous *transposent*! ...où vous voulez ! » (GBIpp 289-290) (our emphasis) The significance of Céline's use of the word 'transposent' underscores the importance placed by the author on the literary device of transposition in order to invest the text with an element of *féerie* or poetic expression. It may therefore be deduced that Céline himself identified more with Sosthène's ideology than with Courtial's; in other words, magic was designed to ward off evil rather than to be used for the benefit of mankind as a whole.

The duality Courtial-Sosthène, magicians and proponents of the occult in a typically 19th century mould cannot fail to evoke the work of Louis-Auguste Blanqui, "... carbonaro dans sa jeunesse, dirigeant soicaliste après 1830, créateur d'innombrables sociétés secrètes, inspirateur de mille complots (...) libre penseur acharné, militant de

l'athéisme", but also, importantly, believer in "la vie éternelle des morts."⁹⁵⁶ In 1872, incarcerated in prison as a result of his political activities, he published his most important work, "*L'Eternité par les astres*" which evokes Courtial des Pereires' fascination with astronomy, astrology and the occult. Blanqui's premise of man's immortality was based on the principle of the Double or *sosie*; a plethora of *alter egos* which existed throughout the Universe: "Nous vivrons et nous revivrons' se pâmait dans son cachot ce spécialiste de l'athéisme (...) Il existe 'des milliards de terres sosies de la nôtre et portent nos sosies personnels' ; l'homme est éternel parce qu'à l'infini dupliqué, 'chacun de nous a vécu, vit et vivra sans fin, sous la forme de milliards d'*alter ego*.' »⁹⁵⁷ This passage cannot fail to remind us of a similar definition of the double posited by Céline in *Féerie I* quoted elsewhere in this work.⁹⁵⁸

Fantasy

Like *The Tempest*, the entire novel is, in effect, a series of fantastic episodes imbued with magic that follow one another in quick succession. Other incidents in *Féerie II* that invite a comparison between Prospero's engineering of the fantasy storm in Shakespeare's play and parallel events in Céline's novel include Ferdinand's two-story fall in the lift shaft: "c'est atroce – un étage, deux!" (FII p 242); the appearance of a crevasse in the building's corridor: "ce que j'aperçois comme crevasse! En plein milieu du couloir ...trois fois large comme tout à l'heure... et qui mincit... rapetisse... referme et reouvre! (...) un gouffre mouvant dans le couloir (...)" (FII p 322); the episode of a sleeping Normance used as a battering-ram to break down the door of Mlle Zeuss in order to gain access to the *vulnérable*: "c'est à lui de crever la porte! (...) la tête en avant! ... en butoir! (...) et *vrang!* coincée, pas coincée.. la porte cède" (FII p 340); the body of a moribund Normance used as a bridge for those wishing to traverse the crevasse: « le monstre là, l'outil, il pourrait m'aider peut-être? Me la faire franchir la crevasse?" (FII p 363).

Other fantastic episodes include the miraculous traverse of the wall of the adjoining apartment through a hole made by Ottavio, only to find "Une pièce intacte! (...) cette maison-là a pas souffert!" (FII p 439). Even more incredible is the fact that the

⁹⁵⁶ Muray, P : *Le 19^e siècle à travers les âges* : p 224

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid : p 224

⁹⁵⁸ *Féerie pour une autre fois I* : p 25 : « La vie, c'est des répétitions, jusqu'à la mort... Elle nous ramène les gens les mêmes, leurs 'doubles' s'ils sont plus, les mêmes gestes, les mêmes turelures... »

apartment is inhabited by Norbert, the silent movie star: “Je croyais pas mes yeux! ... si! Si! Norbert (...) Norbert à table!”(FII p 439). Like a mute oracle, Norbert shows no surprise at their irruption into his world, maintaining an enigmatic silence : « Il était là assis, songeur, ... le regard fixe...on pouvait croire qu’il nous regardait, il nous regardait pas... Il parle pas! ... remarque Lili... »(FII p 440) Adding to the aberrance of the situation is the discovery of the corpse of Mme Gindre drowned in her bath, while her servant has been crushed under the debris of the apartment’s kitchen, the only room damaged in the bombing. However, if these events are fantastic to a degree, it is Ferdinand’s *reaction* to them that augments the fantasy, calmly helping himself to Mme Gindre’s linen as though nothing untoward had occurred: “cette Mme Gindre avait du linge! ... saperlipopette! Des serviettes-éponges, comme ça!” (FII p 450) And the fantastic episode with Norbert continues, compelling the reader to suspend disbelief once again, as he announces that he is a diplomat, awaiting a meeting with world leaders: “Qui t’attends? Le Pape... je le gueule haut exprès... tu le jures? Je le déconcerte pas du tout ! de plus en plus sérieux au contraire !... et pas que le pape qu’il attend ! Churchill et Roosevelt ! qui vont venir ! là ! qu’il me dit ! » (FII p 463) All of this is pure fiction, but a fiction *to which the reader is privy*, unlike the shipwreck in *The Tempest* which had held the audience in its thrall until Prospero’s disclosure to Miranda that it was entirely fictitious.

Rival

In the context of rivalry inherent in figures of the Double, Norbert takes over the baton from Jules in this novel, provoking Ferdinand’s jealousy by asking the narrator’s permission to allow Lili to remain with him to greet his guests: “Un mot encore! Laisse-moi Lili, elle m’aidera à les recevoir.” (FII p 464), - words which echo those of Jules in *Féerie I*: “Donne-moi Lili! Donne-moi Lili!”(FI p 150). However, in a reversal of his cession of Lili to Jules in *Féerie I*, a more lucid Ferdinand refuses to accede to Norbert’s request, no longer blinded by the cachet of an ‘artist’ that had seduced him (and his wife) where Jules was concerned: “Voilà Lili indispensable hôtesse! ... moi, je vois surtout qu’il est cochon... qu’il veut être seul avec Lili... beau masque! (...) il me fait chier avec ses énigmes!.” (FII p 464) We believe that Ferdinand’s refusal to relinquish his wife to Norbert in this episode is a metaphor for the narrator’s decision to *retain* his aesthetic mastery instead of surrendering it as he

had done in *Féerie I*. In this instance alone, the two versions of *Féerie* are mirror-images of each other.

But despite Ferdinand's decision to retain his creative power, the novel closes on an image of both physical and mental destruction; a cataclysm that sees Céline reduced to an abject figure sitting on a curbstone opposite his building, the folios of his manuscript raining down on him as desolately as the "Feuilles mortes et soucis"⁹⁵⁹ in his composition *Règlement*. The narrator's psychic destruction is mirrored by that of the building itself, which is severely damaged; the roof no more than a "grande crevasse", a metaphor for Ferdinand's state of mind, from which "il s'en échappait plein de papiers!" (FII p 478). However, as mentioned *supra*⁹⁶⁰ the latent tragedy of the moment is dispelled by the presence of song in the form of a couplet from the comic opera *Véronique* together with the dance-like steps of the trio of Ferdinand, Lili and Mme Toiselle on their way to the métro – and safety.

Led away like a penitent towards the métro entrance, supported by Lili and Mme Toiselle the concierge ringing "sa cloche fêlée"(FII p 485) which accentuates the damaged nature of the artist who has become a 'leper' in society, the public being warned of his presence by the ringing of a bell as was the custom in Mediaeval times. The street and pavement are littered with pages from Ferdinand's manuscripts. Significantly, in this novel episodes of this nature are interspersed by fragments of popular song, exactly as the potentially tragic events in *The Tempest* were relieved and heightened by musical *divertissements* in the form of a play-within-a-play or *masque* such as the one Prospero presents for Ferdinand and Miranda in Act IV, involving 'Iris', 'Ceres' and 'Juno', all characters in the masque played by Ariel and other Spirits.

Aristotle's Unities

It is in *Féerie I* and *II*, a mirror-image of *The Tempest* in terms of theme, stage direction (in the form of music and other *divertissements*), that through the implementation of Aristotle's three principles of theatre - the notion of man's decadence (Caliban) and an escape offered through art (Ariel) – all staged against a

⁹⁵⁹ *Règlement* : Romans t IV : Editions Gallimard 1993 : p 1083

⁹⁶⁰ In Chapter Three: *Dancing – and singing – with Dionysos*

backdrop of war and intrigue, it becomes apparent that Shakespeare's play served as both matrix and blueprint for Céline's works in general and for *Féerie II* in particular. In this novel, Aristotle's unities of Time, Space and Action as defined in his *Poetics* are as much respected as they are in *The Tempest*. Both play and novel take place within the course of a single day, in a defined space (an island, a building), with a single theme of action, that of the redress or restitution of a title that has been usurped. In *The Tempest* this refers to the restitution of the title of Duke of Milan that has been usurped by Prospero's brother Antonio, while in *Féerie II* the focus is on the vindication and restitution of the artist's reputation and aesthetic capacity through, (as in the case of Shakespeare's play), the magic of the artist himself – Céline. Both play and novel therefore act as catalysts for the achievement of that goal, and in that capacity it is the authors' literary works that fulfill the catalytic role of the Double for both Céline and Shakespeare.

Jules is the equivalent of Caliban in Shakespeare's play, an earthbound, venal monster who is the incarnation of evil and a representation of the narrator's basest instincts. He is the narrator Ferdinand's Double who dares to transgress, thus carrying out all that the narrator can only dream of doing. In a word, he is "a despicable, hateful, alcoholic, erotomaniac, crippled *Doppelgänger* of the narrator."⁹⁶¹

Magic

Above all, *The Tempest* is a paean to the power of magic which finds its parallel in Céline's creation *Féerie pour une autre fois*. And just as Prospero the magician controlled the action in *The Tempest*, so too does Céline direct that of his novel. In a reflection of Jules' 'direction' of the bombardment of Montmartre, so does Céline stage-manage the narrative of his novel. And if both Prospero and Céline may be defined as 'magicians' in this context, an interesting parallel relating to their wands or traditional instrument of magic emerges both at the end of Shakespeare's play and, in Céline's case, in his work *Entretiens avec le professeur Y*, written immediately after the novel under discussion. In the final act of *The Tempest*, Prospero vows to renounce his 'potent art', declaring :

⁹⁶¹ Hainge, G : *Tempest in another time: Shakespeare, Greenaway, Céline: The Romanic Review* Volume 97 No 1: p 24

“But this rough magic
 I here abjure, and when I have required
 Some heavenly music – which even now I do –
 to work mine end upon their senses, that
 This airy charm is for, I’ll *break my staff*,
 Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
 And deeper than did ever plummet sound
 I’ll *drown my book*.”⁹⁶² (our emphasis)

In a parodied analogy of Prospero’s act – and its outcome - Céline, in *Entretiens avec le professeur Y*, describes how his magic, his *metro-émotif*, may only be attained by breaking a baton before immersing it in water, in order to avoid the error of parallax caused by refraction:

“Vous plongez un baton dans l’eau....
 – Un bâton dans l’eau ?
 – Oui colonel ! ... De quoi il a l’air votre bâton ?
 – Je ne sais pas
 – Il a l’air *cassé votre bâton* ! tordu !
 – Alors ? alors ?
 – Cassez-le vous-même, pardî ! avant de le plonger dans l’eau ! cette bonne blague ! tout le secret de l’impressionnisme ! (...)
 – *Ainsi mon style émotif* ! et de mes rails si ouvragés ! profilés ‘spécial’ ! »⁹⁶³ (our emphasis)

Two instruments of magic then; an identical act of breaking them, but for different ends entirely. While Prospero’s magic abates, and with it, his aesthetic creativity, Céline’s gift burgeons into a *féerie* embodied in poetic prose that commenced with *Guignol’s Band*, only to mature into full-blown fantasy in *Féerie I* and *II*, gradually declining in the novels of the trilogy. Like *The Tempest*, which is “charged with meaning of an essentially non-verbal kind”,⁹⁶⁴ the plot in *Féerie* is minimal if not inexistent, and the action is in itself poetic, a factor that in Shakespeare’s case resulted in a situation where the playwright “could afford to strip the verse of extended, formal images precisely because the whole work is a gigantic metaphor.”⁹⁶⁵ Like Shakespeare’s play, Céline’s novels *Féerie I* and *II* are a metaphor for the triumph of a centrifugal movement of aesthetic creation over the centripetal forces of History and public censure. We therefore posit that in Céline’s novels, the predominance of style or *féerie* over plot or theme in the narrative is a metaphor for the emergence of

⁹⁶² *The Tempest* : Act V scene 1 : p 126

⁹⁶³ *Entretiens avec le professeur Y* : Romans t IV : Editions Gallimard 1993 : p 546

⁹⁶⁴ *The Tempest* : Penguin books 1988 : p 17

⁹⁶⁵ *Ibid* p 17

Céline's aesthetic creative impulse through the agency of an interaction between the narrator and his transgressive Double, Jules with the intercession of Shakespeare.

Music

In *Féerie I*, the grim diegesis of Céline's prison cell is somewhat attenuated by the singing of the author's own composition *Règlement*, the 'performance' of which under the title *Entre-deux* is reminiscent of a Shakespearean masque, complete with 'stage directions' issued by Céline the narrator: "Je sors ma chanson.... Je vous l'ai fait soupçonner plus haut.... J'ai des chansons.... (toutes déposées !) tenez, ce couplet : « *Entre-deux* »(FI p 37). And later, in an explicit 'stage direction',: « (jeu de scène : Eh, qu'il aille se faire foutre l'affreux !), with the express purpose of alleviating the situation in which the narrator and his fellow prisoners find themselves ; "...la fin, n'est-ce pas, enlevé, guillerette! tourbillonnée!" (FI p 37) At the close of the novel, in an echo of the power of song to attenuate the misery suffered in a prison cell, we find Ferdinand, at the lowest point in the narrative from both a physical and a psychological point of view, benefit from the irruption of snatches of song, "fredaines et soucis (...) que le vent t'emporte" (FI pp 175-176) which once more defuse (and diffuse) the tension in the narrative, creating an almost burlesque effect. It is important to note that the last line of the song quoted is the penultimate in the song *Règlement/Entre-deux*, which leaves the reader to complete the refrain with the words "Feuilles mortes et soucis!"⁹⁶⁶ which is in itself an image of death, abjection and *finality*. This section of *Féerie I* concludes with words that evoke the ephemeral nature of human existence: "la vie passe... le sang passe... il *emmène*." (FI p 176) which in turn recall the final words of *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, « Il appelait vers lui toutes les péniches, du fleuve toutes, et la ville entière, et le ciel et la campagne, et nous, tout qu'il *emmenait*, la Seine aussi, tout, qu'on n'en parle plus ». (V p 505)⁹⁶⁷

In contrast, being far more frivolous than the words of Céline's composition, *Règlement, Féerie II* closes with two lines from the operetta *Véronique* written by Messager in 1898 and therefore symbolic of the *Belle Époque* and contemporary with

⁹⁶⁶ *Féerie I*: Notes et variantes : p 1083

⁹⁶⁷ Our italics emphasise the repeat of the word 'emmener' at the close of both novels which evokes an image of flux as a metaphor for creativity.

two other works – *La Bohème* and *Louise*, the two lyric works cited most often in this novel. Once more, a painful situation in which the narrator finds himself – in this case, seeing his manuscripts dispersed by the ‘tourbillon’ that has shaken the building where he lived and wrote; a situation where “l’air était bourré de papiers, voilà! ... par tornades! des papiers à moi! Et des autres! Qu’on voyait plus le trottoir en face!...” (FII pp 486-487) is alleviated by song, however frivolous the words may have been (and perhaps *because* of their frivolity): “C’est Estelle et Véronique! Messieurs prenez-nous!” (FII p 486)

Sacrifice

The irruption of crises between rivals or Doubles is a veritable leitmotif in Céline’s works; one that most often has a positive outcome from a creative perspective. While rivals are not always Doubles, it is significant that Doubles are *always* rivals! One has only to recall the conflict between Bardamu and Robinson in *Voyage au bout de la nuit*; between Ferdinand and Courtial des Pereires or Ferdinand and Auguste in *Mort à crédit*; between Ferdinand and Sosthène de Rodiencourt, Ferdinand and Mille-Pattes in *Guignol’s Band*, and finally between Ferdinand and Jules in *Féerie I* and *II*. To substantiate this notion, a scapegoat had to be procured in each case, in order to assuage the guilt and concomitant violence of the figure traumatized by war-induced scenes of violence – in Céline’s case, those experienced at the Front during the First World War. The only recourse for the victim of such mental laceration would be « une fois de plus de ne pas regarder en face la violence; de trouver une nouvelle échappatoire, de se procurer, dans des circonstances de plus en plus aléatoires, une *solution sacrificielle de rechange*. »⁹⁶⁸ (our emphasis) The scapegoat is that figure charged with the expiation of guilt, fear and its concomitant outcome in an act of violence. It is in this context of rivalry and *mimèsis* that the figure of the Double has its origin, for :

“De l’intérieur du système, il n’y a que des différences; du dehors, au contraire, il n’y a que de l’identité. Du dedans on ne voit pas l’identité et du dehors on ne voit pas la différence. (...) Seule la perspective du dehors, celle qui voit la réciprocité et l’identité, celle qui nie la différence, peut repérer le mécanisme de la résolution violente, le secret de l’unanimité refaite contre la victime émissaire et autour d’elle. Quand il n’y a plus du tout de différence (...)

⁹⁶⁸ Girard, R : *La Violence et le sacré* : Editions Bernard Grasset 1972 : p 204

quand l'identité est enfin parfaite, nous disons que les antagonistes sont devenus des *doubles* ; c'est leur caractère interchangeable qui assure la *substitution sacrificielle*. »⁹⁶⁹(our emphasis)

In his work on Shakespeare, Girard observes that having identified the force or power that "périodiquement détruit la structure différentielle de la société", Shakespeare « lui redonne vie sous la forme d'une crise mimétique, qu'il appelle crise du Degré et la fait résoudre dans la violence collective infligée au bouc émissaire. »⁹⁷⁰ The end of one cultural cycle inevitably signals the start of another, and it is « la mise à mort unanime qui transforme la force *destructive* de la rivalité mimétique en une force *constructive*, celle de la *mimèsis* sacrificielle, laquelle reproduit périodiquement la violence originelle afin d'empêcher la crise de renaître. »⁹⁷¹ (our emphasis) We believe that Girard's deduction unequivocally defines the role of the Double in Céline's works. Born of necessity from a situation of conflict, this figure is the agent responsible for the transformation of a destructive force of rivalry into the type of constructive power inherent in a sacrificial form of *mimèsis*. It is this form of transmutation that the reader witnesses in the interrelation of Céline's narrators with their Doubles throughout his works with its outcome in the liberation of the author's creative aesthetic expressed in poetic prose.

However, nowhere else in the author's work does such an interreaction produce a degree of abjection equal to that experienced by Ferdinand in his conflict with Jules, the painter in *Féerie*. In this instance, we are witness to a degree of debasement that is directly proportionate to the narrator's capacity for 'resurrection' or liberation from the morally stultifying situation to which he has been reduced as a result of destructive feelings of jealousy and rivalry. In turn, through the catalytic agency of the Double, his circumstances have been transformed into a positive force for creation.

Monster

We believe that the figure of Jules in *Féerie* is a reflection of Prospero's monstrous double Caliban, and just as Caliban is the hidden face of Shakespeare, so is Jules the monstrous pendant of Céline-Ferdinand. Céline's stature as a writer makes this notion as difficult to assimilate as it is in the case of Shakespeare: « Notre vénération pour

⁹⁶⁹ Girard, R : *La Violence et le sacré* : Editions Bernard Grasset 1972 : pp 221-222

⁹⁷⁰ Girard, R : *Shakespeare : les feux de l'envie* : Editions Grasset et Fasquelle 1990 : p 14

⁹⁷¹ Ibid p 14

Shakespeare est telle que nous ne supportons pas l'idée, pourtant assez évidente, qu'en créant ce monstre ultime, c'est avant tout à *lui-même et à son théâtre* qu'il songeait. »⁹⁷² (our emphasis) Further proof that the figure of the Double-as-Rival is an agent for creation exists in *The Tempest*, with its parallel discernible in *Féerie I* and *II*, and, to a lesser extent, in Céline's other novels. In Shakespeare's play, Caliban the monster, is the incarnation of all pre-linguistic, intuitive acuity and cunning that Céline's narrator Ferdinand so admired in Jules the artist, the monster who : "(...) incarne ce mélange paradoxal d'aveuglement et de perspicacité qui caractérise les régions inférieures de la *mimèsis* conflictuelle."⁹⁷³ Although the narrator of *Féerie* despises Jules on one level for his alcoholism, womanizing and general baseness, the author-narrator cannot help admiring his innate gift for artistic expression, to the extent that in his correspondence Céline referred to Gen Paul, the artist who was the inspiration for the figure of Jules as his 'brother'. In this sense, Jules represents the pre-linguistic Caliban of Shakespeare's play – a figure who, having been taught articulated speech by Prospero, curses him for that gift in the same way that Jules appears to avenge himself on Céline's possession of a creative aesthetic by appropriating that gift in the form of the narrator's wife Lili. Indeed, Caliban's curse leveled at Prospero in *The Tempest*, could just as easily have been spoken by Jules:

"You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!"⁹⁷⁴

The following extracts from correspondence with Céline's wife Lucette as well as friends, including Milton Hindus, reveal the author's ambiguous sentiments towards the artist. In a letter to Lucette Destouches written in 1946 Céline refers to Gen Paul as « vil, bas et génial », while in an undated letter to Paul Marteau he describes the artist as « un enfant gâté du Malheur, bien plus intelligent et plus dangereux encore! parce que génial artiste (...) faux ivrogne, faux fou... faux pauvre le bourgeois le plus coriace et le mieux camouflé du monde, et jaloux, du délire! de l'ombre de son ombre! Pas un atome de *cœur* ! lui ! sa gueule ! ». And in a significant reference to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* Céline describes Gen Paul as « (...) Caliban – toutes les bassesses, toutes les trahisons, » while for Albert Paraz he was « (...) Roublard,

⁹⁷² Girard, R : *Shakespeare : les feux de l'envie* : Editions Grasset et Fasquelle 1990 p 553

⁹⁷³ Ibid : pp 557-558

⁹⁷⁴ *The Tempest*: Act I scene 2: p 77

jaloux – Mais avec un damné génie du mal bien amusant. Je l’aime bien – *comme un frère* (...) ». And finally, in a letter written in 1947 to his friend Georges Geoffroy, Gen Paul is described as possessing « ... du génie et c’est *un frère*. Mais il est démoniaquement pervers. Jaloux. Jaloux à en crever. (...) Il faut le manier comme une harpe. Certaines de ses cordes sont exquises, d’autres atroces. »⁹⁷⁵

We posit that Céline’s equivocal sentiments for Gen Paul are an expression of the writer’s conflicted inner self which, through his art, he sought to resolve by transforming rivalry into productive *mimèsis*. In other words, the writer acts as his *own* medium for the resolution of abjection caused by inner conflict through the creation of the figure of the Double. It is thus evident that for Céline “la mission de l’écrivain (était) d’assumer de façon médiumnique, tout le temps qu’il écrit, cette abjection qui est la forme extrême du lien social.”⁹⁷⁶ Indeed,

“Caliban symbolise le sentiment poétique à l’état brut, tel que Shakespeare l’a vécu lui-même avant d’écrire son œuvre et dans les débuts de celle-ci, informel, amoral, vaine, immoral, dangereux donc et même répréhensible, mais néanmoins *indispensable à la création*. Prospéro initiant Caliban à la parole, c’est Shakespeare lui-même transformant en œuvres littéraires l’inspiration encore sans langage de ce monstre. »⁹⁷⁷(our emphasis)

By the same token, we are witness to a similar process in *Féerie*, where, in ceding his artistic muse Lili to the ‘monster’ Jules, Céline is transforming his pre-linguistic creative aesthetic into a literary oeuvre which finds its expression in *Féerie pour une autre fois*.

Girard’s description of Caliban’s function in *The Tempest* could equally be transposed to that of Jules in *Féerie*, as he is “... à la fois le *produit* – le monstre mythique – et le *processus* qui l’engendre – notre processus mimétique, bien entendu!”⁹⁷⁸ (our emphasis) Indeed, this mimetic process in which the figure of the Double has its origin, is described at the start of *Féerie I* and, significantly in the context of a stage performance: “La vie, c’est des *répétitions*⁹⁷⁹ jusqu’à la mort.... Elle nous ramène les gens, les mêmes, leurs ‘doubles’ s’ils sont plus, les mêmes gestes, les mêmes

⁹⁷⁵ Céline : Romans t IV : Éditions Gallimard 1993 : *Notice* pp 1182-1183

⁹⁷⁶ Bellosta, M-C : *Céline ou l’art de la contradiction* : Presses Universitaires de France, 1990 : pp 172

⁹⁷⁷ Girard, R : *Shakespeare : les feux de l’envie* : Éditions Grasset et Fasquelle 1990 : pp 555

⁹⁷⁸ Ibid p 556

⁹⁷⁹ A *double entendre* for ‘repetition’ and ‘rehearsal’

turelures..... on loupe son entrée, sa sortie, et votre poisse commence ! (...) vous avez qu'une pièce à jouer ! Une seule ! (FI p 25) So completely do Shakespeare's works appear to be integral to Céline's creative process, that we suggest that *The Tempest* could represent a metaphor for two distinct periods in the evolution of the author's oeuvre – the first encapsulating *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, *Mort à crédit*, *Casse-Pipe* and the pamphlets; the second including *Guignol's Band I and II*; *Féerie I and II*, *d'un Château l'autre*, *Nord* and *Rigodon*. If one assumes that the pamphlets include *Mea culpa*, then each section would include seven works- the first group falling under the sign of Caliban; the second under that of Ariel, thus denoting a progression towards weightlessness as a metaphor for creativity in Céline's oeuvre.

If the figure of the Double is an expression of one's 'shadow self', or 'dark' side, no further proof is needed that an internalization, an acceptance (as opposed to a denial) of that aspect of one's being is essential for a realization of the aesthetic creative process than in Prospero's words addressed to Caliban towards the close of the play:

"This thing of darkness I
Acknowledge mine."⁹⁸⁰

We posit that Caliban represents Céline's internal rival, his shadow self, his dark side, his *alter ego*, or 'monstrous double'. Just as Shakespeare endowed Caliban with the power of speech, so does Céline invest that power in his own *alter ego* through the creation of figures of the Double in his works, and in particular that of Jules in *Féerie pour une autre fois*, the most 'Calibanesque' of those figures.

Ariel or Artistry

In *The Tempest*, when Prospero and Miranda arrived on the island, it was inhabited, not only by Caliban and his mother, but also by Ariel, a sprite who had been imprisoned in the trunk of a pine tree by Caliban's mother, the sorceress Sycorax whose name evokes that of Karalik the sorceress in Céline's ballet *Secrets dans l'île*. Ariel had been punished for refusing to obey Sycorax's orders, being, in Prospero's words,

⁹⁸⁰ *The Tempest* : Act V scene 1 : p 135

“(...) a spirit too delicate
 To act her earthly and abhorred commands,
 Refusing her grand hests, she did confine thee,
 (...) Into a cloven pine; within which rift
 Imprisoned, thou didst painfully remain,
 A dozen years (...)”⁹⁸¹

In Girard’s view, « Ariel représente un mode littéraire raffiné, serein et noble, celui que le dernier Shakespeare souhaite substituer aux oeuvres chaotiques de Caliban. »⁹⁸²

As critics have noted, *The Tempest* differs technically from Shakespeare’s previous works as it is the only piece written by the playwright in his mature years “qui se conforme aux fameuses unités aristotéliennes de temps, de lieu et d’action.”⁹⁸³ This is equally true for *Féerie pour une autre fois II*, which mirrors Shakespeare’s last play on several levels, not least of which is Aristotle’s three unities mentioned above. We submit that just as Céline’s oeuvre could be categorized first under the aegis of Caliban, and subsequently under that of Ariel, the two works *Féerie I* and *II* mirror that schism, the former work represented by Caliban-Jules and the centripetal forces of literal and figurative confinement represented by a prison cell and the weight of public disapprobation; the latter by Ariel-Céline signifying the centrifugal forces of aesthetic creation through the agency of poetic prose, of *féerie*.

As a metaphor for the potential of Céline’s creative spirit to rise above the most abject of conditions – incarceration in a cramped prison cell in Denmark - *The Tempest* offers us an example of that power embodied in the cries of an imprisoned Ariel that could be heard “d’un bout à l’autre de l’île”, signifying that “toute brutalisée et étouffée qu’elle est, l’inspiration supérieure n’était pas absente des oeuvres dominés par Caliban.”⁹⁸⁴ The corollary of this is also true, as « ... comment douter de l’omniprésence de Caliban dans Shakespeare dès lors qu’il occupe une place importante dans la seule pièce qu’il faille attribuer sans hésitation à Ariel, la *Tempête* elle-même ? »⁹⁸⁵ This thesis holds true for Céline’s works and in particular in the latter example which applies to *Féerie II*, thus demonstrating a triumph of the aesthetic spirit of Céline-Ariel. Like Ariel who “aspire à un état qui le dégagerait de

⁹⁸¹ *The Tempest* : Act I scene 2 : pp 73-74

⁹⁸² Girard, R : *Shakespeare : les feux de l’envie* : Éditions Grasset et Fasquelle 1990 :p 560

⁹⁸³ Ibid :p 560

⁹⁸⁴ Girard, R : *Shakespeare : les feux de l’envie* : Éditions Grasset et Fasquelle 1990 : p 561

⁹⁸⁵ Ibid p 561

tout esclavage mimétique,”⁹⁸⁶ - or the necessity for a Double – the evolution of Prospero from Caliban to Ariel finds its echo in that of Céline the author as well as his avatars as narrators in his novels – Bardamu, Ferdinand, Céline – from a state of dependence on the tyranny of the Double to that of freedom and weightlessness inherent in all states of complete aesthetic independence. This is evident in the gradual diminution and eventual disappearance of the Double in the novels of the trilogy, similar to a cinematographic fade-out. An example of this occurs in Céline’s last novel *Rigodon*, where the figure of Vaudremer, a medical colleague Céline had worked with at St-Jean-d’Angély during the exodus from Paris in 1940, appears as a collective phantom of all the preceding figures of the Double, only to fade away conclusively: “Vaudremer!... semi-lumineux! ... je vous somme!... qu’est-ce que vous me voulez?... vous êtes là ? ... oui ?... non ? revenant d’où ?” (R p 722)

Power-play

The ‘tempest’ in *Féerie II*, caused by the bombardment which disorientates the inhabitants of the rue Girardon building is entirely Céline’s creation – a figment of his imagination over which he possesses ultimate control. As such, it may be described as a « tempête sous un crâne »⁹⁸⁷ similar to the one created by Prospero in Shakespeare’s play, resulting in the same outcome, “celui d’amener tous les ennemis de Prospéro sous la férule de celui-ci, dans le seul lieu où tous ses voeux sont immédiatement exaucés, son île, son univers à lui, celui de la création littéraire.”⁹⁸⁸ (our emphasis) This evocation of Prospero-Shakespeare’s power echoes that of Céline’s creative dominance over all that he calls into being in his work. It is a manifestation of the author’s supreme creative power that is particularly evident in *Féerie pour une autre fois*, a novel in which Céline exercises his prerogative to « transformer ses ennemis en personnages de sa propre fiction et, dans ce cadre, les châtier, les châtier comme bon lui semble. »⁹⁸⁹ The veracity of this statement is borne out in the passage in *Féerie I* where the author’s literary contemporaries are ridiculed in a savage satire that lampoons them to the extent that they become burlesque caricatures of themselves: “Je les vois en haut de la tranchée! Moi dans la crème! S’ils s’esclaffent! Ciboire et la Pharisienne! Ils en peuvent plus de rire ! François en souliers de satin ! ... le

⁹⁸⁶ Girard, R : *Shakespeare : les feux de l’envie* : Éditions Grasset et Fasquelle 1990 : p 562

⁹⁸⁷ Ibid : p 564

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid p 564

⁹⁸⁹ Ibid p 564

même Nartre ! Ils sont habillés tyroliens ! ...petites culottes ! ... et bicornes !(...) » (FI p 94) Nowhere in Céline's œuvre is the desire to ridicule, and in so doing, to destroy the prestige of his rivals so clearly manifest as in this episode. As was the case for Shakespeare, « Une pièce de théâtre est le champ de bataille imaginaire où le dramaturge prend sa revanche sur la 'vie réelle'. »⁹⁹⁰ Through the power of his pen, Céline has destroyed his rivals as thoroughly as Roland put paid to his Saracen rivals with his sword Durandal⁹⁹¹ : « Il a taillé en pièces Faldrun de Pui et vingt-quatre autres, des mieux prisés. Jamais homme ne désira tant se venger. »⁹⁹²

Although the backdrop to both versions of *Féerie* is surreal, situated at the end of a war that threatened to destroy Europe, Girard reminds us that :

« Le monde qu'invente un grand écrivain n'a pas à coïncider avec le monde dit réel pour parler *réellement* de lui. La 'magie' de l'écrivain est la substance même de ce monde reel, lequel regorge toujours de ce qu'exige la poursuite de sa (triste) marche mimétique, tout comme Prospéro lui-même. »⁹⁹³

In *Féerie*, Céline, through the medium of his *fairy-tale*, sketches, in a style that is hyper-mimetic, the fantastic scenario of an apocalyptic world wracked by a 'tempest' that has its origin in social discord and the strictures of a world dominated by molar institutions, notably that of war. As was the case for Shakespeare's 'tempest', « Pour la déclencher, ni la furie des éléments, ni la magie de Prospéro ne sont vraiment nécessaires. »⁹⁹⁴ Ironically, it was a 'tempest' of this magnitude that Céline sought to avert in writing the pamphlets: "What Céline is doing, therefore, in *Bagatelles pour un massacre*, is inviting his audience to roll up and witness, not the massacre of the Jews by the French, but the opposite: the destruction of the French in a coming war instigated by the Jews."⁹⁹⁵ Similarly, through the power of his pen in the evocation of a 'tempest' in *Féerie* Céline sought to liberate himself from the social disapprobation he had incurred through the publication of the pamphlets.

⁹⁹⁰ Girard, R : *Shakespeare : les feux de l'envie* : Editions Grasset et Fasquelle 1990 : p 565

⁹⁹¹ Our reference to the *Chanson de Roland* was prompted by Céline's reference to Roland's battle against the Saracens on pages 88 – 89 of *Féerie I*, shortly before his description of the narrator's imagined humiliation at the hands of his literary rivals.

⁹⁹² *La Chanson de Roland* : L'Édition d'Art H. Piazza : Paris 1966 : p 159

⁹⁹³ Girard, R : *Shakespeare : les feux de l'envie* : Editions Grasset et Fasquelle 1990 :p567

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid p 566

⁹⁹⁵ Hewitt, N : *The life of Céline : a critical biography*: Blackwell publishers 1999: p 168

As was the case in *The Tempest*, Céline's novel encapsulates all the Shakespearean themes present in that play: "la séduction mimétique, la crise sacrificielle, les duperies de la rivalité, les doubles monstrueux,"⁹⁹⁶ all thrown together in a work in which these elements do not appear to be linked by any visible plot or narrative intrigue related to past events. Like Shakespeare, Céline « écrit plutôt une suite d'allusions à son propre passé littéraire; il distille une délicate parodie de lui-même sous sa forme de saynètes exquises. »⁹⁹⁷ And just as Prospero-Shakespeare's true victory was "son triomphe sur lui-même", so too did Céline reach a point at which he could relinquish his desire for vengeance; a point at which he could finally dispense with the figure of the Double as a mediator in his rivalry with himself, and with which he was finally able to attain reconciliation; victory over the warring factions within his psyche.

This progression finally earned Céline the right to appropriate the Bard's words addressed to Ariel through the magician Prospero on the release of Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo from imprisonment:

"Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th'quick,
 Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
 Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent,
 The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
 Not a frown further. Go release them, Ariel.
 My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
 And they shall be *themselves*."⁹⁹⁸ (our emphasis)

Not only does Prospero no longer wish to imprison the three felons, but he also wishes to relinquish any power he might have held over them, thus restoring them to themselves. We view this as a metaphor for Céline's release of himself from the figurative bondage of mimetic rivalry embodied in various figures of the Doubles in his oeuvre. His release had an outcome similar to that of Shakespeare's 'felons'; the conquest of a hard-won freedom to be himself, achieved through his creative aesthetic.

⁹⁹⁶ Girard, R : *Shakespeare : les feux de l'envie* : Editions Grasset et Fasquelle 1990 :p568

⁹⁹⁷ Ibid : p 568

⁹⁹⁸ *The Tempest* : Act V scene 1 : pp 125-126

Liberation

The notion of transgression is indivisible from that of power, and in the case of both Shakespeare and Céline, that of regaining power over themselves – instead of exercising it over others; of relinquishing the mask of ‘actor’ or ‘narrator’ in their works in order to speak with their own voice. Both Shakespeare’s plays and Céline’s novels revealed a gradual progression towards that point, culminating in liberation for both playwright and novelist in the latter part of their lives.

There is no doubt that Céline was an iconoclastic individual, a fact that is endorsed in his correspondence with Élie Faure. Indeed, it was his anti-establishment viewpoint that led him to reject the Soviet post-revolutionary regime in his pamphlet *Mea Culpa* at a time when most of his literary contemporaries endorsed that particular form of Communist propaganda. It also led him to reject the tenets of formal institutions under the Third Republic such as those relating to education, religion and even health care with which he was intimately acquainted. Ultimately this led Céline to espouse “...a French anarchism of the Right, which is anti-progressist, anti-bourgeois and anti-Semitic and which (...) can make common cause with Nazism.”⁹⁹⁹ Céline’s anarchic stance regarding the principles espoused by the industrial bourgeoisie of his epoch appears to be based on nostalgia for the *Belle Epoque* and his admiration for skills such as lace-making which were overtaken and finally eliminated by the advent of industrialisation and mechanisation. Hewitt suggests that Céline’s antagonism towards the dominant socio-political climate during the inter-war years was heightened, not only by unacceptable social conditions including cramped and therefore unhygienic housing conditions¹⁰⁰⁰, but importantly, from a literary viewpoint, because “... it refused the world of ‘féerie’ by symbolically rejecting Céline’s ballets”,¹⁰⁰¹ which, interpreted by Céline as a Jewish ‘plot’, fuelled his anti-Semitism.

In fact, “Hatred, and thirst for revenge are central to both what we can perceive of Céline’s own personality and, in particular, to his writing, beginning with his famous dictum that ‘slang is the language of hatred’”¹⁰⁰² – an aspect of transgression as a means to power through literature that we examined in our chapter on Céline’s

⁹⁹⁹ Hewitt, N : *The life of Céline : a critical biography*: Blackwell Publishers : p 280

¹⁰⁰⁰ Céline was, in his medical capacity, primarily a hygienist.

¹⁰⁰¹ Hewitt, N : *The life of Céline : a critical biography*: Blackwell Publishers 1999: p 280

¹⁰⁰² *Ibid* p 284

idiolect. However, the conflation of hatred and a thirst for revenge ultimately led to a desire for dominance or power over a victim, but as was the case for so many facets of his personality, Céline's attitude towards the exercise of power was inherently ambiguous. Typical of a bullying personality, which is humiliated when power is wielded against him – for example the loss of Elizabeth Craig or the refusal of impresarios to stage his ballets and the failure of his dispensary at Clichy – he had no hesitation in humiliating others in turn, such as his second wife Edith Follett in a cruel letter of separation. Much later, the American professor Milton Hindus became the butt of the author's mercurial treatment that frequently bordered on the psychotic. In Adorno's terms, Céline "exhibits many of the characteristics of the classic bully, or in technical terms, of the Authoritarian Personality, who defers to authority when exerted from above, and exercises it ruthlessly on those below."¹⁰⁰³ This theory resonates with Céline's anti-Semitism which stems from a perception of the Jew as an authoritarian figure wielding unlimited power, to which the 'victim' has to defer, in order to legitimize his resistance to that real or imagined power. This is the origin of the sociologist Mandel's assertion that "the anti-Semite *needs* the continued existence of the imaginary Jew in order to maintain his identity and deny his authoritarianism."¹⁰⁰⁴ The Jew therefore became the mask behind which Céline hid his desire for power or rampant authoritarianism over a perceived 'enemy', while simultaneously portraying himself as a victim. Céline thus legitimized his persecution of the Jews by portraying them as figures of power – and possible destruction of the Aryan race – by leading the nation into a second World War. Anti-Semitism is therefore a key manifestation of authoritarianism, Céline using language as an instrument to both acquire and wield power; a power that was attained through the transgressive agency of figures of the Double in his works. Only when he had relinquished that need to dominate, did his need for that figure become redundant and he could thus dispense with the Double.

There is no doubt that Shakespeare's works had a profound effect on Céline in the context of the acquisition of power through transgression. To sustain this thesis, one has only to recall the figure of Macbeth, who committed the ultimate transgression in

¹⁰⁰³ Hewitt, N : *The life of Céline : a critical biography*: p 284 quoting from Adorno, T : *The Authoritarian personality* 1950

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid p 285

the heinous crime of regicide (the assassination of the highest authority possible authority in the country). This association may also explain the proliferation of quotes from that play in *Guignol's Band*, a novel in which rivalry, murder and power issues dominate the narrative. Other Shakespeare plays that no doubt influenced Céline, given their presence in his works, and which demonstrate the acquisition of power through acts of transgression include *Hamlet* –quoted throughout *Féerie I* and *II* and in *Entretiens avec le professeur Y*; *Richard III*, - quoted from and alluded to in *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie I*; and finally *Henry V* to which oblique reference is made in the *Voyage* through the Macaulay's tale of Monmouth the Pretender.

Deviation

With regard to a subversive deviation from the norm in specific works by Shakespeare and Céline, *The Tempest* ends uncharacteristically in Elizabethan terms, by failing to acknowledge the presence of actors behind the characters they have played, and thus returning the audience to the reality of everyday life. Instead, Prospero, in his closing speech, “blurs the planes of reality which are ordinarily distinct.”¹⁰⁰⁵ In his Epilogue, Prospero asks for applause, but *not* with the voice of an actor playing the part of Prospero, but as Prospero *himself*, “suddenly and mysteriously aware of the theatre audience...”¹⁰⁰⁶:

“(...) Now tis true
 I must here be confined by you
 Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
 Since I have my dukedom got
 And pardoned the deceiver, dwell
 In this bare island by your spell; But release me from my bands
 With the help of your good hands. Gentle breath of yours my sails
 Must fill, or else my project fails,
 Which was to please. Now I want
 Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
 And my ending is despair,
 Unless I be *relieved* by prayer, Which pierces so, that it assaults
 Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
 As you from crimes would pardoned be,
 Let your *indulgence set me free.*”¹⁰⁰⁷ (our emphasis)

¹⁰⁰⁵ *The Tempest* : Introduction p 50

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Ibid* p 50

¹⁰⁰⁷ *The Tempest* : Epilogue : p 137

In Prospero's Epilogue we are not witness to the simple utterance of a player constructing a parallel between his *persona* in the play and his real self, but a deliberate drawing together of audience and actor. Prospero has come down from the stage, removed his mask, revealing himself as Shakespeare *the man* for the first time. This gesture is echoed in Céline's *Féerie II* with the abandonment of Ferdinand the narrator and his replacement by Céline-as-narrator throughout the trilogy. Indeed, *Féerie II* is as transgressive as the ending to *The Tempest*, with the narrator at the close of the novel conflating the *persona* of the narrator Ferdinand with that of Céline the author. Through this device, the prologue to *Féerie I* which describes Clémence Arlon's visit to Céline the author, is united with the novel's Epilogue which finds the author abjectedly resting on a curbstone surrounded by a maelstrom of sheets of his manuscript erupting from the windows of his apartment in the rue Girardon. The Céline who was "le monstre de Montmartre", played by the narrator Ferdinand throughout both novels, regains and reveals his true identity as Céline-the-author, while simultaneously retaining the reader in a state of suspended disbelief, waiting for the play-acting to end and a return of the 'real' world of Clémence Arlon that had seemed entirely plausible at the start of *Féerie I*. Instead, the reader is left marooned in a Montmartre that has assumed a nightmarish aspect, peopled by dreamlike figures such as the silent Norbert and the vindictive Mme Toiselle, the monster Jules and the spectres of Normance, Mme Gindre and her servant. In other words, the *féerie* continues, bearing the reader with it, enveloping us with its spell, just as Prospero in *The Tempest* continued to exert his magical power over the audience beyond the final curtain.

Celt

Two poets, then, Shakespeare and Céline united in a common Celtic heritage with an Aryan connotation. Poets in whom mysticism and fantasy is immanent; beings who rail against convention and the strictures imposed on their lives by those for whom, being devoid of imagination, "mourir c'est peu de chose" (V p 19) Decidedly, for them, "mourir c'est trop". For both men, poetry was their lifeblood, and the link between the two is no better illustrated than in the following descriptions offered first by André Suares commenting on Shakespeare; the second proffered by Céline in an interview with Robert de Saint-Jean: "Shakespeare est le plus grand des Celtes, c'est le parfait Breton. Du Normand, il n'a que l'énergie et la force d'agir. Il est tout au drame,

comme à son fait. Mais son fait n'est pas le gain, ni même la gloire, *c'est la poésie.* »¹⁰⁰⁸ And four centuries later, Céline, a contemporary French novelist-poet cements his bond with the Elizabethan playwright-poet in his declaration : « (...) Mon père était flamand du nord d'Hazebrouck, ma mère brétonne (...) Ce que je peux faire facilement, c'est la chevalerie, le roman d'apparition avec des rois, des spectres(...) Il faut que je sente une résonance, que je travaille dans le nerf, que j'aie le bon contact. »¹⁰⁰⁹

We can only speculate that Shakespeare would have left those that knew him with the same impression as Céline made on Pierre Monnier who, having conducted a series of interviews with the author, was left with the imprint of a man who was

« ... singulier, impair, nourri de hargnes et de contradictions. Mais derrière l'apparence et l'énormité des défauts, les violences de langage, les mensonges enfantins et l'irritabilité, (il) discerne un ressort essential; la haine viscérale des pouvoirs appliqués à soumettre les faibles et les pauvres, les enfants, les malades, les animaux, ceux que Céline aux yeux bleus de Breton, regarde avec tendresse. »¹⁰¹⁰

¹⁰⁰⁸ Suarès, A : *Poète tragique : Shakespeare ou le portrait de Proséro* : Editions François Bourin : Paris 1990 : p ix)

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Cahiers Céline I* : Céline et l'Actualité Littéraire 1932-1957 : Editions Gallimard 1976 : *Propos de Robert de Saint-Jean* : pp 51-52

¹⁰¹⁰ Monnier, P : *Ferdinand Furieux* : Éditions de l'Âge d'Homme : Lausanne 1979 : p 262

Conclusion

The Introduction to this study suggested that the function of the figure of the Double in Céline's works was pivotal in terms of that figure's transgressive and maieutic agency in the production of the author's poetic prose. For this reason, we divided the work into two sections: one in which the transgressive function of the Double predominated in terms of the impetus required for the creation of the conception of the text, while the other related to the Double's maieutic agency and 'delivery' in terms of Céline's lyrical prose to the reader. However, we discovered that those categories were far from watertight, with elements of each being present in the other in a mirror-image of the Double itself. We are reminded here of Gaillard's description of subterranean space as "un sas, étanche, mais communicateur."¹⁰¹¹

Pivot

The pivot in this work is undoubtedly chapters Four (Céline's use of idiolect) and Five (Writing as a catalyst), spanning the divide between the transgressive and maieutic agency of the Double. We discovered elements of both in each of these chapters, hence their placement at the focal point of this work. While chapter Four primarily focuses on the transgressive element in Céline's use of his idiolect, maieutic factors are also present. Inversely, and in a mirror image of this chapter, chapter Five relating to the catalytic and maieutic agency of the Double examines for the most part the aspect of the delivery of Céline's poetic prose, while also acknowledging the transgressive element in the act of writing *per se*.

Should the reader question the length of the section under the heading *Transgressors* which is three times longer than its counterpart *Midwives*, we ascribe this to the fact that the transgressive agency of the Double is necessarily more complex than its maieutic expression which is simply the delivery of a lyrical, poetical style of writing engendered through transgressive agency. The first section of this work therefore required far more explanation and detailed analysis than did its counterpart *Midwives* which is simply its outcome. We thus view the maieutic section as the sum of the diverse parts of the transgressive elements that led to the fruition of Céline's creative

¹⁰¹¹ *L'Imaginaire du souterrain* : Textes réunis par Aurélia Gaillard. Université de la Réunion p. 5

aesthetic extant in a level of lyrical prose designed to reach directly to the reader's emotional core.

Entretiens

An important element not included in our introduction, as it only emerged during the course of this study, relates to the effect of Céline's poetic prose on the reader. Perhaps not surprisingly, this factor became apparent in the chapter dealing with Céline's use of his idiolect, and his use of argot in particular. We may therefore deduce that Céline was far from being the sole beneficiary in the attainment of a level of prose which he envisaged in his *Entretiens avec le professeur Y*; one that would strike directly at the reader's emotional core. The essential spin-off is that prose of this calibre releases a kinetic, dynamic energy which involves the reader in the text through the agency of a degree of *délire* which Céline advocated in a letter to Milton Hindus: "Délirez si vous voulez, mais délirez JUSTE attention. Pour délirer *juste* il faut que cela prenne au trognon de l'Homme de son âme, pas de sa tête."¹⁰¹² There is no doubt then, that Céline's prose sets in motion a series of concentric circles similar to those created by a stone thrown into a pool. Radiating from a point of impact, the ripples evoke the centrifugal force of creativity which extends from the reader's core (or point of impact) to encompass his entire being, "thereby allowing, not forcing, both text and reader to sing."¹⁰¹³

Indeed, *Entretiens avec le Professor Y*, published shortly after *Féerie pour une autre fois II* was Céline's stylistic manifesto which formally defined his own maieutic method in his work. The work is a dialogue between Céline and Professor Y (Colonel Réséda), which evokes obvious comparison with Plato's *Dialogues* with a fictitious Socrates. In this work Céline expounds his theory of emotive stylistics encapsulated in the equation "*métro-tout-nerfs-rails-magiques-à-travers-trois-points*"¹⁰¹⁴, one which Céline defined as "plus important que l'atome!"¹⁰¹⁵ The important difference between Socrates and his interlocutors and Céline and the 'Professor Y', is that in the latter case, although Céline is theoretically in dialogue with the professor, it is Céline who is both interviewer and interviewee: "(...) c'est Céline qui est *interviewé*, C'est lui

¹⁰¹² Letter to Milton Hindus dated 12 June 1947, in *Éditions de L'Herne* 1999: p 116

¹⁰¹³ Hainge, G: *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline*: p 134

¹⁰¹⁴ *Céline* : Romans t IV : Éditions Gallimard 1993 : p 543

¹⁰¹⁵ *Ibid* p 543

qui fournit toutes les réponses et même quelquefois les questions.”¹⁰¹⁶ We therefore conclude that the maieutic outcome of this dialogue involves as much Céline himself as it does his interlocutor(s). Indeed, Céline’s contribution to French literature is encapsulated in Dutourd’s statement that « Céline a introduit dans la littérature française ‘une toute petite invention’ (...) l’invention de Céline c’est (...) l’émotion dans le langage écrit. Personne en effet avant Céline n’avait écrit comme lui et, depuis 1932, beaucoup l’ont imité sans jamais l’égaliser. »¹⁰¹⁷ However, in general, the *Entretiens* did not attract favourable press reviews. One reviewer in particular, Robert Kemp, not only slates the work itself but, in an ironic reference to Socrates which underscores our thesis regarding the philosopher’s influence on Céline, declares that the work is “(...) de grosse satire, ciguë éventée.”¹⁰¹⁸

Importantly, in the context of our thesis, a reading of Plato’s *Dialogues* the Socratic *maieûtikos* or dialectical method is creative in that it produces a fresh, original perspective on received ideas. In the same way, an attentive, active reading of Céline’s works produces the same effect on the reader who becomes imbued with an entirely new outlook; frequently a complete reversal of views he or she had previously held through the author’s ability to debunk conventional ideas. In other words, Céline’s works compel the reader to abandon perceived ideas and opinions in order to embrace entirely new cognitive associations. In so doing, the reader, in tandem with the author, achieves an expression of his or her creative aesthetic. This idea is vindicated in the case of both Plato’s *Dialogues* and Céline’s works, by the avid reader response which both authors’ works continue to elicit today.

Avatar

We noted that manifestations of the Double occurred not only as actual figures in the novels in the persons of, for example, Robinson, Mille-Pattes, Jules, but also as a metaphor for that figure in various phenomena in both a transgressive and a maieutic context. Examples include the phenomenon of War and the use of Idiolect - both transgressive elements. In a maieutic context, the Double was also manifest in subterranean space and in the act of writing *per se*. With regard to War as a metaphor

¹⁰¹⁶ *Céline* : Romans t IV : Éditions Gallimard 1993 : Prière d’insérer pour *Entretiens avec le professeur Y* écrit par Jean Dutourd p 1365

¹⁰¹⁷ *Ibid* p 1366

¹⁰¹⁸ *Ibid* p 1367 : Robert Kemp : *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 2 juin 1955

for the Double, we note that its effect on the protagonist in Céline's novels as well as on the author himself prompted him to create the figure of the Double in order to cope with the trauma experienced in war. Figures of the Double may thus be said to represent avatars of that prototype which prompted their creation. In turn, it was the Dionysian turbulence and disruption caused by War and its avatars in the author's life which led to the creation of his poetic prose as an outcome of creative rivalry between author and his Double as well as between the narrators in Céline's novels and their respective Doubles. We believe this phenomenon is extant in Céline's observation: "Bardamu? *Ce n'est pas moi, c'est mon double. Mais Robinson aussi.*"¹⁰¹⁹

Immanence

In Céline's works, each instance of the attainment of an ideal state of being for the realization of creative aesthetic - whether expressed as a dissolution of individuation in a collapse of the "*principium individuationis*"¹⁰²⁰ or « *de la sublimation de l'être* »¹⁰²¹ is associated with the divine duo of Hermès-Mercury. The implication is a dissolution of the ego as a prerequisite for authentic aesthetic expression in the creation of poetic prose. To a certain extent, magic plays a part in this equation, as the level of fantasy created by both Shakespeare and Céline causes the reader/spectator to suspend disbelief, thus subverting both reason and ego. We note that Céline was as skilled as Shakespeare in the creation of this level of magic embodied in both *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois*.

It is in the abolition of the ego, through *assimilation* of the Other, that a purely elemental state is achieved by the hero, one which is an expression of pure immanence. It is also one in which Céline's poetic prose was to find its fullest expression. Is this not what achieving a state of immanence or *La Grande Santé* implies: dissolving to oneself, becoming imperceptible or clandestine? This notion is encapsulated in Deleuze's observation that « (...) si l'homme a un destin, ce sera

¹⁰¹⁹ Carayon, Jeanne: *Le docteur écrit un roman* : Cahiers de l'Herne No 3 1962 : p 22

¹⁰²⁰ Nietzsche, F: *The Birth of tragedy and The case of Wagner* : Trans. Walter Kaufmann: Random House 1967: p 36

¹⁰²¹ Durand G : *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* Bordas Etudes Paris 1969 p 347

plutôt d'échapper au visage, défaire le visage et les visagéifications, devenir imperceptible, devenir clandestin (...) »¹⁰²²

Indeed, a complete assimilation of the text by the reader in a process described by Hainge as a “becoming-reader/text”¹⁰²³ can only occur once the narrator/author has become ‘clandestine’ or ‘imperceptible’ – a Deleuzian term which we have interpreted in the state of immanence attained by Céline’s heroes in the a fusion with, and concomitant elimination of the Double as an entity in *opposition* to himself – and the author’s creative process. Céline thus rids himself of the “étrange detour”¹⁰²⁴ presented by the Double which represents a barrier to the attainment of his ideal form of narrative formulated in his notion of a “*métro-tout-nerfs-rails-magiques-à-traverses-trois-points*”¹⁰²⁵ no detour, no obstacle to its passage: “*vos rails sont droits que dans l’émotion!*”¹⁰²⁶ The resultant degree of poetic prose present throughout Céline’s oeuvre emulates his ‘métré émotif’, thus implicating the reader in an active interpretation of his text. In eliminating the Other incarnate in the figure of the Double, Céline attains a state which is “... le vrai dualisme (...) avec l’absence d’autrui.”¹⁰²⁷ Indeed, that dualism, an ideal state in which neither Good nor Evil is distinguished, exists in the interstice between the Other and its absence, as “Le vrai dualisme est tout à fait ailleurs: entre les effets (...) d’Autrui (...) et son absence.”¹⁰²⁸

La Grande Santé

In order to achieve a state of immanence, the protagonists in Céline’s works were all required to embark upon a particular genre of journey which Deleuze termed a *Robinson(n)ade*¹⁰²⁹ or “la perversion même.”¹⁰³⁰ And in Céline’s *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, transgression and perversion of the rules of society are the hallmark of the protagonist-hero’s trajectory which aims to “Instaurer le monde sans autrui, redresser

¹⁰²² Deleuze, G, and Guattari, F : *Capitalisme et schizophrénie: Mille Plateaux* : Les Éditions de Minuit : 1980 : p 209

¹⁰²³ Hainge, G : *Capitalism and schizophrenia in the later novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : p 150

¹⁰²⁴ Deleuze, G : *Postface : Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique* : p 278 : « Instaurer le monde sans autrui, redresser le monde (comme Vendredi le fait, ou plutôt comme Robinson perçoit que Vendredi le fait), c’est éviter le détour. » : p 278

¹⁰²⁵ *Entretiens avec le professeur Y* : Romans t IV : Editions Gallimard 1993 :p 543

¹⁰²⁶ Ibid p 541

¹⁰²⁷ Deleuze, G : *Postface : Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique* : p 267

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid p 266

¹⁰²⁹ We note that the spelling of this term differs between the use of one ‘n’ and two

¹⁰³⁰ Deleuze, G : *Postface à Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique* : p 283

le monde (...) c'est éviter le détour. C'est séparer le désir de son *objet*, de son détour par un corps, pour le rapporter à une *cause* pur : Les Éléments. »¹⁰³¹ A cosmic element is thus implicit in the outcome of Céline's final journey which sees the narrator Céline-Destouches in the company of his wife and Bébert the cat gain an intrinsic, elemental serenity against a backdrop of actual – as opposed to fictitious - wartime events which have lost their power to cause him trauma. This is a calm that cannot be shattered by external events, as it is immanent, a hard-won state of serenity that Céline journeyed towards throughout the trajectory of his novels, in the company of his Doubles; a journey expressed in some of the most poetic prose in French literature. Appropriately, the word denoting that journey of self-discovery - a *Robinson(n)ade* - incorporates the name of the Double of both Céline and his protagonist Bardamu in his first novel.

Each journey in Céline's novels is diametrically opposed to the journey of the picaresque hero, Bardamu's evasion is prompted by a survival instinct, leaving him increasingly alienated from society, to the extent that "Bardamu demeure, (...) une sorte d'étranger au sein d'un monde hostile."¹⁰³² Essentially, Bardamu's continual flight from perceived danger is a morally and ethically creative act ; one which surpasses that of the traditional definition of the picaresque hero, as « La force centrifuge¹⁰³³ qui le pousse le plus loin possible du borbier et des dangers humains paraît de ce fait contraire au principe du roman picaresque. »¹⁰³⁴

Signifying the end of Bardamu's journey to the end of his own particular night, is the fact that the novel closes with the protagonist's contemplation, at *dawn*, of an image of flux and an injunction to silence: "qu'on n'en parle plus".(V p 505) The closing scene in this novel presages a retreat into oneself, which is a prerequisite for authentic creative production; one which was to be borne out in the poetic prose which steadily increased with each successive novel, reaching its apogee in *Féerie pour une autre fois*. Céline's first novel the *Voyage* thus represented merely the initial stage on the author's own particular journey to the end of his night, culminating with the novel

¹⁰³¹ Ibid p 278

¹⁰³² Verdaguer, P : *L'Univers de la Cruauté : une lecture de Céline* : Librairie Droz 1988 : p 133

¹⁰³³ In Deleuzian terms, a metaphor for the creative act, as opposed to one that is centripetal.

¹⁰³⁴ Verdaguer, P : *L'Univers de la Cruauté : une lecture de Céline* : Librairie Droz 1988 : p 133

Rigodon the evocative name of a dance. In turn, this evokes the words of Jeanne Carayon, Céline's first secretary who recalled that "La compagne du Docteur Destouches, c'est donc la Danse: le corps affranchi de la pesanteur par le rythme. C'est bien ce qu'appelaient ces yeux de Celte."¹⁰³⁵

However, the state of immanence in which Céline-the-author as well as Céline-Destouches the narrator finds himself at the end of both his life and the creation of his oeuvre is a hard-won conquest; one which Nietzsche described as "celle qu'il ne suffit pas d'avoir, celle qu'on acquiert, qu'il faut acquérir constamment, parce qu'on la sacrifie sans cesse, parce que sans cesse, il faut la sacrifier."¹⁰³⁶ At the end of the *Voyage* we witness a Bardamu who declares "Mon trimbalage à moi il était bien fini" (V p 500) words which evoke a sense of lightness inherent in one who has acquired a state of weightlessness – an Ariel freed from the weight of worldly encumbrance present in the person of Caliban.

Reconciliation

Implicit in Céline's quest to touch the reader's emotional core is an acceptance of Death as an integral part of life without attempting to dissimulate its finality. Such an acceptance entails living life in such a way that Death becomes part of the equation rather than a deferred state of existence. In this study we have demonstrated that Céline did indeed achieve that goal through the sublimation of his ego, and a reconciliation of the schism within his psyche caused primarily by war neuroses. We also noted a gradual decline in the presence of the figure of the Double in Céline's works, particularly in the trilogy comprising *D'un château l'autre*, *Nord* and *Rigodon*, where the Double's presence fades away entirely in the last novel. We believe this signals both an acceptance of death as well as a resolution of Céline's war-induced trauma with its concomitant reliance on the figure of the Double as both a refuge and an agent for artistic creation. The Double no longer represents the archetypal rival with whom the author-narrator is required to do battle; he and Céline have become one in a calm that is reflected in the last scene of the author's last novel *Rigodon*.

¹⁰³⁵ Carayon, Jeanne: *Le docteur écrit un roman* : Cahiers de l'Herne 3 1962 : p 21

¹⁰³⁶ Nietzsche, F : *Le gai savoir* : p 215

Dionysos

The elements of Dionysian dance and song are, we believe, a key transgressive force for the production of Céline's poetic prose; a level of literary expression that was the outcome of the creative rivalry existing between the Dionysian conflict between the protagonists in Céline's works and their respective Doubles. The resultant poetic prose is an embodiment of Apollo, whose moniker 'the Brilliant' is one which best describes the level of poetic prose achieved by Céline in the novels of the Trilogy.

The vicissitudes of Céline's protagonists, be they Bardamu, Ferdinand, Céline or Céline-Destouches, represent the progression of a journey towards what Otto Rank described as an "appointment *per se* of the artist with himself"¹⁰³⁷. In each novel, the protagonist, in a creative, dissident relationship with his Double, evocative of the creative rivalry between Dionysos and Apollo, evolves towards a state of immanence in which the necessity for the presence of the Double is gradually effaced; not to be negated, but to be *assimilated* within the persona of the protagonist as an integral element in his being. Mimetic rivalry is thus supplanted by the resolution of fundamental difference in a productive assimilation by the protagonist of all that the Other represented – and who formerly represented, in Deleuzian terms, a 'detour' on the path of the protagonist's journey towards an appointment with himself.

Transgressors

War and Death

We observed how the transgressive agency of the Double was present in the phenomenon of War, and in which capacity the figure of the Double is, in this instance, a mirror-image of War itself. We also examined the Double's role as a refuge or shield for those suffering from traumatic war experiences, notably those suffered by Céline himself, by exploring the phenomenon of Death itself in the context of war, and in particular the significance of sacrificial death by suicide which is present in the figure of Robinson in *Voyage au bout de la nuit*. It is in an interview with André Brissaud that Céline offers us one of his most poignant reflections on death: "La mort qui est au bout, seule compte... Pour moi, quand elle viendra, je lui

¹⁰³⁷ Rank, O. : *L'Art et l'Artiste : Créativité et développement de la personnalité* : Bibliothèque scientifique Payot ; 1998 :p 55

dirai que je suis bien content... Salut la compagnie! Vous crèverez tous, comme moi, dans la barque à Caron... J'ai eu, moi aussi, des raisons de vivre."¹⁰³⁸ In this study, we therefore interrogated Death in the context of the production of Céline's aesthetic: a Death that is accepted as an integral part of the journey of life.

We noted a gradual diminution of the figure of the Double in Céline's novels from *Féerie pour une autre fois* onwards in the novels of the trilogy, as he appears to be increasingly redundant, having fulfilled his role as a catalyst for the metamorphosis of the narrators in the author's works as well as a parallel evolution of the author himself. This progression is reflected in Céline's choice of name for his narrator, starting with Bardamu, progressing to Ferdinand (Bardamu's first name) and ending with Ferdinand-Céline, an onomastic trajectory which, we believe, is a reflection of the author's gradual reconciliation with the fragmented aspects of his psyche. He has evolved from a figure who is at the mercy of the whims of the Other, starting with Robinson, to an individual who has regained himself; an immanent being reconciled with his duality and no longer at war with that part of his being that constituted the Double.

Céline's narrators were ultimately able to bridge the gap separating them from their respective Others or Doubles in the persons of Robinson, Courtial des Pereires¹⁰³⁹, Sosthène de Rodiencourt, Mille-Pattes and lastly Jules, the epitome of malevolence and the most extreme example of mimetic rivalry embodied in the Other in Céline's works. From that point onwards, the Double, having achieved his purpose, almost ceases to exist, except in a shadow version of himself in the figures of La Vigue and Vaudremer in the trilogy. It appears as though this figure, like a character in a film, gradually fades from the picture, his image dimming as the overall story draws to a close.

¹⁰³⁸ L'Herne No 3: Lettres Modernes: André Brissaud: *Voyage au bout de la tendresse* : p 231

¹⁰³⁹ We note that although in the case of these two figures that separation was caused by Death, their relationship was nonetheless deemed to have been reconciled.

Initiators, Rivals

Although not inherently transgressive, the various father-figures present in Céline's life played a key initiatory role in stimulating Céline's interest in a dual career of medical doctor and writer. In their capacity as both initiators and the prototype of the Double-as-Rival, these figures occasionally provided an example of both transgressor and midwife, the Hungarian obstetrician Semmelweis being a case in point. While providing the subject for Céline's medical thesis, Semmelweis also afforded the aspirant doctor the opportunity to hone his writing skills for which he was praised by his medical examiners. Other initiators were to follow, including Henry de Graffigny (Raoul Marquis) and Benedictus, who were to serve as Céline's inspiration for the creation of the figures of Courtial des Pereires in the case of the former, while Sosthène de Rodiencourt and Borokrom were believed to have been inspired by Benedictus. Of particular significance in the gallery of influential father-figures is that of Ludwig Rajchman, a respected doctor and Céline's colleague at the *Société des Nations* who was caricatured in both the author's play *L'Église* as well as in the pamphlet *Bagatelles pour un massacre* in the figure of Yudenzweck, thus providing an outlet for Céline's anti-Semitism.

Dionysos and Apollo

The archetypal, mythical duality of Dionysos and Apollo was examined in terms of a productive conflict between rivals resulting in artistic expression in Céline's works. That rivalry is in fact integral to artistic production : « C'est ce qu'on pourrait appeler la *nécessaire* dissidence de la création. »¹⁰⁴⁰ Drawing on Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, we drew a parallel between that philosopher's comments on the ineluctability of Fate present in Attic tragedy, and a concomitant acceptance of death as part of life, and Céline's gradual coming to terms with his own fate. Dionysos' transgressive nature expressed in song, dance and ribaldry is interpreted in terms of its expression in Céline's works as an agent for artistic production. We also drew a parallel between Céline's attainment of a fundamental calm towards the end of his life and literary career and the immanence of 'brilliance' of Apollo which echoes the state attained by the author and expressed in his prose. We discovered that in order to gain

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ferrier, M : *Céline et la chanson* : p 269

a full understanding of Céline's works it was essential to understand the role of a Dionysian presence in the creation of poetic prose in Céline's oeuvre.

Idiolect and comedy

We examined Céline's transgressive use of his idiolect, present in form of argot, ironic laughter, caricature and vulgarity, as a metaphor for the Double. Particularly significant was the author's use of his idiolect to ridicule societal norms and the individuals who sustained that *status quo*. The regenerative force of Céline's use of idiolect in the context of an *active* reading of his texts was also found to play a significant role in the production of the author's poetic prose, as was the use of the English language in particular, which we believe had its roots in Céline's admiration for Shakespeare. Indeed, the role of the English language is particularly significant as a metaphor for transgression and freedom expressed in *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, *Mort à crédit* and especially *Guignol's Band* where the narrative is played out against a backdrop of London, with the statue of Shakespeare in Leicester Square as its focal point.

Midwives

Writing as catalyst

We interrogated the act of writing as an agent or catalyst for the integration of the schism present in the author's psyche in the context of a creative act. For Céline, alchemy played a significant role in the writing process, one which appears to have been undertaken under the aegis of the dual divinity Mercury-Hermès, and we believe that the duality of Mercury-Hermès therefore functions as a catalyst for the generation of Céline's creative impulse. We examined the phenomenon of *psychogogy* – an instrument of maieutic in terms of a link to Hermès in his function as *psychopompe*, which entails the ability “to lead souls to the nether world.” We believe this encapsulates the Socratic maieutic method of leading the mind, through dialectic, to self-discovery. The significance of the divine duo Hermès-Mercury in Céline's works is relevant, not only in its representation as a pivotal alchemic figure, but also in the incarnation of *Hermès Trismégiste* (thrice-greatest) who is « le principe du devenir,

c'est-à-dire selon l'hermétisme, de la *sublimation de l'être*. ».¹⁰⁴¹ We found that it was not fortuitous that Céline consecrated his oeuvre to this particular divinity and his avatars, as Mercury is not only “la planète de Paris”¹⁰⁴², but also because “le dieu Mercure, qui gouverne le signe des Gémeaux a l'air pour élément, soit l'élément surpositif chez Céline.”¹⁰⁴³

Ambiguity and the grotesque

Eminently ambiguous and therefore maieutic, subterranean space fulfils the role of a metaphor for a regenerative hypogeal journey undertaken by the narrator in Céline's works. We therefore concluded that those subterranean spaces present in Céline's works represent the site of a metaphorical descent into oneself in a search for the Truth. We found this to be particularly relevant in the context of *Féerie II* which was written from within the confines of a prison cell. We also discovered a parallel between the degree of enclosure in which the author wrote his works and the level of poetic prose present in the resultant works. Directly proportional to the degree of enclosure from which they emerged, these works display a level of fantasy which leads one to conclude that a state of confinement served as a catalyst and metaphor for the Double in its agency to achieve the dissolution of the barriers separating the author from society. It is in this sense that subterranean spaces are deemed maieutic in both versions of *Féerie pour une autre fois*, as they provide a site for the delivery of a heightened level of poetics in the author's prose.

Associated with the notion of the subterranean, chthonic world, is that of the grotesque. It is in this context that we explored the instances of physical disability in the form of a limp in the author's works, as they denote an earthbound, subterranean existence compared with their counterpart, the dancer who is the epitome of Ariel, an airborne creature. We note that instances of *claudication* or *boiterie* occur in the narrator's case in times of stress, such as the instances cited in *Guignol's Band* in the events leading up to the bacchanalia at the Touit-Touit club. In itself, that event takes place in one of the most grotesquely significant subterranean spaces in Céline's works; in a *cuve* which evokes a vat for alchemic transmutation. In this instance we

¹⁰⁴¹ Durand G : *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* Bordas Etudes Paris 1969 p 347

¹⁰⁴² Charles Barlet : (Fauchoux, Albert) *L'astrologie et la guerre* : La Sirène (1918) p 21 in Derval, A : *Le récit fantastique dans l'œuvre de Louis-Ferdinand Céline* : p 291

¹⁰⁴³ Ibid p 291

are witness to a reverse process of the transmutation of Evil into Good with the dwarf Mille-Pattes transforming Good into Evil during a Saturnalia which culminates in the deflowering and subsequent pregnancy of the hitherto virginal Virginie.

Céline's Bard

Shakespeare was perhaps the most significant literary influence on Céline; one that lasted throughout the author's life, causing him to write his works under the aegis of the Elizabethan playwright. Indeed, Shakespeare appears to represent a Double or *alter ego* for Céline, a notion that finds expression in a mirror-image of the abrogation and creation of magic. While Prospero, the magician in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* abjures his magic by breaking his baton at the close of the play, Céline's narrator in *Entretiens avec le professeur Y* breaks his baton before immersing it in water in a demonstration of the magic inherent in his "métro-émotif". While undoubtedly representing an initiator into the world of letters for Céline, Shakespeare also fulfils a maieutic function in that he provided a site for the gestation and delivery of the author's poetic prose.

We analysed the parallels between Shakespeare's last play *The Tempest* and Céline's novels *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois* in terms of a heightened degree of poetic prose and fantasy present in these works, taking into account the significance of quotations from various Shakespearean plays which had been transposed by Céline in both works. We concluded that this degree of intertextuality signaled the extent to which Shakespeare had exerted an influence on the gestation of Céline's poetic prose.

Parallels

In our examination of the transgressive and maieutic agency of the Double we discovered an unexpected parallel between the seven chapters in this work and Céline's seven novels. Thus, in terms of transgressive agency, the four chapters under the heading *Transgressors* correspond to Céline's first four novels – *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, *Mort à crédit*, *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois* - while the three chapters under the heading *Midwives* – *D'un Château l'autre*, *Nord* and *Rigodon*- relate to the maieutic outcome of the agency of the Double. While the first four chapters mirror in density and transgressive imagery the content of Céline's first

four novels, the last three chapters reflect the relative calm of the narrative style in the Trilogy. While not as overtly poetic as Céline's early novels, an atmosphere of serenity pervades his last works, paradoxically despite their backdrop of war; a sense of resolution and self-discovery and a concomitant delivery of the essence of poetry in a resolved creative aesthetic.

In contrast to the staccato rhythm of the poetic prose prevalent in *Guignol's Band* and *Féerie pour une autre fois*, the lyricism that is present in the novels of the Trilogy no longer relies on the pyrotechnics explicit in the former novels, yielding to a narrative style that is perhaps more subtle, more implicit, but no less evocative in its poetic evocation of war-torn Europe. The emphasis is not so much on a stream-of-consciousness expression of emotional fragmentation as on the fruit of Céline's attempt to reconcile the fragments of his shattered psyche through the creation of figures of the Double. Indeed, the poetic prose present in the Trilogy reflects an important change in perspective in that Céline prioritises an observation of those around him experiencing the vicissitudes of war-torn Europe in contrast to his prior observation of *himself* subjected to traumatic events in the previous novels. We ascribe this to a sublimation of the author's ego and a concomitant ability to view life from the perspective of the Other instead of regarding that figure as a threat; as a rival.

Throughout his entire oeuvre, then, we are witness to Céline reworking his primal trauma through the creation of diverse figures of the Double in the persons of father-figures, mother-figures, authority-figures such as the Colonel Entrayes and even colleagues and friends such as Gen Paul- Jules. Even the metre and cadence of the poetic prose has altered, reflecting an Apollonian calm; a brilliance characteristic of the divinity expressed in a dreamlike state of evoked by the image of exotic birds emerging from the foliage in the Copenhagen public gardens at the close of Céline's last novel *Rigodon*. In this image we discern a metaphor for the author's attainment of a state of calm; of self-resolution after a long and painful journey of self-discovery. At that point in Céline's life, death is no longer the reason for sterile fear, but a promise of renewed life – a stimulus for creation. He has reached a point at which -

“On est devenu soi-même, imperceptible et clandestine dans un voyage immobile. Plus rien ne peut se passer, ni s'être passé. Plus personne ne peut rien pour moi ni contre moi. Mes territoires sont hors de prise, et pas parce qu'ils sont imaginaires, au contraire : parce que je

suis en train de les tracer. Finies les grandes ou les petites guerres. Finis les voyages, toujours à la traîne de quelque chose. Je n'ai plus aucun secret, à force d'avoir perdu le visage, forme et matière. Je ne suis plus qu'une ligne. Je suis devenu capable d'aimer, non pas d'un amour universel abstrait, mais celui que je vais choisir, et qui va me choisir, en aveugle, *mon double*, qui n'a plus de moi que moi.(...) »¹⁰⁴⁴ (our emphasis)

This image is symbolic of the degree to which Céline has become himself in the most authentic sense of the word, through a complete sublimation of his ego, thus attaining what Nietzsche termed *La Grande Santé*.

End notes

In conclusion; we posit that the spin-off from Céline's notion of reaching the reader lies in a stimulation of the desire to re-interpret the author's text, not necessarily (and perhaps not at all) in academic terms, but through an inspiration to emulate Céline's narrative style in fictional works which will continue to perpetuate the blueprint laid down by the author in his oeuvre. Céline's project will thus bear fruit on two levels: that of a generation of writers who, in echoing Céline's journey towards self-realisation and a conscious acceptance of death and a sublimation of the ego in the achievement of a state of immanence, will produce prose that will serve as an inspiration for future generations of readers – and writers.

Céline, at the simultaneous end of his life – and his life's work – did indeed discover that he had, in Cixous' words, "Walk(ed) through (him)self towards the dark"¹⁰⁴⁵, embracing both Life and Death in the process.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Deleuze, G and Guattari, F : *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie: Mille Plateaux*: Les Éditions de Minuit : 1980 : p 244

¹⁰⁴⁵ Cixous, H : *Three steps on the ladder of writing*

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