Introduction

THE MODERNISM OF CALLIGRAMMES

Calligrammes is, with *Alcools*, the second major volume of poetry on which rests Guillaume Apollinaire's reputation as one of the great modern poets in French literature. Linking the two volumes are deep and persistent continuities, rooted in Apollinaire's vision of the world and the fundamental nature of his lyric gift. There is also a marked proximity in time, for the first poems of *Calligrammes* were written in December 1912 and early 1913, immediately after the completion of *Alcools* in November 1912. Yet these affinities do not prevent most readers being struck—and rightly so—by considerable differences in tone, style, and theme between the two volumes. *Calligrammes*, particularly the first section entitled "Ondes," reveals a novelty of accent and composition which clearly rests on aesthetic assumptions different from those underlying the main poems of *Alcools*, assumptions that can conveniently be drawn together under the concept of modernism.

Although a modern note is frequently struck in *Alcools*, and increasingly so as we move from the earlier to the later poems, Apollinaire's conception of poetry in that volume is one that essentially derives from Symbolism. It is an introspective poetry in which the poet is concerned with the troubled depths of the psyche, the transitoriness of experience, and the quest for

identity and permanence. The shadowy and obsessive nature of the poet's states of mind is reflected in elliptical, elusive, and sometimes hermetic expression. Like the great Symbolist poets, Apollinaire finds deep aesthetic satisfaction in the beauties of obscurity and allusiveness of utterance. Even the supremely musical short poems on which his fame as a popular lyric poet rests—"Le Pont Mirabeau" and others—acquire their melodic ease through a process of distillation and condensation which makes them more appealing than immediately intelligible.

The force with which an urgent form of consciousness is increasingly deployed in this poetry, tempering the melancholy, widening the imaginative span, and revitalizing the language, is Apollinaire's major creative achievement in *Alcools*. But, with some exceptions, it is an achievement that does not seek to renew the poet's vision of the world. This is so even in "Zone," the opening poem but the last to be written, which in its early lines makes the first forceful statement of the new enthusiasm for the modern world which was to burst out in *Calligrammes*. The initial optimism, however, is not sustained. The final mood that is established is one of anguish and suffering, and the poem ends with the poet assuming what is his most characteristic role throughout the volume, that of the lonely wanderer in the hostile and ominous environment of the modern city.

In *Calligrammes*, on the other hand, the mood reflects much greater confidence and enthusiasm for life. In the first part of "Liens" and "Les Fenêtres" the poet is no longer posited as a lonely wanderer in a harsh cityscape but as a "new man" whose vision radiates across frontiers and continents and unites the modern world in a network of concordances. The shadowy, claustrophobic atmosphere of earlier poems now gives way to urgent, syncopated rhythms and to the play of sensuous color and light. The final lines of "Les Fenêtres,"

> *La fenêtre s'ouvre comme une orange*
> *Le beau fruit de la lumière*
>
> [The window opens like an orange
> The lovely fruit of light]

symbolize a new openness to experience in the poet and a sense of communion with the world, even in its farther-flung reaches.

It is not only in Apollinaire that this remarkable change in outlook is encountered. The whole prewar generation of artists in Paris was caught up in a similar wave of extrovert enthusiasm. It was a change of mood that stemmed ultimately from the rapid technological advances of the early years of the twentieth century and the general widening of horizons brought

about by such inventions as the motorcar, the airplane, radiography, cinematography, and radio communications. Suddenly modern man seemed to be living in a totally different context from the older, slower world of the nineteenth century. His ability to manipulate his environment, and his capacity for experience, had been infinitely increased. Now he seemed the triumphant master of his own destiny.

It is not surprising that this new sensibility should produce a new tempo in the arts and a general desire for artistic change. All the prewar movements, from the Futurists to the most ephemeral and obscure, declared that the artistic forms of the past were no longer adequate to express the new spirit and had to be radically renewed. Apollinaire stands out as the most masterly innovator in an avant-garde hectically devoted to experiment, not because his ideas were the most original, but because he had the creative genius to transform aesthetic concepts that were in general circulation into powerful and appealing poetry.

Central among these aesthetic ideas was the notion that the modern work of art must adequately reflect the global nature of contemporary consciousness. In the conditions of modern life man has achieved totality of awareness: through worldwide communications he is as aware of what is happening in New York as in Paris; through newspapers, radio, and the cinema his imagination is stimulated by a constantly changing stream of information and ideas; in the streets and cafés his senses are assailed by a kaleidoscopic multiplicity of sights, sounds, and sensations. To be able to mirror such a multiple form of consciousness the work of art had to abandon linear and discursive structures, in which events are arranged successively, in favor of what Apollinaire called *simultaneity:* a type of structure that would give the impression of a full and instant awareness within one moment of space-time.

Essentially this conception led Apollinaire to a radical dislocation of poetic structure. To create an impression of multiple and simultaneous consciousness, perceptions and ideas are abruptly juxtaposed in the poems in an arrangement that, at first reading, seems to be one of considerable disorder. Many poems of *Alcools* had already been characterized by elliptical syntax and collocations of disparate images, but the novelty in *Calligrammes* is that the discontinuities are much more radical, forcing the reader into a greater effort of synthesis to discover the underlying unity. It was this effort of synthesis that, for Apollinaire, produced the "simultanist" vision, insofar as it short-circuits the normal discursive process of reading and requires the reader to reassemble the apparently random fragments in a new order that is independent of the flow of time and is experienced in one global act of consciousness.

Undeniably Apollinaire was encouraged in his thinking by the similar

fragmentation of structure he observed in Cubist painting, particularly in the work of Picasso, which he also considered to stem from the simultaneous depiction of the same object from several viewpoints. What he admired above all in Picasso was the sheer imaginative boldness with which the painter had broken with all previous conceptions in Western painting. He describes Picasso in *Les Peintres Cubistes* as a heroic figure who had dared to disrupt the established order of the universe and to rearrange it as he thought fit:

> *La grande révolution des arts qu'il a accomplie presque seul, c'est que le monde est sa nouvelle représentation.... C'est un nouveau-né qui met de l'ordre dans l'univers pour son usage personnel, et aussi afin de faciliter ses relations avec ses semblables. Ce dénombrement a la grandeur de l'épopée.*[1]
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> [The great revolution in the arts which he almost alone has accomplished is that the world is now in his image.... He is a newborn babe who rearranges the universe for his personal convenience and to facilitate understanding with his fellowmen. His cataloguing has an epic grandeur.]

The important thing here is that the elaborating of a new structure is identified with personal creativity of the highest order. The process of reordering the world according to the artist's own vision testifies not only to his global, all-embracing consciousness but also to his unique powers as an inventor. The distinguishing feature of the modern artist is that he produces a new art object, profoundly original in conception and form and freed from servile imitation of nature, which becomes the projection of his own creative personality onto the world.

The different emphases in Apollinaire's own experiments in poetic form which emerge implicitly from his account of Picasso can be traced, in greater or lesser degree, in most of the poems of "Ondes," the section of *Calligrammes* which contains his prewar innovative work, but are particularly evident in the two poems that Apollinaire himself dubbed "conversation poems": "Les Fenêtres" and "Lundi Rue Christine." The descriptive label refers to the fact that frequent use is made of snippets of spoken language, assembled from what seem to be unrelated and disconnected conversations being held in some public place. The intention seems to be to face the reader

1. *PC*, p. 67.

with a mass of unintegrated details, not unlike the profusion of planes that, at first sight, obscure the overall design and organization of a cubist painting. The difference between the poems is that when a synthesis begins to emerge from the jigsaw, it is achieved in a high key in "Les Fenêtres" and in a lower and subtler key in "Lundi Rue Christine." In "Les Fenêtres" the mixing into the jumble of conversation of sensuous evocations of light and color, and flashing impressions of a worldwide scene, quickly suggests that there is a powerful controlling consciousness at the heart of the poem, unifying it through the force of its own aspiration. In this poem, therefore, simultanist form is directly expressive of the creator's personality and power of vision. In "Lundi Rue Christine," on the other hand, the poet is virtually absent, or is reduced to the role of an eavesdropper, and the reader has to build up the picture of a café scene from quizzical hints that arise in the disorderly buzz of conversation. Here the emphasis falls on the autonomy of the work of art that has been created: it stands out as an arbitrary but fascinating construction whose existence is justified by its status as a deliberately fabricated object. The distinction, however, is not absolute. In both poems, and in its many other uses in the poems of "Ondes," the terse, fragmented structure operates on two levels at once, suggesting both the multiple consciousness of the poet at the center of the modern world and the formal intricacy of an innovatory approach to poetic form.

A similar judgment can be made of the use of language in the conversation poems. The question of language is as central to modernism as the notion of simultaneity. One of Apollinaire's principal convictions was that a poetry that seeks to express the quintessence of the modern world must also use the direct and forceful speech of contemporary life. Already in "Zone" there is the statement that the stylistic models for the modern poet should be those that he can find in the public uses of language all around him:

> *Tu lis les prospectus les catalogues les affiches*
> *qui chantent tout haut*
> *Voilà la poésie ce matin et pour la prose il y a*
> *les journaux*
>
> [You read handbills catalogues advertisements that
> sing out loud and clear
> There is where poetry is this morning and for prose
> there are the newspapers]

And in many other contexts the poet who had once argued for the necessary

obscurity of poetry now condemns the convoluted nature of Symbolist verse and declares his faith in an art that has broad popular appeal.[2]

The use of fragments of ordinary speech in the conversation poems is a striking example of the extension of poetic language to include popular usage. Phrases that have none of the characteristics of conventional poetic diction are shown to acquire meaning and expressiveness when manipulated in a certain way. This amounts to the destruction of any notion of hierarchy in language and to the removal of artificial barriers between the kinds of speech that can be used by poets. In this sense Apollinaire can be said to have stripped the remaining ornaments of rhetoric from the language of poetry. But here also there are implications that are formal and internal. It is because he is defeated in his attempt to find an immediate discursive meaning linking the various fragments that the reader is thrown back onto the text and interrogates the linguistic network more closely, discovering unexpected resonances and connections in apparently banal phrases. The poem thus becomes a self-reflexive object, in which it is the internal echoes and the relationships of the snippets of language among themselves which provide the aesthetic pleasure, as much as any externally directed act of communication.

The interaction of style and structure throughout the modernist poems makes it clear that they are creatively original and independent of the painters. However much Apollinaire may have been stimulated by the example of Picasso, and for a shorter period by that of Robert Delaunay,[3] he could draw no more than general inspiration from them. It is only through particular combinations of words and images that the poems achieve their success, and in this respect they are as innovatory at the level of poetic style as they are at the level of structure.

The range of Apollinaire's modernism can be gauged from the fact that it is expressed not only in the simultanist experiments, but also in poems that, in technique and conception, are at the opposite extreme. Where the experimental pieces abandon linear and discursive structures and turn their back on narration and description, two major poems of "Ondes"—"Un Fantôme de Nuées" and "Le Musicien de Saint-Merry"—adopt a linear form and discursive narration as their fundamental modes of expression. Moreover, in these poems and others ("Sur les Prophéties" and many later pieces) coherence and continuity are restored to language. The language remains the casual speech of everyday life, but, as against the elliptical juxtapositions of

2. Cf. *TS*, p. 55, where Apollinaire describes late Symbolist verse as being directed at "les snobs férus de mysticité" [snobs enamored of obscurity]. Again, in *LM*, p. 53, he wishes a socially diverse audience for his own poetry.

3. See note on "Les Fenêtres."

the conversation poems, the registers of the spoken language are used in a fluent, relaxed way, producing an impression of spontaneity and naturalness of utterance.

Narration, description, unforced naturalness of style—these conventions imply a respect for empirical reality and an acceptance of its intrinsic value. Rather than manipulate the real world in order to impose his highly structured vision upon it, the poet, in this approach, sees it as a continuum and tries to preserve its homogeneity. This is, to an extent, a rehabilitation of mimesis as a literary mode, a confidence in the power of literature to render the essence of unadorned reality through attentive observation. It testifies to the pull of the real world on Apollinaire's imagination, counterbalancing the powerful attraction of artistic innovation, and demonstrates the strength of his ambition to make his poetry a truly popular art, accessible to an undifferentiated public. Few French poets in the twentieth century have gone so far in capturing what Zola called the everyday "sense of the real," or written poems so immediately readable and appealing as "Un Fantôme de Nuées" and "Le Musicien de Saint-Merry."

In this approach the personal vision of the poet is not absent but is allowed to grow out of the common area of experience that the poem renders. Apollinaire's delight in the ordinary world stemmed not only from its colorful diversity but also from its multilayered ambiguity, which he saw as the task of the poet to explore and exploit. It was at this time that he began to formulate the concept of surprise as a key element in a modernist aesthetic and to suggest, in "Sur les Prophéties," that magical and superstitious interpretations of reality have their own validity. It is symptomatic that he was also drawn to the works of such eminently surprising and enigmatic painters as Chirico and Chagall, whose disconcerting canvases undoubtedly stimulated his interest in the dimension of the irrational. (There does seem to be some influence of Chagall behind Apollinaire's first attempts in "A Travers l'Europe" to use the kind of apparently unmotivated imagery that points in the direction of surrealism.) These strands in his view of reality come together in the concept of *surnaturalisme*,[4] which may be described as a blend of realism and fantasy in the poet's approach to the world, allowing him to move easily between both poles and to suggest, as in "Sur les Prophéties," that the marvelous is an integral part of our everyday experience. The

4. The term was applied to Apollinaire's poetry in a note in his own review, *Les Soirées de Paris* (May 1914). He also used the term "Orphism" which he coined in 1913 to describe the painting of Delaunay. Cf. *OC*, III, 939: "Orphisme ou surnaturalisme, c'est à dire un art qui n'est pas le naturalisme photographique uniquement et qui cependant soit la nature . . . cette nature intérieure aux merveilles insoupçonnées, impondérables, impitoyables et joyeuses" [Orphism or surnaturalism, that is, an art that is not merely photographic naturalism and yet is

successful application of this aesthetic is to be seen in "Un Fantôme de Nuées" and "Le Musicien de Saint-Merry." The first is remarkable in bringing about an untroubled epiphany with minimal departures from a casual narrative tone. The second is no less so in encompassing the whole range of Apollinaire's conflicting emotions within the framework of a narrative fable, set in the heart of modern Paris. The past and the present, fatalistic obsession with the loss of love and delight in the multiplicity of the modern world, are all brought together, in perfect balance, in what is indeed a new form of twentieth-century *merveilleux:* a sense of the real suffused with personal vision.

It is not only in "Le Musicien de Saint-Merry" but throughout "Ondes" that a state of inner anxiety, reminiscent of the mood of *Alcools*, makes itself felt. For all the novelty of accent and outlook of *Calligrammes*, Apollinaire's sensibility remains one haunted by uncertainty and doubt. This is what distinguishes his modernism from the more aggressive and strident version of his contemporaries. Where they were condemning subjectivity as outmoded and self-indulgent, he declares only partial loyalty to the bright new world of extrovert energy and admits to an enduring attachment to the poetry of personal emotion and elegiac sadness. Far from seeking to minimize his inner contradictions, he articulates them clearly in the prefatory poem "Liens," raising self-division to the rank of the major theme around which the whole modernist section of the volume is constructed. His instinctive gravitation toward images of sadness and pain, and the melodious incantatory phrases in which they naturally seek expression, are not to be explained solely in terms of the unhappiness that followed his separation from Marie Laurencin in 1913—although echoes of the suffering that produced the late lyric masterpieces of *Alcools* are certainly among the most plangent notes of *Calligrammes*. Beyond that, there is a more general anxiety in the face of experience which seeks refuge in the comfort of the past and fears, rather than welcomes, confrontation with the new. This explains why, on occasion, even the modern world, and the future itself, can lose their dynamic associations for the poet and become equivocal and ominous. In "Arbre" it is a barren and comfortless world that is about to be born. The new beings who will usher it in bear the mark of divinity in the mystic number three, but nevertheless hark back to the *acteurs inhumains*

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nature . . . that inner nature of unsuspected, imponderable, unrelenting, and joyous marvels]. It was he who gave currency to the word "surrealism," which he applied to his own play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and to the ballet *Parade*, but for him it was a synonym of orphism and surnaturalism, rather than what the surrealist movement later made of it.

claires bêtes nouvelles of "Le Brasier" [inhuman actors bright new beasts], symbolizing a soulless new race, insensitive to the old world of emotion and memory.

Every dynamic theme in "Ondes," therefore, has its antithesis which reverses the mood and the associations. Despite the apparent assertion of "Liens," this represents not so much a conflict within the poet—although for vividness of expression images of conflict are often used—as a creative tension between two states of sensibility that are felt to be indivisible parts of the self. Melancholy and confidence are each so instinctive in Apollinaire that only when they have been resolved and brought into balance can he feel that he has fully expressed the wholeness of his personality. His lyricism derives all its power and rich ambiguities precisely from this resolution of inner contradictions into a complex but profoundly unified state of sensibility.

It was no doubt to ensure that the depth of personal experience which characterizes Apollinaire's modernism was adequately represented that he included "Les Collines" in "Ondes," out of chronological order. Not written until 1917, after the poet had gone through the maturing turmoil of war, this poem presents, more powerfully than any other in the section, the commitment to modernism as a testing spiritual adventure. The picture it gives of the modern poet as an innovator and a prophet radically enlarges that notion as it was expressed in "Sur les Prophéties." Rather than the gift of everyday observation within the power of any man, prophecy now becomes the prerogative of the poet as a seer who acquires his privileged insights into the mysteries of the universe through struggle, trial, and suffering. The poet again takes on the persona of the martyr-hero of *Alcools*, mourning the loss of youth, wracked by the exceptional experiences he undergoes, but gaining as his prize a multiplication of his powers and an oneiric understanding of life and death. In its exalted tone, denseness of allusion, and complexity of expression, "Les Collines" thus achieves the higher resolution of all Apollinaire's complexities and colors the whole context of "Ondes." Inevitably the reader is induced to see the poet's modernism, even in its more apparently fanciful experiments, as a poetic undertaking of the highest seriousness of purpose.

THE CALLIGRAMMES

The calligrams may have seemed fanciful experiments to many contemporary and later commentators, but they were not so in Apollinaire's eyes. By giving to the whole volume the title he invented for these exercises in what he called "visual lyricism"—even though only a small minority of poems are

composed in that style—he made plain the importance he attached to them. His famous lecture in 1917, "L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes" [The New Spirit and the Poets], leaves no doubt that he saw visual or spatial poetry as an important new development, and had he lived he would probably have pursued it much further.

In conception the calligram derives directly from the techniques of fragmentation and recombination employed in the conversation poems. It stems from the conviction that the simultaneous nature of consciousness can be even more powerfully rendered by abandoning not only discursive expression but also the traditional linear layout of the poem as well. In a phrase that has had a famous history, a friendly critic described this typographical revolution as inevitable "because it is necessary that our intelligence become accustomed to understanding synthetico-ideographically instead of analytico-discursively."[5] That is to say that in a spatial layout, where the poem is displayed in a multiplicity of patterns on the page rather than being arranged in one linear sequence, the reader is forced to grasp the complex interrelationship of the whole in a global perception which is (apparently) more instantaneous than his recombination of the fragmented structure of the conversation poem and leads to a more powerful illumination. The fact that some of his understanding comes to him through a visual, as well as a verbal, communication of ideas further reinforces the direct sensory awareness that is characteristic of a modern consciousness.

While Apollinaire was certainly encouraged in his thinking about this concept by a desire to emulate his painter friends, as is demonstrated by his original intention to publish the poems separately under the title "Et Moi Aussi Je Suis Peintre" [I, too, am a painter], the calligram remains indisputably a form of poetry that, in its combination of spatial and linguistic factors, points toward the concrete poetry movement of recent years. Yet, intriguingly, his implementation of his bold plan has served to obscure the originality of his thought and has led to some misunderstanding of the poems. The confusion arises from what seems like a dramatic change of heart between the publication of the first calligram, "Lettre-Océan," and those that followed.

In an article about "Lettre-Océan" published in Apollinaire's own review, *Les Soirées de Paris*, G. Arbouin[6] welcomed the poem as a revolutionary innovation but expressed the important reservation that the new technique

5. The phrase is from the article by G. Arbouin on "Lettre-Océan" published in *Les Soirées de Paris* in July-August 1914, the same number in which the "new-style" calligrams appeared. Most commentators have assumed erroneously that Arbouin was a pseudonym of Apollinaire's.

6. See note 5.

could destroy the rhythmic basis of poetry, on which the communication of emotion depended, and thus create an arcane art reserved for the initiated. One must assume that these views reflected Apollinaire's own uncertainties about the proper mode of application of spatial poetry and his own constant desire to combine innovation with broad popular appeal. He must, therefore, have been susceptible to Arbouin's argument that the calligram would perforce evolve toward a pictorial shape directly related to its subject matter. Inwardly he must have felt that to give the spatial poem a pictorial shape was to restore it to a more immediately intelligible form and one that was more compatible with the rhythmic expression of feeling.

That is indeed what happened. After "Lettre-Océan," in which a global view of the modern world is imprinted on the page in an exploded structure of radiating lines and pulverized language, the calligrams that immediately follow it are composed of coherent phrases fashioned into extremely simple and instantly recognizable shapes. Any intention of expressing a simultaneous consciousness seems to have disappeared, so that some readers have fallen into the trap of thinking that the shape is simply a tautological repetition of what the referential or discursive meaning of the words already clearly conveys.

But to do so is to misunderstand the different nature of the reading operations involved in even the simplest association of word and picture. Tautology is impossible between a linguistic statement and the instant impression conveyed by a shape. Inevitably, and in poetic use deliberately, the words refine and add connotations and overtones that extend and complicate the initial response. The eye and the mind of the reader describe a circle that leads from recognition of the object to the exploration of the poet's reflections on it, and back again to the picture overlaid with a new significance. This significance must be considerable when, as in most of Apollinaire's poems, the language is richly lyrical. Whether in compact or languorous form—in "Paysage" or in "Il Pleut"—the calligrams encapsulate much of his most incantatory writing. It is, in fact, the nature of their lyricism, more than their mode of operation, which distinguishes the pictorial calligrams from "Lettre-Océan." Rather than expressing the poet's delight in the pulsating modern world, they are concerned with the realm of private feeling; however, the process by which an instantaneous graphic perception is enriched by the accumulated associations of extended reading is common to both. In a nonfigurative poem like "Lettre-Océan," the eye can take a larger number of paths through the shape, and the mind may have to hold together a larger number of different associations, but the delayed-reaction effect, before the experience is complete, is the same. Provided that one understands that "simultaneity" is really the eventual end result of a process of reading rather than the instant perception that Apollinaire sometimes

implied, it can be seen that "Lettre-Océan" and the pictorial poems share one kind of simultaneity that distinguishes them from noncalligrammatic poems like the conversation pieces: the fusing together of two different modes of apprehension of the same idea or feeling, one mode working through visual association and the other through verbal.

Such a manner of operation gives particular satisfaction when the picture itself carries immediately as much impact as the words. If in some of the calligrams the picture is emblematic and acquires its richness of significance from the words in an initially one-way process, as is possibly true of the watch, the house, or the crown, other shapes instantly impress themselves on the eye with their own suggestive power before being enriched by the words. The vivid outline of the lovers in "Paysage," the oval of the mirror, the graceful lines of the fountain, the falling rain, the shell, the smoking cigar, the harmonious balance of forms in "La Mandoline l'OEillet et le Bambou"—all these and others demonstrate that Apollinaire immensely increased the capacity of figured verse to assume a wide variety of flexible and striking forms. Since antiquity pictorial poetry had confined itself to a relatively small number of elementary shapes, which were solidly filled with unbroken lines of type. Departing from this static tradition, Apollinaire's calligrams use single lines of type to trace bold or delicate outlines on the printed page with all the spontaneity of handwriting, producing a much wider range of plastic images. The fluid nature of his composition has always posed problems for printers, but by the same token, when the calligrams are successfully realized in type, they have a freshness of effect that gives them immediate expressiveness and explains why they have been so often reproduced and imitated, even by advertisers.

In a significant number of examples the inherent expressiveness of the graphic form adds a dimension of meaning to the poem which is inseparable from its appearance on the printed page and cannot emerge from the words alone. The shape of the lovers in "Paysage" can be interpreted pictorially in different ways, with considerable consequences for the overall meaning of the poem, and, whatever the interpretation, the shape says something that the words do not. The same is true in many other poems. Nor are the visual implications necessarily restricted to those associated with the object that is pictured. In calligrammatic compositions, no less than in visual art generally, graphic form itself can be directly expressive. It is instructive, from this point of view, to compare the three different typographical representations of rain in Apollinaire's work (see notes on "Il Pleut" and "Du Coton dans les Oreilles") where the different nature of type, line, and spacing on each occasion produces three quite different statements. It can even happen that certain graphic forms—notably the sinuous line—are so imprinted with associations that they contradict the verbal statement that the poem is mak-

ing and create a much more complex mood than is immediately apparent (see note on first page of "Du Coton").

It is observable that Apollinaire becomes increasingly sensitive to the possibilities of spatial expression. While the earlier poems, with the exception of "Lettre-Océan," are pictorial, later sections of the volume show his interest in less figurative uses of the medium. In the section "Case d'Armons" there are examples of handwritten script and bold layout which make their effect in purely plastic terms. In the calligrams proper, in the same section, abstract graphic values can be seen to assume equal importance with the representational. Even a simple emblematic likeness of a gun in "S P" has formal qualities that transcend the shape, whereas in "Loin du Pigeonnier" and "Visée" the graphic form is sophisticated and suggestive on several levels. Again, if a figurative intention is present in the later works, such as "Aussi Bien Que les Cigales" and "Éventail des Saveurs," these poems also make an impact as a pleasing pattern of lines and as an exercise in the formal grouping of shapes on the page. A freer approach to layout is to be found even in conventionally printed poems, as in the marginal additions or offset lines of "Saillant," "Échelon," and "Oracles." These have less an explicit significance than the general function of calling attention to the poem as a deliberate composition in both structural and plastic terms, and thus of raising the reader's consciousness of the spatial dimension.

Within these freer designs, language is used in a freer way also, sometimes in marked contrast with the coherent, well-formed phrases of most of the picture poems. Apollinaire realized that one of the most potent features of the calligram is the heightening effect it has on the words from which it is made, and that it thus lent itself to his constant endeavors to restore high expressiveness to language. One of the ways in which the form serves this purpose is to act as a vehicle for the dense allusive utterances that he had favored since his Symbolist beginnings. The one-line poem "Chantre," which he added at the last moment to the proofs of *Alcools*, is a formulation of this kind, and it could be read as the first tentative calligram. Poems such as "Visée" and "Éventail des Saveurs," however, not only multiply the power of "Chantre" tenfold, by accumulating a succession of such "autonomous" lines, but confer visual as well as auditory eloquence on the statements by the beauty of their graphic composition. More boldly, the expressions that are encapsulated in other calligrams are in a much lower poetic register. These can be prosaic, repetitive slogans ("Aussi Bien Que les Cigales"), fragmentary phrases ("Loin du Pigeonnier"), or simple declarative sentences and exclamations ("1915," "Carte Postale à Jean Royère"), but here also the intention is clearly to elevate the statement through its isolation in a striking graphic structure and thus give it the self-sufficiency of a complete poetic thought.

However few in number, therefore, the calligrams are a significant poetic achievement. Nothing could be more mistaken than to think of their shape, whether pictorial or more abstract, as incidental or merely decorative. On the contrary, their graphic form interacts with the verbal text to create a new form of poetry in which Apollinaire has had many successors. They also play their part, like the conversation poems before them, in extending the range of poetic expression and increasing the number of uses of language in which we can find aesthetic satisfaction.

THE WAR POEMS

The war poetry, although the product of circumstance, is far from circumstantial in the pejorative sense. The vast poetic output (only part of which found its way into *Calligrammes*) of the fifteen months between December 1914, when Apollinaire enlisted in the artillery, and March 1916, when he was wounded in the head, testifies to the stimulating effect of events on his imagination. The drama of a creative personality faced with a phenomenon on an unprecedented scale unfolds through the five sections of the volume which chronicle his changing reactions to the different aspects of war.

Throughout its evolution the commanding feature of Apollinaire's attitude is his desire to respond to these events as a new dimension of experience. The general social climate at the outbreak of hostilities—which was, curiously, one of eager anticipation—together with the more specific optimism and energy of his own modernist outlook led him to welcome the coming conflict as the opening of a new era of infinite promise. It takes only a reading of "La Petite Auto," the poem that is virtually the overture for everything that follows, to see that his vision of the war was an epic one. The almost apocalyptic images that swell the tone of this poem represent the simultanist vision of the 1913-1914 period carried to a new pitch of intensity. Embracing within himself the dimensions of earth, sky, and ocean as well as the armies spreading across the face of Europe, the poet feels that coming events can only multiply his powers further. The pattern that can be traced throughout the succeeding work is that of Apollinaire's attempt to maintain this larger vision in face of the realities of war. Aragon's belief that "ce serait un crime de montrer les beaux côtés de la guerre . . . même si elle en avait"[7] [it would be a crime to show the attractive face of war . . . even if it had one] is the very antithesis of what Apollinaire was trying to achieve.

7. From an article in which Aragon is highly critical of Apollinaire's attempt to find beauty in war: "Beautés de la guerre et leurs reflets dans la littérature" [Beauties of war and their reflection in literature], *Europe* (December 1935), 474-480.

The division of the effects of war into horrors and beauties is one that he sought to transcend in order to grasp it as a total experience that could multiply his imaginative powers and his capacity for living.

The synthesis was perhaps easiest to achieve in the period covered by "Étendards" and "Case d'Armons." Novelty enhanced the enthusiasm with which Apollinaire entered upon his training as a soldier and underwent his first engagements in artillery combat at the front. He was proud that, as an intellectual and a poet, he could prove the equal of the other recruits (mostly much younger than himself) in becoming a man of action, and he derived immense satisfaction from mastering the pragmatic skills of soldiering. The sense of being part of a vast collective effort, and the experience of comradeship, brought the kind of fulfillment that was sought in more imaginative terms in the prewar period. Echoing the proud statement of a liberated personality in "Le Musicien de Saint-Merry"—"J'ai enfin le droit de saluer des êtres que je ne connais pas"—the enlisted poet can say with equal force but more literal truth, "Me voici libre et fier parmi mes compagnons." That is not to say that Apollinaire felt none of the alienating effects of his situation. The loneliness and the apprehension that could afflict him are strongly expressed in "La Colombe Poignardée et le Jet d'Eau," while the reinforcement of the basic polarities of his nature, under pressure of the war situation, is densely formulated in one line of "Visée": "Guerre paisible ascèse solitude métaphysique." But at this early stage inner doubts are conquered by an effort of the will and the imagination. The sense of purpose felt in his life spills over into his creative activity. As in the prewar period, his self-confidence is expressed equally in vigorous simplicity of expression and lively formal innovations, represented on the one hand by the easy discursive verse of "2^{e} Canonnier Conducteur," "A Nîmes," and "Veille," and on the other by the typographical experiments and bold plastic values of many poems of "Case d'Armons."

The recurring image in "Case d'Armons" which crystallizes the freedom of spirit of the early months at the front is that of *le bois* or *la forêt*, suggesting a private enclave, a time out of war, which the poet has created for himself. It is a fact that Apollinaire's battery was stationed during this period (April-June 1915) in a small wood at some distance from the front line. His letters are full of delighted accounts of its plant and animal life and the hours of leisure he enjoyed within it, in relative safety, writing and making rings out of shell cases. But the poems—"Échelon" especially, with the white wound of the trenches seen beyond the wood and Death dangling at the perimeter—heighten this real-life situation by a process of fabulation in which the wood takes on the associations of a privileged, almost magic, sanctuary. A sense of security, therefore, spreads throughout the poems, exorcising danger. An artillery bombardment becomes an exciting and