

MYTH IN THE WORK OF APOLLINAIRE

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the work of Apollinaire are to be found references to mythological figures and incidents, drawn from many different areas of mythology and legend, both ancient and more modern. Apollinaire had a taste for somewhat bizarre and esoteric detail, such as these references. But they are clearly not interspersed throughout his writing in a gratuitous manner: it would seem that each one fits into a larger plan of the poet's inspiration and creation. The aim of this examination of myth in the work of Apollinaire is to try to trace a link between his interest in, and references to myths, and his own artistic expression. There appears to be a synthesis of the two elements of traditional mythology and personal expression, which transforms both elements into a peculiarly Apollinairian form of myth. Personal inspiration draws upon mythology and, at the same time revitalizes the myths themselves, freeing them from the immobility of tradition. For Apollinaire, myth becomes a constituent part of what he called "l'esprit nouveau", which was a new, free form of spiritual adventure.

After attempting to define the areas of mythology and legend from which Apollinaire draws most often, we shall use these precisions in studying some aspects of Apollinaire's poetic imagery, to see how he incarnates and animates certain aspects of myth in his own way. In this is to be found an important aspect of Apollinaire's renovation of myth, in which myth merges with new, surprising images of the new kind of poetry that was being formed after the Symbolists. The solar myth, and other myths of fire, for example, are taken up by Apollinaire to the end of a personal poetic expression. Similarly, water, music or shadows are used to illustrate or dramatize Apollinaire's individual

interpretations and transformations of myth.

Finally, as a kind of cross-reference, we will turn to Apollinaire's biography in order to discuss the possible role played by mythology in his views and attitudes towards his own life and experiences. In some poems, for example, he likens himself to certain aspects of the figure or myth of Orpheus or Christ. His own life, and above all, his writing, bears this imprint of mythology, and, on the other hand, the myths that he uses bear the imprint of Apollinaire himself. From a reciprocal transformation such as this comes a new attitude to myth, which becomes part of the "new spirit", and also part of the vague legend of Apollinaire himself.

Apollinaire's treatment and use of myth thus appears, in the context of early 20th century poetry, as an overture to a new poetic vogue, the themes of which were to be embellished by the Surrealists. His poetic and mythological example shows that 20th century poetry had not entirely broken with the former spirit and tradition of poetic mythology, but had merely adapted it to reflect the spirit of its own creation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I	Page
Introductory definitions of myth	1
Chapter II	
Ancient myths and mythological characters	14
Chapter III	
Myths of creative and destructive fire	39
Chapter IV	
Myths of death and rebirth in water, shadow, music and flowers	55
Chapter V	
Apollinaire: personal life and myth	73
Chapter VI	
Conclusion: towards a new myth	95
Bibliography	103
Appendix	110

INTRODUCTORY DEFINITIONS OF "MYTH"

A study of "myth" in the work of any writer must necessarily start from some general notions of what "myth" is, and of its different constituent parts. It is therefore necessary to attempt to define and clarify the terms to be used, before embarking upon consideration of the work itself. For this reason, we have chosen to distinguish between five words which would appear to relate to five distinct, yet sometimes overlapping aspects of "myth". These are: "myth" itself, the word which will be used to encompass all the variety of facets to be discussed, but which has a significance peculiar to itself only; legend, which must be considered separately as one particular aspect of what is loosely called "myth"; symbol, archetype, and image or metaphor of all sorts, which are seen as further abstract aspects of "myth", as well as the "plastic" manifestations, the material by which "myth" is often expressed and illustrated. All of these are to be found in the work of Apollinaire, and they provide interesting landmarks in his work, and in the "myth" of his work, or his imagination.

Some interesting definitions of the meaning of the words "myth" or "mythology" are to be found in the works of those who have specialized in the study of "myth". Professor C. Kerényi collaborated with C.G. Jung in the writing of Essays on a science of mythology.¹ An attempt to establish a "science of mythology" seems perhaps unnecessarily technical, and risks destroying the essential beauty of mythological creation, though it may shed an interesting light on the psychological processes of such a creation. However, for our purposes, part of the definition of Kerényi will serve as a good point of

departure:

A particular kind of material determines the art of mythology, an immemorial and traditional body of material contained in tales about gods and god-like beings, heroic battles and journeys to the Underworld - "mythologem" is the best Greek word for them - tales already well known but not unamenable to further reshaping. Mythology is the movement of this material: it is something solid, yet mobile, substantial yet not static, capable of transformation.²

Kerényi goes on to emphasize the creation of mythology as being an art: "held fast as the mythologems are in the form of sacred traditions, they are still in the nature of works of art".³ In these words Kerényi points out one of the principal characteristics of the creation of myths, which is its sacred, or religious nature. The myth is a pattern for human behaviour within a society and civilisation. The creator or the re-shaper of myths, the artist, takes on something of this religious sanctity in the very act of creation, or re-creation. The artist is then, a founder who draws strength from, and builds upon the original source of myth. This is one of the peculiarities of myth as distinct from legend, symbol, archetype, and so on.

"It is no groundless generalization to say that mythology tells of the origins or at least of what originally was,"⁴ writes Kerényi later on, and his "generalization" is supported by the theories of other myth-specialists. One other such specialist of note is Mircea Eliade, who emphasizes the metaphysical importance of myth in writing:

Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial time, the fabled time of the "beginnings"⁵
.... The actors in myths are Supernatural Beings.

Eliade goes on to give a point-by-point definition of myth which it will be interesting to bear in mind when thinking of "myth" in the writings of Apollinaire:

In general it can be said that myth, as experienced by archaic societies, (1) constitutes the History of the acts of the Supernaturals; (2) that this History is considered to be

absolutely true ... and sacred; (3) that myth is always related to a "creation", it tells how something came into existence, or how a pattern of behaviour, an institution, a manner of working were established ...; (4) that by knowing the myth one knows the "origin" of things and hence can control and manipulate them at will ...; (5) that in one way or another one "lives" the myth ...⁶

In the life and "mythology" of Apollinaire we will find evidence of most of these aspects of the myth, as defined by Eliade, not least of which, its "sacred" aspect, with which Apollinaire closely identifies the poet, the artist, and himself. For Apollinaire, the artist, as creator, and "founder" in contact with the "origin", is himself a divinity:

Avant tout, les artistes sont des hommes qui veulent devenir inhumains.

Ils cherchent péniblement les traces de l'inhumanité, traces que l'on ne rencontre nulle part dans la nature.

Elles sont la vérité et en dehors d'elles nous ne connaissons aucune réalité.⁷

What more clear confession of aspiration to divinity, and of belief in the myth of the artist?

It is not contradictory to what has been said up to now, to say that myths are not necessarily about gods. They are not necessarily sacred or religious. Indeed, the sort of myths to be found in the work of Apollinaire are often of a secular type. They become divine particularly when associated with the personal aspirations of the poet towards the divinity of a creator. Poems such as "Le Larron" or "Les Collines" will be discussed in this light in a later section.

When speaking of the "secular myth", however, we encroach already upon the territory of legend, which is the second thing that pure myth is not. Myths, specific though they may be in their depiction of character and setting, are usually set in a timeless past. Details of contemporary life may appear in myth, but these are probably the complications of the influence of legend. Myths are not folktales, whereas legends often are. Philippe

Renaud, in his work on Apollinaire, points out a further distinction between myth and legend:

... le mythe a pour protagonistes les dieux, la légende des mortels, qui sont bien souvent des héros dans l'acception antique du mot: des hommes cherchant à être dieux, des demi-dieux de naissance. 8

So the artist, as creator, in identifying himself with the sacred and with the "original" is not himself mythical, however closely he aligns himself with the exemplary characters of myth. He becomes rather, as he presents himself in his life or work, a case of legend. That is, he can create around himself a hazy aura of mystery, which will give rise to legend. Rimbaud's life in Africa has something of the legendary about it, being mysterious and relatively undocumented. Alfred Jarry, in assuming the identity of his own Père Ubu, intentionally became a living legend, a curiosity and a mystery. Apollinaire too, created an air of legend around some of the facts of his own life, probably to emphasize his taste for the bizarre, which has itself become legendary.

As these examples show, legend, as opposed to myth, relates to mortal men whose lives offer material of interest to the imagination that will elaborate them into legendary dimensions. The historical truth of events and personalities is re-shaped into legend just as the tales about gods were seen to be for the formation of myth.

Symbol, as we have said, is one of the other constituents of myth. It is one of the devices used to illustrate the content of myth. In his book on Myths in French literature, Pierre Albouy clarifies what he sees as the role of symbol in the creation of myth:

Aussi bien le symbole est-il, plus que l'allégorie, proche du mythe ... Le symbole, en supprimant la distinction entre l'image et la notion, rend plus difficile et plus incertain le raisonnement qui permet de traduire la signification de l'emblème; Il se révèle

susceptible d'interprétations variées ... C'est ce qu'est pleinement le mythe; l'apologue, la parabole visent à laisser transparaître un sens clair; le mythe se veut difficile, et, moins encore que le symbole, se laisse réduire à une explication unique. 9

The meaning of any symbols to be found in the works of Apollinaire will, in accordance with the theory of Albouy, be seen to be open to numerous interpretations. The symbol can serve a multiple function also. The immediate poetic predecessors of Apollinaire were, of course, the symbolists. Apollinaire has often been said to show strong traces of their influence, particularly in his earlier works. Indeed, he wrote in La Phalange nouvelle:

... Les symbolistes furent les premiers objets de nos enthousiasmes, et tous ceux qui, depuis 1895, ont créé de la poésie doivent de la reconnaissance aux maîtres aimés du symbolisme. 10

The symbol would appear to offer the poet, be he symbolist or Apollinaire, an expression of the unknown by analogies to the known, and also, in Jung's words, "ignotum per ignotius", the unknown through the even more unknown. Symbolic experience appears to go beyond rationalization, comprehension of it being attained by means of image, rather than by abstract concepts alone.

Jung saw some overlap in the roles and definitions of the symbol and the archetype - one of the psychological concepts with which he was particularly concerned. Jung held that all human beings possess an inborn tendency to form some general symbols which are manifested in the mind through myths, dreams, fantasies and folk-tales. As evidence in support of this theory, Jung said that certain general symbols such as "mother earth", "the sun", "the animus and the anima", etc., do recur frequently in myths and dreams, as if by instinct. We are verging now on a definition of the archetype, which can most simply be said to be a sort of "static symbol".

The "static symbol", or the archetype, cannot be reshaped itself, as can the myth, the legend or even the literary symbol. But an archetype is

nevertheless in itself a kind of symbol. In Renaud's book on Apollinaire, we find Orpheus described as "archétype et patron des poètes qui veulent forcer les limites de l'humanité, découvrir les mystères et révéler un univers sacré ..." ¹¹ Clearly Renaud wishes to emphasize the exemplary, pattern-like aspect of the figure of Orpheus for Apollinaire, this being one of the major characteristics of the archetype. However, the role and function of the archetype is more complex than just this. Without delving too far into the technicalities of psychology, it is interesting to return to some of the ideas of Jung. Jung sees the archetype as being an inherited pattern of behaviour or scheme of functioning, which man expresses in the form of archetypal images and forms - such as the image of Orpheus as described by Renaud. In an interview with another psychologist, Jung described archetypes in this way:

They are instinctual images that are not intellectually invented. They are always there and they produce certain processes in the unconscious that one could best compare with myths. That's the origin of mythology. Mythology is a pronouncing of a series of images that formulate the life of archetypes. So the statements of every religion, of many poets, etc., are statements about the inner mythological process ...

12

Myths and archetypes do have certain features in common, as Jung points out, and archetypes appear in myths, as for example, does the "archetypal" figure of Orpheus. But archetypes appear as involuntary manifestations of unconscious processes whose existence and meaning can only be guessed and interpreted, whereas myths deal with traditional, thus more intentional forms of cultural history.

Archetypal behaviour by the archetypal figure in an archetypal situation becomes an example within the context of myth, just as Renaud points out that Orpheus is, in a sense, an example to the poet searching out a mysterious and sacred universe. However, the archetype may be finally only an image

that is held in the unconscious mind, to which some external reality, be it mythical or living, must correspond before the archetype will function as an artistic or narrative device. A good example of a "matching up" or an application of archetypes to the end of artistic analysis is to be found, for example, in Gaston Bachelard's book La Poétique de la rêverie¹³, where the writer adopts the Jungian distinction between the archetypes of "animus" and "anima" to use them in an evaluation of the mental state of poetic reverie that may precede poetic creation.

The most commonly found of the components of myth in the work of Apollinaire is the image, or the metaphor. Certain metaphors and groups of metaphors recur frequently in his writing, and they play an important part in the creation of an Apollinairian mythology, as we shall hope to show. Charles Mauron, a prominent figure in the field of literary psycho-criticism, has entitled one of his critical works Des Métaphores obsédantes au mythe personnel. Introduction à la psychocritique.¹⁴ Although we will not attempt a psychocriticism of Apollinaire's works in this study, it will still be interesting to approach not only his personal myth, but also his whole use of myth from the point of view of the "métaphores obsédantes" that can be most easily discerned and interpreted. Roland Barthes would doubtless call such an analysis "thématique". The theme, for Barthes, is not only seen as part of the realm of ideas and ideology, but is seen as an object or a being that demonstrates a certain quality or sensation that recurs repeatedly, seemingly expressing some sort of obsession - which brings us back to the ideas of Mauron. Alcools, for example, is a subtle combination of external qualities and sensations: fire, water, stars, inebriation, flowers, and so on, that appear frequently, and of ideas of a cultural, spiritual, religious or mythological kind. The external images and sensations are often used to illustrate

or to embroider upon some mythological or ideological framework. Thus, when an image is noticeably recurrent it may well be that the underlying ideology or obsession also recurs. Images, as part of the literary fabric of the writing, can in this way offer indications of some possibly hidden significance of the ideas or of the mind of the writer. Baudelaire expressed the same idea in these words:

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laisent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent 15
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité

And in his book on Apollinaire, Renaud points to the possibility of a similar "correspondance".

Les données fondamentales d'Alcools: mort, dispersion, regard, chant, remembrement, mythe orphique de la poésie ont des liens nécessaires avec des schèmes dynamiques profonds ...; elles en ont d'autres, importants aussi, avec des formes de pensée héritées de la poésie et de la mythologie. 16

Apollinaire uses a theme at various levels of consciousness, thus drawing fully upon the psychological depths of the inspiration afforded by that theme.

It is not amiss to speak of Apollinaire's imagery with such strong reference to its possible psychological sources. The poet himself was beginning to be aware of the importance of the mind's processes in poetic creation when he spoke of "l'esprit nouveau", and when he wrote "Onirocritique", but his immediate successors, the Surrealist poets based much of their work on an exploration of the mind's workings, of the imagination. Also, as Albouy says: "L'étude du mythe est, en fait, inséparable de celle de l'imagination et de l'imaginaire".¹⁷

Baudelaire had called the imagination "la reine des facultés",¹⁸ and had already pointed towards the importance of the imagination in an exploration of new and marvellous worlds of experience:

C'est l'imagination qui a enseigné à l'homme le sens moral de la couleur, du contour, du son et du parfum. Elle a créé, au commencement du monde, l'analogie et la métaphore. Elle décompose toute la création, et, avec les matériaux amassés et disposés suivant des règles dont on ne peut trouver l'origine que dans le plus profond de l'âme, elle crée un monde nouveau, elle produit la sensation du neuf. 19

L'imagination est la reine du vrai, et le possible est une des provinces du vrai. Elle est positivement apparentée avec l'infini. 20

In these words Baudelaire seems to foresee the interest that Apollinaire would have in the "merveilleux" of the artistic imagination, of which he speaks often in his discourse on L'Esprit Nouveau and in his articles on Les Peintres Cubistes.

Later on the Surrealists too were interested in the mystery and the "merveilleux" of the image and the imagination. Breton wrote:

Il faut rendre grâce aux découvertes de FreudL'imagination est sur le point de reprendre ses droits. 21

and again, on the subject of the "merveilleux":

... le merveilleux est toujours beau, n'importe quel merveilleux est beau, il n'y a même que le merveilleux qui soit beau. 22

As we said earlier, myth has a certain mystery-content, and a certain religious mysticism about it. The imagination that gives birth to an image of the sort implied by the words of Breton certainly draws on the "merveilleux" and explores it. In examining some of the images and patterns of images in the writing of Apollinaire, it is their content of "merveilleux" that may shed some light upon the mysteries of his myths, his legend, his symbolism and his mind. The strangeness of an image can point to some mysterious depth of consciousness, or to some magic inspiration that is part of the myth of his art, or of his mythical thought.

So, the image provides some guide into the imagination of the poet, where the creation, and possibly also the significance, of myth, legend, symbol or archetype are to be encountered. For this reason, an examination of the themes and images that are used to express the myth and its many contributory forms will occupy a major part of this study.

* * * * *

The intention of this study of Myth in the work of Apollinaire is, therefore, to try to trace some link between mythological references as they are formulated in the poet's mind, and his own poetical creation. Out of the synthesis of these two factors will emerge some idea of Apollinaire's 'literary myth', which is defined in this way by Albouy:

Le mythe littéraire est constitué par (le) récit, que l'auteur traite et modifie avec une grande liberté, et par les significations nouvelles qui y sont alors ajoutées. 23

The synthesis is that of the two basic ingredients of personal inspiration and cultural, mythological heritage, which at the same time links and transforms both elements. Personal inspiration draws upon myth and draws closer to a mythical reality in so doing, and myth itself is liberated from the immobility of history in becoming more personal and more alive. In the case of Apollinaire, myth can become part of the expression of "l'esprit nouveau", for example.

We will firstly try to distinguish some of the areas of classical mythology and legend in which Apollinaire is most interested, and from which he draws most in the mythological references to be found in his writing. Certain mythical characters would appear to be more significant to him than

others, as we shall see.

Secondly, we shall attempt an analysis of some of the most important aspects of Apollinaire's imagery in the light of the discoveries made about his mythological preferences. "Myths" of fire constitute a large part of his imagery, and a certain link with a mythological framework would seem to underlie them: the Sun and the solar myth, in particular, interest Apollinaire. Similarly, underlying the images of water, shadow, flowers and music, as they are used by Apollinaire, would appear to be some reference to mythology, which make these images part of Apollinaire's own universe of "myth": these images, as he uses them, echo and illustrate or animate certain mythical incidents.

In the last section, we shall deal more specifically with the possible role played by mythology in Apollinaire's own life, and in the formation of his personality. Certain aspects of his personal life bear interesting similarities to mythology, of which he was certainly aware, and which, as we shall show, he exploited in certain of his poems. He relates himself to Christ or Orpheus, for example, or his unhappy love-affairs are likened to the effects of the sirens' song. Finally, out of these references to direct personal association with some myths, arises the legend of Apollinaire himself. As he portrays himself in his writing, he himself offers at least one example of a fusion of myth and living reality, which in the tradition of myth, as we defined it earlier in this chapter, can offer an example to posterity, as Apollinaire did to his poetic successors.

NOTES

All page-references for poems and plays by Apollinaire will throughout be indicated in brackets immediately following the quotation. The page number given is that of the "Pléiade" edition of the Oeuvres poétiques of Apollinaire, as listed in the Bibliography. References to writings by Apollinaire other than poetry or plays, such as his prose works or art criticism, are indicated by individual footnotes.

* * * * *

- 1 Jung, C.G. and Kerényi, C. Essays on a science of mythology. trans. R.F.C. Hull. Bollingen Series 22. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- 2 *ibid.* p. 2.
- 3 *ibid.* p. 3.
- 4 *ibid.* p. 7.
- 5 Eliade, M. Myth and reality. trans. W.R. Trask. World Perspective Series 31. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.
- 6 *ibid.* pp. 18-19.
- 7 Apollinaire. Méditations esthétiques, p. 48. Oeuvres complètes. Paris: Balland et Lecat, 1966.
- 8 Renaud, P. Lecture d'Apollinaire. Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 1969. p. 73.
- 9 Albouy, P. Mythes et mythologies dans la littérature française. Paris: Colin, 1969. p. 8.
- 10 quoted by Renaud, Lecture, p. 75.
- 11 *ibid.* p. 73.
- 12 Evans, R.I. Conversations with Carl Jung and reactions from Ernest Jones. Princeton: D. van Nostrand Company, 1964. p. 48.

- 13 Bachelard, G. La Poétique de la rêverie. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960.
- 14 Mauron, C. Des Métaphores obsédantes au mythe personnel. Introduction à la psychocritique. Paris: Corti, 1963.
- 15 Baudelaire, C. "Correspondances". Les Fleurs du Mal. Paris: Garnier Frères, 1961. p. 13.
- 16 Renaud. Lecture. pp. 21-22.
- 17 Albouy. Mythes... p. 13.
- 18 Baudelaire, C. "La Reine des facultés". Curiosités Esthétiques. Paris: Louis Conard, 1923. p. 272.
- 19 ibid. p. 274.
- 20 ibid. p. 275.
- 21 Breton, A. Manifestes du surréalisme. Collection "Idées". Paris: Gallimard, 1969. p. 19.
- 22 ibid. p. 24.
- 23 Albouy. Mythes... p. 9.

ANCIENT MYTHS AND MYTHOLOGICAL CHARACTERS

References to ancient myths and mythological characters in the work of Apollinaire are evidently drawn from a rich fund of erudite detail in the poet's mind. He uses certain myths recurrently to illustrate some of his pet ideas, in fact, to illustrate parts of his own "myth". And he uses certain aspects of these myths often in a symbolic manner, in order to obtain a universal significance for his particular example. This, as we saw in the previous chapter, is one of the main reasons that many Greek or Roman myths were created - in order to serve as generally applicable examples.

Before any attempt to define and examine the use of ancient myths by Apollinaire can be made, we must first distinguish the main areas of mythology and legend from which he draws. In the play entitled Couleur du Temps, is to be found a long enumeration of deities and myths from many areas of human history:

...Les dieux de Babylone et tous les dieux d'Assur
 Voici Melquarth le nautonnier et le moloch
 L'affamé qui toujours nourrit son ventre ardent
 Baal au nom multiple adoré sur les côtes
 Ce tourbillonnement Belzébut Dieu des mouches
 Et des champs de bataille écoutez écoutez
 Tanit vient en criant et Lilith se lamente
 Et sur un trône fait de flammes étagées
 D'anges épouvantés et de bêtes célestes
 Terrible et magnifique entouré d'ailes d'or
 De cercles lumineux à la lueur mouvante
 Jéhovah le jaloux dont le nom épouvante
 Arrive fulgurant infini adorable
 Voici des dieux toujours des dieux toujours des dieux
 Toujours les antiques dieux venus des pyramides
 Les sphinx les dieux d'Egypte aux têtes d'animaux
 Les nomes Osiris et les dieux de la Grèce
 Les muses les trois soeurs Hermès les Dioscures
 Jupiter Apollon tous les dieux de Virgile
 Et la tragique croix d'où le sang coule à flots
 Par le front écorché par les cinq plaies divines

Domine le soleil qui l'adore en tremblant
 Voilà les manitous les dieux américains
 Les esprits de la neige et leurs mouches ganiques
 Le Teutatès gaulois les walkyries nordiques
 Les temples indiens se sont aussi vides
 Tous les dieux assemblés pleurent de voir les hommes
 S'entretuer sous le soleil qui pleure aussi.

(p. 949-950)

The appearance of such a diversity of gods and mythological figures is perhaps more characteristic of the poems of a Parnassian poet such as Leconte de Lisle, for example. In the works of Apollinaire, the range is somewhat more limited than this long speech by Nyctor, the poet-hero of Couleur du Temps, would seem to imply. But most, if not all of the types of mythology commonly used by Apollinaire do appear here: Greek myths, figuring characters such as Orpheus, Icarus or Ixion; Roman myths, used more sparsely by Apollinaire; old German myths, used principally in the two series of "Rhénanes" - one of Alcools and the other of Le Guetteur Mélancolique; and what we will call Biblical "myths", or legends, which play a clearly important part throughout the poetry and prose works of Apollinaire. In addition, the figures of some of the women that fascinate Apollinaire appear here: the Muses, the sphinx, and Lilith. Ancient Anglo-Saxon legend appears on several occasions in Apollinaire's verse, in references to "Rosemonde", who is one of the legendary women who interests the poet especially. Nordic myth is limited to two or three references to the "mouches ganiques", but otherwise seems to play no part in the index of mythological references of Apollinaire. Similarly, Oriental mythology and legend play no apparent part in his work.

In this study of Apollinaire's use of mythological reference, and its significance for his own writing (with which we will deal mainly in later chapters) the approach taken will fall mid-way between that of Philippe Renaud, author of Lecture d'Apollinaire¹ and that of Scott Bates, author of

Guillaume Apollinaire.² Renaud's discussion of Apollinaire's work is based largely on the medieval and semi-biblical myths associated with the figure of Merlin, the "enchanteur". The importance of these myths for the structure of Renaud's study can be seen in chapter-headings, such as "Alcools, ou Merlin", "Ondes, ou Lancelot" (part of the Authurian legend) or "L'enserrément de Guillaume", which resembles the "enserrement" of Merlin, who also becomes L'enchanteur pourrissant. Renaud uses these myths as the main framework for his discussion of the work of Apollinaire - he also, of course, uses many other areas and types of mythology in his excellent and detailed study.

The book by Scott Bates on Apollinaire takes a somewhat different line of approach, in that it does not use a mythological context as a point of departure for its analysis, as does Renaud, but rather uses mythological detail as a point of reference in its discussion of themes, sexual and otherwise.

A combination of these two approaches, such as we shall attempt in this chapter, presents clear advantages. References to ancient myths and mythological characters, such as are to be found in the works of Apollinaire, provide some indication of the interests of the writer, and of the traits to be found not only in his works, but also, as we shall see later, in his personal life. What are the gods or demi-gods that appear most often in his writing, and to what end are the significant characteristics of these figures used by Apollinaire? What are the predominant features of the exploits of Apollinaire's legendary figures, that appear to interest the poet most? In a poem entitled "A Jean Cocteau", Apollinaire says:

Nous parlerons ...
 ... de tous les dieux nos sujets
 A nous rois de la poésie.
 (p. 834)

Just how important are these "sujets" for the main outlines, as well as for the details, of Apollinaire's work? It is possible that they provide some interesting landmarks in the tracts of his poetry and in the labyrinths of his unconscious mind.

Le Bestiaire, the first published poetic work of Apollinaire, is subtitled Cortège d'Orphée. It seems therefore appropriate to turn first to the figure of Orpheus, who is, indeed, the central figure of this early work. Orpheus, the mythical tale of his adventures, and the symbolical significance that he represents, provides a frequent source of material for Apollinaire. He is mentioned several times by name in the most famous collection of poems by Apollinaire, Alcools, and the tale of his death, for example, undoubtedly forms the basis of the death of the poet Croniamantal in Le Poète assassiné, the prose work published in 1916.

In a dictionary of Greek mythology we read: "Le mythe d'Orphée est l'un des plus obscurs et les plus chargés de symbolisme que connaisse la mythologie hellénique".³ Before seeing what use Apollinaire makes of the myth of Orpheus, it is useful to recall some of the principal events in the myth, and some of the mythical, symbolic meaning of Orpheus himself.

Orpheus is the son of Calliope, one of the nine Muses. He is, first and foremost, a singer, a musician and a poet, who plays his lute and "cithare" so beautifully that he can overcome the enchantment of the Sirens' song, and can charm even the infernal gods of the Underworld into submission to his wishes. He saved the mariners of the "Argonaut", in search of the Golden Fleece, from death-by-enchantment by the voices of the Sirens, and, in a more famous exploit of his life, he descended into the Underworld in search of his beloved Eurydice. By reason of his being insufficiently

constant, he failed to return Eurydice to life, and from that time to the time of his death, he wandered the earth, inconsolable. Orpheus met his death at the hands of hordes of jealous Thracian women, who possibly resemble the frenzied Tristouse Ballerinettes of Le Poète assassiné, who tore him into pieces. His head is supposed to have continued to sing with unmatched beauty, long after his death.

Certain aspects of this myth can be interpreted with interesting results relevant to the work of Apollinaire. Paul Diel, in a study of symbolism in Greek mythology, writes the following of the myth of Orpheus: "Toute son histoire le montre hésitant entre le sublime et le pervers, entre Apollon et Dionysos. Symbole de la splendeur de l'art et de l'inconstance de l'artiste, Orphée accompagne son chant à la lyre d'Apollon, et la puissance de ses accords entraîne après lui jusqu'aux arbres et aux rochers de l'Olympe; mais il est aussi le charmeur de fauves, l'enchanteur de la perversité".⁴ A similar dichotomy of the "sublime" and the "pervers", the Apollinian and the Dionysian modes of artistic creation, can be traced far into Apollinaire's writings, as we shall see. Orpheus is, above all, the archetypal figure of the poet, aspiring to lyrical harmonies in his work, and who would also be an enchanter. "Certes, tout artiste doté d'une vision authentique dépasse le niveau de l'artiste-Centaure et participe, dans un degré, plus ou moins accentué, à la nature d'Orphée", writes Diel⁵, and he continues: "Le chant d'Orphée et sa vie sont l'illustration du conflit essentiel qui ravage la vie humaine, et qui, manifestation évoluée de la discorde initiale, se trouve figurée dans tous les mythes par le combat entre le divin et le démoniaque".⁶

Directly or indirectly, Apollinaire uses most aspects of the myth of Orpheus at one time or another. The notes to Le Bestiaire provide the most

explicit indication of what Apollinaire's conception of the character of Orpheus is:

"... Quand Orphée jouait en chantant, les animaux sauvages eux-mêmes venaient écouter son cantique. Orphée inventa toutes les sciences, tous les arts. Fondé dans la magie, il connut l'avenir et prédit chrétiennement l'avènement du SAUVEUR"

(p. 33)

The link of Orpheus with Christianity is particularly interesting and will be discussed further on. For the moment, the magical power noticed by Apollinaire in Orpheus is of note, since, as Renaud points out⁷, the tradition of the Orphic myth upholds and affirms the power of man over nature, a power which derives from a knowledge of the secrets of the Gods, such as that gained by Orpheus during his descent to the Underworld. The poet, in emulating this archetype of poets, Orpheus, thus holds some power of enchantment over his natural surroundings, over

... cette troupe infecte
Aux mille pattes, aux cent yeux:
Rotifères, cirons, insectes
Et microbes plus merveilleux
Que les sept merveilles du monde...
("Orphée", p. 15)

Such powers of enchantment are illustrated also by a poem such as "Vendémiaire", or by references to "l'amphion" such as is to be found in the fifth stanza of "Le Brasier" (p. 108). The main act of enchantment taken from the myth of Orpheus by Apollinaire, is that in which Orpheus overcame the charms of the Sirens with his singing. This is used in two poems: "Vendémiaire" of Alcools and "Languissez languissez" of Poèmes divers:

Il trompa les marins qu'aimaient ces oiseaux-là
Il ne tournera plus sur l'écueil de Scylla
Où chantaient les trois voix suaves et sereines
(pp. 151 and 567)

In Alcools, Orpheus is used both in the "Poème lu au mariage d'André Salmon", and in "Le Larron". In the former poem, the mention is of "le

dernier regard d'Orphée" and of "le regard d'Orphée mourant" (pp. 83-84). Neither mention would seem to have any special significance, (other than the fact that both Salmon and Apollinaire are poets, as is Orpheus), probably due to the fact that the poem was only written, according to Apollinaire, on a bus, on his way to Salmon's wedding! (p. 1054). "Le Larron" is of greater interest, however, in that it offers a possible comparison of Orpheus with Christ, depending on the identity given to the "Larron" himself by the reader:

... Que n'avait-il la voix et les jupes d'Orphée
Et les femmes la nuit feignant d'être des taures
L'eussent aimé comme on l'aima puisqu'en effet

Il était pâle il était beau comme un roi ladre
Que n'avait-il la voix et les jupes d'Orphée...
(pp. 94-95)

Before continuing a discussion of Christ and Orpheus, in parenthesis, the death of Orpheus must be considered briefly. Orpheus, the poet, as Croniamantal the poet, dies at the hand of women. Similarly, a kind of emotional and spiritual death is suffered by Apollinaire, poet, at the hand of the various women that he loved. Poems such as "L'Emigrant de Landor Road" or "Tristesse d'une étoile" or "Les Colchiques" bear witness to this minor death caused by disappointed love:

Et ma vie pour tes yeux lentement s'empoisonne
(p. 60)

he writes in "Les Colchiques". The death of Orpheus is succeeded also by the dismemberment of the poet's body, similar to that described in very personal terms in the poem "Cortège":

Le cortège passait et j'y cherchais mon corps
Tous ceux qui survenaient et n'étaient pas moi-même
Amenaient un à un les morceaux de moi-même
(p. 75)

And there are other direct analogies to be made between Apollinaire himself

and Orpheus. Both are of Slavic and Mediterranean origin, for example. Apollinaire, as Orpheus, seeks to conquer death by immortalizing whatever is dead (his loves, his past life, etc.) in the song of his poetry. Both, as we have said, waver between the poles of the "sublime" and "grotesque" of Hugo, the "idéal" and the "spleen" of Baudelaire. These similarities fall into the realm of Apollinaire's own "myth", rather than into the discussion of his use by direct reference of the myth of Orpheus, and hence will be further examined later on.

A final aspect of interest in the figure of Orpheus is his link with Jesus Christ, which Apollinaire does not ignore. As we have seen, he wrote in his notes to Le Bestiaire:

... il (Orphée) connut l'avenir et prédit chrétiennement
l'avènement du SAUVEUR.

(p. 33)

Similarly, one of the verses entitled "Orphée" in Le Bestiaire reads as follows:

Que ton coeur soit l'appât et le ciel, la piscine!
Car, pêcheur, quel poisson d'eau douce ou bien marine
Egale-t-il, et par la forme et la saveur,
Ce beau poisson divin qu'est JESUS, Mon Sauveur?

(p. 20)

The links between these two "sons of gods", of different "mythologies" (the Greek and the Biblical), are striking. Not only is Orpheus supposedly a prophet of the Messiah, but he is also supposed to have foretold the existence of John the Baptist, another prophet of Christ. Christ, as Orpheus, descended to Hell after his crucifixion, and rose again with the secret of Life and Death, which the followers of both were eager to learn. Finally, both Orpheus and Christ embody different aspects of a sublime, aesthetic and moral ideal. They both appear to provide some goal towards which the streak of idealism that runs through Apollinaire's writing seems to be directed... here again, we encroach already on the purely personal myth of Apollinaire,

however.

The "legend" of Christ, drawn from Biblical "mythology", is a more frequently used source of inspiration or illustration in Apollinaire's prose and poetry alike. He maintains a certain respect for Christ himself, although often the Christian Church, notably that of Roman Catholicism, suffers under the sardonic pen of Apollinaire: some short stories from L'Hérésiarque et Cie such as "Sacrilège" or "L'Hérésiarque" or "Infaillibilité" bear witness to this skepticism. Leaving aside for now the Christian Church, let us concentrate on the tone of references to Christ himself, and on the aspects of the Christian "myth" that seem to preoccupy Apollinaire.

Scott Bates sees in the figure of "Le Larron" a portrait of Christ, and he presents a convincing argument in favour of such an interpretation of the poem. If the figure of the Thief is in fact a symbolical portrayal of Christ, then this poem provides an interesting reference to the birth of Christ, which is strangely similar to the birth of Apollinaire:

Ton père fut un sphinx et ta mère une nuit
(p. 91)

he writes. Part of the very nature of the Sphinx (and here too there is a coincidence of Greek and Biblical mythological reference) is its mysterious dependance upon a riddle. The Sphinx is undone only after its riddle has been solved by Oedipus outside Thebes. The identity of God the Father, in the Christian Trinity, is also nebulous and riddle-like; and as we shall see later on, the identity of Apollinaire's own father is still something of a riddle to his biographers.

Further references to Christ occur in poems of all Apollinaire's major collections of verse. In Alcools alone, Christ is mentioned in "Zone" (p. 39), "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé" (p. 46), "Palais" (p. 61), "Le Voyageur" (p. 78),

"Le Larron" (p. 91), and "L'Ermite" (p. 100). Oblique references to Christ occur in the notion "resurrection" in "La Maison des Morts" (p. 66); in a reference to the "Madonne" (and to the "Vierge") in "Les Fiançailles" (p. 128); in the poems written in La Santé prison (pp. 140-145); and finally in "Vendémiaire" (p. 149) where mention is made of "la croix", of "le lys" (the flower of Easter) and of the "trirègne". In the collections of Calligrammes or Il y a a similar, though slightly lesser emphasis is placed on inspiration derived from the figure of Christ.⁸

It is interesting to note the mixture of respect and veiled cynicism in some of these references to Christ. Some lines from "Zone" point up this duality of tone well:

... Tandis qu'éternelle et adorable profondeur améthyste
 Tourne à jamais la flamboyante gloire du Christ
 C'est le beau lys que tous nous cultivons
 C'est la torche aux cheveux roux que n'éteint pas le vent
 C'est le fils pâle et vermeil de la douloureuse mère
 C'est l'arbre toujours touffu de toutes les prières
 C'est la double potence de l'honneur et de l'éternité
 C'est l'étoile à six branches
 C'est Dieu qui meurt le vendredi et ressuscite le dimanche
 C'est le Christ qui monte au ciel mieux que les aviateurs
 Il détient le record du monde pour la hauteur

(p. 40)

In these lines, the awe inspired by Christ is built up to a crescendo effect, where Christ is a sublime figure, "C'est Dieu...", before being suddenly deflated by the semi-mockery of "holding the world-record for altitude", a perverse, physical detail. Similarly in "L'Ermite", "Seigneur le Christ est nu... As-tu sué du sang Christ dans Gethsémani": these words are sincere but the mockery returns in the words:

... Car j'ai trop espéré en vain l'hématidrose
 J'écoutais à genoux toquer les battements
 Du coeur le sang roulait toujours en ses artères
 ...
 Une goutte tomba Sueur Et sa couleur
 Lueur Le sang si rouge et j'ai ri des damnés

Puis enfin j'ai compris que je saignais du nez
 A cause des parfums violents de mes fleurs
 (p. 101)

The contrast between the religious fervour of the hermit praying to see Christ sweat blood (l'hématidrose) and the ridicule of his own bleeding nose attains an extremely, yet subtly, ironical tone. To equate Christ with a "larron des fruits" is surely also to display a certain degree of skepticism about Christ: Bates goes as far as to say that: "'The Thief' is the most direct and violent attack Apollinaire ever made on Christ and Christianity's Jewish patrimony; it is a barbarous, clanging poem, full of dissonances and ambiguities, erotic puns, drunken verbalisms, and an extraordinary compendium of the pagan marvelous culled from his already considerable knowledge of ancient lore".⁹ Again in the "Elégie du Voyageur aux pieds blessés" of Il y a, Christ is seen as an entirely human young man, and is addressed familiarly:

Le gars! Ô l'homme aux pieds blessés!
 ...
 Tu foules les dieux sous tes pas
 (p. 337)

But in the "Chant de l'honneur" of Calligrammes, on the other hand:

Le Christ n'est donc venu qu'en vain parmi les hommes
 (p. 305)

And in "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé":

Le grand Pan l'amour Jésus-Christ
 Sont bien morts et les chats miaulent
 Dans la cour je pleure à Paris
 (p. 50)

This is the sense of loss and disillusionment that leads to Apollinaire's cynicism about Christ and Christianity, which is the "pervers" side of his attitude to the New Testament "myth". References to Christ provide, in fact, another indication of the "sublime" and the "pervers" duality in the work of Apollinaire which will become even more apparent in later chapters.

Also in contrast to the references to Christ himself are some important references to Antichrists, of whom there are many in Apollinaire's prose and verse. Principal among these Antichrists are the figures of Isaac Laquedem, the wandering Jew of L'Hérésiarque et Cie; Simon Magus, from the short story of the same name in L'Hérésiarque and mentioned also in "Zone", along with Christ; Merlin the Enchanter, who appears in "Merlin et la vieille femme" and also in L'Enchanteur pourrissant; and finally the hermit of the poem "L'Ermite". It becomes clear that: "... Apollinaire was acquainted with the opinions of the Church Fathers and nineteenth-century anthropologists about the Antichrist; in addition, he knew medieval and sixteenth-century authorities on the subject..."¹⁰

In "Zone", for example, Christ is in the company of several antichrist figures:

... comme Jésus monte dans l'air
 Les diables dans les abîmes lèvent la tête pour regarder
 Ils disent qu'il imite Simon Mage en Judée
 Ils crient qu'il sait voler qu'on l'appelle voleur
 Les anges voltigent autour du joli voltigeur
 Icare Enoch Elie Apollonius de Thyane...

(p. 40)

The presence of all these antichrists cannot fail to belittle the holy ascension of Christ into Heaven after his crucifixion and resurrection. Simon Magus in particular, said to be the originator of Gnoticism, is a challenge to the sole divinity of Christ. Simon Magus is sometimes regarded as an incarnation of some of God's power, and is supposed to have performed miracles, including that of levitation.

That other great Antichrist of Apollinaire's work, Merlin, is the son of Satan, rival of God the Father himself:

Merlin guettait la vie et l'éternelle cause
 Qui fait mourir et puis renaître l'univers

(p. 88)

Merlin, like Christ or Orpheus, has knowledge of the secret source of Life or Death too. In this alone his divinity challenges that of Christ.

The idea of levitation, closely associated with the figure of Christ in "Zone", provides an interesting link with another major mythological figure who features prominently in Apollinaire's writing: Icarus. In "Zone":

C'est le Christ qui monte au ciel mieux que les aviateurs
Il détient le record du monde pour la hauteur

and later in the poem:

Icare Enoch Elie Apollonius de Thyane
Flottent autour du premier aéroplane (Christ)
(p. 40)

In "Le Voyageur" also, "il s'envolait un Christ" (p. 78) ...

The most famous part of the myth of Icarus is perhaps the story of his flight with Dedalus, his father, and of his death after his wings had failed him. Icarus, symbolically, wishes to ascend to the Sun, which is the source of all life and knowledge. He aspires to a state of Christ-like divinity, and to a knowledge of the secrets of Life. The actual incidents of the myth of Icarus are well-known: Dedalus, his father, invented wings with which he and Icarus could escape imprisonment by Minos in the Labyrinth of Crete. The wings were to be attached to the flyer's shoulders with wax. Icarus, young and full of pride and ambition, did not heed his father's warning and flew too near to the Sun. The wax attachment of his wings melted, and Icarus fell to his death in the sea below.

The interpretation of this myth by Paul Diel merits some attention, as it sheds interesting light on some of the references to Icarus found in Apollinaire's poems. Diel writes: "Le mythe exprime - on dirait, le plus clairement possible - ces deux significations: le désir exalté d'élévation et l'insuffisance des moyens employés. ...En remplaçant le soleil par son

sens symbolique, l'esprit, il apparaît que Dédale met son fils en garde contre le danger auquel il s'exposerait, s'il nourrissait le désir démesuré de fuir les régions perverses (Labyrinthe) dans l'espoir vain de pouvoir atteindre la région sublime par le seul moyen trop insuffisant de l'intellect (les ailes de cire)".¹¹ In the myth of Icarus also, therefore, as in the myth of Orpheus, the two elements of the "sublime" aspirations towards an ideal and "pervers" reality of man's limitations are counterpoised. Icarus' artificial wings symbolise not the sublime aspirations of the creative imagination, which true wings (those of angels, for example) would represent, but they symbolise rather the perverse imagination, blinded by its own vanity, and blind also to the wise counsels of Dedalus, the true intellectual. "Plus Icare s'approche du soleil, de la vie de l'esprit, plus ses ailes artificielles le trahissent. C'est l'esprit qui inflige le châtement; c'est le soleil qui fait fondre les ailes artificielles. Icare s'abat et tombe dans la mer".¹²

The idea of flight, of levitation occurs in various poems by Apollinaire, and expresses a desire to rise above material, terrestrial existence, a desire for sublimation that approaches a state of divinity. The flight of Icarus is similar to that of all spiritual ambition, in which 'pride precedes the fall'. In Apollinaire's use of the myth of Icarus, the pattern of the fall from the sublime heights of the mind to the perverse depths of carnal desires is clearly expressed. A similar pattern provides the foundation of "Zone", for example. The loves and idealized women of Apollinaire's own life were often the objects of this expression of alternating sublime-perverse desires. In this way Apollinaire fits exactly the description of Diel, who writes: "L'artiste accompli est celui qui sait exprimer avec la même véracité, avec la même objectivité, donc sans exaltation, la chute et l'élévation, le tourment et la joie de la vie".¹³

In the collection of poems entitled Il y a, Apollinaire dedicates an entire poem to the figure of Icarus, and to the significance of his symbolic flight. The poem is entitled "L'Ignorance", which immediately indicates Apollinaire's awareness of Icarus' fatal fault. The poem begins with the words:

Soleil, je suis jeune ...
(p. 344)

The youthful ambitions of Icarus to become divine echo exactly those of the Greek myth:

Soleil, je viens caresser ta face splendide
Et veux fixer ta flamme unique, aveuglement
Icare étant céleste et plus divin qu'Alcide
Et son bûcher sera ton éblouissement
(p. 344)

As Apollinaire notices, it is the "aveuglement", the "ignorance" of Icarus that cause his downfall:

Mais, ton amour, soleil, brûle divinement
Mon corps qu'être divin voulut mon ignorance
(p. 345)

Elsewhere, Apollinaire speaks of himself in direct association with Icarus, as for example in "Merveille de la Guerre" of Calligrammes:

C'est moi qui commence cette chose des siècles à venir
Ce sera plus long à réaliser que non la fable d'Icare volant...
(p. 272)

or in "Les Fiançailles" of Alcools:

Tous les mots que j'avais à dire se sont changés en étoiles
Un Icare tente de s'élever jusqu'à chacun de mes yeux
Et porteur de soleils je brûle au centre de deux nébuleuses
(p. 130)

These last lines go as far as to express a superiority over Icarus, a disdain for the ignorance and blindness of such ambition:

Ailés et tournoyants comme Icare le faux
Des aveugles gesticulant comme des fourmis
(p. 309)

As Philippe Renaud has written: "... l'image d'Icare est très fréquente chez Apollinaire Nul doute qu'avec Orphée et Merlin, Icare ne soit un des patrons d'Apollinaire et l'une des grandes figures qui permettent de mieux comprendre la nature de son effort".¹⁴ Renaud's list is not quite complete, since he leaves out the figure of Christ. It is indeed remarkable that these four major "mythical" figures are the only ones to whom entire poems are allotted, or to whom consistent reference is made by Apollinaire.

Orpheus has a poem named after him - "Orphée" - in the Poèmes retrouvés (p. 683), as well as Le Bestiaire, of which four stanzas are entitled "Orphée"; Merlin is the hero of "Merlin et la Vieille femme" in Alcools; Icarus is the central figure of "L'Ignorance", as well as being one of the major images of "Lul de Faltenin"; and Christ appears in the poems already mentioned, "Le Larron" and the "Élégie du voyageur aux pieds blessés", as well as in numerous other references.

Let us now turn our attention to some of the lesser deities who find a place in the store of myths used by Apollinaire. Prominent amongst these deities is the Sun, Helios or Apollo, considered a divine ideal, and often endowed with symbolic significance by Apollinaire. But the importance of references to the Sun is not so much a mythical, as a metaphorical one, and so discussion of the role of the Sun in Apollinaire's writing will be deferred to a later chapter.

Associated indirectly with the Sun, however, is the Greek myth of Ixion. Ixion, a Thessalonian king, murdered his father-in-law, but was absolved of his guilt by Zeus, who took pity on him. Ixion showed extreme ingratitude towards his divine benefactor, by trying to seduce the goddess Hera, wife of Zeus. In error, he seduced a cloudy image of Hera, from which union were

born the Centaurs. Zeus punished Ixion for his deceitfulness by attaching him to a flaming wheel and condemning him to turn eternally in space: Hence the association with the Sun. Apollinaire makes specific use of the incidents of this myth in two poems, "Vendémiaire" and "Un Fantôme des nuées" (pp. 193-196). In "Vendémiaire", the reference to Ixion is explicit: he is called both "l'Ixion mécanique" (p. 150) and "Ixion le créateur oblique" (p. 151). Ixion is the creator of the Centaurs, by his mysterious, "oblique" union with the "fantôme des nuées", Hera. In "Un Fantôme des Nuées", it is this image of the elusive and illusory Hera, the woman of cloud loved by Ixion, that is used to provide an indirect mythical point of reference for the image of the young "Saltimbanque", the child-wonder of the itinerant and mysterious street-performers. This Ixionic type of creation has a symbolic value for Apollinaire, as an image of the creation of art. "And for this false, yet divine creation out of self which gives birth to a new reality, Apollinaire finds a striking new celestial trinity, another solar myth, that of King Ixion The vision of the goddess is in the creator ... She is the breeder of art".¹⁵

Before passing on to a discussion of legendary or mythical women, and their use or place in Apollinaire's writing, it is appropriate to mention the presence of Eros and Anteros, the two gods concerned with Love. As in the case of Christ and the various Antichrists discussed earlier, these two brother-gods demonstrate a distinct duality in Apollinaire's mind and work. They provide a further illustration of a "sublime-pervers" dichotomy, as these words from "La Victoire" show:

Deux lampes brûlent devant moi
 Comme deux femmes qui rient
 Je courbe tristement la tête
 Devant l'ardente moquerie
 Ce rire se répand

Partout

...
 O paroles
 Elles suivent dans la myrtaie
 L'Eros et l'Antéros en larmes...
 (p. 311)

Of legendary women in Apollinaire's works there are many, including Greek, Roman, Biblical and German folk-heroines. Apollinaire refers to four women with particular insistence: Rosamond, Lilith, Helen of Troy, and Salome; and makes reference to others such as Ophelia in the "Poème lu..." (p. 84), the sirens and Scylla in "Vendémiaire" (p. 151)¹⁶, the Virgin Mary in "Les Fiançailles" (pp. 128, 135), Aphrodite in "Le Larron" (p. 91), Venus in "C'est Lou qu'on la nommait" (p. 218), Berenice in "Merveille de la guerre" (p. 271) or the infantas of Spain in "Tierce rime..." and "Adieux" (pp. 331, 332). All these together form a composite image of his ideal woman, and his ideal of beauty:

Je vois bien devant moi la beauté
 L'adorable beauté de mes rêves
 Elle est plus belle que dans les livres
 Toutes les imaginations
 Des poètes n'avaient supposé
 Elle est plus belle que ne fut Eve
 Plus belle que ne fut Eurydice
 Plus belle qu'Hélène et Dalila
 Plus belle que Didon cette Reine
 Et que non Salomé la danseuse
 Que ne fut Cléopâtre et ne fut
 Rosemonde au Palais Merveilleux...
 (p. 956)

These are the words spoken by Nyctor, the poet of Couleur du Temps, when he finds his ideal of beauty and of womanhood encased in a block of ice in the Antarctic. The irony and ridicule of the whole setting of this speech seems to indicate that Apollinaire does not believe that such a woman, that such beauty truly exists or is ever attainable.

In legend and imagination at least, however, his ideal woman exists. From Greek legend springs the poem "Hélène" of the Poèmes Divers. In this

poem, Apollinaire dwells on the magical beauty of Helen of Troy:

Sur toi Hélène souvent mon rêve rêva
 Tes beaux seins fléchissaient quand Paris t'enleva
 Et savais-tu combien d'hommes avaient tes lèvres
 Baisé depuis Thésée jusqu'au gardeur de chèvres

Tu étais belle encor toujours tu le seras
 Et les dieux et les rois pour toi firent la guerre
 Car ton corps était nu et blanc comme ton père
 Le cygne amoureux qui jamais ne chantera

.....
 ... et tu dois vivre encore
 En quelque bourg de Grèce belle comme alors
 (p. 579)

The search for a feminine ideal continues with the figure of Rosamond, who appears in one of the "Orphée" stanzas of Le Bestiaire (p. 15), in "Palais" (p. 61), and "Rosemonde" (p. 107) from Alcools, and in "Je vis un soir la zézayante" (p. 327) from Il y a. Rosamond Clifford was a mistress of Henry II of England, who supposedly lived in a palace at Woodstock, and was known as the "rose of the world" because of her remarkable beauty. She is a sort of "femme fatale", mysteriously hidden in her palace, and thus unattainable. Her palace becomes a symbol of the goal of Apollinaire's vain search for his ideal:

Puis lentement je m'en allai
 Pour quêter la Rose du Monde
 (p. 107)

Vers le palais de Rosemonde au fond du Rêve
 Mes rêveuses pensées pieds nus vont en soirée...
 (p. 61)

The emphasis laid on the notion of his ideal being a "rêve" occurs also notably in the quoted passage from "Hélène". Both Rosemonde and Hélène are "femmes fatales" whose ruinous powers intrigue and yet are mistrusted by Apollinaire, like the powers of the sirens' song. These women, with others such as Salome, are the cause of man's suffering.

One of the short stories of L'Hérésiarque entitled "La Danseuse" and an entire poem of Alcools are dedicated to "Salomé". Salome was a symbol of the immortal "femme fatale" to nineteenth-century poets such as Mallarmé or Oscar Wilde. Her beauty and her grace as a dancer beguiled Herod into agreeing to the decapitation of John the Baptist:

Salomé, enjolivée, attifée, diaprée, fardée, dansa devant le roi
et, excitant un vouloir doublement incestueux, obtint la tête du
Saint refusée à sa mère.

("La Danseuse", L'Hérésiarque et Cie)

In the poem "Salomé", the heroine celebrates her success in bringing about the death of the prophet; and in "La Danseuse" it is her own legendary death that is described in a lyrical, yet gruesome manner:

Soudain, la glace se brisa sous elle qui s'enfonça dans le Danube,
mais de telle façon que, le corps étant baigné, la tête resta
au-dessus des glaces rapprochées et ressoudées. Quelques cris
terribles effrayèrent de grands oiseaux au vol lourd, et, lorsque
la malheureuse se tut, sa tête semblait tranchée et posée sur
un plat d'argent.

("La Danseuse", L'Hérésiarque et Cie)

Lilith is also one of the four mythical women most frequently mentioned by Apollinaire. She is the first wife of Adam and later wife of Beelzebub; she is the satyr of the 34th chapter of the Book of Isaiah: "... and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest". In Hebrew mythology she is a demon who howls in the night, and in "L'Ermite", Apollinaire describes her as exactly this:

Et je marche je fuis ô nuit Lilith ulule
Et clame vainement et je vois de grands yeux
S'ouvrir tragiquement O nuit je vois tes cieux
(p. 102)

Lilith is a creature of the shadows, which, as Madame Dürri points out in her study of Alcools, is an important aspect of the imagery of this collection: "Le motif de l'ombre revient toujours", she writes.¹⁷ For Scott Bates, on the

other hand, Lilith is "a widely feared incubus with (in Apollinaire) an attendant train of vices including menstruation, Lesbianism, and flagellation. ... a symbol of frustrated motherhood and sterility in The Putrescent Enchanter. ... an ingenious symbol of menstruation who had created the Red Sea against the desires of men before turning to deceive Beelzebub with female lovers".¹⁸ In the Poèmes à Lou Lilith indeed appears with Proserpine "aux enfers":

Nous nous aimons sauvagement dans la nuit noire
Victimes de l'ascèse et produits du désespoir
Chauves-souris qui ont leurs anglais comme les femmes

and Lilith herself chants:

J'ai créé la mer Rouge contre le désir de l'homme
(p. 446)

Lilith is, then, a creature of Anteros tendencies, whereas Helen, Rosamond or Salome are rather on the side of the god Eros.

The last of the "femme fatale", enchantress figures that we will discuss is taken from Rhenish folklore and myth. This is the legend of the Loreley, taken up by Apollinaire in the poem "La Loreley" of the Rhénanes in Alcools. For this poem, Apollinaire was inspired by a novel by Brentano entitled Godwi, written in the early 1800's. The legend itself tells of a maiden who threw herself into the Rhine in despair over a faithless lover, and who returned as a siren-like creature, "une sorcière blonde", to lure boatmen to their destruction on the "Loreleifelsen" of the Rhine:

O belle Loreley aux yeux plein de pierreries
De quel magicien tiens-tu ta sorcellerie
(p. 115)

In this poem, Apollinaire voices his suffering after Annie Playden had deserted him:

Mon amant est parti pour un pays lointain

Faites-moi donc mourir puisque je n'aime rien
(p. 115)

As we shall see later, Apollinaire frequently makes use of all the myths we have examined to express a personal experience or sentiment in just this way.

As a conclusion to this examination of Apollinaire's references to myths and mythological characters, a clear list of such references has been compiled in order to give an enumerated indication of some of the patterns to which we have been trying to draw attention. From this list it will be obvious that some references have so far been almost completely ignored, as for example those to the Sirens or to the Sphinx. These will be discussed in the course of the examination of some of Apollinaire's recurrent images that is to follow, and in an examination of some aspects of the poet's personal life in a later section.

List of mythological or legendary allusions to be
found in Le Bestiaire, Alcools, Calligrammes and
Il y a.

GREEK

Amphion: "Le Brasier".
Aphrodite: "Le Larron".
Attis: "Vent Nocturne".
Centaures: "Le Brasier".
Eros/Anteros: "La Victoire".
Eurydice: Le Bestiaire V.
Hébé: "1904".
Icarus: "Zone", "Lul de Faltenin", "Les Fiançailles", "Merveille de la Guerre", "La Victoire", "L'Ignorance".
Ixion: "Vendémiaire", "Un fantôme des nuées".
Jason: Le Bestiaire IV.
Orpheus: "Poème lu au mariage...", "Le Larron", Le Bestiaire I, XIII, XVIII, and XXIV.
Pan: "Chanson du Mal-Aimé", "Chant de l'horizon en Champagne".
Psyllés: "Les Collines".
Satyres/faunes: "Chanson du Mal-Aimé", "Élégie".
Scylla: "Vendémiaire".
Sirens: "Chanson du Mal-Aimé", "Lul de Faltenin", "L'Emigrant...", "Les Fiançailles", "Vendémiaire", "Bonjour mon frère", Le Bestiaire XXIV and XXV.
Sphinx: "Le Larron", "Le Brasier".
Thule: "Sanglots".
Tyndarides: "Le Brasier".
Ulysse: "Chanson du Mal-Aimé", "La nuit d'avril 1915".

ROMAN

Bérénice: "Merveille de la Guerre".
Caesar: "C'est Lou qu'on la nommait".
Mars: "Chanson du Mal-Aimé".
Minerva: "Tristesse d'une étoile".
Rome: "Rolandseck" (?) ("... les sept montagnes...").
Thule: same as for Greek legend.
Venus: "Chanson du Mal-Aimé", "C'est Lou qu'on la nommait".

BIBLICAL

Old Testament

Balthazar: "Merveille de la Guerre".
Beelzebub: "Chanson du Mal-Aimé".
Elijah: "Zone".
Enoch: "Zone".
Eve: Le Bestiaire V.

(Exodus from Egypt): "Le Larron" ("...cailles...manne"), "Chanson du Mal-Aimé".
 Hebrews: "Chanson du Mal-Aimé".
 Lilith: "L'Ermite", "L'Emigrant" ("...La femme du diable").
 Lucifer: "Les Collines".
 Ophir: "Sanglots".
 Pharoah: "Chanson du Mal-Aimé".
 Red Sea: "Chanson..."

New Testament

Barrabas: "Chanson..."
 John the Baptist: Le Bestiaire XVIII, "Salomé".
 Christ: Le Bestiaire XVIII and XXVI (and Notes), "Zone", "Chanson ...", "Palais", "Le Voyageur", "Le Larron" (?), "L'Ermite", "Un Soir" (?), "Chant de l'honneur", "Elégie du Voyageur...", "Rolandseck" ("Ton Corps si noble...").
 Chrysostome (Christian history): "Tierce rime pour votre âme".
 The Cross: "Vendémiaire".
 Madonna/Virgin: "Les Fiançailles", "Lorsque vous partirez".
 Salome/Herod: "Salomé".
 Simon Magus (Christian history): "Zone".
 The Trinity: "Vendémiaire".

"ANGLO-SAXON"

Merlin: "Merlin et la vieille femme".
 Rosamond: Le Bestiaire XIII, "Palais", "Rosemonde", "Je vis un soir la zézayante".
 (Shakespearean): "Poème lu au mariage..." (Hamlet, Ophelia).

GERMAN

Rhenish myth and legend of "Rhénanes" ("Nuit Rhénane", "La Loreley", "Schinderhannes"), and of "Dans le Jardin d'Anna".

MISCELLANEOUS

Columbus: "Chanson..." ("Désirade..."), "Le Brasier" ("Désirade"), "Toujours".
 Don Juan: "Toujours" (cf. also pornographic work entitled Les exploits d'un jeune Don Juan).
 Fairy Yra: "Le Trésor".
 Orkenise(?): "Onirocritique".
 Roc, pihis, mythical birds: "Zone".
 Spanish infantas: "Tierce rime...", "Adieux".

NOTES

- 1 Renaud, Philippe. Lecture d'Apollinaire. Collection Lettera. Lausanne: Editions L'Age d'Homme, 1969.
- 2 Bates, Scott. Guillaume Apollinaire. T.W.A.S. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1967.
- 3 Grimal, Pierre. Dictionnaire de la mythologie grecque et romaine. Paris: P.U.F., 1969. p. 332.
- 4 Diel, Paul. Le symbolisme dans la mythologie grecque. Paris: Payot, 1966. p. 136.
- 5 *ibid.* p. 140.
- 6 *ibid.* p. 141.
- 7 Renaud. Lecture. p. 177.
- 8 See the brief (and incomplete) list of mythological references at the end of this chapter.
- 9 Bates. Apollinaire. p. 29.
- 10 *ibid.* p. 34.
- 11 Diel. Symbolisme... pp. 47-48.
- 12 *ibid.* p. 49.
- 13 *ibid.* p. 57.
- 14 Renaud. Lecture. p. 149.
- 15 Bates. Apollinaire. p. 80.
- 16 There are numerous other references to the sirens, which will be discussed later with reference to Apollinaire's personal love-affairs.
- 17 Durry, Marie-Jeanne. Guillaume Apollinaire: Alcools. vol. III. Paris: SEDES, 1964. p. 52.
- 18 Bates. Apollinaire. p. 45.

MYTHS OF CREATIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE FIRE

We now come to the discussion of Apollinaire's personal interpretations of "myth", that is compounded of references to ancient mythology and the meaning attached to such references by the poet, and of his own myth or legend, seen mainly in his choice of subject-matter and in his imagery. The aim of the examination of some aspects of Apollinaire's imagery, that is to follow, is to demonstrate certain of his personal tendencies or interests as seen through the images themselves and through recurrent themes. Certain images and their distribution in a complex network throughout Apollinaire's poetry contribute greatly to the vitality of myths which otherwise may well have remained as erudite curiosities, sprung from the poet's mind. It becomes necessary to attempt to show how some images both feed and transform the myths to which they are related, in being based on the imagination and experience of Apollinaire himself: images can become the animation and the incarnation of myth, giving it a true poetic value, as we hope to show. It may be that some of the traits seen in his imagery are similar to, or relate directly to the principal characteristics of Apollinaire's "favourite" gods or mythical characters, seen in the preceding chapter. These are figures such as Christ, Orpheus, Icarus or Ixion. The figure of Prometheus must now be added to this list, since undoubtedly, as Renaud writes of Alcools:

"La tradition mythique sur laquelle s'appuie Alcools est une tradition orphéo-prométhéenne insistant sur les pouvoirs de l'homme et fort compatible avec l'idée de progrès, y compris de progrès technique".¹ Prometheus is the divine benefactor of humanity, who stole fire from the Sun to give to mankind in defiance of the order of Zeus. In some myths Prometheus is even held

to have created man.²

Our discussion of Apollinaire's imagery and recurrent themes clearly cannot be exhaustive, so we have taken as a primary guide-line for our selection of images to be discussed some words of Margaret Davies, who writes: "Apollinaire's favourite props for his poetic world may seem banal enough: the sun, light, shade, the sea, birds".³ In addition to these 'elements' we will discuss images of music and flowers, which seem to fall into the pattern of Apollinaire's myth. Many of Apollinaire's critics insist on the importance of images of fire and flame, which will be the object of this chapter. Scott Bates devotes two chapters of his Guillaume Apollinaire to "The Death of the Sun", and to "The Phoenix" - a creature of fire and flame. Madame Durry speaks of the "motif ...de la lumière et du feu..."⁴; and Renaud writes: "...les deux premiers mots-clés d'Alcools sont automne et flamme L'extraordinaire importance du feu dans ce livre vient de ce qu'il est présent à tous les niveaux, et symbolise aussi bien les infrastructures de la vie que les plus 'nobles' activités de l'homme, au premier rang desquelles Apollinaire place la poésie, dont le symbole est pour lui le feu".⁵ Starting, then, with what would seem to be a major image of Apollinaire's work, we will see later how other recurrent images fall into place around it, giving some coherence to the personal myth of Apollinaire.

Gaston Bachelard has made interesting studies of fire and flame in two of his works: La Flamme d'une chandelle⁶ and La Psychanalyse du feu.⁷ Some of the ideas expressed in these works, on fire and the flame, are echoed in a certain way in the writings of Apollinaire, as we shall see. "La flamme", writes Bachelard, "parmi les objets du monde qui appellent la rêverie, est un des plus grands opérateurs d'images: La flamme nous force à imaginer".⁸

Elsewhere, Bachelard had written, in a chapter devoted to "Le complexe de Prométhée": "Le feu est intime et il est universel. Il vit dans notre coeur. Il vit dans le ciel. Il monte des profondeurs de la substance et s'offre comme un amour. Il redescend dans la matière et se cache, latent, contenu comme la haine et la vengeance. Parmi tous les phénomènes, il est vraiment le seul qui puisse recevoir aussi nettement les deux valorisations contraires: le bien et le mal. Il brille au Paradis. Il brûle à l'Enfer".⁹ This is the presence of fire "à tous les niveaux", of which Renaud writes. It will be seen how, in the works of Apollinaire, as in the ideas of Bachelard, there are two types of fire, and how many images of fire have a dual significance: the "sublime" and the "pervers", the creative and the destructive, the good and the bad.

Icarus, in his ignorance, aspired to a state of solar divinity. His flight was up towards the Sun, source of Life. The Sun for Apollinaire, as for Icarus, holds an apparently symbolic value, as being an inspiration and an ideal of knowledge and divinity to mortal man. It is the Sun's fire and light that gives birth, that creates and recreates. The gods associated with the Sun are Apollo, or Helios - these are the heroes of the solar myth. And Apollinaire, by association of name at least, sees himself as a son of Apollo, a child of the Sun, and thus, a part of the solar myth: In "Les Fiançailles" the identification of the poet himself with the Sun is clear:

Un Icare tente de s'élever jusqu'à chacun de mes yeux
 Et porteur de soleils je brûle au centre de deux nébuleuses
 (p. 130)

As Scott Bates writes: "Apollinaire like Rimbaud was a 'fils du Soleil', a son of the Sun".¹⁰ The Sun is at the head of a family of images of fire in his writing, a family that includes flames, stars, alcohol, electricity and precious stones.

This close identification of the poet with the Sun, Apollo, has two major implications for his imagery: as child of the Sun, Apollinaire was symbolically killed every night at sunset, and every autumn as the days grow shorter. In "Zone", for example, there are the famous lines on the sunset, that create a direct analogy with death by decapitation:

Adieu Adieu
Soleil cou coupé
(p. 44)

And again, at the end of another poem of flames and ardent emotion, entitled "Les Doukhobors", that appears in the Poèmes Retrouvés, the same image occurs:

Les Doukhobors; le soleil qui radiait
Dut paraître à leurs yeux extasiés
Espérant des remous
Océaniques
Des nations, là-bas, du côté d'Occident ou d'Amérique
Le cou tranché d'une tête immense, intelligente
Dont le bourreau n'osait montrer
La face et les yeux larges pétrifiés
A la foule ivre
Et quel sang, et quel sang t'éclabousse, ô monde
Sous ce cou tranché!
(p. 716)

Or in "Epithalme" of Il y a, the poet's mind turns again to:

...ce pays de feu...
.....
Où l'on tranche la tête au soleil chaque jour
Pour qu'il verse son sang en rayons sur la terre.
(p. 343)

The Sun's rays become streams of blood at sunset in "Merlin et la vieille femme" of Alcools too:

Le soleil ce jour-là s'étalait comme un ventre
Maternel qui saignait lentement sur le ciel
La lumière est ma mère ô lumière sanglante
Les nuages coulaient comme un flux menstruel
(p. 88)

For Apollinaire the Sun is so often a "soleil de chair" (p. 88), as in these poems, and its rays are of life-giving blood. The extinction of the fire of

the Sun at sunset is thus directly linked with the extinction of Life, of poetic inspiration and of Love. The sun sinking at sunset makes the same journey as did Orpheus into the Underworld, or Christ into Hell after the crucifixion. But, just as Christ rose again, or just as Orpheus returned from the Underworld with an enhanced knowledge of the meaning of Life, so the Sun rises fresher and restrengthened in the morning. For Apollinaire, the Sun is like the Phoenix who:

...s'il meurt un Soir
Le matin voit sa renaissance
(p. 46)

Dawn thus holds a special lyrical fascination for the poet, as the time of the resurrection of the Sun, with whom Apollinaire identifies himself. In the "Aubade" section of "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé", for example, we read:

Les poules dans la cour caquètent
L'aube au ciel fait de roses plis
L'amour chemine à ta conquête
.....
La nature est belle et touchante
(p. 49)

At the end of two other major poems of Alcools, "Zone" and "Vendémiaire", the dawn is breaking, and bringing with it a lift in tone, a certain calmness and reassurance associated with everyday events:

Tu es seul le matin va venir
Les laitiers font tinter leurs bidons dans les rues
(p. 43)

Et la nuit de septembre s'achevait lentement
Les feux rouges des ponts s'éteignaient dans la Seine
Les étoiles mourraient le jour naissait à peine
(p. 154)

These dawns of Alcools are tragic and ominous for the sad and weary wanderer-poet; but he cannot help but feel for an instant the lyrical beauty of the urban sunrise, such as that sketched already by Baudelaire in his Tableaux Parisiens. And the poem entitled "Aurore d'hiver" of the Poèmes Retrouvés

is another purely lyrical evocation of sunrise:

L'Aurore adolescente
 Monte peu à peu
 Si doucement qu'on peut
 Voir grelottante
 Rosir l'aurore pénétrée
 De la fraîcheur de la dernière vèprée.
 (p. 710)

The cycle of Sun through the day from dawn to sunset follows an exactly similar pattern to the solar cycle of the year from springtime to winter. Apollinaire associates similar feelings with both solar cycles: as the season of the sun is in its decline during autumn, so, for Apollinaire, Life itself wanes and draws near to its wintry death. It descends into its own Underworld. And in Spring, Life reappears with the ascendancy of the Sun to recommence its annual cycle:

Voici que vient l'été la saison violente
 Et ma jeunesse est morte ainsi que le printemps
 O Soleil c'est le temps de la Raison ardente
 (p. 314)

For this reason, Apollinaire's poems on autumn, his autumnal imagery, have a certain relevance to the theme of the Sun's fire. In the poem "Automne" of Alcools, the Sun dies as autumn succeeds summer:

Oh! l'automne l'automne a fait mourir l'été
 (p. 104)

This autumn, this decline of the Sun, is close to the frame of mind and to the emotions of Apollinaire, who writes in the poems "Signe" of Alcools, or "L'Automne et l'écho" of the Poèmes Divers:

Je suis soumis au Chef du Signe de l'Automne
 Partant j'aime les fruits je déteste les fleurs
 Je regrette chacun des baisers que je donne
 Tel un noyer gaulé dit au vent ses douleurs

Mon Automne éternelle ô ma saison mentale

...

(p. 125 and p. 588)

Finally, in "Automne malade", the autumn succumbs to winter:

Automne malade et adoré
 Tu mourras quand l'ouragan soufflera dans les roseaies
 Quand il aura neigé
 Dans les vergers

(p. 146)

The spiritual death and rebirth of Apollinaire, the son of Apollo, the poet-creator and the lover, follows the death of the Sun in autumn. The Sun is that source of Life, "l'éternelle cause/Qui fait mourir et puis renaître l'univers" (p. 88), and is also the "ardente lyre" (p. 59) of the inspiration and creation of the orphic poet.

The Sun, as a source of destructive fire, also appears repeatedly in one of the most frequently used images of war in Calligrammes: the image of the "obus". Artillery shells, clearly associated with death, become agents of a purifying, purging kind of solar fire that fascinates the poet in its ominous beauty. It is indeed remarkable to note that almost all of the images of fire to be found in Calligrammes are of a destructive kind of fire, whereas in Alcools or Il y a fire is often an inspiring, ideal, or recreative force; it is an "ardente cendre", a "noble feu", the "feu de mes délices", or a "désirable feu".

In a poem such as "Du Coton dans les Oreilles" of Calligrammes, by comparison with the fire-imagery of other collections of poems, fire and the Sun appear in this way:

Et les trajectoires cabrées
 Trabuchements de soleils-nains
 Sur tant de chansons déchirées
 (p. 289)

These "soleils-nains" are the bursts of artillery shells; they are the main theme of a poem such as "Fête":

Feu d'artifice en acier
 Qu'il est charmant cet éclairage
 Artifice d'artificier

(p. 238)

and they are the "mille soleils" of "La Nuit d'avril 1915" (p. 243).

Images of artillery fire, this terrible destructive fire, recur throughout Calligrammes under different forms. Two entire sections of the collection are entitled Lueurs des Tirs and Obus Couleur de Lune. Some lines of "Merveille de la Guerre" summarize the destructive yet fascinating power of this type of fire:

C'est un banquet que s'offre la terre
 Elle a faim et ouvre de longues bouches pâles
 La terre a faim et voici son festin de Balthasar cannibale
 Qui aurait dit qu'on peut être à ce point anthropophage
 Et qu'il fallut tant de feu pour rôtir le corps humain

...

(p. 272)

Leaving now the imagery associated directly or indirectly with the Sun, let us turn to the images of the "brasier" and the "bûcher" which form the fabric of one of the major poems of Alcools - the poem entitled "Le Brasier". This kind of fire is that which kindles the poet's inspiration, it is the flame of his emotional life, and it is a purging power at the same time. The effect of purification by this fire is a renewal, a rebirth; it is the life-source of the Phoenix. And for the poet himself it is:

... ce bûcher le nid de mon courage
 (p. 136)

Before returning to a consideration of the mythical image of the Phoenix in Apollinaire's writing, it is useful to dwell for a moment on the construction and progression of "Le Brasier". This hermetic and difficult poem is apparently divided into three sections, each with a separate theme, and each theme forming part of a progressive cycle. The cycle moves from

the theme of destruction, to that of renaissance, to that of reconstruction.

In the first part of the poem, the poet throws his past, his painful memories of love-affairs, into "le noble feu", which is a source of forgetfulness and also an image of poetic inspiration fed by the poet's past experiences. The poet prays for the rebirth of the flames of Love in his life:

L'amour est devenu mauvais
 Qu'au brasier les flammes renaissent
 (p. 108)

The idea of rebirth and reconstruction is thus sown in the poem, illustrated in addition by the image of the Amphion, who built the walls of Thebes by playing his lyre to charm the stones into position. This is the magical power of the singing of Orpheus, and the miraculous power of Christ.

In the second part, such magical rebirth and power germinates in the poem, and the fire of the "brasier" purges the poet:

Je flambe dans le brasier à l'ardeur adorable
 Et les mains des croyants m'y rejettent...
 (p. 109)

These words seem to echo the idea of the descent of Christ into Hell, before his resurrection, or the descent of Orpheus to the Underworld. The poet too, in this section of "Le Brasier" experiences the fire of Purgatory, out of which martyrdom comes a salvation:

Voici ma vie renouvelée...
 (p. 109)

Like the symbolic swan of Mallarmé's poem "Le Vierge, le Vivace et le Bel Aujourd'hui", the poet of "Le Brasier" is liberated into song from the frozen immobility of his past. His renewed life emerges as a blazing "bateau ivre", in which the poet will journey "aux frontières/De l'illimité et de l'avenir" (p. 314):

Voici le paquebot et ma vie renouvelée
 Ses flammes sont immenses

Il n'y a plus rien de commun entre moi
 Et ceux qui craignent les brûlures.
 (p. 109)

This, then, is the fire associated with the danger and adventure of poetic inspiration and of poetic creation, such as is seen in the 'reconstruction' section, the last section of the poem.

In this final part of "Le Brasier", there is a kind of apocalypse of art, spelled out in images of flames:

L'avenir masqué flambe en traversant les cieux
 (p. 110)

Significantly, the fire and warmth of the Sun return to the poem:

Puis le soleil revint ensoleiller les places
 D'une ville marine apparue contremont
 (p. 110)

A new poetic cosmos is constructed by Solomon's "ver Zamir", yet another magical constructor.¹¹ This new cosmos is the "Désirade" of Apollinaire, which has issued out of the regenerative fire of "Le Brasier".

The theme of destruction-renaissance-reconstruction is the same as that we have seen in the solar myth, where the Sun followed a daily and yearly life-death cycle. It is also the same idea as that of the image of the Phoenix which is important for Apollinaire's work. The Phoenix is, for Apollinaire, a mythical symbol of poetic and erotic rebirth. It is the creature that rises out of the purging fire of the "Brasier":

Le phénix ce bûcher qui soi-même s'engendre
 (p. 41)

And in "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé" the Phoenix becomes the image of reborn passion:

... mon amour à la semblance
 Du beau Phénix s'il meurt un soir
 Le matin voit sa renaissance
 (p. 46)

This is the Phoenix of "le feu sexualisé", of which Bachelard writes in La psychanalyse du feu, the Phoenix of Love, both sentimental and erotic.

The image of an ideal fire is present also in the "alcools" of Apollinaire's verse. Alcohol, for Bachelard, is "l'eau qui flambe". "L'eau-de-vie", writes Bachelard, "c'est l'eau de feu.... Elle est la communion de la vie et du feu.... Seule de toutes les matières du monde, l'eau-de-vie est aussi près de la matière du feu".¹² According to this theory, the consumption of alcohol is similar to drinking in the elixir of Life itself. This liquid fire offers a form of divinity to the consumer, and, like Icarus, Apollinaire aspires to a state of divinity, to a knowledge of the meaning of Life such as that gained by Orpheus in the Underworld, or such as that offered by Christ and the Christian God. Alcohol, being an "eau-de-vie", and a liquid fire at the same time, opens the possibility of sublimation and ascension to a higher, divine state of consciousness.

Alcohol, firstly, physically resembles a flame, in the imagination of Apollinaire:

Mon verre est plein d'un vin trembleur comme une flamme
(p. 111)

and, as we have seen in "Le Brasier", flames are assimilated to the life of the poet. Apollinaire, drinking his wine, drinks also his life:

Et tu bois cet alcool brûlant comme ta vie
Ta vie que tu bois comme une eau-de-vie
(p. 44)

The fire of alcohol inspires an ardour of living and a thirst for knowledge in the poet. This thirst for the fire of Life is the "soif terrible" of "Vendémiaire":

L'univers tout entier concentré dans ce vin
Qui contient les mers les animaux les plantes

Les cités les destins et les astres qui chantent

...

Le feu qu'il faut aimer comme on s'aime soi-même

Et tout ce que je ne sais pas dire

Tout ce que je ne connaîtrai jamais

Tout cela tout cela changé en ce vin pur

Dont Paris avait soif

Me fut alors présenté

...

Mais je connus dès lors quelle saveur a l'univers

Je suis ivre d'avoir bu tout l'univers

(pp. 153-154)

At the end of "Vendémiaire", the poet, who also embodies the city of Paris, seems to reach a state of omniscient divinity:

Parce que c'est dans toi que Dieu peut devenir

(p. 152)

The theme of "Vendémiaire", which is also the theme of Alcools according to Scott Bates, is "the poet's superhuman acceptance of and transcendancy over everything in the universe".¹³ The ascension of the poet to this state of 'human divinity' is achieved through the ideal, sublimating fire of alcohol. Apollinaire has surpassed the flight of Icarus, which failed in "L'Ignorance" of Il y a, and has risen to the generative force of Life, the Sun. In so doing, he has "ascended into Heaven", as the Christian catechism says of Christ, and can say in "La Jolie Rousse":

Me voici devant tous...

Connaissant la vie et de la mort ce qu'un vivant peut connaître

(p. 313)

This ascension to 'human divinity', as we have called it, comes about through the element of fire in alcohol. A network of images spreads out from this alcoholic, inebriating fire which inspires the poet. As Madame Durry writes: "... il unit l'amour et l'ivresse, le ciel, les astres, la clarté, la flamme, l'ombre même",¹⁴ and she quotes these lines of Apollinaire, which will conclude our consideration of the fire of alcohol:

Mon ALAMBIC vos yeux ce sont mes ALCOOLS

Et votre voix m'enivre ainsi qu'une eau-de-vie

Des clartés d'astres saouls aux monstrueux faux-cols 15
 Brûlaient votre ESPRIT sur ma nuit inassouvie

In the preceding lines the eyes of the loved-one are 'alcools', fire-water, but in a poem such as "La Loreley"; her eyes are likened to two other fire-images that are used by Apollinaire: the image of flames, and that of stars.

Mes yeux ce sont des flammes...

says the maiden of the Loreley, and her enchanted lover replies:

Je flambe dans ces flammes ô belle Loreley
 (p. 115)

Later in the same poem, we read:

La Loreley les implorait et ses yeux brillaient comme des astres
 (p. 116)

These two images of flames and stars are both semi-creative, in that their fire is magical and enchanting, and semi-destructive, in that their enchantment leads to ruin and to emotional shipwreck.

Stars, in the repertoire of fire-images used by Apollinaire seem to have a peculiarly dual role which changes in emphasis according to the date of the poem or the collection to which it belongs. In "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé", for example, there is the mysterious refrain of the "voie lactée", which has an equivocal tone, being both lyrically attractive and menacing, simultaneously:

Voie lactée ô soeur lumineuse
 Des blancs ruisseaux de Chanaan
 Et des corps blancs des amoureuses
 Nageurs morts suivrons-nous d'ahan
 Ton cours vers d'autres nébuleuses
 (pp. 48, 53, 58)

Also in "La Chanson" there appear:

Des astres des fleurs du matin
 (p. 54)

In "Les Fiançailles" stars are neither a threatening nor a destructive element of the imagery, since the poet says:

Je buvais à pleins verres les étoiles
(p. 129)

It is in the Calligrammes that the stars, as did the Sun, become associated with the destruction wrought by the "obus". In "Fête", for example:

L'air est plein d'un terrible alcool
Filtré des étoiles mi-closes
Les obus carressent le mol
Parfum nocturne...
(p. 238)

And in "Les Saisons",

... des astres passaient que singaient les obus
(p. 240)

or in "La Nuit d'avril 1915":

Le ciel est étoilé par les obus des Boches
...
Comme un astre éperdu qui cherche ses saisons
Coeur obus éclaté tu sifflais ta romance
Et tes mille soleils ont vidé les caissons
Que les dieux de mes yeux remplissent le silence.
(p. 243)

Stars have become artillery-shells, and are potential agents of death and destruction, yet despite this, a certain fascination for them seems to linger in Apollinaire's mind. The fire of the stars is apparently neither warming nor chilling, neither "sublime" nor "pervers" for Apollinaire, it is simply the object of lyrical, poetic fascination.

In opposition to the images of fire we have so far considered, there are numerous images of shadow and water in the writing of Apollinaire. Both of these are, in a sense, the elemental enemies of fire. Both imply the extinction of fire. And if Apollinaire himself is sometimes a "porteur de soleils", as in "Les Fiançailles" (p. 130), he also falls on occasions into a sadly

sombre frame of mind, and writes:

Dans ce grand vide de mon âme il manque un soleil il
manque ce qui éclaire

(p. 259)

Along with the images of music and flowers, we will discuss these two images of shadow and water, and their significance for Apollinaire's "myth" in the following chapter.

To conclude the discussion of myths of creative and destructive fire, let us return to some of the words of Margaret Davies, who summarizes Apollinaire's use of fire-imagery in this way: "The light itself, linked often with fire and flames, is always... the purifying but dangerous agent of the ideal... the sun is a flaming brasier often associated with cruelty - its rays are whiplashes, it represents a decapitated, bleeding head".¹⁶ These words seem to point out well the sublime-perverse, creative-destructive duality of Apollinaire's images of fire.

NOTES

- 1 Renaud. Lecture. p. 484.
- 2 See Grimal. Dictionnaire de la mythologie. p. 397.
- 3 Davies, Margaret. Apollinaire. London and Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964. p. 37.
- 4 Durry. Alcools. vol. III. p. 53.
- 5 Renaud. Lecture. p. 146.
- 6 Bachelard, Gaston. La Flamme d'une Chandelle. Paris: P.U.F., 1964.
- 7 Bachelard, Gaston. La Psychanalyse du feu. Paris: Gallimard, 1949.
- 8 Bachelard. La Flamme... p. 1.
- 9 Bachelard. La Psychanalyse... p. 19.
- 10 Bates. Guillaume Apollinaire. p. 40.
- 11 In 1908, Apollinaire wrote: "Le ver Zamir qui sans outils pouvait bâtir le temple de Jérusalem, quelle saisissante image du poète!" (see Pléiade notes, p. 1060).
- 12 Bachelard. La Psychanalyse... pp. 139-140.
- 13 Bates. Guillaume Apollinaire. p. 107.
- 14 Durry. Alcools. vol. III. p. 34.
- 15 ibid. p. 33. These lines are dedicated to Marie Laurencin.
- 16 Davies. Apollinaire. p. 37.

MYTHS OF DEATH AND REBIRTH IN WATER,
SHADOW, MUSIC AND FLOWERS

Having considered certain 'myths of fire' in the preceding chapter we now turn to two natural elements which would seem to be direct "enemies", or opposites of fire: water and shadow. But, as we shall hope to show, in Apollinaire's own myth, water and shadow are reconciled with fire in some ways, and can even be considered to be metamorphoses of it. In addition to these two new elements of water and shadow, we will discuss the importance of music as a common factor in both ancient and Apollinairian mythology, and of flowers, which play an important role in the metaphorical repertoire of Apollinaire, as it is used by him to animate and embroider the myths of his verse and of his imagination.

Water, in the imagery of Apollinaire's verse, takes the physical form of rivers and of sea, or ocean. In a poem such as 'La Maison des Morts' of Alcools, he evokes also the water of a lake. The two rivers that predominate in his poetry are, undoubtedly, the Seine and the Rhine, these being the two rivers beside which some of the important events of his personal life took place. His days spent in Nice as a boy, and also possibly his journeys across the English Channel in pursuit of Annie Playden, helped to engrave the sea in his mind and in his poetic imagery, as an element of some importance.

These two sorts of water, the river and the Ocean, or the lake, are clearly distinguished in his poetry, where each would seem to take on an entirely distinct 'tone', an entirely different set of connotations. The river, as being water that flows and passes by, takes on a certain symbolical

and morose significance associated with the passage of time. The ocean or the lake, on the other hand, are "still waters", and are sometimes associated with death by drowning, or with a process of purging and of purification, or otherwise they are a balm and a solace to the tormented mind.

In his study of L'Eau et les Rêves, Bachelard discusses the running and flowing of water, that will be seen to be important in poems of Apollinaire such as 'Le Pont Mirabeau' (p. 45), or 'Le Pont' of Il y a (p. 361), or 'Marie' (p. 81). Bachelard writes:

...l'eau est aussi un type de destin... l'être humain a le destin de l'eau qui coule. L'eau est vraiment l'élément transitoire... Il meurt à chaque minute, sans cesse quelque chose de sa substance s'écroule.

This is an echo of the central idea of Apollinaire's poem 'Le Pont Mirabeau', where water, Time and Love pass, as it were, hand in hand. They flow equally past the poet and under the bridge:

L'amour s'en va comme cette eau courante
 L'amour s'en va
 Comme la vie est lente
 Et comme l'Espérance est violente

Vienne la nuit sonne l'heure
 Les jours s'en vont je demeure
 Passent les jours et passent les semaines
 Ni temps passé
 Ni les amours reviennent
 Sous le Pont Mirabeau coule la Seine

Vienne la nuit sonne l'heure
 Les jours s'en vont je demeure

(p. 45)

In the poem 'Marie', the flow of the river takes on another significance, associated now specifically with the pain of a broken heart, rather than with Love's or Time's passage (with a capital 'L' or 'T'). In 'Marie':

Le fleuve est pareil à ma peine
 Il s'écoule et ne tarit pas

(p. 81)

And in 'Le Pont', as in 'L'Emigrant de Landor Road' which we shall examine shortly, flowing water is associated directly with the ephemeral transitory nature of flowers, another great image in the melancholy side of Apollinaire's 'myth':

Les jeunes filles qui passent sur le pont léger
 Portent dans leurs mains
 Le bouquet de demain
 Et leurs regards s'écoulent
 Dans ce fleuve à tous étranger
 Qui vient de loin qui va si loin
 Et passe sous le pont léger de vos paroles
 (p. 361)

However, it is not so much the flowing water of rivers that seems to be the most important kind of water in Apollinaire's own myth. As Philippe Renaud says in one of the discussions of the 'Colloque de Stavelot' of 1968:

...on parle beaucoup du thème de l'eau courante chez Apollinaire;
 mais on ne s'est guère penché sur les eaux mortes, les bassins. 2

and he continues:

...ces eaux mortes se retrouvent dans Vitam Impendere Amori. Je
 crois qu'on y rencontre tous les éléments de ce que Bachelard
 appelle le complexe d'Ophélie. 3

Bachelard's 'complexe d'Ophélie' is an association of the image of water, still and deep, with death. The two images of music (singing) and of flowers are also associated with the death by drowning of Ophelia. As Renaud suggests, the death of Ophelia is vaguely evoked in Vitam Impendere Amori in some verses of extreme lyrical beauty:

Tu descendais dans l'eau si claire
 Je me noyais dans ton regard
 ...

Tu flottes sur l'onde nocturne
 ...

(p. 161)

This water is still, and it is 'nocturne'. This is the water of the Ocean in which the foolish and disillusioned Icarus is to die, though far less

graciously and lyrically, in the poem 'L'Ignorance' of Il y a :

Un dieu choit dans la mer, un dieu nu les mains vides
 Au semblant des noyés il ira sur une île
 Pourrir face tournée vers le soleil splendide

(p. 345)

It is also the water into which the sun sets in its evening death, bringing with it the night that will make the water truly 'nocturne' and that will associate it with the 'ombres' and 'ténèbres' which we have yet to discuss. It is the water of death and of the possible suicide by drowning of 'L'Emigrant de Landor Road'.

In L'Eau et les rêves, Bachelard draws strongly this link of death with the image of still and deep water:

L'eau est une invitation à mourir; elle est une invitation à une mort spéciale qui nous permet de rejoindre un des refuges matériels élémentaires. 4

Eau silencieuse, eau sombre, eau dormante, eau insondable, autant de leçons matérielles pour une méditation de la mort. 5

L'eau, substance de vie, est aussi substance de mort pour la rêverie ambivalente. 6

With these notions in mind, let us look at some of the still waters of Apollinaire's imagery. These are the waters of the ocean or the lake; dark waters, bringing either death and sadness, or bringing solace and refuge, as Bachelard suggests.

In 'La Maison des Morts', for example, the troupe of the dead row across a mysterious and dream-like lake in the poet's imaginative fantasies. This kind of water, according to the definitions of Bachelard, would symbolize the substance of death, a sleep from which the dreamer would not wish to awaken, which cradles and protects him. And in 'L'Emigrant de Landor Road', a similar, half-expressed death-wish is linked with the image of water. Nostalgia and melancholy pervade the evocation of the ocean over which the emigrant is about to depart, and upon which floats the tiny and frail wreath of flowers:

Les vents de l'Océan en soufflant leurs menaces
 Laisaient dans ses cheveux de longs baisers mouillés
 Des émigrants tendaient vers le port leurs mains lasses
 Et d'autres en pleurant s'étaient agenouillés

Il regarda longtemps les rives qui moururent
 Seuls des bateaux d'enfant tremblaient à l'horizon
 Un tout petit bouquet flottant à l'aventure
 Couvrit l'Océan d'une immense floraison.

...

Gonfle-toi vers la nuit O Mer les yeux des squales
 Jusqu'à l'aube ont guetté de loin avidement
 Des cadavres de jours rongés par les étoiles
 Parmi le bruit des flots et les derniers serments

(p. 106)

From this complex of images emerges a general impression of death and sadness, which is attributable to the notions of departure and farewell, to the "baisers mouillés" (of the sea? or of the loved-ones?), to the "rives qui moururent", and to the image of the tiny bouquet of flowers dropped into the ocean, at the mercy of the waves. The menacing tone of these lines is set by the "vents de l'Océan", and by the "squales" which covet the "cadavres des jours". Water here is thus both sad and beautiful, and it brings for the emigrant a menace as well as a promise of deathly forgetfulness, or of suicidal solace.

In combining the two elements of "nuit" and "mer" in the last strophe of 'L'Emigrant', Apollinaire has fixed the tone of the end of his poem as being one of regret, perhaps of nostalgia. For, as Bachelard writes:

L'eau mêlée de nuit est un remords ancien qui ne veut pas dormir. ⁷

In the sense that it is longed-for, and in that it brings with it a calm repose for the sadness of the poet, or the emigrant, the still, deep water of ocean or lake, and the death that it suggests, is also a water of purification, a purging water. It is the kind of water associated with Christian baptism - the water that washes away sin - in that it washes away grief and pain. It offers death, and also a kind of spiritual rebirth: out of the sea into which

it sets every evening will arise the new-born sun each dawn. Likewise, the foolishness of Icarus is purged in his watery death.

Water may also offer a certain elevation or salvation in becoming alcohol and in fusing itself with the element of fire. Alcohol, as we saw previously, is the fusion, the marriage of two hostile and opposed elements, fire and water. "Comment rêver de plus grands géniteurs que l'eau et le feu!" cries Bachelard.⁸

Water thus holds a multiple significance in the myth of Apollinaire. It flows, or it is still, it is a substance of either joy and solace, or of sorrow and death as for Icarus and the solar myth. It can be a purifying agent, as in the Christian myth, and an agent of harmony when metamorphosed into alcohol, which offers a renewed vigour and life, in that fire is reborn in the water itself. Out of the water of death, comes the water of alcohol, so important to the force and vitality of Apollinaire's personal, poetic myth.

As we have already noted in passing, water is often associated by Apollinaire with shadow and with Night. Just as the poet can wish to drown or to be purified in water in order to refind a sublime state of calmness, so too he looks to shadow and darkness as a means of escape and sublimation. Shadow, as water, is one of the "enemies" of the ardour of flame - both suggest the death of fire, and thus the death of Life in general, since, as we have seen, Life is often associated with Fire. Water and shadow are linked for example in "Le Voyageur":

Une nuit c'était la mer
Et les fleuves s'y répandaient
(p. 78)

Or in "Les Fiançailles", flowing water is a dark and shadowy 'marriage' of shadow and water:

Et sombre sombre fleuve je me rappelle

Les ombres qui passaient n'étaient jamais jolies
(p. 129)

And in the poem "Simultanéités" of Calligrammes, we have the graphic importance of the colour of shadows in the water:

O vaste mer aux mauves ombres
(p. 285)

In these fused or juxtaposed elements of Apollinaire's imagery is to be found evidence of what Bachelard has expressed in saying:

...comme l'eau est la substance qui s'offre le mieux aux mélanges,
la nuit va pénétrer les eaux, elle va ternir le lac dans ses
profondeurs, elle va imprégner l'étang. 9

The shadows of water are clearly linked also with death. The poet, in his descent into the imagery of the shadowy night of water, follows in the steps of his mythological master, Orpheus, who descends to the Underworld in search of the lost purity of his love for Eurydice. Christ, too, for three days before his rebirth and resurrection, descended into the shadow of Hell. These two figures, as we saw earlier, are both of considerable prominence in Apollinaire's mythological system of reference.

It seems natural therefore that images of "ombre", "nuit" or "ténèbres" should be quite common in Apollinaire's verse, and the moods of melancholy or repose or weird fantasy that are associated with such notions also. Shadow and darkness are either a kind of mental inferno to the poet, often verging on the fantastic, surrealistic world of dream as in "Onirocritique", for example. In this prose poem, the poet, as Orpheus or Dante, or Faust, experiences the wild torments of an infernal dream-world. It is only after having traversed such a world that the haven of "Orkenise", a paradisaical state of purity and knowledge, can be reached:

Orkenise parût à l'horizon.... Des vaisseaux d'or, sans matelots,
passaient à l'horizon. Des ombres gigantesques se profilaient sur

les voiles lointaines. Plusieurs siècles me séparaient de ces ombres. Je me désespérai. Mais, j'avais la conscience des éternités différentes de l'homme et de la femme.

(pp. 371-374)

Ships on dream-like seas and gigantic shadows combine to make the poet despair and yet to reassure him of the ultimate benefits of undergoing such a purgatory. Shadow of this sort offers a descent to the Underworld, and a resurrection to the poet.

Similar torments or uncertainties are experienced by the poet during the night-time of "Zone" or "Vendémiaire", from both of which he finally emerges into daylight, and the birth of a renewed life.

The mental itinerary of the poet seems to pass through several stages of shadow and night, which it is interesting to trace as part of his personal myth. In the poem "Le Larron", we read of the "larron" himself, who is possibly also Christ and the poet:

Il entra dans la salle aux fresques qui figurent
L'inceste solaire et nocturne dans les nues

...
Va-t'en va-t'en contre le feu l'ombre prévaut

...
L'ombre équivoque et tendre est le deuil de ta chair
Et sombre elle est humaine...

(pp. 92-94)

In such an "ombre équivoque", the poet experiences the fantasies of "Zone", "Vendémiaire" or "Onirocritique", where death entails a certain salvation. Shadow becomes something of value to him; it becomes a part of his poetic melancholy and inspiration:

Ténébreuse épouse que j'aime
Tu es à moi en n'étant rien
O mon ombre en deuil de moi-même

(p. 54)

In "Cortège", the liaison between the poet and shadow becomes even closer and more mysterious:

Et moi aussi de près je suis sombre et terne
Une brume qui vient d'obscurcir les lanternes

Une main qui tout à coup se pose devant les yeux
 Une voûte entre vous et toutes les lumières
 (p. 74)

A poem such as "Le Voyageur" reflects the importance of the theme of shadow for Apollinaire's poetic inspiration. There are the "ombres" of the cypress-tree in "cette nuit au déclin de l'été", and there is "le bruit éternel d'un fleuve large et sombre". Later on in the poem he writes:

Alors sans bruit sans qu'on put voir rien de vivant
 Contre le mont passèrent des ombres vivaces
 De profil ou soudain tournant leurs vagues faces
 Et tenant l'ombre de leurs lances en avant

Les ombres contre le mont perpendiculaire
 Grandissaient ou parfois s'abaissaient brusquement
 Et ces ombres barbues pleuraient humainement
 En glissant pas à pas sur la montagne claire
 (p. 79)

The word "ombre" itself, or words denoting a similar notion occur no less than eight times in the space of sixteen lines of this poem, being sometimes vaguely sexualized as is the shadow of the cypress-trees reaching toward the moon, or as the shadow that is the "ténébreuse épouse" of the Mal-Aimé; or being merely significant of a lack of light and life - "sans qu'on put voir rien de vivant", he writes.

Madame Durry sees this recurrent image of shadow as vital to the entire structure of Alcools, which, indeed it is. She writes:

Le motif de l'ombre revient toujours.... Voilà bien en quoi
 consiste l'unité interne d'Alcools, surtout si j'ajoute au motif
 de l'ombre celui de la lumière et du feu qui ne fait qu'un avec
 lui. 10

In shadow, then, as in water, Apollinaire sees an Orpheus-like or Christ-like descent into Hell, which is the region of Lilith, from which the poet emerges like the Sun at sunrise: reinvigorated, reborn and purified.

The figure of Orpheus is to be recalled once more as we consider the importance of music in Apollinaire's use of 'myth'. In his book on Eros and Civilization, Herbert Marcuse succinctly summarizes the importance of music and song that is associated with the myth of Orpheus:

Orpheus is the archetype of the poet as liberator and creator: he establishes a higher order in the world - an order without repression. In his person, art, freedom, culture are eternally combined. He is the poet of redemption, the god who brings peace and salvation by pacifying man and nature, not through force but through song. 11

The music of Orpheus is magical in its powers over other creatures, as is the music of the lyre of the Amphion, also evoked by Apollinaire, or the song of the Sirens, constantly used as a reference in "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé", for example. Orpheus, as "the archetype of the poet", provides an ideal for the poet aspiring to enchant other men with the 'song' of his verse. The two elements of music and magic are, in this way, importantly related.

The magical power of verse begins maybe, as Bachelard suggests, in the poetic reverie of water:

Le rêverie commence parfois devant l'eau limpide, tout entière en reflets immenses, bruissante d'une musique cristalline. 12

Music is also associated with the fire of Life and of the Sun by Apollinaire himself, when he writes in "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé":

Juin ton soleil ardent lyre
Brûle mes doigts endoloris
Triste et mélodieux délire
J'erre à travers mon beau Paris
Sans avoir le coeur d'y mourir

(p. 59)

From this verse alone it can be seen how Apollinaire identifies himself with the musician playing upon, co-ordinating the musical strings and tones of natural phenomena into an Orphic world of enchanting beauty: a "triste et mélodieux délire". These words, as Renaud has said:

...(sont) la plus belle caractérisation qui se puisse trouver non

seulement de "La Chanson" même, mais, peut-être, de l'ensemble d'Alcools.... La danse et le chant jouent dans Alcools un rôle primordial, danse et chant qui sont autant le fait du monde que du poète lui-même....

13

But before considering the idea of the musical melody and the magic contained in it, let us look at the poem "Cors de Chasse", where the single musical note evokes a certain sadness and nostalgia, similar to the tone of the final lines of "L'Emigrant de Landor Road". This poem is a "fin d'amour" poem, commemorating Apollinaire's love affair with Marie Laurencin. The note of the hunting-horn, carried away on the wind, symbolizes the gradual fading of Apollinaire's hopes and his love:

Notre histoire est noble et tragique
Comme le masque d'un tyran

...

Les souvenirs sont cors de chasse
Dont meurt le bruit parmi le vent

(p. 148)

Like the flow of water under the "Pont Mirabeau", Life and Love ebb away:

Passons passons puisque tout passe
Je me retournerai souvent

(p. 148)

This single musical note holds only a defiant hope and a dim magic, that is doomed to fade slowly away.

The whole melody, however, contains a powerful magic. The poet's verses make him into L'Enchanteur, or, as with Croniamantal in Le Poète assassiné, they can incur such frenzy in others that will lead to the martyrdom of the poet himself. Alternatively, the magical melody of the poet's creation is associated by Apollinaire with figures such as the Amphion or the "Musicien de St-Merry".

In these two figures is to be seen the clearest reflection of the link between music and magic that is suggested in the myth of Orpheus. And the magical power of music, as seen by Apollinaire, can be sometimes destructive and sometimes creative, rather in the same way that water or shadow are

ambivalent in his range of imagery. The Amphion, for example, follows after Orpheus in being a creative, musical magician. The Amphion, in mythology, is said to have built the walls of Thebes by playing his lyre to make the stones move themselves into position. Or according to the reference to this myth in "Le Brasier":

Partant à l'amphion docile
Tu subis tous les tons charmants
Qui rendent les pierres agiles

(p. 108)

These lines evoke the creative song of the poet's music, but in most other cases in Apollinaire's mind and 'myth', music would appear to be linked with a destructive magic:

Les démons du hasard selon
Le chant du firmament nous mènent
A sons perdus leurs violons
Font danser notre race humaine
Sur la descente à reculons

(p. 58)

The figure of the "Musicien de St. Merry" forms part of this line of magicians, who lead the way to destruction. And the poet clearly identifies himself with this mysterious "Musicien" of Calligrammes :

Je chante toutes les possibilités de moi-même hors de ce monde et
des astres
Je chante la joie d'errer et le plaisir d'en mourir

(p. 188)

cry both the poet and the musician-hero of the poem. The "Musicien de St-Merry", like the Pied-Piper of Hamelin, leads away his victims, enchanted by the sounds of his music, to their destruction and disappearance:

Toi ma douleur et mon attente vaine
J'entends mourir le son d'une flûte lointaine

(p. 191)

But as Philippe Renaud has said in a lecture given on the subject of "'Ondes', ou les métamorphoses de la musique", in speaking of this poem:

...il me semble qu'on n'aura pas dit l'essentiel si l'on omet de remarquer que ce musicien (le Musicien de St-Merry) est une sorte d'Orphée retourné, d'Orphée inverse: qui ne suit pas Eurydice aux Enfers, ni ne tente de l'en ramener, mais l'y conduit.

14

Elsewhere, Apollinaire associates himself with another kind of music of destruction: namely, the song of the Sirens. He knows "des lais pour les reines", but also "des chansons pour les sirènes". The Sirens' song usually has connotations of personal disillusionment in love in Apollinaire's verse. The poet himself is most frequently the victim of the Sirens' magic. It is their music that enchants him, like the singing of the maiden of the Lorelei. We will return to this myth of the Sirens' music in the following chapter.

One of the other legendary figures with whom music, in the form of dance, is associated, and who interests Apollinaire, is Salome. She beguiles Herod and causes the destruction of John the Baptist by the enchantment of her dancing:

Pour que sourie encore une fois Jean-Baptiste
Sire je danserais mieux que les séraphins

(p. 86)

In the short-story entitled "La danseuse", mentioned in an earlier chapter, Apollinaire again gives a specific emphasis to the dancing of Salome, which finally causes her own destruction.

Possibly the most ominously destructive of the forms of music to be found in the imagery of Apollinaire, however, appears in some of the poems of war of Calligrammes. The lyrical aura which Apollinaire lends warfare is made more vividly horrific and yet more enchanting by means of musical imagery. In "La Nuit d'avril 1915", for instance:

La mitrailleuse joue un air à triples-croches
...
Coeur obus éclaté tu sifflais ta romance

(p. 243)

Or in the poem "Du coton dans les oreilles", he writes:

Ici la musique militaire joue
 Quelques chose
 Et chacun se souvient d'une joue
 Rose
 Parce que même les airs entraînants
 Ont quelque chose de déchirant quand on les entend à la guerre
 (p. 290)

This kind of music is that of the destructive weaponry of modern warfare, which, as we saw in the case of the fire and flame of "obus", both fascinates and horrifies Apollinaire, as if it were a spectacle. In "Du Coton dans les oreilles", in fact, the images of water and flowers are deformed by the tone of the war: "coquelicots" are seen as drops of blood, and there is the deformed image of flowing water in:

Les projectiles d'artillerie qui glissent
 Comme un fleuve aérien
 (p. 291)

The imagery associated with flowers to be found in Apollinaire's verse, though not associated directly with any classical, mythological references, forms an important and interesting part of the poet's own myth. It emphasizes his preoccupation with a life-death, creation-destruction, sublime-perverse dichotomy, such as we have attempted to trace in the imagery of fire, water, shadow and music, that we have so far considered. Although flower-imagery is only, in this sense, a metaphorical "reinforcement" of the poet's own myth, it merits at least a brief examination.

Flowers, for Apollinaire, appear to be linked frequently with the passing of time, and with other destructive forces, such as death or even love. Their bright colour is deceptive in its beauty, in that it is ephemeral, and is doomed to fade. The perfume of the flower inevitably fades away in time also. Flowers follow the same life-death cycle as the sun - in autumn they, too, die away, and in spring, they are reborn.

Above all, flowers are associated with Love, and with the ephemerality of Love. "Les Colchiques" are beautiful and entrancing flowers, that bewitch the poet, as do his loved-one's eyes, but which are also poisonous and will kill in autumn-time as the life of the year draws to an end:

Le pré est vénéneux mais joli en automne
 Les vaches y paissant
 Lentement s'empoisonnent
 Le colchique couleur de cerne et de lilas
 Y fleurit tes yeux sont comme cette fleur-là
 Violâtres comme leur cerne et comme cet automne
 Et ma vie pour tes yeux lentement s'empoisonne

(p. 60)

And in "La Cueillette" of Il y a, a similar, though more explicit image occurs:

Nous vîmes au jardin fleuri pour la cueillette.
 Belle, sais-tu combien de fleurs, de roses-thé,
 Roses pâles d'amour qui couronnent ta tête,
 S'effeuillent chaque été?

Leurs tiges vont plier au grand vent qui s'élève.
 Des pétales de rose ont chu dans le chemin.
 O Belle, cueille-les, puisque nos fleurs de rêve
 Se faneront demain!

...

Et les fleurs vont mourir dans la chambre profane.
 Nos roses tour à tour effeuillent la douleur.
 Belle, sanglote un peu... Chaque fleur qui se fane,
 C'est un amour qui meurt!

(p. 318)

Similar to this Ronsardian image of "Cueillez dès aujourd'hui les roses de la vie"¹⁵ are the images of the "marguerite exfoliée" of "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé" (p. 54), the fragile bouquet of flowers in "L'Emigrant de Landor Road" (p. 106), the "pétales tombés des cerisiers de mai" of the poem "Mai" (p. 112), and the image of "...ma jeunesse abandonnée/Comme une guirlande fanée" of Vitam Impendere Amori (p. 162). In Apollinaire's verse, there are numerous other such instances of flower-imagery being used to evoke a nostalgic mixture of Love, Youth and Life fading away and dying.

Flowers, as music, are used also in some of the warfare images of Calligrammes. In these cases, flowers become actively destructive, and carry with them not only a reminder of the approach of death, but also a potential killing power of their own. The bursts of shells are not only "suns", but they are seen as "flowers" by Apollinaire as in the "2^e Canonnier Conducteur":

La Victoire se tient après nos jugulaires
 ...
 Ses fleurs sont nos obus aux gerbes merveilleuses
 (p. 215)

Or else they are directly linked with the spectacle of battle, as in "Fête":

Les obus caressent le mol
 Parfum nocturne où tu reposes
 Mortification des roses
 (p. 238)

Or, as in "Chevaux de Frise", where Apollinaire writes:

Pendant le blanc et nocturne novembre
 Tandis que chantaient épouvantablement les obus
 Et que les fleurs mortes de la terre exhalaient
 Leurs mortelles odeurs...
 (p. 302)

But in this last poem, "Chevaux de Frise", is to be seen the promise of a rebirth of Life that is occasionally associated with flower-imagery by Apollinaire:

Mon coeur renaissait comme un arbre au printemps
 Un arbre fruitier sur lequel s'épanouissent
 Les fleurs de l'amour
 (p. 302)

In "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé" also, we read:

Dans les jardins et les vergers
 Les oiseaux chantent sur les branches
 Le printemps clair l'avril léger
 (p. 54)

This is the springtime that is associated with budding flowers and reborn Life and Love. As he writes in his great poem-credo of Adventure, "La Jolie Rousse":

Nous voulons vous donner de vastes et d'étranges domaines

Où le mystère en fleurs s'offre à qui veut le cueillir
(p. 313)

Despite all the melancholy of his flower-imagery, a certain optimism and vigour remain associated with it in this way.

In conclusion we can look back at these images of water, shadow, music and flowers, and see how each one is used by Apollinaire to illustrate certain aspects of the life-death, creation-destruction cycle of some of his favourite myths, of his own life, and of his love-affairs in particular. By contrast with the images of fire and flame, discussed earlier, which are usually images of Life and of inspiration, the images now under discussion are used, most frequently, to illustrate a darker, more melancholy meditation. Each holds the hope and faint promise of a rebirth in it, but each is predominantly a herald of death and decay for Apollinaire.

NOTES

- 1 Bachelard, Gaston. L'Eau et les rêves. Paris: Corti, 1942. p. 8.
- 2 Renaud, Philippe. "Discussion" in Du monde européen à l'univers des mythes. Actes du colloque de Stavelot (1968). réunis par Michel Décaudin. Paris: Lettres Modernes, Minard, 1970. p. 46.
- 3 loc. cit.
- 4 Bachelard. L'Eau... p. 77.
- 5 ibid. p. 96.
- 6 ibid. p. 99.
- 7 ibid. p. 139.
- 8 ibid. p. 133.
- 9 ibid. p. 137.
- 10 Durry. Alcools. Vol. III. pp. 52-53.
- 11 Marcuse, Herbert. Eros and Civilization. A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud. Boston: Beacon Press, 1966, p. 170.
- 12 Bachelard. L'Eau... p. 66.
- 13 Renaud, Philippe. "'Ondes', ou les métamorphoses de la musique" in Apollinaire et la Musique. Actes du Colloque de Stavelot, août 1965. réunis par M. Décaudin. Stavelot: Edition "Les Amis de Guillaume Apollinaire", 1967. p. 22.
- 14 ibid. p. 27.
- 15 Ronsard. Sonnets pour Hélène, no. 43.

APOLLINAIRE: PERSONAL LIFE AND MYTH

The purpose of the present chapter is to attempt to see how Apollinaire's personal life may have heightened his interest in certain myths, and, 'vice versa', to examine also how greatly myth may have determined certain aspects of the poet's life in as much as it is reflected in his writings. Certain events and factors in Apollinaire's life were seen by him in a distinctly 'mythological' manner: parallels were sometimes drawn metaphorically between his own situation and a mythical situation or figure. Clearly, however, it would be impossible to cover in detail all of Apollinaire's biography within the space of one chapter, and besides, to do so would only be to copy the excellent work of biographers such as Pierre-Marcel Adéma, Georges Vergnes and others. It would also be too lengthy a task to deal with all the poems in which a direct personal reference is made by Apollinaire, since, as the poet himself said in a letter to Henri Martineau:

Chacun de mes poèmes est la commémoration d'un événement de ma vie et le plus souvent il s'agit de tristesse, mais j'ai aussi des joies que je chante. 1

In some poems Apollinaire does give some condensed and explicit biographical facts: poems such as "La Jolie Rousse", the poems "A la Santé", "Cortège", or "Merveille de la Guerre". In a poem such as "Le Larron", for example, are to be found mysterious allegorical-personal references, where the poet is fused with myth to a point where his own identity becomes vague. In some poems also, a certain detachment from the self appears, and an interest in the legend of Guillaume Apollinaire, as created by Guillaume Apollinaire, seems to become more objective: there is an alternation between the first and second persons, the "je" and the "tu", as Apollinaire either steps back from or

identifies with himself. A poem such as "Zone" illustrates this alternation, or "Cortège" where the poet's identity is divided, and one half addresses the other. This last tendency, indicative of a possible schizophrenia in Apollinaire, results in a haziness of identity - an identity which the poet searches throughout his life to define more clearly, to unify, and to create for himself. In this creation myth and mythological example undoubtedly play a part.

In dealing with Apollinaire's personal life and myth, we shall firstly attempt to sketch some possible mythological influences by a chronological review of the poet's life, and lastly, we will try to formulate some general impressions of certain mythical and mythological traits in the personality of Apollinaire, using as a basis some of the opinions and reminiscences of his friends, above all. This final section will be concerned then, largely, with the myth of Guillaume Apollinaire, the man and the poet.

Apollinaire was born in Rome during August 1880. His mother was named Angelica Kostrowitsky, and was of Polish descent. The identity of his father has baffled Apollinaire's biographers, but it is speculated that his name was Francesco Flugi d'Aspermont. Later in his life Apollinaire liked to let it be known that his father was a Pope, since this must have appealed to his Jarryesque sense of humour. The important aspect of Apollinaire's birth, though, is this mystery that shrouds the identity of his father. In the poem called "Le Larron", which Scott Bates sees as an allegory concerning the coming of Christ, a similarly mysterious birth is attributed to the "Larron":

Maraudeur étranger malhabile et malade
Ton père fut un sphinx et ta mère une nuit

(p. 91)

The analogy with Christ is interesting, and is certainly plausible in the

light of these two verses at least. And the possibility that Apollinaire identified himself with Christ in some ways, as discussed in an earlier chapter, would seem to add weight to the connection, suggested by these verses, between the poet's own birth and that of Christ, the "Larron".

A further mythological association that surrounds Apollinaire's birth is contained within the two verses quoted from "Le Larron" themselves: this is the mention made of "un sphinx". The Sphinx of Theban legend is a creature traditionally associated with enigma, with riddles. The identity of the poet's father remains enigmatic to his biographers at least, and may well have been something of a riddle to Apollinaire himself.

Besides the specific circumstances of his birth, the general notion of Birth seems to have had certain connotations in Apollinaire's mind, of the sort that were mentioned in discussing one of the "myths" of fire - that of the Sun. The Sun, in being born each morning, regenerates Life. It is usually a creative, a re-creative and a divine force. It is associated in mythology with the name of Apollo. The poet cannot have failed to associate these connotations that he linked with Birth in general, with his own birth, particularly in the light of the fact that his own name would appear to be a derivative of the name "Apollo". The psychological links are indeed complex, but it is reasonable to state, as does Scott Bates, that: "Apollinaire like Rimbaud was a "fils du Soleil", a son of the Sun..."²

It is Bates too, who makes an interesting remark concerning Apollinaire's mother, Angelica. The mother of "Le Larron" is called "une nuit", which suggests a possible link with one of the goddesses of darkness, Lilith. Lilith is the demon-mother, and in mythology she is often associated with flagellation and other vices. As Bates writes:

His (Apollinaire's) mother, according to many reports, had the

nineteenth-century Polish aristocrat's freedom with the whip; her son's interest in the same can be traced through his poems and letters...

3

In the light of such associations, a connection between Apollinaire's mother and the mythical figure of Lilith may well have prompted such lines as those already quoted from "Le Larron".

At the age of three years old, Apollinaire moved with his mother to Monaco. He was schooled by Jesuits in Monaco for several years, which must have inspired his awareness of Christian dogma and ritual, and must have fostered his childhood belief in these doctrines. The mysteries and awe of this childhood faith are recalled in some verses of "Zone":

Tu es très pieux et avec le plus ancien de tes camarades René Dalize
 Vous n'aimez rien tant que les pompes de l'Eglise
 Il est neuf heures le gaz est baissé tout bleu vous sortez du dortoir
 en cachette
 Vous priez toute la nuit dans la chapelle du collège
 Tandis qu'éternelle et adorable profondeur améthyste
 Tourne à jamais la flamboyante gloire du Christ
 (p. 40)

In 1899, having left the school in Nice to which he was sent after leaving the Jesuit college of Monaco, Apollinaire moved with his mother and her lover to live in Belgium for several weeks. They lived in Stavelot, near Spa, and it is here that Apollinaire suffered his first unfulfilled love-affair with a local girl named Maria Dubois. It is she who is remembered in the poem entitled "Marie", where the memory of her fuses with the image of Marie Laurencin, the poet's later great love. During this stay at Stavelot, Apollinaire took note of the local culture also, which he incorporated in short stories such as Que Vlo've? for example. Local legend, in the form of Que Vlo've? himself, and in the form of the elves and pixies who whisper to him as he dies, forms the attraction of this particular story, so well does Apollinaire capture the tone of the Ardennes.

After his return to Paris, following the Stavelot interlude, Apollinaire had another unreciprocated love-affair with Linda, who is celebrated as "la zézayante" in several poems. In the collection entitled Il y a are to be found a series of "Dicts d'amour à Linda", where Apollinaire praises his loved-one, and uses legendary reference to describe her:

Ainsi bayèrent par le monde
 Viviane auprès de l'immonde
 Et dans son palais Rosemonde
 Qui fut moins belle que Linda.

(p. 327)

The image of Linda in these poems reflects also some of Apollinaire's Roman Catholic background, since she is likened to the madonna:

Si vous n'êtes pas là, zézayante, ô Madone,
 J'irai gémir à votre porte comme un chien.

...

Madone au Nonchaloir, lorsque vous partirez
 Tout parlera de vous, même la feuille morte

(p. 329)

The anxiety of the poet in these verses becomes a desperate disappointment when Linda does not respond to Apollinaire's love. Like Ixion, he loves only a vaporous ideal, and he writes:

J'adore de Linda ce spécieux reflet

(p. 323)

It was in 1901 that Apollinaire embarked upon the first period of his life, and of his writing in particular, to be deeply and notably steeped in myth and legend. After the disillusionment of his 'affair' with Linda, Apollinaire went to Germany, to the Rhineland, as a tutor to a young German girl. He went to a place known as Neu-Glück, which, as Georges Vergnes points out, ironically means "Nouveau Bonheur".⁴ 'Ironically' because it was here that Apollinaire had yet another unhappy and unreciprocated love-affair, this time with Annie Playden, who was later to be transposed into the "Emigrant de Landor Road", and into some important background and personal aspects of

mythical references made in "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé".

Apollinaire, as Victor Hugo and Gérard de Nerval before him, was fascinated by the wealth of folk-lore and legend offered by the Rhineland, and by Germany as a whole. The area was one of a mysterious mythical enchantment, called by Orecchioni in writing on the theme of the Rhine in Apollinaire's inspiration, the "Dionysos Rhéna". In writing of Rhenish wine, Orecchioni says:

Le vin est la clé d'un monde fantastique, de légende et de magie.⁵
 Le thème du vin du Rhin fournit à Apollinaire une sorte d'explication, de justification mythique de l'inspiration poétique, où l'on⁶
 retrouve les éléments du mythe antique de Dionysos.

The role played by wine in Apollinaire's appreciation of Rhenish legend is of particular relevance since it was probably in bars and drinking-halls that he gathered much of his information and local colour. The Rhineland furnished him with material for his poem "Schinderhannes", which deals with a popular Rhineland hero and bandit - a Hernani-figure. It offered also the myth of the maiden of the Lorelei, discussed in an earlier chapter, which became particularly meaningful to Apollinaire during his painful affair with Annie.

Annie Playden is associated with the maiden of the poem entitled "La Loreley", which was inspired by an earlier poem by the poet Brentano. Apollinaire adapts the famous legend of the Lorelei to suit the theme of the ruinous danger of love, which reflects his own sentimental life at this period. Annie - the Lorelei maiden - is seen as a kind of siren who magically lures the poet-mariner to his destruction on the Lorelei Rock of Love. Annie refused to respond to the ardent demands made of her by Apollinaire, and he turns to Rhenish myth in this poem to express his own melancholy and heartbreak. Mythology is said too to have played a part in the affair with Annie itself: it is said that his proposal of marriage to Annie was 'staged' dramatically in a place where Rhenish legend was used by Apollinaire to terrify Annie into agreeing

to marry him:

For this (the proposal of marriage) Apollinaire chose the most romantic spot in the Seven Mountains, the top of the Drachenfels, where Siegfried, the hero of the Niebelungen, is reputed to have slain the dragon. There he offered her his title of nobility and his huge fortune. The young miss from Clapham declined. 7

Such a proposal and 'staging' by Apollinaire certainly indicates a romantic and sinister awareness of Rhenish legend, which played a part in Apollinaire's life at this time.

During the period of his stay in Germany, Apollinaire also had the chance to travel in Central Europe. He became a kind of wanderer. The presence of gypsies and wanderers of a more legendary or mythical sort is notable in his writings of this time:

Sur le chemin du bord du fleuve lentement
Un ours un singe un chien menés par des tziganes
Suivaient une roulotte trainée par un âne

(p. 112)

The poem "La Tzigane" is another poem of the Rhineland period, written in 1902, which also gives some confidence on Apollinaire's affair with Annie in the words:

L'amour lourd comme un ours privé
Dansa debout quand nous voulûmes
Et l'oiseau bleu perdit ses plumes
Et les mendiants leurs 'Ave'.

(p. 99)

And the famous short-story entitled "Le Passant de Prague", which describes an encounter with the legendary Wandering Jew, is also inspired from this period of Apollinaire's travels in Central Europe. The tone of sympathy used in this story to describe the Jew seems to imply a warmth on the part of Apollinaire towards such a wanderer, and towards the legend of a man who, like himself, belongs to no one country, and searches endlessly for a resting-place.

Apollinaire left Germany in 1902 and returned to Paris, where he became involved in the publication of a small literary journal known as Le Festin d'Esopé. This journal ran to the ninth issue. Its name alone indicates an interest in and an awareness of mythology - the title refers to the myth of the two feasts, both exactly similar, prepared by Aesopé for his master, Xantus.

At the same time, Apollinaire began to attend the 'soirées de la Plume', held in the "caveau maudit" of the Café du Départ, referred to in the "Poème lu au mariage d'André Salmon". In this poem, Apollinaire mocks the seriousness with which he and his young friends of the "soirées" treated poetry at this time.

A similar seriousness and sadness to that of the "Poème lu...", that are of great lyrical beauty reflecting a profound emotional distress, pervade his great poem which was written during these same years celebrating his love for Annie Playden, "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé". The poem is full of mythological and legendary references as we saw in the earlier discussion and enumeration of mythological references to be found in Apollinaire's poetry. In "La Chanson ...", the Sirens of Greek mythology are mentioned frequently, as well as Pan, the satyres, and Ulysses. Mars and Venus, from Roman myth, are mentioned also; and Old Testament Biblical mythology holds a prominent position in references to the Hebrews, to the Exodus from Egypt, and to the Red Sea in the first verses of the poem. References to Christ and to Barrabas bring in the element of New Testament Biblical mythology also, though in a more minor way. Out of this complex and mixture of mythological references, which may be best traced in our list, that concludes the second chapter of this study, arises the great legend of Apollinaire himself, as the figure of the "Mal-Aimé". Adéma, Apollinaire's biographer, has dedicated an entire study to this legend of Guillaume Apollinaire, Le Mal-Aimé,⁸ which was to grow in the poet's love-life from this

time onwards, and which was to influence profoundly the poet's own personality and outlook on life, as we shall see.

From about 1907 to 1911 Apollinaire had what has been called his "greatest" love-affair, which was to produce poems of such sad beauty as "Le Pont Mirabeau". His loved-one was called Marie Laurencin. A painting by the painter Henri Rousseau, le Douanier, depicts "Le Poète et sa muse", and is supposed to portray Apollinaire with his muse, Marie. It is of Marie Laurencin, rather than of Maria Dubois, that he writes in the final, melancholy lines of the elegy to "Marie", although as we have said, the images of the two women, are fused. Apollinaire's affair with Marie Laurencin, according to the evidence of his poetry at least, seems to have been one of anxiety and suffering for him. In "Marie" we have an example of flowing water being associated with passing love and with sadness, that is related to his affair with Marie Laurencin:

Le fleuve est pareil à ma peine
 Il s'écoule et ne tarit pas
 (p. 81)

In causing Apollinaire pain and anxiety, Marie is depicted as another siren-figure who has lured the mariner-lover to his destruction: some of the lines of "Vendémiaire", written in 1909 or 1910, would seem to have a personal meaning in this sense:

Mais où est le regard lumineux des sirènes
 Il trompa les marins qu'aimaient ces oiseaux-là
 Il ne tournera plus sur l'écueil de Scylla
 Où chantaient les trois voix suaves et sereines
 (p. 151)

Apollinaire clearly sees himself as one of the "marins" of the myth. Only Orpheus, the archetype of the poet, with his enchanting singing and poetry, was capable of saving the mariners of the Argonaut from destruction at the hand of the Sirens as we saw in an earlier discussion of the myth of Orpheus. But Orpheus himself, as we have seen, was later to perish at the hands of other

women, and Apollinaire recalls this incident in another poem in Le Guetteur Mélancolique, entitled "Marie".

Car Orphée amoureux fut tué par les femmes
 Et je sais que souvent la nature entend mieux
 Les sanglots de la lyre et les pleurs de nos âmes
 Que les belles ô toi vers qui vont nos grands yeux

(p. 514)

Apollinaire associates himself with Orpheus twice in these references, and refers indirectly also to the women who would have destroyed (the Sirens), or who did destroy (the Thracian women), his master Orpheus. Apollinaire, as Orpheus, can sometimes stave off the potential destruction of love and can protect himself by means of his own poetry, which is a solace to him. Finally, however, he falls at the hand of women such as Marie Laurencin, who emotionally "destroy" him. But, in myth, Orpheus' head continued to sing even after his destruction by women. And so does Apollinaire's, in the sense that some of his greatest poems were produced in the wake of unhappy love-affairs: "La Chanson du Mal-Aimé" and "Le Pont Mirabeau" to name but two. "Le Pont Mirabeau", written during the time when Marie Laurencin was leaving him, echoes the anxieties of the lines already quoted from the earlier poem, "Marie":

L'amour s'en va comme cette eau courante
 L'amour s'en va
 Comme la vie est lente...

(p. 45)

André Rouveyre, Apollinaire's friend, writing of "Le Pont Mirabeau", makes these comments about it:

Tout ce qu'il peut pour ranimer la présence auprès de lui de sa
 maîtresse perdue, il le tente dans son poème. 9
 Mais bref, où se termine "Le Pont Mirabeau", il n'y a plus d'amants,
 plus d'amour. Seuls survivent la construction de pierres et
 de fer, sourde et lourde, et le fleuve qui continue de s'écouler. 10

This too, reminds one of the figure of Orpheus, trying to revive his beloved Eurydice from the Underworld, singing to appease the tormenting demons in Hell,

but failing to succeed. Only the head of Orpheus remains to sing, just as only the voice of Apollinaire's love and sadness remain after his broken affair with Marie Laurencin:

Passons passons puisque tout passe
 Je me retournerai souvent
 Les souvenirs sont cors de chasse
 Dont meurt le bruit parmi le vent
 (p. 148)

he wrote in "Cors de Chasse"; another poem of this 'fin d'amour' period.

At about the time of the end of his affair with Marie occurred another event that had a considerable effect on Apollinaire. This was the "affaire des statuettes", and the accusations levelled against him concerning the theft of the Joconde, for which he was imprisoned in La Santé prison in 1911. The six poems in Alcools entitled "A la Santé" have an intensely personal tone, and witness a strange return to the poet's childhood Christian faith during this time of distress. Apollinaire uses Biblical mythology in the imagery of these poems with no such tone of cynicism as is associated with it in a poem such as "Zone", for example. These verses written in "La Santé" seem to be a cry from the heart, a close personal link with God and Christianity:

Que deviendrai-je ô Dieu qui connais ma douleur
 Toi qui me l'as donnée
 Prends en pitié mes yeux sans larmes ma pâleur
 Le bruit de ma chaise enchaînée

...
 Prends en pitié surtout ma débile raison
 Et ce désespoir qui la gagne
 (p. 143)

Apollinaire, during his imprisonment, seems to see himself as an innocent victim, as a martyr in the style of Christ himself. In some unpublished verses of this time, he wrote:

Je viens de recevoir des lettres
 Vous ne m'abandonnez donc pas

Jésus que l'on emprisonna
Et que les douze abandonnèrent

Je viens de retrouver la foi
Comme aux beaux jours de mon enfance
Seigneur agréez mes hommages
Je crois en vous je crois je crois

11

And one of his biographers writes:

...someone who met him at this time wrote that he was "depressed, considered himself deserted by all, irretrievably ruined; he had been much affected by his incarceration in the Santé and the unconcealed pleasure that certain malicious fellow-writers had taken in his plight".

12

Christ too, had been betrayed by one of his friends, and his closest friend, Peter, had refused to recognize him, just as Picasso is said to have refused to recognize Apollinaire. Christ, in his sadness and need, turned his pleas to God just as Apollinaire did in *La Santé*.

Of the period following his release from *La Santé* prison, up to the outbreak of the First World War, Apollinaire's friend André Billy has written:

Cette période d'avant la guerre vit l'apogée de son influence....
Il était le prince de l'esprit moderne, le chef d'orchestre des idées nouvelles, l'âme de la grande révolution par laquelle étaient déjà sapées, déjà détruites, les vieilles conventions de la vieille poésie discursive et de la peinture figurative.

13

It is during these years from 1911 to 1914 that Apollinaire published *Le Bestiaire*, that he became the editor of *Les Soirées de Paris*, that he published *Alcools*, and his *Méditations esthétiques* on *Les Peintres Cubistes*, as well as a manifesto entitled *L'Antitradition Futuriste*. It is perhaps to this period of his life that some of the most succinctly autobiographical verses of his work could best apply; verses in which he speaks of his own poetical 'doctrines' and their effect.

In "La Jolie Rousse", which was probably written at a later date, but which is nevertheless most aptly applicable to this period of his career, he writes:

Je juge cette longue querelle de la tradition et de l'invention

De l'Ordre et de l'Aventure

...
 Nous voulons vous donner de vastes et d'étranges domaines
 Où le mystère en fleurs s'offre à qui veut le cueillir
 Il y a là des feux nouveaux des couleurs jamais vues
 Mille phantasmes impondérables
 Auxquels il faut donner de la réalité
 Nous voulons explorer la bonté contrée énorme où tout se tait
 Il y a aussi le temps qu'on peut chasser ou faire revenir
 Pitié pour nous qui combattons toujours aux frontières
 De l'illimité et de l'avenir
 Pitié pour nos erreurs pitié pour nos péchés
 (pp. 313-314)

Just prior to the outbreak of war in particular, Apollinaire saw himself as an adventurer, a pioneer, and as a kind of prophet in the style of "Les Mages" of Victor Hugo and in the style of Orpheus or John the Baptist or even Christ. He wrote in "Les Collines":

Sache que je parle aujourd'hui
 Pour annoncer au monde entier
 Qu'enfin est né l'art de prédire

Certains hommes sont des collines
 Qui s'élèvent entre les hommes
 Et voit au loin tout l'avenir
 Mieux que s'il était le présent
 Plus net que s'il était le passé
 ...

Je me suis enfin détaché
 De toutes choses naturelles

...
 Et ce qu'on n'a jamais touché
 Je l'ai touché je l'ai palpé

(pp. 171-173)

We will discuss these prophetic ideas further in connection with the theory of 'l'esprit nouveau'.

At the outbreak of war in 1914, Apollinaire became a kind of poet-warrior figure, finding in the danger and death of warfare a source of marvel and inspiration that was to his taste. The poems of the "Case d'Armons", "Lueurs des Tirs" and "Obus couleur de lune" sections of Calligrammes, bear witness

to this new thrill of experience in the life of Apollinaire. His poems are generally concerned more with real, every-day war experiences and sights at this time, than with mythological reference or lyricism.

However, it was during his period as a soldier that Apollinaire met Louise de Coligny, celebrated in the Poèmes à Lou, and that he enjoyed his extremely carnal relationship with her. Rouveyré writes of this affair:

Ses lettres et ses poésies à "Lou" montrent Apollinaire dans son recours permanent, spontané à la nature féminine qu'il avait connue cette fois-ci enfin à outrance; dans son identification avec la matière physique, terrestre, animale, concrète... jusqu'au cours de ses plus sauvages crises d'érotisme imaginaire... 14

In contrast to the physical, sexual nature of this affair with Lou, there was Apollinaire's affair with Madeleine Pagès, which took place at almost exactly the same time. He met her for three or four hours only, whilst on a train, but continued to develop his love for her by letters, and finally proposed marriage to her in the same way. Madeleine is, in this sense, a kind of sublime, ideal figure with whom Apollinaire had only a minimal physical contact. Lou was the 'touchable', the Dionysian, the perverse, and Madeleine the 'untouchable', the Apollonian, the sublime, it would seem: an interesting division of tastes and tendencies in Apollinaire's personality.

Apollinaire finally tired of Madeleine, however, and broke with her, in the same way that Annie Playden had drifted away from him years before. As Steegmuller points out:

Like Annie Playden, she had been an episode in his life; Annie had left him, now he left Madeleine. Both affairs were the occasion of some of his best writing, and certainly both women were for him muses rather than real persons. 15

Through all these love-affairs runs a thread attached to the myth of Orpheus which it is of interest to note at this point. Ovid writes in the tenth

Metamorphosis:

Orpheus had shunned all love of womankind, whether because of his

ill-success in love, or whether he had given his troth once for all. Still, many women felt a passion for the bard; many grieved for their love repulsed. 16

The similarity between Orpheus' actions in myth, and Apollinaire's in-reality gives rise to the speculation that Apollinaire's rejection of Madeleine may have been motivated by similarly misogynic feelings as those attributed to Orpheus by Ovid.

Apollinaire's change of attitude towards Madeleine, however, came at the time of his head-wound and convalescence from this wound, which may well account for his change to a certain degree at least. His wound makes of him again a kind of martyr-figure, undergoing the tribulations of Life in order to emerge from them as a 'fuller' human being with an expanded knowledge of Life. In "La Jolie Rousse", he writes in a tone of sobriety and assurance that contrasts greatly with the exuberance of his earlier war-poems:

Me voici devant tous un homme plein de sens
 Connaissant la vie et de la mort ce qu'un vivant peut connaître
 Ayant éprouvé les douleurs et les joies de l'amour
 Ayant su quelquefois imposer ses idées
 Connaissant plusieurs langages
 Ayant pas mal voyagé
 Ayant vu la guerre dans l'Artillerie et l'Infanterie
 Blessé à la tête trépané sous le chloroforme
 Ayant perdu ses meilleurs amis dans l'effroyable lutte
 Je sais d'ancien et de nouveau autant qu'un homme seul pourrait des
 deux savoir

(p. 313)

These lines no longer speak of the "Merveille de la Guerre", but rather of the "effroyable lutte". It would seem as if Apollinaire had reached the sombreness of "L'Age de raison". According to his friends he had changed considerably at this time, after his recovery from his head-wound. André Billy writes:

Ses amis virent alors reparaître un Apollinaire grave, irascible, chez qui la barbiche et la tête bandée sous le bonnet de police accusaient une altération morale assez profonde. J'ai fréquenté quotidiennement l'Apollinaire de cette période-là. Elle était loin, la charmante fantaisie d'avant la guerre. 17

In 1918, Apollinaire married Jacqueline Kolb, whose beauty is commemorated in "La Jolie Rousse":

Voici que vient l'été la saison violente
Et ma jeunesse est morte ainsi que le printemps

...

Elle a l'aspect charmant
D'une adorable rousse

Ses cheveux sont d'or on dirait
Un bel éclair qui durerait

(p. 314)

It was at this time, above all, that Apollinaire was concerned with "l'esprit nouveau". In November of 1917 he had lectured on "L'esprit nouveau et les poètes", and in this lecture he expresses the same weariness with the past and adventurous thrill of the future as he had expressed in "Zone" in 1913:

A la fin tu es las de ce monde ancien (p. 39)

The "new spirit" of which Apollinaire was an advocate in 1917 and 1918, is an attempt to create a new art, based on a new attitude towards the modern world. Apollinaire interested himself in modern phenomena such as the aeroplane, the cinema and the phonograph. He saw himself as a new kind of soldier-poet, one crusading for new ideas and new forms in poetry. In "La Victoire" he writes:

O bouches l'homme est à la recherche d'un nouveau langage
Auquel le grammairien d'aucune langue n'aura rien à dire

Et ces vieilles langues sont tellement près de mourir
Que c'est vraiment par habitude et manque d'audace
Qu'on les fait encore servir à la poésie

(p. 310)

He sees himself again as one of the adventurers and prophets of poetic thought:

Nous qui quêtions partout l'aventure

...

...nous qui combattons toujours aux frontières
De l'illimité et de l'avenir

(p. 313-314)

And "l'esprit nouveau" offers him wonderful revelations, to be shared with humanity:

Et je pèle pour mes amis
L'orange dont la saveur est
Un merveilleux feu d'artifice
(p. 176)

It is above all in images such as this last one that the form of "l'esprit nouveau" takes shape. It depends for its beauty upon surprisingly contrasted elements of imagery, which form a new world of sensations and imagination. Pierre Reverdy has formulated the best known expression of this idea, taken up later by Surrealist writers such as André Breton:

L'image est une création pure de l'esprit. Elle ne peut naître d'une comparaison mais du rapprochement de deux réalités plus ou moins éloignées. Plus les rapports de deux réalités rapprochées seront lointains et justes, plus l'image sera forte - 18 plus elle aura de puissance émotive et de réalité poétique...

Apollinaire had become one of the first to use and propagate such new poetic ideas and forms, and, after his sudden death in November 1918, the trail he had opened was to be followed by writers of the Surrealist movement, who were to expand further Apollinaire's interest and researching in the domain of dream and the imagination, the "reine des facultés" as Baudelaire had called it. As Apollinaire himself had so truly written in "Cortège":

Et je m'éloignerai m'illuminant au milieu d'ombres
Et d'alignements d'yeux des astres bien-aimés
(p. 74)

* * * * *

Turning now, briefly, to the personality of Apollinaire, let us consider some of the most prominent features that have arisen out of a study of the man and his writing, as regards his own myth or legend. A great diversity of his interests and characteristics makes it impossible to reach any hard and fast conclusions about his own myth, but certain aspects of an Apollinairian myth can be at least tentatively outlined. Claude Tournadre, writing of

"Apollinaire et la critique", says this:

L'homme, il faut le reconnaître, est particulièrement encombrant. Il a donné naissance à des mythes divers dont on ne s'est pas encore débarrassé.... De ces mythes Apollinaire lui-même est en partie responsable. Ses nombreux amis aussi. Ils ont pieusement servi sa mémoire, mais n'ont pu se départir du culte de la personnalité. 19

Perhaps one of the most salient features of the personality-myth of Apollinaire is his stature as a poet. Even André Breton, who is often harsh in his judgements on Apollinaire, wrote of him:

C'était un très grand personnage, en tout cas comme je n'en ai pas vu depuis. Assez hagard, il est vrai. Le lyrisme en personne. Il traînait sur ses pas le cortège d'Orphée. 20

And André Billy, another close acquaintance, writes:

Il se considérait comme appartenant à la race invulnérable des devins et des enchanteurs. Il croyait à sa propre légende. En toute bonne foi et avec une belle ingénuité de poète-enfant, il la vivait. 21

We have already seen evidence of this belief in himself as a prophet in the doctrines of "l'esprit nouveau" and in a poem such as "Les Collines".

His role as a poet-prophet, similar to Croniamantal or L'Enchanteur, aligns him yet again with the myth of Orpheus, who, in Apollinaire's own words, "...connut l'avenir et prédit chrétiennement l'avènement du SAUVEUR" (p. 33).

Another important facet of Apollinaire's personal myth is its duality, or what we called earlier in this chapter a "detachment from the self", a "possible schizophrenia". Apollinaire can be both "obscène et tendre" as an article by Jean-Bertrand Barrère about him suggests²², and as his simultaneous relationships with Lou and Madeleine indicate. He will enjoy now the pleasures of his body and the world, and now the pleasures of his mind and imagination:

Je t'adore ô ma déesse exquise même si tu n'es que dans mon imagination (p. 260)

The division is similar to that of Baudelaire's "spleen" and "idéal", or to that of Hugo's "sublime" and "grotesque". Apollinaire can be alternately

Apollonian and Dionysian in his tendencies, as indeed Orpheus was said to have been also:

Toute son histoire (celle d'Orphée) le montre hésitant entre le sublime et le pervers, entre Apollon et Dionysos. Symbole de la splendeur de l'art... Orphée accompagne son chant à la lyre d'Apollon... mais il est aussi le charmeur des fauves, l'enchanteur de la perversité. ...La vigueur imaginative au lieu de soutenir l'aspiration créatrice se perd alors dans les séductions multiples de la réalité. 23

This split, or duality, as we suggested earlier, is illustrated not only in Apollinaire's subject-matter, and tone of writing, but also in his way of looking at and speaking of his own identity. In "Zone", for example, he converses with his 'alter ego' and watches as it flits across Europe, as he had done in his childhood and in 1901 and 1902:

Te voici à Marseille au milieu des pastèques

Te voici à Coblenz à l'hôtel du Géant

Te voici à Rome...

Tu as fait de douloureux et de joyeux voyages
Avant de t'apercevoir du mensonge et de l'âge
Tu as souffert de l'amour à vingt et à trente ans
J'ai vécu comme un fou et j'ai perdu mon temps

(p. 42)

This last line in the first person is, as it were, a comment by himself on all his own former acts, divorced from his present identity by Time.

In "Cortège" too, appears a well-known passage, where Apollinaire seems to be stepping back from himself and commentating his own legend:

Un jour
Un jour je m'attendais moi-même
Je me disais Guillaume il est temps que tu viennes
Pour que je sache enfin celui-là que je suis
Moi qui connais les autres

(p. 74)

Apollinaire, divided from himself, searches for the unity of his own identity, which, as he says later in this same poem, appears to be made up of numerous fragments - the fragments of his own experience and knowledge of Life:

Le cortège passait et j'y cherchais mon corps
 Tous ceux qui survenaient et n'étaient pas moi-même
 Ament un à un les morceaux de moi-même
 On me bâtit peu à peu comme on élève un tour
 Les peuples s'entassaient et je parus moi-même
 Qu'ont formé tous les corps et les choses humaines

(pp. 75-76)

This man of Polish descent, born in Italy without knowing his father, moved at an early age from his country of birth to France, schooled in French, and so on, was concerned with finding his own identity, with building himself and his legend "comme on élève un tour". And so he can listen finally to the footsteps of his own myth in the passage of future Time:

Et j'entends revenir mes pas
 Le long des sentiers que personne
 N'a parcourus j'entends mes pas
 A toute heure ils passent là-bas
 Lents ou pressés ils vont ou viennent

(p. 175)

- the myth of Apollinaire himself, so variegated as to be impossible to grasp clearly, as to be a truly personal myth.

NOTES

- 1 quoted by P.M. Adéma. Guillaume Apollinaire. Paris: La Table Ronde, 1968. p. 347.
- 2 S. Bates. Apollinaire. p. 40.
- 3 *ibid.* p. 46.
- 4 Vergnes, Georges. La vie passionnée de Guillaume Apollinaire. Paris: Seghers, 1958. p. 70.
- 5 Orecchioni, Pierre. Le thème du Rhin dans l'inspiration de Guillaume Apollinaire. (Collection "Thèmes et Mythes" 3). Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1956. p. 100.
- 6 *ibid.* p. 103.
- 7 Steegmuller, Francis. Apollinaire. Poet among the Painters. New York: Farrar, Straus & Co., 1963. p. 71.
- 8 Adéma, P.M. Guillaume Apollinaire le mal-aimé. Paris: Plon, 1952.
- 9 Rouveyre, André. Amour et poésie d'Apollinaire. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1955. p. 86.
- 10 *ibid.* p. 90.
- 11 quoted by M. Décaudin. Le Dossier d'Alcools. Paris: Minard, 1960. p. 214.
- 12 Steegmuller. Apollinaire... p. 222.
- 13 Billy, André. Introduction to Guillaume Apollinaire: choix de poèmes. (Collection "Poètes d'Aujourd'hui") Paris: Seghers, 1967. pp. 28-29.
- 14 Rouveyre. Amour et poésie... p. 244.
- 15 Steegmuller. Apollinaire... p. 309.
- 16 quoted from Ovid, Metamorphosis X, 79-85, by Ivan Linforth. The Arts of Orpheus. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941. p. 57.
- 17 Billy. Introduction to Seghers edition. p. 33.
- 18 Reverdy, Pierre. Le Gant de Crin. Paris: Plon, 1926. p. 32.

- 19 Tournadre, Claude. "Apollinaire et la critique" in Les critiques de notre temps et Apollinaire, ed. C. Tournadre. Paris: Garnier frères, 1971. pp. 8-9.
- 20 Breton, André. quoted in *ibid.* p. 18.
- 21 Billy, André. quoted in *ibid.* pp. 19-20.
- 22 Barrère, J-B. "Apollinaire obscène et tendre". Revue des sciences humaines, Oct. - Dec. 1956. pp. 373-390.
- 23 Diel, Paul. Le symbolisme dans la mythologie grecque. pp. 136-137.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A NEW MYTH

Having examined some aspects of Apollinaire's writings in the light of classical, mythological references, a more coherent picture of the nature of the influence of myth on his work begins to appear. In discussing some of the specific references made by Apollinaire to mythological incidents and characters, it became clear that the myths used most often by him were those of Orpheus, Christ and Icarus.

In the myth of Orpheus it appeared to be Orpheus's power of magical enchantment that fascinated Apollinaire most of all: he referred to Orpheus's encounter with the Sirens in which the magic of the young poet's song was stronger than that of the destructive Sirens. Orpheus, being a poet as well as a musician, thus provided a kind of mythical, poetic ideal for Apollinaire, himself an aspiring poet. Orpheus's journey to the Underworld fascinated Apollinaire also, representing a symbolic death and rebirth, similar to that of Christ or the Sun. And finally, the death of Orpheus interested Apollinaire in that it struck a personal note in mythical terms: Orpheus was killed and dismembered by Thracian women, just as Apollinaire, the "mal-aimé", saw himself to have been killed and dismembered emotionally in the deceptions of his own love-affairs with Maria Dubois, with Linda, Annie, Marie or Lou.

The numerous references to the "myth" of Christ display even greater range of interest for Apollinaire than that of Orpheus, as can be seen from the number of poems in which Christ is mentioned.¹ It would seem to be Christ's semi-divine and mysterious birth, similar to his own birth, that interested Apollinaire, as well as Christ's martyrdom, death and resurrection, which again follows a similar pattern to death and rebirth in the solar myth and the Orphic

myth. The awe inspired in Apollinaire by Christ, which he never really lost despite some mocking references such as that in "Le Larron", undoubtedly remained from his childhood Christian beliefs and practice, as they are described in "Zone". Christ's magical and divine powers interest Apollinaire, in particular the miracle of the ascension into heaven which suggests in physical terms a spiritual transcendence and superiority. Apollinaire, as a poet, aspired to a similar, though purely poetic, superiority and divinity. Thus Christ, as Orpheus, offers an ideal, as well as a target for Apollinaire the poet, or the religious skeptic.

The myth of Icarus held an interest for Apollinaire similar to that offered by the myths of Christ or Orpheus. Both these two latter heroes were divine or semi-divine, which endowed them with super-human powers. Icarus, however, was a purely human character, and as such was closer to the identity of Apollinaire himself. Icarus, as Apollinaire, had aspirations to rise above and to escape the labyrinthine obscurity of a limited human mind and perception. Icarus, as Apollinaire, aimed himself towards the ideal of an acquisition of a knowledge of the source of Life itself - this, in the myth of Icarus, being symbolised by the Sun. And Icarus, in being human, was doomed to fail, and the wings of his arrogant imagination would drop off him, leaving him to plunge to a dark death in the sea. The poem entitled "L'Ignorance" (p. 344) studies the myth of Icarus in these same symbolic terms, and gives an insight into Apollinaire's realization of the futility of exaggerated human aspirations.

The myth of Icarus also introduces two of the most important of the elements of Apollinaire's poetic imagery, fire (the Sun) and water (the Sea), and it sets them in a mythological framework similar to that in which Apollinaire himself appeared to see them. In discussing the "myth of fire" it became obvious that one of the most important fire-myths for Apollinaire was that of

the Sun. The Sun, a life-giving heavenly force, presents a concrete image of another kind of ideal for the aims of the poet-creator, following in the tradition of Orpheus, whose lyre was transformed into a celestial constellation after his death. Like Icarus, Apollinaire aspires to a solar, celestial and Orphic divinity, but like Icarus, he too discovers that he has 'feet of clay', and his human limitations bind him to his human condition. One aspect of this human condition of which Apollinaire was acutely aware, and which he expresses through his treatment of the solar myth, was his slavery to Time and Death. The solar cycle of each day, from birth at sunrise to death at sunset, reminded Apollinaire of the cycle of his own life. And the annual solar cycle, that of the four seasons, from birth in spring to death in winter, again suggested the mortality of man. But one of the divine attributes of the Sun, as of Christ, that was clearly admired by Apollinaire was its daily resurrection, which renewed his own poetic and emotional hope and inspiration. Thus sunrise or spring is associated with renewed and invigorated Love or poetic creation, whereas sunset or winter suggests an emotional and artistic death and sterility. This cycle of the fire-myths was also illustrated by Apollinaire with his own, now well-known image of "Le Brasier". And another of the images of fire, which is important to Calligrammes in particular, is that of the "obus", which are often referred to as suns, but in this sense they are destructive, furnace-like suns. They have, as we have seen, a peculiar purging power and beauty in Apollinaire's eyes.

The second of Apollinaire's major images that is introduced by the myth of Icarus, is that of water. If the Sun, for Icarus and for Apollinaire, represents an ideal of Life and Knowledge, the waters of the Sea into which Icarus fell represent, for Apollinaire also, an element of death and darkness. Like Icarus, Apollinaire will sink into the gloom and despondency of water, as,

with Orpheus or Christ, he sinks into the darkness of the Underworld. But water and shadow also have one of the positive qualities of the Underworld, and that is the power of purification. Water is a source of cleansing forgetfulness in the poetic world of an emotionally deceived Apollinaire: like the risen Christ, Apollinaire emerges from the darker side of his experience, associated with water, as well as shadow, fulfilled and regenerated, just as the reborn Sun rises out of the waters of the sea each morning.

Other images, such as those of shadow and music, are also used by Apollinaire to embroider his view of his "favourite" myths. Shadow is clearly associated with death and with sadness in his mind, and in this way it falls into a similar pattern to that of the myth of Christ's descent into Hell, before the resurrection, or Orpheus's descent to the Underworld in search of a lost and ideal purity, which is his love for Eurydice. Music, as well as shadow, has certain Orphic overtones in Apollinaire's use of musical imagery: just as shadow reflects similar connotations for Apollinaire as are to be seen in Orpheus's journey to the Underworld, so music too assumes certain aspects of the Orphic myth. Music, as it is often used in Apollinairian imagery, has a magical power of enchantment. It is through poetry and music that Orpheus beguiled the gods of the Underworld, and Apollinaire sees the music of his own poetry as having the same potential power. It is a solace to the distressed soul of the poet, just as we have seen water or shadow to be. Music does have, on occasions, a note of threat in it, as in some of the war-poems of Calligrammes, where the machine-guns play a tune, or where the shell-fire whistles.

Thus there is a certain, interesting duality within the details of each of the major myths that interest Apollinaire - as in the Christ and Antichrist dichotomy, for example - and in the connotations that he attaches to some of the images that he uses most frequently to reinforce and illustrate these myths,

but there is also a duality of poetic and spiritual outlook: as we saw, fire can be either creative when embodied in the Sun or destructive in the fire of artillery, of warfare. There is a 'sublime' and a 'grotesque' aspect to the whole of Apollinaire's poetic world. As we saw in the case of alcohol, however, opposites can be reconciled, and this reconciliation is of special magical significance in Apollinaire's eyes. Fire and water fuse into the unity of alcohol, an elixir of Life and magic and vigour. It is only in an image such as that of alcohol that the two halves of the poet's inspiration - the sublime and the grotesque, the 'spleen' and the 'idéa' - seem to be reconciled into an expression of a profound imaginative unity. The entire image of 'alcohol' seems in this sense to be a Cubist creation for Apollinaire, since it offers a reconciliation of two entirely different perspectives in one unified and complex image. The perspective of fire, light, ascension, vigour and Life is joined in the image of alcohol, with that of water, darkness, sadness and Death. In this way the image of alcohol represents a typical image of "l'esprit nouveau". It is the focal point of at least two of the most important of Apollinaire's "leitmotifs", and offers a peculiar poetic magic - an inebriation of poetic inspiration to the poet of the New Spirit. This is at least part of the reason why Apollinaire's most famous and most enchanting collection of poems is so significantly entitled Alcools. Renaud has this to say of the collection:

Chacun des poèmes est un alcool, c'est-à-dire une métamorphose
du monde en chant. 2

It is the metamorphosis of Apollinaire's personal world into poetry, and his personal world, as we have said, is one of a great duality, displayed as much in his imagery as in his view of certain myths.

It becomes clearer through all this that Apollinaire assimilated certain myths which he used in his own creation, and also that he saw these myths in an individual way, using the perspectives of his own imagery, tastes, and

characteristics. In so doing, the myths he used were adapted or transformed to fit into the framework of his poetic inspiration. This synthesis of personal inspiration and traditional myth is constantly variable, one or the other element taking on a greater importance. A distinct tension between the two exists, giving a vitality and novelty of Apollinaire's use of myth. Myth, for him, appears to be regenerated as is Life itself, by the Sun, Apollo, each morning. It appears to be charged by Apollinaire's own adventurous personality, by his cosmopolitanism, his travels, his loves and disillusionments, and above all by his vocation as a poet. These we have attempted to trace briefly in the last chapter. As André Breton has hinted³, Apollinaire followed closely in the tradition of the myth of Orpheus, the archetype of the poet. As a kind of modern Orpheus, Apollinaire sings of the modern world that surrounds him and enchants him. His song is that of the new mythology, which he himself had labelled "L'esprit nouveau", in which ancient myth is used, but is transformed and joined to a modern myth. In "Zone", Christ is seen as an aviator, flying as an aeroplane, for example. Here again, as in the fusion of opposite elements seen in the image of alcohol, two different perspectives are reconciled into the artistic unity of a single creation.

The image of the New Spirit relies in this way on an element of surprise or unlikeliness, which Apollinaire himself had insisted upon in his lecture on "L'Esprit Nouveau et les poètes", given in 1917. It is the "rapprochement de deux réalités plus ou moins éloignées" of which Reverdy writes in Le Gant de Crin, and which was to be developed by some of Apollinaire's successors, such as Paul Eluard, who would take for granted a certain familiarity of the reader with some of the poetic surprise-techniques of imagery already prepared by Apollinaire or by Cendrars.

According to the nature of this New Spirit, the world of Apollinaire's imagery is vitalized by inspiration from past myths - the solar myth, or that of Icarus, of Christ, of Orpheus - and by an infusion of the "merveilleux", of surprise contrasts and alliances. Mythical expression finds itself free of the traditions of "ce monde ancien" and moves into a new, unexplored world of images, that of "Onirocritique", of the subconscious mind, later to be researched more deeply by the Surrealist writers, such as Breton or Soupault, for example.

Il y a là des feux nouveaux des couleurs jamais vues
 Mille phantasmes impondérables
 Auxquels il faut donner de la réalité

(p. 313)

Apollinaire had written in "La Jolie Rousse". And it was he himself who had taken the initiative of straddling the gap between the old and the new mythologies, between the Symbolist or Parnassian mythology and the Surrealist mythology to come. He reaches towards the ideals offered by ancient myths in a new way: he uses traditional mythical example, legendary adventure, and symbolic diversity, such as we defined at the outset, in an intricate embroidery and superimposition of the old and the new. This is what entitles him to say with such confidence in the same poem, "La Jolie Rousse":

Je juge cette longue querelle de la tradition et de l'invention
 De l'Ordre et de l'Aventure

(p. 313)

NOTES

- 1 Please see the list of references on page 37.
- 2 Renaud. Lecture. p. 140.
- 3 See note 20 of preceding chapter.

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APPENDIX

The following is an attempt to demonstrate in schematic form certain parallels between the major areas of Apollinaire's mythological interests and some of the images that he uses to illustrate these in Alcools, Calligrammes and Il y a. In the left-hand column will be found some of the major aspects or characteristics of myths of greatest interest to Apollinaire, and in the right-hand column will be found a selective list of the corresponding images that illustrate or reflect similar interests to the myths commonly used.

MYTHS	IMAGES
<p>Sun, <u>solar myth</u> as cycle of sunrise to sunset, spring to winter, similar to Life-cycle.</p> <p>Flame, as life-giving, creative, inspiring force: <u>the Phoenix</u>.</p> <p>Icarus's aspiration to Sun-like omniscience and divinity. <u>Icarus's flight</u> up towards ideal of Life in Sun. Sun here symbol of divine knowledge. Icarus inebriated, flight with wax wings.</p> <p>Alcohol, the liquid and magical flame.</p>	<p><u>Alcools</u>.</p> <p>"Zone": phénix - "bûcher qui soi-même s'engendre... son ardente cendre" (recreative fire), "le feu de l'Enfer" (destructive), "flammes ferventes" (religious ardour), "alcool brûlant comme ta vie..." (alcohol), "soleil cou coupé" (décapitation).</p> <p>"Chanson du Mal-Aimé": "Aubade", "ton soleil ardente lyre/Brûle mes doigts..."</p> <p>"Crépuscule": "ciel sans teinte".</p> <p>"Merlin et la vieille femme": "soleil saignant... Lumière est ma mère ô lumière sanglante", soleil de chair, soleil dansant.</p> <p>"Lul de Faltenin": "Je flambe atrocement" etc. (destructive).</p> <p>"L'Ermite": "flagellez les nuées du coucher (du soleil)" (perverse).</p> <p>"Le Brasier": "noble feu... flamme... étoiles... brasier... soleil... astres saignants". "Je flambe... brasier... ardeur adorable... feu de mes délices... paquebot de ma vie, flammes immenses..."</p> <p>"avenir masqué flambe... théâtre bâti avec le feu solide... flammes comme des feuilles".</p>

MYTHS

IMAGES

(solar myth, flame, Phoenix,
Icarus, alcohol).

"Nuit Rhénane": vin... Comme une flamme.

"La Loreley": yeux - flammes, flammes, sorcellerie (magic).

"Rhénane d'Automne": "L'air tremble des flammes... cimetière plein de flammes".

"Un Soir": feux pâles, feux de gaz.

"Les Fiançailles": Icare... "porteur de soleils je brûle"... "sa tête est le soleil/Et la lune son cou tranché", "templiers flamboyants je brûle parmi vous... désirable feu... libre flamme... ce bûcher nid de mon courage".

"Vendémiaire": brûlant soleil (destructive), "vin qui contient... flammes" (alcohol).

Calligrammes.

"Les Collines": avion du soleil... nuit et jour, "tout n'est qu'une flamme rapide".

"Coeur, Couronne et Miroir": "...coeur ressemble à une flamme renversée".

"Fumées": "... tu fascines les flammes".

"Servant de Dakar": obus "éclatent dans le ciel splendide".

"Fête": feu d'artifice en acier (obus), "l'air est plein d'un terrible alcool/ Filtré des étoiles..." (obus).

"Nuit d'avril 1915": "Coeur obus.../ Et tes mille soleils".

"Le Palais du Tonnerre": "feu semblable à l'âme".

"Dans l'abri-caverne": feu solide, manque de soleil... manque d'éclairage.

"Fusée": obus.

"Désir": obus.

"Chant de l'horizon...": obus miaulant, "l'ardeur de la bataille..."

"Merveille de la Guerre": (obus) fusées, millions de fusées, "il fallut tant de feu pour rôtir le corps humain", Icare volant, (autobiographical passage).

"A l'Italie": "Faisons la guerre à coups de fouet/Faits avec les rayons du soleil" (perverse).

"Aussi bien que les cigales": LA JOIE ADORABLE DE LA PAIX SOLAIRE.

"Simultanéités": atroces lueurs des tirs (destructive).

MYTHS

IMAGES

<p>(solar myth, flame, Phoenix, Icarus, alcohol).</p>	<p>"<u>Du coton dans les oreilles</u>": (obus =) soleils nains. "<u>La Victoire</u>": Icare le faux... "<u>La Jolie Rousse</u>": flammes.</p>
<p>Water into which <u>Icarus</u> plunges. Water of approaching Death and Time passing, as opposed to warmth and Life offered by <u>the Sun</u>. Shadows of water, suggest also shadows of <u>Orphic Underworld</u>, or <u>Hell</u> into which <u>Christ</u> descended between crucifixion and resurrection. Water as melancholy element of alcohol.</p>	<p><u>Alcools</u>. "<u>Pont Mirabeau</u>": Seine, "amour... comme cette eau courante"... temps passé trépassé, Amour - Seine. "<u>Chanson du Mal-Aimé</u>": "onde mauvaise à boire", "l'eau d'argent". "<u>Maison des Morts</u>": promenade en bateau sur un lac... "<u>Clotilde</u>": "détés des eaux vives". "<u>Cortège</u>": mer, clartés, profondeurs. "<u>Le Voyageur</u>": "fleurs surmarines", nuit... mer... fleuves..., "bruit éternel d'un fleuve large et sombre". "<u>Marie</u>": "fleuve pareil à ma peine..." "<u>La Porte</u>": eau triste. "<u>Le Vent nocturne</u>": fleuve... (Rhine). "<u>Lul de Faltenin</u>": sirènes... grottes... mer... "fleur de l'onde". "<u>L'Emigrant de Landor Road</u>": "petit bouquet flottant à l'aventure,, couvre l'Océan...", Nuit - mer. "<u>Nuit Rhénane</u>": le Rhin... nuit... "<u>Mai</u>": le Rhin. "<u>Rhénane d'Automne</u>": le Rhin. "<u>Les Fiançailles</u>": "sombre sombre fleuve". "<u>Vendémiaire</u>": jeune nageur... noyés... onde nouvelle (death - rebirth). <u>Calligrammes</u>. "<u>Simultanéités</u>": "mer aux mauves ombres". "<u>Du coton...</u>": projectiles "comme un fleuve aérien". "<u>La Victoire</u>": "mes grands cris comme des dieux noyés" (Icarus - ambitions), le langage de la mer. Il y a. "<u>L'Ignorance</u>": la mer (Icarus's death). "<u>Rolandseck</u>": le Rhin. "<u>Le Pont</u>": fleuve, l'eau... "et leurs regards s'écoulaient/Dans ce fleuve".</p>

MYTHS

IMAGES

Death of Christ and descent to shadows of Hell. Journey of Orpheus, as renewal and purification in shadow, as source of inspiration to artist - part of itinerary of poet, as of Sun in solar myth: decapitated Sun brings darkness.

Alcools.

"Chanson du Mal-Aimé": "ténébreuse épouse... mon ombre en deuil".

"Palais": ombre... ciel presque nocturne.

"Crépuscule": ombres de la mort.

"Maison des Morts": ombre - lumière.

"Cortège": sombre, terne, brume obscurcit - soleil, feu, unique lumière.

"Le Voyageur": ombres vivaces... ombres barbues.

"Le Larron": "contre le feu l'ombre prévaut", "ombre équivoque et tendre,,," sombre elle est humaine".

"L'Emigrant de L. R.": "cadavres des jours rongés par les étoiles".

"Rhénane d'Automne": ciel sans soleil... cimetière.

"Les Fiançailles": "ombres qui... n'était jamais jolies", "les cadavres de mes jours..." (cf. "L'Emigrant"), "l'ombre enfin solide", "J'ai tout donné au soleil/ Tout sauf mon ombre".

Calligrammes.

"Ombre": Souvenirs deviennent des ombres (dead friends).

"Photographie": "l'ombre/Du soleil" (negative impression).

"Dans l'abri-caverne": "manque de soleil dans mon âme, manque d'éclairage".

Il y a.

"Sanglots": "malades maudits de ceux qui fuient leur ombre".

"Onirocritique": apocalyptic salvation glimpsed in dream-world and darkness.

Ascension of Christ to Heaven - a flight of symbolic value in eyes of poet. Transcendence and superiority, as Icarus's ambition. Divine ubiquity and omniscience.

Alcools.

"Zone": "siècle changé en oiseau monte dans l'air", "le joli voltigeur" (Christ), l'avion, hirondelles, faucons, hiboux, ibis, etc... "la colombe esprit immaculé".
Marseille - Coblenz - Rome - Amsterdam - Leyde - Gouda - Paris, etc.

MYTHS

IMAGES

(ascension of Christ, transcendence, Icarus's ambition).

"Le Voyageur": "il s'envolait un Christ".
 "Vendémiaire": ubiquity and omniscience,
 "mondes/... je vous ai bu..."

Calligrammes.

"Les Collines": Homme "qui vole plus haut que les aigles", "j'ai plané si haut..."

"Arbre": Leipzig - Rouen - Finlande etc.

"Le Musicien de Saint-Merry": "Je chante toutes les possibilités de moi-même".

"Merveille de la Guerre": "Je suis partout...", "l'histoire de Guillaume Apollinaire/Qui... sut être partout..."

"La Jolie Rousse": "Me voici... etc." (autobiographical passage).

Il y a.

"Per te praesentit aruspex": "ma créature et ma divinité".

"L'Ignorance": aspirations of mortal to divinity.

Death and dismemberment of Orpheus at hands of Thracian women. Suggests potential danger of emotional destruction at hands of any woman. Sirens' song, a lure to shipwreck mariners.

Lorelei song, a lure to destroy Rhenish boatmen.

Salome, musical beguilement of Herod, and resulting decapitation of John the Baptist.

Music of Orpheus, the poet's defence. Magical power used against

Le Bestiaire: music and magic of Orpheus. Alcools.

"Chanson du Mal-Aimé": "lais pour les reines... chansons pour les sirènes", "violons/font danser notre race humaine... le chant du firmament".

"Cortège": "lyrique pas"... "morceaux de moi-même".

"Salomé": danse... je danserais mieux que les séraphins... (enchantment).

"Le Brasier": "tons charmants... pierres agiles" (enchantment).

"Les Sapins": "beaux musiciens... graves magiciens" (enchantment).

"Vendémiaire": voix chantante... chanson de Paris... trois voix suaves.

Calligrammes.

"Le Musicien de Saint-Merry": Music and magic.

MYTHS

IMAGES

Sirens during journey to Under-
world to charm infernal gods.

Orphic and poetic 'music' is eternal

- Orpheus's head continued to sing

long after his dismemberment.

"Un Fantôme des nuées": music of
acrobat's artistic creation, called
a "fantôme" (Ixion and Hera).

"Visées": Harpe "aux cordes d'argent".

"Nuit d'avril 1915": "mitrailleuse
joue un air", orgues, chanson de
l'avenir.

"Du coton...": musique militaire.