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reference to his themes and images*

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THE POETRY OF THÉOPHILE DE VIAU
with special reference to his
themes and images.

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INTRODUCTION

Until relatively recently the literature of the first half of the seventeenth century in France has received less attention than it deserves. There has been a tendency to regard the first years of the century as a period of preparation for the achievements of the generation of 1660, a fashion set, it should be noted by the writers of that generation themselves who were prone to disparage the work of their predecessors (1). Of recent years however, the attention of critics has been drawn more and more to this period (2); a reassessment of the poetry of the Metaphysicals in England has encouraged the appreciation of a certain kind of poetic writing, which, it is said, may be found in the work of poets on both sides of the channel at this time.

The period is indeed notable for its poetry, and it is often a poetry of a kind which is not to be found later in the century. Malherbe has, of course, consistently received the homage of posterity, but largely because his work has been said to look forward to the

-
1. Saint-Evremond for example notes this change in opinion and points to features which invited the criticisms of the second half of the century: Dans ma jeunesse on admirait Théophile malgré ses irrégularités et ses négligences qui échappaient au peu de délicatesse des courtisans de ce temps. Je l'ai vu décrier depuis par tous les versificateurs sans aucun regard à sa belle imagination, aux grâces heureuses de son génie. Oeuvres Mêlées de Saint-Evremond, ed. Giraud Paris 1865, Vol. II, p.465.
 2. See Rousset La Littérature de l'Age Baroque en France, 1954 de Mourgues Metaphysical, Baroque and Précieux Poetry, 1953. Buffum Studies in the Baroque from Montaigne to Rotrou, 1957. Special Issue of XVIIe Siècle, 1953, Du Baroque au Classique Cahier de l'Association Internationale des Etudes Françaises July 1951.
Rousset Anthologie de la Poésie Baroque Française, 2 Vols. 1961.

form of artistic expression which we now call classicism. He too has been regarded as a forerunner. It is now being recognised however, that this judgement fails to take into account certain important features of his work (1). A similar kind of selective treatment has been applied to the period as a whole.

There is, of course, evidence to suggest that there was a tendency towards classical order and stability in literary form and expression, with which the name of Malherbe may justly be associated; but to point to evidence suggesting such a trend while ignoring that which seems to contradict it is to misrepresent the situation at the time. Some writers in fact show little readiness to fall in with such a trend towards order. Many of the features of the art of the time suggest a form which is in essence anti-classical: ideas tend to be expressed in concrete terms which appeal to the senses rather than to the intellect. The poetry of the time in particular abounds in concrete sensuous imagery which later writers were to renounce.

Of the poets whose work cannot be fitted easily into the framework of classicism Théophile de Viau is one of the most outstanding, though he is one among several. A period which produced Malherbe, Saint-Amant, Tristan and Théophile, to name only the better known, was evidently rich in poetry of considerable variety. The work of such poets should not be regarded as inferior merely because it is different from a literary form which has been treated as if it were characteristic of the century as a whole, but which in fact belongs

1. See for example Lebègue, Les Larmes de Saint Pierre, poème baroque, R.H.S., July-Dec., 1949.

to only part of it. Much of this poetry must have seemed strange and unbalanced to the ear attuned to the harmony of the perfected alexandrine: some of it would appear fantastic to those accustomed to the polished world of the honnête homme. The disordered brilliance of this poetry failed to please the taste of the later part of the century, when a greater insistence on the value of harmony achieved by improved technique, led to a rejection of the achievements of the earlier poets along with their technical faults.

We intend in these pages to examine the themes and images which appear in the poetry of Théophile. We have chosen to set his poetry against the background of the poetry of his predecessors and contemporaries, in the belief that the work of this poet, like that of many others, cannot be fully appreciated without reference to other work of the same period. By examining this particular poet in relation to contemporary thought, poetic theory and practice, we can more easily assess the personal qualities of his work and at the same time understand what it has in common with the poetry of the time.

The apparent separation of the matter of poetry into theme and image in our title requires a word of explanation. Our first reaction to the phrase might be to define theme as the subject of the poem and image as illustration of the subject. However, theme and subject are seldom interchangeable terms. The subject of the poem may best be defined as the basic idea, feeling or experience which inspired the writing of the poem. The subject of the poem A Monsieur de L. (1) is

1. Théophile de Viau Oeuvres Poétiques edited with an introduction and notes by Jeanne Streicher, 2 vols. v. I 1951, v. II 1958. Textes Littéraires Français. Droz. References will usually be made to this edition, indicated thus: O.P. I/II. Here O.P. II, p. 214.

the death of M. de L's father, but the theme might be stated thus: everything comes to an end, death is inevitable. In a poem in which the poet sets out to explain his beliefs concerning a certain subject or in which his aim is to clarify and convey to the reader the effect upon him of an experience, we may expect to find images used as illustration or adornment of the basic subject, and the theme will arise out of the interaction of image and subject. The theme, as can be seen from the example quoted above, is of a more general application than the subject, since the image widens the scope of the poem by introducing new elements, new associations. In some poetry, of course, the image is in control, rather than the idea or line of argument, and here the theme arises out of the images which control the direction of the poem. Some of Théophile's work comes closer to this type than to the logically conceived poetry of ideas. In the Ode, Perside je me sens heureux, for example, Théophile makes a statement of the subject in the opening stanza - the lady's use of cosmetics is detrimental to her natural beauty. There follows a series of images - flowers, birds, water, pebbles, which take charge of the direction of the poem and from which the theme arises - the natural is superior to the artificial. The theme is in fact explicitly stated after the elaboration of the images:

La Nature est inimitable
 Et dans sa beauté véritable
 Elle esclate si vivement
 Que l'art gaste tous ses ouvrages,
 Et luy fait plustost mille outrages
 Qu'il ne luy donne un ornement. (1)

It will be seen that this has a wider application than the particular

and limited idea which inspired the poem. Sometimes however, Théophile refuses to submit to the discipline of the primary idea or feeling. The poet, whether he is composing poetry of ideas or poetry in which the image directs the poem, normally feels himself limited as to the scope and direction of the poem by the idea or feeling, or else by the images he is elaborating. With Théophile we feel that he has sometimes not decided on the direction the poem will take before he begins writing, so that, sometimes the idea, sometimes the image may lead him on to further, quite different ideas and images, not envisaged at the beginning. There is a certain nonchalance about Théophile's methods of composition; at times, for example, he even apologises to his reader for running on too long. (1)

With Théophile, therefore, it is sometimes extremely difficult to extract from a poem one particular theme and one only. He does not always write poems about well-defined subjects, from which one theme, logically developed, emerges. Often we find a succession of images which suggest to us several different themes, whose link is an imaginative one, a link forged by the image and not by the logic of thought. As an example of this we may quote the second ode of La Maison de Silvie. Here Théophile is describing the Tritons transformed into snow-white deer by Silvie's magic:

La Princesse qui les charma
Alors qu'elle les transforma
Les fit estre blancs comme neige....(2)

1. See for example Elegie à une Dame O.P. I, p. 7. l. 111 et seq.
Mais desja ce discours m'a porté trop avant,
Je suis bien pres du port, ma voile a trop de vent....

2. O.P. II, p. 141, l. 75-77.

The image then seems to take charge and provokes a long description of snow itself. Or again in the Satyre Première the introduction of the image of the old man in order to illustrate the mutability of human passions, leads on to the development of a separate theme - that of the naturalness of human desires.

We have therefore found it more useful to think of a theme not only in relation to a particular poem, but also as a line of thought or feeling which can be traced through many different poems of the same poet's work. The themes of the poetry are the recurrent lines of poetic enquiry which can be traced in what the poet says about his ideas and feelings as well as in the imagery he uses.

As we have already suggested, the images which occur in the poem may be no more than illustrations of an idea. As an example of this we may quote Théophile's:

Mais nostre jeune temps laisse aussi peu de marque,
Que le vol d'un oiseau, ou celui d'une barque.... (1)

Such images may lead on to the development of further ideas, as does the image of the sanglier enragé in the Satyre Première, which is intended to clarify the idea that it is better for a lover to accept his passion than to struggle against it, but which leads on to a consideration of the conduct of life as a whole.

Most images, whatever their purpose, have something of the sensuous about them, though some are more intensely sensuous than others; some may be termed metaphysical images in that they contain the germs of intellectual ideas. But to whichever category it may seem to belong,

1. Quand la Divinité, qui formoit ton essence.... O.P.I, p.66, l.41-2

an image may be defined as a picture in words which makes concrete some thought or feeling of the poet, and which has a certain suggestiveness by virtue of the fact that it brings different objects together and sets the reader thinking about their relationship.

The poet may make a direct statement which explains in some way the significance of the image, but he does not always do so; moreover the image may well have a significance which cannot be precisely stated in intellectual terms. Thus the images used may direct the reader to a certain theme without any explicit statement of that theme on the part of the poet. He may, for example, make constant use of imagery of the sea, in such a way as to bring the theme of inconstancy to the reader's mind, without, however, mentioning the theme itself. Thus we return to our definition of a theme as a line of thought or feeling, traceable through the images used as well as through ideas actually expressed. It will be seen therefore, that there is a very close relationship between the themes and images of the poetry.

Inevitably Théophile turns to themes common not only to poets of the seventeenth century in France, but to poets of all ages and of all origins. The transience of life, death, human and divine love, the beauties of nature: these are constantly recurring poetic themes. Most of them are to be found in the poetry of Théophile. Of course different themes may be expected to take on greater prominence at different periods of history; during the period with which we are concerned, poets seem to have been particularly concerned

with the transience of life and the inconstancy of human affections. Such is the imagery they use, so frequently do they refer to these themes that we find in their poetry a world which is full of change and instability. Théophile of course, shares, to a certain extent at least, the preoccupations of his age; we have therefore given the title An Unstable World to one part of our investigation. However, these are not the only themes which may be detected in his poetry. Even the imagery which is associated with them often has qualities which lead us to suspect another side to his thought. There is much imagery associated with nature which suggests an intensely sensuous appreciation of the world. That there is this more positive side to his work, we hope to show in the second part of the thesis.

However, a third quality may often be detected in the imagery used by Théophile and by the poets of his time: there is often a suggestion of artifice about it. Of course in a sense, there must always be artifice in the construction of a poem and in the use of imagery as an expression of thought and feeling; we sometimes feel, however, on reading the poetry of the time, that we are witnessing a conscious affectation of an experience or mood. The fact that we notice this serves to remind us that we no longer see the poet's role in the same way as Jonson for example, who describes the poet as one who "feigneth and formeth a fable and writeth things like the truth." We have perhaps accepted too naively the claims which nineteenth century poets made about their role, so that we now expect the poet to give us truth, and we look for sincerity or depth of

feeling before skill in imitating these things.

There was of course much debate in the poetry of the time about the relative merits of art and nature; as we have already seen Théophile professes to prefer the works of nature to those of art, but his statements of faith in the natural cannot obscure the presence of artifice in his own poetry. That there is also an artificial world to be detected in his poetry we hope to show in the third part of the thesis.

AN
UNSTABLE WORLD

INCONSTANCY

The theme of inconstancy has attracted many poets at different times, but it has seldom possessed the minds of poets as it does at the end of the sixteenth and at the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. The life of man is felt to be inconstant, subject to change, lacking in stability. The world in which he lives is presented as an inconstant world which can offer no stable basis for human life and deeds.

It is of course true that men have always been conscious of the flux of life; decay and death were ever-present in the mediaeval world. However, change was then accepted as but a part of a harmonious and divinely ordered universe. At the end of the sixteenth century the validity of the world view, which accorded to created things a divinely ordained position in the chain of being, is called into question. Belief in authority has been shaken and in some minds has been replaced by doubt and relativism. Man no longer sees the change around him as part of a greater whole; instead he dwells on the fact of change itself. Of course the transformation in man's view of himself in relation to the universe is not a sudden one, but rather, the gradually achieved result of a long period of readjustment on many different levels.

Insecurity had entered into the reality of everyday life in the religious wars of the second half of the sixteenth century, and this violent physical expression of instability must have had some influence on the growth of interest in death and mutability towards the

end of the century.

The earlier view of flux may be seen in the poetry of Ronsard for example:

Ce qui fut se refait, tout coulle comme une eau
Et rien dessous Le Ciel ne se voit de nouveau
Mais la forme se change en une autre nouvelle. (1)

The idea of flux here includes that of renewal. The flux of the world is not entirely purposeless; there is rather a continual ebbing and flowing which paradoxically produces some kind of balance. There is moreover the suggestion that it is only in the sublunar world that change is to be found: the extralunar regions are unchanging and incorruptible. In a Christian context, the eternal stability of the next world follows the instability of the present. As the century progresses however, more stress is laid on flux and less on harmony and balance. The influence of Montaigne is here of considerable importance, and it is largely his influence which can be seen in the work of Durand whose interpretation of the world is somewhat different from that of Ronsard. Inconstancy is now the spirit which rules the universe; nowhere can man find stability; there remains no unchanging authority.

Esprit des beaux esprits, vagabonde inconstance
Qu'Eole roi des vents avec l'onde conceut,
Pour être de ce monde une seconde essence,
Reçois ces vers sacrez à ta seule puissance,
Aussi bien que mon âme autrefois te receut. (2)

It is on this fickle deity that man's life and death depend. There is

1. Hymne de la Mort, Second Livre des Hymnes, 1555;
2. Stances à l'Inconstance, Le Livre d'Amour d'Etienne Durand,
ed. Lachèvre Paris, 1907. Ll. 1-5

no plan or purpose in her indiscriminate activities:

Déesse qui partout et nulle part demeure,
Qui préside à nos jours et nous porte au tombeau
Qui fait que le désir d'un instant naisse et meure....

He goes on to describe the unenviable lot of man in a world where all is change and where there is no stability:

Nostre esprit n'est que vent, et comme un vent volage,
Ce qu'il nomme constance est un branle rétif:
Ce qu'il pense aujourd'hui demain n'est qu'un ombrage,
Le passé n'est plus rien, le futur un nuage,
Et ce qu'il tient présent il le sent fugitif. (1)

Durand catches the impermanence of human thoughts which light here and there, eternally changing their substance, before they can be caught and hardened into words:

Je peindrois volontiers mes légères pensées,
Mais déjà le pensant mon penser est changé (2)

Freeing himself from the bondage of love, of all things the most inconstant, Durand presents the goddess with un tableau fantastique:

Les sables de la mer, les orages, les nues,
Les feux qui font en l'air les tonnantes chaleurs,
Les flammes des éclairs plus tôt mortes que vues,
Les peintures du ciel à nos yeux inconnues,
A ce divin tableau servirent de couleurs. (3)

It is only through such imagery as this that the goddess can be suitably described. Most of the images in these lines carry with them a suggestion of transience; some of them are characterised by movement and even violence. Moreover they are images which have a distinctly

1. Durand, op.cit. l.16-20.

2. ibid. l. 21-22. This particular theme had some currency at the time. see, for example, Motin: Et si je le pouvais j'y peindrois ma pensée
Mais elle est trop soudain de mon esprit
passé.

Inconstance, Cabinet des Muses, 1619.

3. Durand, op. cit. l. 50-54.

sensuous quality about them, for this unstable world is approached and understood through the senses by many poets of the time.

A comparable description of the ruling spirit of inconstancy, written at about the same time, is to be found in the Songe de Philomuse of Baudouin. (1) Here the poet is visited by a vision of Fortune:

Son corps estoit de verre
Et touché soudain se cassaît....

Here again occurs imagery evoking fragility and impermanence:

La 'tête n'avait pour matière
Que le vent, l'air et la poussière,
En vapeur son col s'estendoit;
Et sous sa perruque peignée
Comme une toile d'araignée
Le destin des hommes se pendoit.

In these lines a quaint and rather whimsical note is struck by the reference to the "perruque peignée comme une toile d'araignée:" the figure of Fortune which might have been fearsome or mysterious is made to appear rather less impressive. This is a quality which we shall notice in some of Theophile's contributions to the vogue for horror.

The theme of inconstancy is touched on again and again in the poetry of the time; always there is the insistence on the inconstancy of human life and affections and on the instability of the world; never do we hear a suggestion of the balance which Ronsard saw. Towards the middle of the century poets are still treating the theme in the now familiar imagery.

Il n'y a rien icy bas qui ne soit perissable,
Les plus fermes rochers sont assis sur le sable. (2)

-
1. J. Baudouin, Songe de Philomuse, Deuxième Livre des Délices, 1620
 2. Ph. Habert, Le Temple de la Mort, Paris 1646.

Tout n'est plein icy bas que de vaine apparence,
 Ce qu'on donne à sagesse est conduit par le sort,
 L'on Mont et l'on descend avec pareil effort,
 Sans jamais recontrer l'estat de consistance.(1)

The theme is frequent of course in the love poetry of the time. The inconstancy of the lady is but one aspect of the inconstancy of the world itself. It is hardly surprising if the lover, faced with such an inconstant world, should decide that constancy on his part is incongruous and unrewarding.(2)

For the poets who write from an avowedly Christian standpoint there is at least the hope of stability and repose in the life to come; in fact the prospect of future stability only serves to emphasise the instability of the present world. If we go back to the beginning of our period we find Sponde using imagery similar to that used by Durand in his Stances:

La Vie est de plume et le monde de vent.(3)

Nor can Chassignet find much of any worth in this earthly life. It is he says:

..... une bouteille molle
 Qui s'enfle dessus l'eau, quand le ciel fait pleuvoir
 Et se perd aussitot comme elle se fait voir,
 S'entrebrisant à l'heurt d'une moindre bricole.
 Qu'est-ce de notre vie? un mensonge frivole
 Qui sous l'ombre du vrai nous vient décevoir....
 un tourbillon rouant
 De fumiere à flots gris, parmy l'air se jouant. (4)

-
1. Sonnet in Cabinet des Muses 1658, p.188 attributed to Des Barreaux by Lachèvre
 See Une petite découverte bibliographique, 1904. p. 56.
 2. See for example Motin Inconstance Cabinet des Muses, 1619
 Frenicle De l'Inconstance, Les Premières Oeuvres Poétiques Paris 1625.
 3. Sponde, Sonnets de la Mort
 4. Chassignet Le Mépris de la Vie et la Consolation contre la Mort, 1594.

Once again the idea of inconstancy is conveyed by imagery of water and intangible air. Water imagery is of course most appropriate to this theme and we shall discuss it in more detail later (1).

In another of his sonnets Chassignet stresses the mutability of human life. Man is continually in a state of flux:

Ainsi l'homme varie, et ne sera demain
 Telle comme aujourd'hui du pauvre corps humain
 La force que le temps abrèvie et consomme:
 Le nom sans varier nous suit jusqu'au trépas,
 Et combien qu'aujourd'hui celui ne sois-je pas
 Qui vivois hier passé, toujours même on me nomme.(2)

There is here a concern with the changing nature of human personality, with the idea that the personality is never constant or static, but is ever in a state of becoming; and here the influence of Montaigne may be easily traced.

Another aspect of the theme which is often stressed is the inconstancy of man's desires. It is recognised by some that there is a certain predictability about some aspects of change. Gody, for example, points to the flux of time, to the change from season to season, and finds a kind of stability in the turning year:

Tout fuit mais tout revient, ces révolutions
 Tiennent de l'asseuré dans leurs mutations. (3)

However when he turns to the human condition he finds, like Chassignet, that there is no stability whatever. So fickle are human actions, so unpredictable are human desires that there is not even the comfort

1. See p. 36-42

2. Chassignet, op. cit.

3. Placidus Philemon Gody, Les Honnestes Poésies

1632 Élégie Huitiesmè

of consistent change:

Mais l'estat des Humains Ô bon Dieu ! quels Prothées,
 Quels vents et quelles mers non jamais arrestées !
 Voit-on la plus part ne pouvoir respirer
 Sinon dans le change, à tout bien soupirer,
 Ne se sôûler de rien, saluer toute chose,
 Tout voir et toucher tout sans point faire de pose,
 Ainsi vont-ils errans, et leur chemin sans but
 Plus soymesme se perd, que plus il est par tout. (1)

Not only is man fickle in his desires but the good things of the world are illusions in themselves:

Sur la fumée en l'air, sur l'instable de l'onde,
 Sur le crystal formé du seul froid d'une nuit:
 Sur le sable mouvant cil insensé construit
 Qui plante ses désirs sur les biens de ce monde.(2)

We should notice that the imagery used here is of the same type as that woven by Durand into his tableau fantastique; it is imagery which evokes things of common experience and which is effective through the appeal it makes to the senses of the reader. He is not asked to approve an intellectual argument proving logically the instability of the world, but he is presented with a vivid picture of unstable things.

Later in the century the theme is still discussed by the moralists among the poets. For Pierre Le Moyne human life appears as the water of a stream, eternally flowing and bearing away with it present hopes and desires (3). However, in the second half of the century the manner in which the theme is presented is no longer the same. When Brébeuf tackles the subject he does not make such use of the imagery

1. Ibid.

2. Les Quatrains du Président Faure de la vanité du Monde. Published in Les Quatrains du Seigneur Pibrac 1639

3. Pierre Le Moyne, Lettres Morales, 1665, I,10.

characteristic of earlier poets. He gives rather an intellectual statement of the theme, not a concrete representation of it:

A cent objets divers tour à tour il s'engage,
Et de cent tour à tour degage ses souhaits,
Ce qui fait bonheur se change en son dommage,
Ce qui luy plaist de loin le rebute de près. (1)

Poets in the first half of the century, therefore, reveal their interest in the theme of inconstancy by the frequency with which they discuss it and by their use of a particular kind of imagery. It is to be expected therefore that Théophile should, to a certain extent at least, share this interest. Indeed if we look at the Satyre Première we find a most pessimistic interpretation of the human condition. Man is described as a poor, defenceless creature, lacking in purpose and set in a situation which is patently more absurd than that of the beasts of the field:

Tu vois en gémissant la lumière du jour;
Ta bouche n'est qu'aux cris et à la faim ouverte,
Ta pauvre chair naissante est à toute découverte,
Ton esprit ignorant encor ne forme rien,
Et moins qu'un sens brutal sçait le mal et le bien.(2)

At least the animal's young is able to fend for itself at an early age. Man on the other hand, is subject to the scourges of war, pestilence, famine, and always in his mind he feels l'effroy de l'Achéron trompeur. The animal world is spared the fear of death as it is spared the inconstancy of human life:

Franche de passions et de tant de traverses,
Qu'on voit au changement de nos humeurs diverses.(3)

-
1. Brébeuf, Entretiens Solitaires, Paris, 1660, ch.III De l'inconstance humaine.
 2. O.P.I. p.82, l.12-16.
 3. Ibid. p.84. l.41-2.

Nothing is firm, nothing fixed in human life:

Ce que veut mon Caprice, à ta raison desplaist;
 Ce que tu trouves beau, mon oeil le trouve laid:
 Un mesme train de vie au plus constant n'agrée,
 La prophane nous fasche autant que la sacrée. (1)

Human nature, inconstant, in itself is in the hands of an inconstant destiny:

Ce qui sert aujourd'huy nous doit nuire demain
 On ne tient le bonheur jamais que d'une main;
 Le destin inconstant sans y penser oblige,
 Et nous faisant du bruit souvent il nous afflige.
 Les riches plus contans ne se scauraient guérir
 De la crainte de perdre et du soin d'acquérir. (2)

He can find no constancy in human life at all; hopes are ephemeral, fortune fickle, even the light of reason may be dimmed by passion and man's desires are subject to change as time passes:

Nostre désir suit la course de l'age,
 Tel est grave et pesant qui fut jadis volage,
 Et sa masse caduque esclave du repos
 N'aime plus qu'à resver, hait les joyeux propos. (3)

It would seem, from the evidence of the part of this poem which we have examined, that Théophile had as poor an opinion of the nature of man as the religious poets of the time. Parts of the Satyre Première are comparable, for example with the ninth elegy of Gody:

Esprit tenant seulement à la boue,
 Esprit mobile à guise d'une roue;
 Esprit ingrat, infidelle à aymer
 Celuy qui seul le devrait allumer. (4)

Gody, however, offers the hope of redemption and consequent survival

1. 1.43-46.

2. 1.59-64.

3. 1.65-68.

4. Gody, Elegie Neuviésme, Les Honnestes Poésies, 1632.

in a world free of the uncertainties of the present one. Théophile, while he obviously recognises the instability of the world and the frailty of man, can abandon neither, since he doubts the validity of the christian case. In the Ode addressed to Monsieur de Liancour - Entretiens la mélancholie.... he states his doubt explicitly:

Je trouve un soing bien ridicule
De travailler à son renom,
Deubt on vaincre le nom d'Hercule,
Dont je doutte s'il feust ou non.
Après nous il ne faut attendre
Que la pourriture et la cendre.....

....Et quel bon sens ou quelle estude
Nous peut oster l'incertitude
Du futur qui nous est promis ? (1)

For Théophile the only certainty is this certainty of death. The life of man is in the hands of a blind unthinking destiny, so that there can be no discernable plan in life; it is governed by chance. Sometimes Théophile introduces the Parcae who cut the threads of life indiscriminately, to stress his idea of destiny:

Et quand nos astres ont fait leur cours
Et que le trame de nos jours
N'a plus aucun filet à suivre.....(2)

To ascribe the apparently arbitrary events of man's life to the influence of the stars was of course a conventional way of expressing the idea:

Il est vray qu'un sort malheureux
Par un astre bien ténébreux
Conduisoit le train de ma vie. (3)

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1. Théophile Ode a M de Liancour (Entretiens la melancholie) O.P. II, p. 220, (Appendice)
 2. Théophile, Requete au Premier Président, O.P. II, p.114, l.25-27
 3. Théophile, Quand j'auray ce contentement O.P. I, p.65, l.13-15

Mais moy qui vois mon astre en si mauvais sentier....(1)

La Fortune, too, appears in Théophile's poetry, though without the fantastic imagery with which Baudouin surrounds it. It is the apparently haphazard nature of Fortune's ministrations which Théophile describes in the Satyre Seconde. Here the public career of man - probably Concini is intended - is described in the following way:

Un homme dont le nom est à peine connu
D'un pais etranger nouvellement venu,
Que la fortune avengle en promenant sa roue
Tira sans y penser d'une orniere de boue. (2)

There is no suggestion, in such references, of the idea of Providence. Here the ruling force of life is blind and therefore heedless of man's condition; there can be no hope of stability in a life ruled by such a fickle monarch. In describing the results of this subjection of man's life to fortune Théophile gives one of his most pessimistic accounts of it in a poem addressed to the comte de Candale:

Triste condition que le sort plus humain
Ne nous peut assurer au soir d'estre demain
Ainsi te mit nature au cours de la fortune,
Aussi sujet à tous à cette loi commune,
D'un natural fragile, et qui se vient ranger
A quel point que l'humeur le force de changer. (3)

The transient life he describes in two simple but effective images, later in the same poem:

Mais notre jeune temps laisse aussi peu de marque
Que le vol d'un oiseau ou celui d'une barque. (4)

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1. Théophile, Elegie, Dans ce climat barbare O.P. II, p.36, l.67.
 2. Théophile, Satyre Seconde, O.P. I, p.89. l.7-10.
 3. Théophile, Quand la Divinité... O.P. I. p.66, l.11-16.
 4. ibid l.41-42.

By these references to the transitory life of man, by the insistence on the inconstancy of life, by the use of images such as the stars and fortune, Théophile produces one view of the human condition: man is placed at the mercy of a blind destiny, he is trapped between the blind chance of his birth and the equally blind chance of his death. This is indeed the view of man's condition which we find in some of Théophile's poetry. It is not however, the whole view. The Satyre Première from which we have quoted does not end as pessimistically as it began. Life may be inconstant, but the realisation of this does not persuade him to reject the only life of which he can be sure.

That inconstancy is for Théophile an important characteristic of the world and of the life of man, is revealed by the use he makes of a certain kind of imagery. We have already noted the images used by Durand suggesting movement and fragility; of these, those images which are associated with the sea are among those used most frequently at the time. The sea is forever in a state of flux; unstable and unfixed, its moods can never be foreseen; indeed it seems to contain the very spirit of inconstancy. In addition, its changeability is often the cause of death to those who risk themselves upon it. It is these twin factors of inconstancy and death which Théophile evokes when he uses imagery of the sea.

We must first of all make a distinction between Théophile's use of such imagery and that of certain of his contemporaries. For the religious writers of the time imagery of the sea is an obvious way

of stressing the vanity of human life in order to point to a more stable world hereafter. Théophile does not make use of it to point to a moral of general application, as does Chassignet:

Notre vie est semblable à la mer vagabonde
Où le flot suit le flot et l'onde pousse l'onde,
Surgissant à la fin au havre de la mort. (1)

or Sponde:

Qui sont ces louvoyeurs qui s'éloignent du port?
Hommagers à la vie et felons à la Mort,
Dont l'étoile est leur bien et le vent leur Fantasie ?
Je vogue en même mer et craindrois de périr
Si ce n'est que je sais que ceste même vie
N'est rien que le fanal qui me guide à mourir. (2)

He does not use it as does Malleville to preach the vanity of the world:

Le vent sur cette mer excite mille orages
Le nombre des vaisseaux est celui des naufrages
Le rocher le plus ferme est enfin ébranlé. (3)

However it is not only the religious poets who find the sea an attractive image. Other poets among whom we may count Théophile, use the imagery not only because they wish to talk about inconstancy, but because they seem attracted to the movement, the dynamism and the violence of the sea. Thus Tristan in a poem written to celebrate the return to health of St Aignan:

Comme parfois dans un Orage
Qui met en péril de naufrage
Ceux qui se trouvent sur les flots
Un vent vient à régner contre toute apparence
Qui sauve le navire et remet l'Espérance

1. Chassignet, op. cit. Sonnet LIII.

2. Sponde, Sonnets de la Mort.

3. Malleville, La Vanité du Monde Poésies Paris 1644.

Au cœur des Matelots. (1)

And again Tristan on the renewal of his inspiration:

Et déjà ma flamme s'elance
Avec autant de violence
Que l'eau qui jaillit d'un Rocher. (2)

Indeed Tristan devotes one of his Vers Héroïques to the sea, and while in part of the poem he is concerned with describing that state of reverie induced in him by the sight of a tranquil sea, he is none the less attracted by the storm. Here is his description of a vessel in a tempestuous sea:

Tantôt il est haut élané
Tantôt il se trouve enfoncé
Jusque dans les sablons humides:
Et se voit toujours investir
D'un gros de montagnes liquides
Qui s'avancent pour l'engloutir. (3)

But with Tristan the mobility seems sometimes to have been arrested, and the waves frozen in their onward path, for he is very fond of describing the sea and water in general in terms of precious stones.

In La Mer for example, we find the following lines:

Le Soleil à longs traits ardans
Y donne encore de la grâce;
Et tasche à se mirer dedans
Comme on ferait dans une glace:
Mais les flots de verts émaillez
Qui semblent des Jaspes tailles
S'entredérobent à son visage
Et par de petits tremblements
Font voir au lieu de son Image
Mille pointes de diamants. (4)

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1. Tristan l'Hermite, A M. le comte de St Aignan sur sa guérison, Vers Héroïques, Paris 1648.
 2. Tristan, Ode a Monseigneur le Mareschal de Schomberg sur le combat de Locate. Vers Héroïques.
 3. Tristan, La Mer, Vers Héroïques, 1.125-130.
 4. ibid, 1.41-50.

The frequency with which imagery associated with the sea occurs in Théophile's poetry would suggest that for him too, it held some kind of attraction. In the great majority of cases his use of this imagery produces pictures of violence. The poem Parmy ces promenoirs sauvages begins with such a picture:

Parmy ces promenoirs sauvages
 J'oy bruire les vents et les flots,
 Attendant que les matelots
 M'emportent hors de ces rivages.
 Icy les rochers blanchissans
 Du choc des vagues gemissans,
 Hérisissent leurs masses cornues
 Cotre la cholere des airs,
 Et Présentent leurs testes nues
 A la menace des esclairs. (1)

Here an image of violence and wildness is suggested by the use of the word "sauvage" in the first line, and is developed by the appeal to the hearing of the reader in the second, by the description of the peculiar shape of the rocks battered by the waves, and by the final suggestion of danger in the last line together with the vivid visual effect of the word "esclairs". In this poem the violence of the sea is used to stress the strength of his love, since in spite of the danger involved in a sea voyage, he is still determined to return to his beloved. The departure is delayed however, and prayers for an end to the storm are of no avail since the sea is this

Esclave du vent et de l'air,
 Monstre confus,..... (2)

The storm dies away only to return once the vessel has put to sea.

1. Théophile, O.P. I. p. 124, l.1-10.

2. ibid l.26-27.

This introduces the final pointe of the poem which compares the inconstancy of the sea with the constancy of the lady:

La tourmente revient dans l'eau,
Dieux que la mort est infidele !
Chere Cloris, si ton amour
N'avoit plus de constance qu'elle,
Je mourrois avant mon retour. (1)

The inconstancy and cruelty of the sea are suggested in many other images. One of the most extended is to be found in the elegy Desja trop longuement la paresse me flatte. This seascape develops almost haphazardly out of a simple comparison.

Neptune est effroyable, il tempeste, il escume,
Sa fureur jusqu'au ciel vosmit son amertume,
Trahit les plus heureux, et leur faict un cercueil
Tantost d'un banc de sable, et tantost d'un escueil:
Ses abois font horreur, et mesme en la bonace
Par un silence affreux ce trompeur nous menace.(2)

Here the personification included in the image adds malevolence to the idea of violence. Moreover the periods of calm offer a false hope of security, a point which Gombauld also makes (3) However we should note that this image of insecurity is not used by Theophile in order to illustrate explicitly the vanity of human life; the image may suggest to us a concern with inconstancy in other spheres, but the suggestion is contained in the nature of the image itself. Théophile seems attracted by the violence of the image rather than by its moral implications. The violence is stressed in the further

1. l.76-89.

2. Poem addressed to Candale, O.P.I, p.71, l.69-74.

3. Dans un calme incertain j'écoute retentir
Les accens enchanteurs des perfides Sirènes. Gombauld, Sonnets Chrestiens,
La Poésie de Gombauld, Paris, 1946.

development of the image:

Il a devant tes yeux faict blesmir les nochers,
Obscurcy le Soleil, et fendu les rochers:
De ses flots il fait naistre et mourir le tonnerre;
Et de son bruict hideux gemit toute la terre:
L'image de la mort passe au travers des flots,
Dans les coeurs endurcis des plus fiers matelots.(1)

In the Ode: Plein de cholere et de raison Théophile paints another picture of the sea which is to serve as an illustration of the cruelty of winter:

Aujourd'huy mille matelots
Où ta fureur combat les flots,
Defaillis d'art et de courage
En l'avanture de tes eaux,
Ne rencontrent que des tombeaux. (2)

In another stanza of the same poem however, the flux of the sea is frozen into immobility:

La nassaille attendant le flux
Des ondes qui ne courent plus
Oysifve au port est retenue. (3)

But it is seldom that Théophile's descriptions of the sea lose their suggestion of violence. He has not recorded an experience similar to the reverie of Tristan or Saint-Amant.(4) When, in Théophile's poetry the lover turns in his despair to the sea, it has no solace to offer:

J'invoque les ondes et l'air:
Mais au lieu de me consoler,
Les flots grondent à mon martyre,
Mes souspirs vont avec le vent,
Et mon pauvre esprit se retire
Aussi triste qu'auparavant.(5)

1. Théophile, O.P. I, p.71, l.75-80.

2. Théophile, Ode, O.P. I, p.33, l.73-77.

3. l.41-43.

4. See Tristan, La Mer, l. 1-10 and Saint-Amant Le Contemplateur, l. 91-94

5. Aussi franc d'amour que d'envie, O.P. I, p.134, l.35-40.

The image of shipwreck is often associated with that of the violent sea: the fate of the Spaniards in the Ode au Prince d'Orange is compared with that of sailors battling against the sea, who find their rest "sur les rochers de leur naufrage." Elsewhere the poet describes his own life in terms of a sea voyage. If his enemies have their way, he tells us, his life will end in disaster:

S'il arrive que non naufrage
Soit la fin de ce grand orage
Dont je voy mes jours menassez....(1)

The same imagery is used, as one might expect, to point to the uncertainty of human life:

En quel Palais et quels Autels
Ne se peut glisser le tonnerre?
Quels vaisseaux, et quels matelots
Sont tousjours asseurez des flots ? (2)

The lines we have just quoted are taken from poems concerning his personal danger at the time of his imprisonment. At such times he also makes use of the complementary metaphor "le port". In spite of the storm, he maintains in his letter to his brother, he still has hope of one day reaching safe harbour:

Il faut enfin que la tempeste
M'ouvre le sépulchre ou le port. (3)

Here the haven represents the peaceful life he looks forward to, when he is no longer in danger of persecution at the hands of authority. There is an occasion on which he uses the metaphor to represent the

1. Prière aux poètes de ce temps, O.P. II, p. 126, l.19-21
2. Lettre de Théophile à son Frère, O.P. II, p.185, l.143-146.
3. O.P. II, p.185, l.19-20.

haven of death as Sponde had done:

Plus je sens approcher le terme
 Plus je desire aller au port,
 Et tousjours d'un visage ferme
 Je regarde verir la mort. (1)

In an image such as this the stress is on the peace and repose of the haven rather than on the violence of the present storm, but it is the latter quality which we more often find in Théophile's sea imagery.

When in the Ode Lorsqu'on veut que les Muses flattent Théophile makes use of sea imagery to describe the composition of a poem we find both the safety of the goal to be reached and the violence of the journey:

Tout plein de zele et de courage
 Je m'embarque à ce grand ouvrage;
 Je scay l'Antarctique et le Nort,
 J'entends la carte et les estoilles
 Et ne fais point enfler mes voilles
 Avant qu'estre asseuré du port.(2)

His enemies however, will be hoping for failure:

Par les rochers, et dans l'orage
 De l'onde où je me suis commis
 Je prepare à mes ennemis
 L'esperance de mon naufrage. (3)

While Théophile does not use imagery of the sea in order to moralise about the vanity of human life, the frequent use of images suggesting the violence of the sea would indicate that the world Théophile experienced around him, was in part at least, a world of violence, of insecurity, of inconstancy. This hypothesis finds confirmation in another series of images, closely connected with the imagery we have

1. Mon Dieu que la franchise est rare O.P. I, p.95, 1.57-60.

2. O.P. I, p.92, 1.75-80.

3. *ibid*, 1.81-84.

been discussing, but which is at times even more evocative of violence and insecurity. Théophile often takes natural phenomena such as thunder and lightning, wind and earthquake, and creates from them images which make us feel that we are standing on the crust of a quaking earth, of which the normal order has collapsed. Sometimes indeed an apocalyptic picture of disaster is achieved. The storm theme is one which is to be found in the painting of the time as well as in the poetry. In Rubens' Philemon and Baucis, for example, the sense of movement, together with the flash of lightning and the violent contrast of light and dark, reminds us of Théophile's description of battle in the Ode au Prince d'Orange.(1)

Durand links this imagery directly with the theme of inconstancy in his Stances where he speaks of

Les feux qui font en l'air les tonnantes chaleurs,
Les flammes des éclairs plus tôt mortes que vues. (2)

It is imagery which Sponde had used when speaking of the proximity of death to this proud life of ours:

J'ay veu ces clairs esclairs passer devant mes yeux,
Et le tonnerre encore qui gronde dans les Cieux,
Où d'une ou d'autre part esclattera l'orage.(3)

Théophile, in a poem written when he was under the threat of persecution, uses the same imagery to convey his equanimity in face of

1. Théophile, O.P. I, p. 39, l.91 et seq. A similar interest in disorder and violence may be seen in Rubens' Conquest of Tunis by Charles V, and in his Capture of Paris by Henri IV.
2. Durand Stances a l'Inconstance, op cit.
3. Sponde, Sonnets de la Mort.

death.

Mais que la flamme du tonnerre
Vienne esclatter a mon trespas,
Et le Ciel fasse sous mes pas
Crever la masse de la terre,
Mon esprit sans estonnement
S'appreste a son dernier moment. (1)

Here the effect of violence contained in the first two lines is increased by the suggestion of earthquake in the two which follow. Sometimes the violence of the image is heightened by the use of a poetic form, based on a series of single sense lines, each complete in itself.

Aux coups que le canon tiroit
Le Ciel de peur se retiroit,
La mer se veid toute alumée
Les astres perdirent leur rang,
L'air s'estouffa de la fumée,
La terre se noya de sang. (2)

This poem is in fact notable for its effective use of this imagery of storm. The poet describes the prince's part in the victory in the following lines in which he makes effective use of the dramatic contrast between light and dark:

Toy soul grand Prince es le vainqueur,
Car si les tiens monstrent du coeur
Tout ce qui les y fait resoudre
Sont tes yeux dont le feu reluit

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1. Théophile, Mon Dieu, que la franchise est rare, O.P. I, p.95, l.51-56.
 2. Théophile, Ode au Prince d'Orange, O.P. I, p. 39, l.150-155.
A passage which is identical in its rhythm and feeling to the one quoted above is to be found in the work of Nicolas Frenicle

Toujours l'orage continue,
La nuit a tout rempli d'horreur,
Le vent augmente da fureur,
Le tonnerre a crevé la nue,
Nous sommes tous couverts de feu.

Ode, Les Premières

Dans le sang, et parmi la poudre,
Comme aux orages de la nuit
Brillent les flammes de la foudre. (1)

There is sometimes a certain unreality in the pictures created by these images. Some of the lines we have already quoted suggest a disordered universe which has lost what order and stability it once possessed; it seems at times to be a universe in the process of disintegration. In Théophile's play Pyrame there occurs a violent description of the universe in collapse. Here la Mère gives an account of a fearful dream, in the course of which "cent fois la mort par mes os a couru". The sun, mainstay of the universe, regarded as the beneficent source of life, is in eclipse. The vision proceeds in this atmosphere of apocalyptic darkness:

J'ay senty sous mes pieds ouvrir un peu la terre,
Et de là sourdement bruire aussi le tonnerre:
Un grand vol de corbeaux sur moy s'est assemblé;
La lune est dévalée, et le ciel a tremblé;
L'air s'est couvert d'orage, et, dans ceste tempeste,
Quelques gouttes de sang m'ont tombé sur la teste. (2)

Not only is a storm in progress but the moon falls from its accustomed place, and the heavens themselves seem insecure.

The same apocalyptic imagery is used in another of Théophile's

1. *ibid*, 1.91-97. These lines may be compared with Lortigue's epitaph to Henry le Grand:

Combien de fois couvert tout de sang et de poudre,
Entre les bataillons comme une ardente foudre,
Engraissoit les guetres des soldats courageux
Les renversant ainsi qu'un torrent orageux
Qui descend furieux des plus hautes montagnes
Et saccage en bruyant les fertiles campagnes.

Les Poèmes Divers, 1617

2. Théophile, Pyrame et Thisbé, Act IV, Sc. I. Ed. Alleaume, Vol. II p. 130.

poems which has attracted much attention on account of the strangeness of its imagery. Not only does it contain the images used by La Mère in the account of her dream but much more besides:

Un corbeau devant moy croasse,
 Une ombre offusque mes regards,
 Deux belettes, et deux renards.
 Traversent l'endroit ou je passe;
 Les pieds faillent à mon cheval,
 Mon laquay tombe du haut mal,
 J'entends craqueter le tonnerre,
 Un esprit se presente à moi,
 J'oy Charon qui m'apelle à soy,
 Je voy le centre de la terre.

Ce ruisseau remonte en sa source,
 Un boeuf gravit sur un clocher,
 Le sang coule de ce rocher,
 Un aspic s'accouple d'une ourse,
 Un serpent deschire un vautour,
 Le feu brusle dedans la glace,
 Le Soleil est devenu noir,
 Je voy la Lune qui va cheoir,
 Cet arbre est sorty de sa place.(1)

In the first stanza occur several different omens of death, of which the most familiar is the corbeau. The reference to the thunder creates an image of violence and disorder, as does to an even greater extent the last line of the stanza with its suggestion of a quaking earth. Death in the first stanza is therefore accompanied by a suggestion of disorder, and it is this which becomes the theme of the second. The upheaval of the natural order of things is suggested in almost every image. This is in fact a world turned upside down, a world which is about to disintegrate, and the effect of these images of disorder is heightened by the very form of the poem - the single line

1. Théophile, O.P. I., p. 164.

technique which we have already noticed.

Théophile paints another and rather different picture of the end of the world in the Ode à M. L. sur la Mort de son Père. Here we find a rather more direct description of the event. Théophile looks forward to the time when the ending of the state of balance of a universe in perpetual movement will bring about collapse:

Les planettes s'arresteront,
 Les eslements se mesleront
 En ceste admirable Structure
 Dont le Ciel nous laisse jouyr.
 Ce qu'on voit, ce qu'on peut ouyr
 Passera comme une peinture:
 L'impuissance de la Nature
 Laissera tout évanouyr. (1)

Saint-Amant's picture of the same event contains the kind of imagery which Théophile uses in his Un Corbeau devant moi

Les estoiles tombent des cieux,
 Les flames devorent la terre,
 Le mont Gibel est en tous lieux
 Et partout gronde le tonnerre.
 La salamandre est sans vertu,
 L'asbeste passe comme festu
 La mer brusle comme eau de vie,
 L'air n'est plus que souffre allumé
 Et l'astre dont l'aube est suivie
 Est par soy-mesme consumée. (2)

Not only therefore does Théophile create images of violence and disorder which suggest a world full of instability, but he uses these images to describe explicitly the final crumbling of the system. His awareness of instability in the real world is made even clearer by the negative use to which he puts this imagery from time to time. In

1. Théophile, Ode a M. de L. O.P. II, p. 214. 1.81-88.

2. Saint-Amant. Le Contemplateur ed Garnier, p. 10, 1.420-429.

contrast to the crumbling world of the apocalypse, he creates his own imaginative paradise, a hortus conclusus of the mediaeval tradition, where all is peace and permanence. The parc at Chantilly is never troubled by winds and storms:

Au moins les vents et les rochers
N'y font point crier les nochers
Dont ils ont brisé les navires. (1)

Tristan makes a similar use of the imagery in his description of the lovers' paradise:

Jamais les vents ny le tonnerre
N'ont troublé la paix de ces lieux;
Et la complaisance des Cieux
Y sourit toujours à la Terre. (2)

Not only then, is this imagery of sea and storm suggestive of violence and movement, but it is sometimes used to create the picture of an unstable world, indeed of a universe in collapse. Such images as those we have been discussing are in themselves indicative of such a view of the world and of man's place in it. It is of course true that in his discussion of the theme of inconstancy Théophile shows none of the anguish of a Sponde. Though he recognises the inconstancy of the world and fully reveals his awareness of it in his imagery, he does not, because of that, reject this world and look for a better. For Théophile the world is unstable but-----, while for Sponde or for Gombauld, it is unstable therefore -----. The distinction will become clearer if we compare Théophile's use of water imagery with

1. Théophile, La Maison de Silvie Ode III, O.P. II, p.147, l.28-30.
2. Tristan, Le Promenoir des Deux Amants Les Amours ed. Garnier, p.50.

the use to which several of his contemporaries put it.

The very fluidity of water makes it of course an admirable source of imagery for the poet who wishes to draw attention to the inconstancy of human life. Chassignet, for example, had explained the mutability of man through the image of a flowing stream:

Assieds toy sur le bord d'une ondante rivièrè
 Tu la verras fluer d'un perpetual cours,
 Et flots sur flots roulant en mille et mille tours
 Descharger par les prez son humide carrièrè.
 Mais tu ne verras rien de cette onde première
 Qui n'aguierè coulait, l'eau change tous les jours,
 Tous les jours elle passe, et la nommons toujours
 Même fleuve et même eau, d'une même manière. (1)

In describing the stream in this way Chassignet is of course preparing an analogy with the life of man; he is interested primarily, not in the image itself but in the idea of mutability. The purpose of such poets as Chassignet, Sponde, or later Le Moyne is too serious for them to be diverted by the decorative effect of water. And yet to many poets, and to Théophile himself, it is the beauty and the particular characteristics of this ever changing element which is attractive. They linger about the beauty of the image, they do not wish to harness it to a particular theme. Their interest in water derives perhaps, from their interest in movement itself. We have already seen that Théophile seems to find attractive the dynamism of certain images of sea and storm; very often he seems to stress the changing form of water because this too, answers his desire for movement.

Typical of this attitude to water imagery is Du Bois Hus who

1. Chassignet, Le Mépris de la Vie et Consolation contre la Mort.

describes in detail the fluidity and formlessness of water:

Un scavant et subtil Hazart
 Gouverné par l'esprit de l'art
 Fait des miracles de peinture
 Il écrit avec l'eau dessus le front de l'air
 Et forme une écriture
 Qui demeure toujours et ne fait que couler.

Vois un lys que est élément
 Fait et défait chaque moment
 Sans le ravir à l'oeil qui l'aime
 Un miracle de l'art que sa matière fuit
 Sans sortir de lui même
 Et le fuyant sans cesse incessamment le suit.(1)

Frequent are the more conventional images which attempt to evoke the movement of water by the use of such words as serpent, roulant, glissans. The flowing stream is an essential part of the setting to Marbeuf's idyllic lovers' paradise

... une fontaine au pied d'une colline
 Qui faisoit un serpent de son onde argentine
 Elle sur le sablon doucement gazouillant
 Alloit ses plis crespes l'un sur l'autre roullant
 Se glisser su l'herbe au millieu d'une prée. (2)

Nor is Frenicle insensitive to the charms of movement:

Cette eau dont le flot vagabond
 Se débordoit dans ce vallon
 Avec ses Nymphesse resserre
 Et bouillant aux rais su soleil
 Découvre son gravier à l'oeil. (3)

Even the lugubrious Lortigue is enchanted by the flowing stream:

J'admire les ruisseaux glissans
 Qui rendent les pres florissans
 Descendant de maintes fontaines
 Et courant a cent plis tortus. (4)

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1. Du Bois Hus La Nuit des Nuits et le Jour des Jours 1641
 2. Marbeuf, Recueil des Vers Rouen, 1628
 3. Frenicle, Aminte Les Premières Oeuvres 1625
 4. Lortigue, Le Désert, 1637 Livre le

The beauty of changing forms is evoked by Tristan in his description of an idealised countryside:

Apres de cette Grotte sombre
 Ou l'on respire un air si doux
 L'onde lutte avec les cailloux
 Et la lumière avecque l'ombre.

But soon the movement is ended and Tristan goes on to describe the beauty of tranquil water:

L'ombre de cette fleur vermeille,
 Et celle de ces joncs pendants
 Paraissent être là-dedans
 Les songes de l'eau qui sommeille. (1)

It is the beauty of the movement of water which Théophile finds so attractive in La Maison de Silvie, when he describes the streams and fountains of the parc at Chantilly, which even today is streaked

with water: Un estanc dort là tout auprès
 Où ces fontaines violentes
 Courent, et font du bruit expres
 Pour esveiller ses vagues lentes.
 Luy d'un maintien majestueux
 Reçoit l'abord impetueux
 De ces Naiades vagabondes
 Qui dedans ce large vaisseau
 Confondent leur petit ruisseau
 Et ne discernent plus ses ondes. (2)

This description is full of the movement of water which, before its flowing can be caught, merges its transient form with that of the larger whole of the pond. The appeal of the image is sensuous, on the level both of sight and sound; it has no intellectual application outside itself and is not therefore a metaphysical image as was Chassignet's image of the stream quoted above; it has however,

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1. Tristan Le Promenoir des Deux Amants Les Amours
 2. Théophile, La Maison de Silvie Ode III, O. P. II, p.147, l.11-20.

a precious and slightly intellectual content in that it is based on the conception of natural objects possessing human feelings. Here, perhaps, we may point to the three most important characteristics of Théophile's imagery - instability, here seen in the movement of the water, sensuality, and artifice. This combination of the sensuous with the artificial may be observed in another image of water also from La Maison de Silvie:

Ses yeux jettoient un feu dans l'eau;
 Ce feu choque l'eau sans la craindre,
 Et l'eau trouve ce feu si beau
 Qu'elle ne l'oseroit esteindre. (1)

Sometimes in this water imagery the movement receives a check. Like Tristan, Théophile often introduces words which suggest the tinkle of crystal, the breaking of delicate glass rather than that of the liquid stream. In fact he seems to waver between the fluid and the static, evoking now one and now the other, and sometimes both at once. In the following lines the impression given by the description of sunlight filtering through the trees on to the water is one of changing forms, and yet here and there, there is a suggestion of the static.

Les rayons du jour esgarez
 Parmi des ombres incertaines
 Esparpillent les feux dorez
 Dessus l'azur de ces fontaines.
 Son or dedans l'eau confondu,
 Avecques ce cristal fondu
 Mesle son teint et sa nature,
 Et seme son esclat mouvant
 Comme la branche au gré du vent
 Efface et marque sa peinture. (2)

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1. Ibid. Ode II, O.P., p.141, l.21-24
 2. Ibid. Ode Vi, O.P., II, p.161, l.101-110.

Without doubt an impression of fluidity is contained in such expressions as "esgarez", "des ombres incertaines", "Mesle", "son éclat mouvant", "efface", but there is also the suggestion of the static in these precious images taken from the jeweller's art - "son or", "ce cristal". Elsewhere the effect is more noticeable:

(les) teintures dont le soleil
Couvre les petits flots de verre.(1)

There is a similar passage in the Ode au Roy sur son Retour, where the precious effect of such a description of water makes a strange contrast with the high-sounding phrases of the official ode:

Les sources de Fontainebleau,
Rompant leurs petits flots de verre
Contre les murs de leurs rampars,
Ne murmurent que de la guerre
Qui les prive de vos regards. (2)

Such lines as these recall Tristan's description of the sea in terms of precious stones(3). It is as if Théophile, aware of the transience of the beauty of water wishes to arrest the streams, to freeze them into delicate ornaments of glass, so that they may the more easily admire the shifting beauty of their forms. There is a passage in the Maison de Silvie in which the desire for permanence and constancy is made explicit:

Je sçay que ces miroirs flotants
Où l'objet change tant de place
Pour elle devenus constans
Auront une fidele glace,
Et sous un ornement si beau
La surface mesme de l'eau,

1. Ibid. Ode VII, O.P. II, p.167, l. 6-7.
2. O.P. II, p. 7, l. 16-20.
3. See above p.23.

Nonobstant sa delicatesses,
 Gardera seurement encrez
 Et mes caracteres sacrez
 Et les attraites de la Princesse.(1)

And here the image has a metaphysical as well as a sensuous quality. He knows well that water will always flow on, but such is the beauty of Silvie, such is the magic of this unreal garden, that the fluidity of water, like the change and decay of life, can, he hopes, be transformed into stability, that this fragile human beauty can be preserved.

This duality in imagery of water is observable in the work of other poets of the time. D'Arbaud Porcheres, for example, describes flowing water as if it were a sheet of glass:

Verres tramblants, miroirs liquides
 Flots d'argent, veines de cristal.....(2)

Scudéry, in the first of his twelve sonnets on the Fontaine de Vaucluse, speaks of "un liquide de cristal....un bel argent fondu". In the third sonnet the water is described as "un grand miroir d'argent" and in the fourth as "ce serpent de cristal". This duality appears too, in another poem:

Icy un Ruisseau murmure
 Icy cet autre s'endort
 Sa glace tranquille et pure
 Reçoit l'image du bort. (3)

It is of course Tristan who carries furthest the static description of water. He is particularly fond of the tinkle of precious stones,

1. Théophile, La Maison de Silvie Ode I, O.P. II, 137, 1.101-110.
2. Rimes d'arbaud Porchers, Sur les Fontaines et les Rivières. Paris 1855.
3. Scudery, Poésies Diverses Paris, 1644 (bound together with Malleville Poésies) Sonnets sur la Fontaine de Vaucluse, and Ode à M. l'abbé de Richelieu.

which lends an impression of fragile artificiality to much of his verse:

Les vagues d'un cours diligent
A longs plis de verre ou d'argent
Se viennent rompre sur la rive:
Où leur debris fait tout à coup
Rejaillir une source vive
De perles parmi les cailloux. (1)

Théophile makes a less obvious use of this particular kind of water imagery, but that he is from time to time concerned with ending the mobility of water is suggested by the use he makes of water which has in fact been solidified:

Le Heron quand il veut pescher
Trouvant l'eau toute de rocher.....(2)

Les poissons dorment asseurez,
D'un mur de glace remparez
Francs de tous les dangers du monde
Fors que de toy tant seulement,
Qui restreins leur moite element,
Jusqu'à la goutte plus profonde,
Et les laisses sans mouvement,
Enchassez en l'argent de l'onde. (3)

Here once more is the Théophile who takes his imagery from the artificial creations of the jeweller. He is, it seems, caught between the fascination of the flux, of the ever changing beauty of water, and the desire to preserve its fleeting beauty by artificially immobilising the flowing stream by means of this hard, brittle imagery of gold and precious stones.

However, whether Théophile's pictures of water evoke at any

1. Tristan, La Mer Vers Héroiques, 1.95-100.
2. Théophile, Ode Plein de cholere O.P. I, p. 33, 1.49-50.
3. Ibid, 1.57-64.

particular moment the fluid or the static, he never attempts to use them in order to point a moral about human life. His imagery is, in this particular sphere at least, seldom metaphysical. It is the present beauty of the object which interests him. This only confirms the distinction which we have already drawn between Théophile and certain of his contemporaries who use the transient qualities of water in order to point to the transience of life. Such is Théophile's appreciation of the sensuous beauty of the world that he is able to stop and savour the sensuous beauty of water, and at the same time ignore its obvious symbolism. Nevertheless, it may well be thought that such an insistence on water in the poetry indicates an awareness of the change and decay of life. The attraction of the water image in conjunction with that of the images of storm and the sea would suggest that one of the characteristics of Théophile's poetry is this sense of instability revealed by so many of his contemporaries.

DEATH.

An insistence on the inconstancy of the life of man and on the instability of the world in which he lives, inevitably entails a consideration of the fact of death. The awareness of death, and not only of the fact of death, but also of all the details of decay is another symptom of the unstable world which so many poets of the time seem to see around them. Once again we should expect to see the distinction between those who, regarding life as vanity, display before us the horror of death as the end of human pride, and those like Théophile who, while conscious of the fact of death, stress the value of the life which precedes it, rather than that which follows. Not only is the theme seen to be useful on moral grounds but it often seems to be poetically attractive to both sets of poets. The use which the religious poets of the time make of the theme is illustrated in the following lines:

Il me plaist de gémir, me plaindre et lamenter,
 Et m'ennuyer de vivre,
 Desseigner un tombeau et tout seul feuilleter
 Les plaintifs de ce livre. (1)

Here Philemon Gody looks on death with affection; there is a suggestion of obsessional interest in the third line - "desseigner un tombeau." Others look forward to death with even greater pleasure than this:

"O douce mort, que tes appas sont puissants! ô misérable
 vie que tes charmes sont faibles. O chère Mort que tes
 maux sont délicieux! ô dure vie que tes tourmens sont
 insupportables!" (2)

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1. Placidus Philemon Gody, Les Honnestes Poésies 1632, Livre 4e Muse Funebre, Stances.
 2. Fuget de la Serre, Les Délices de la Mort. Rouen, 1631.

For the religious poet an understanding of the human situation can only be achieved through concentration on the fact of death and on the life beyond. The pleasures of this life are rejected since their effect is to divert attention from death. Pascal puts the point as follows:

"La seule chose qui nous console de nos misères est le divertissement, et cependant c'est la plus grande de nos misères. Car c'est cela qui nous empêche principalement de songer à nous, et qui nous fait perdre insensiblement. Sans cela nous serions dans l'ennui, et cet ennui nous pousserait à chercher un moyen plus solide d'en sortir. Mais le divertissement nous amuse, et nous fait arriver insensiblement à la mort." (1)

The prevalence of such an attitude to death at the time may go some way towards explaining the continual insistence on the theme in poetry. Frequently however, death seems to be introduced with all its paraphernalia of decay, as a subject attractive in itself rather than as an inducement to meditation on the human situation. Some poets seem intent on creating an effect of pleasurable horror which will divert the reader rather than send him in quest of eternal truths.

Of course recognition of the fact of death may be no more than the natural complement of a healthy concern with life, as it often was with the poets of the Pléiade in the mid sixteenth century. They, in their concern with the full experience of life, considered death only as a means of emphasising the joy of life. However, at the end of the century, after so many years of war and bloodshed, death has become a constant reality, and poets are concerned with it as some-

1. Pascal, Pensées, 171.

thing which casts its shadow over the whole of life. The change of emphasis is apparent within the poetry of Ronsard himself, who writes at the end of the end of his life:

Que l'homme est malheureux qui au monde se fie ! (1)

He now sees death as the comforter:

Ha mort, le port commun, des hommes le confort,
Viens enterrer mes maux, je t'en prie à mains jointes.(2)

It may of course be argued that Ronsard's attitude to death would naturally change as he grew older, but we cannot apply the same argument to the many poets who interested themselves in the theme in the years which followed.

The consciousness of death expresses itself in various ways. The carpe diem theme is still to be found, though now bearing more macabre touches. Many poets who are not obsessed by the sordid details of death are none the less conscious of its inevitability. The lover still urges his mistress to enjoy and to let him enjoy the pleasures of the flesh, of this flesh which will so soon decay. As Durand has it, winter is quick to follow spring and summer. He goes on:

Cet ceil si beau se cavera,
Ce beau teint se replissera,
Et cette bouche si vermeille
Qui tire tous les coeurs à soi
Par l'effect du temps, qui sommeille
Ne servira plus que d'effroy. (3)

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1. Ronsard, Elégie Contre les Bûcherons... Ed. Garnier, v.V, p.245.
 2. Idem, Sonnet Ah longues nuits d'hiver... 1585, publ. 1586. Ed. Garnier, v.II, p.465.
 3. Durand, Ode I. Le Livre d'Amour D'Etienne Durand. Paris Leclerc 1907..

The spring of life says Racan is with us only once, and he implies the remedy:

Et ne croy pas en Automne
Cueillir les fruits d'Amour. (1)

The consciousness of ultimate decay sometimes brings with it an insistence on the equality of all men, rich and poor, in face of death, as when Théophile asserts in all frankness to Louis XIII that his flesh must suffer the decay ordained by the deity:

Luy qui vous preste sa lumiere
Et qui malgré les fleurs de lis,
Un jour fera de la poussiere
De vos membres ensevelis, (2)

Malleville deals with the same theme in his sonnet on the death of Richelieu:

Sa pompe n'est plus rien que la pompe funebre
Et sa grandeur se borne à celle d'un cercueil. (3)

In another poem Malleville makes the point quite clearly:

Et dedans le cercueil les plus riches Monarques
Ne sont point différents des plus pauvres Bergers. (4)

On the other hand poets sometimes make a point of denying the power of death over the great men and women they are celebrating. In doing so they are obeying a convention to which even the most independent of poets found themselves obliged to subscribe. In Malherbe's Ode sur L'Attentat the poet asks that the queen be shielded from the

1. Racan, La Venue du Printemps A M. de Termes Poésies, v.VI, p.53
2. Théophile, Ode Au Roy, Celui qui lance le Tonnerre, O.P. I, p.53, l.7-10.
3. Malleville, Poésies, Paris 1649.
4. Ibid. De la Vanité du Monde See also Colomby, Consolation à la Reine Mère sur la Mort dufeu Roi. Délices 1621:
Du Passage des grands comme des miserables
Charon est enrichy.

effects of time:

Fais que jamais rien ne l'ennuie,
 Que toute infortune la fuie,
 Et qu'aux roses de sa beauté
 L'âge par qui tout se consume
 Redonne contre sa coutume
 La grâce de sa nouveauté. (1)

Yet an awareness of the inevitability of death is none the less evident in such lines as these. If time does not take its usual toll it will be "contre sa coutume". Théophile too, may be found expressing a belief in the permanence of his subject's beauty, though such an attitude is hardly typical of his outlook:

Car je ne pense pas que ses attraitcs succombent
 Sous l'injure des ans; tant que les Cieux ne tombent
 Ils se renforceront au lieu de faillir
 Comme l'or s'embellit à force de vieillir. (2)

Malherbe however, often insists on the power of his pen to immortalise the great and thus to preserve them from the tyranny of death's oblivion:

Par les Muses seulement
 L'homme est exempt de la Parque.... (3)

Théophile is normally less concerned with posterity, though we do find the same idea expressed:

Encore mon esprit oze se faire fort
 De sauver ton mérite et mon nom de la mort.(4)

All these references to the theme of death suggest an awareness

1. Malherbe, Ode sur l'Attentat de 1605, l. 185-190.
2. Théophile, Souverain qui regis l'influence des vers, O.P. II, p.16, l.199-202.
3. Malherbe, Ode Au Feu Roy sur l'heureux succes du voyage de Sedan, p.35, l.207-208. ed. Garnier,
4. Théophile, Souverain qui regis

of death as something which invades almost every level of life itself. But here the tone is quiet, resigned, meditative at times, as in parts of the Stances of Gody. There is no attempt to horrify the reader with the facts of death. There is, however, another interpretation of the theme. The concern with death is shown more forcibly in those poems which deal directly with the physical horror of death. Some poets seem to be both revolted and attracted by the decay of the flesh, so that at times we seem to witness once again the vision of the dance of death. And yet one can sometimes detect a difference in tone and in intent between these evocations of decay and those of earlier centuries. It is a difference which lies in the conscious affectation of horror, when the theme is in the hands of certain poets.

We find a realistic treatment of death in the later poetry of Ronsard:

Je n'ay plus que les os, un Squelette je semble,
Décharné, dénérvé, démusclé, dépaülpé,
Que le trait de la mort sans pardon a frappé...(1)

Passages evoking the physical horror of death are to be found in Le Printemps of D'Aubigné who later recounts in some detail the slaughter of the religious wars. We should recall too, that the strangely religious atmosphere of the court of Henri III lent itself to a somewhat obsessional treatment of the theme, with the activities of such bodies as the Confrérie de la Mort. The records which we have of the funerals of the great reveal an insistence on the

1. Ronsard, Les Derniers Vers, Sonnet I.

physical details of death.(1) The contemplation of death and of the misery of human life seems often to have been accompanied by a macabre pleasure in the symbols themselves. Thus Chassignet brings before us the horror of the rotting corpse:

Mortel, pense quel est dessous la couverture
D'un charnier mortuaire un corps mangé de vers,
Décharné, dénervé, où les os découverts,
Dépoullés, dénoués, délaissent leur jointure. (2)

Twenty years later La Ceppède publishes his series of sonnets on the Passion and Crucifixion. Here the crucifixion itself is dealt with in concrete realistic terms:

De même au trou d'en bas les pieds demeurent courts:
Les bourreaux ont de même à la corde recours.
C'est lors qu'on voit crouler cette belle structure.
Tout ce corps se déjoint, et le dur craquement
Des membres disloqués, et des nerfs la rupture,
Font croire qu'on veut faire un vif démembrement. (3)

And when in 1633 Auvray publishes his Pourmenade de l'Ame Dévote the emphasis remains the same. Once again we find the insistence on the physical horror of the crucifixion:

Ouy Seigneur, Toutes ces ordures,
Ces puanteurs, ces pourritures,
Ces Croix, ces os, ces corps infets,
Ces roues, ces bourreaux terribles
Ne vous semblent point si horribles
Que le moindre de mes fortaits. (4)

With such poets as these however, although there is an unusual insis-

1. See, for example, Callot's engravings of the funeral of La Reine d'Espagne. c.f. article in "XVIIIème siècle" Juillet-octobre 1957, No. 36-7: "L'art et le sentiment de la mort au XVII e siècle"
2. Chassignet, op. cit. Sonnet CXXV.
3. Jean de la Ceppède, Les Théorèmes, v.I, 1613, v.II, 1621. See also J. de Sponde, Stances de la Cène 1588, for a similar treatment of theme.
4. Jean Auvray, La Pourmenade de l'Ame Dévote, 1633. See also his Sonnets sur la Passion.

tence on the physical details of death and decay, the interest is not solely in these details themselves; or at least the poet does not intend it to be. Such descriptions as those we have quoted serve a moral purpose, for example that of bringing the reader face to face with the realities of his situation. Of course the fact that reality is seen in this way may well suggest a somewhat distorted view of man and of the world. However, in the work of other poets such descriptions of decay serve no moral purpose; the interest is in death and decay for its own sake. This somewhat obsessional interest in the subject may be seen in the Désert of Lortigue. (1) Against the background of the desert place which will be discussed in more detail later, is set the morbid descriptions of human remains. Saint-Amant had of course introduced into his Solitude a skeleton, swinging in the ruins of a castle, but in Saint-Amant's poem such references are incidental to the whole; with Lortigue physical decay becomes for long periods the principal interest. The impression of grisly horror which is created by such a subject together with the presence of strange, macabre creatures, takes us back to the paintings of Grunewald and of Bosch.(2) Lortigue piles on the horror with almost pathological intensity. In the midst of the désert he finds:

un maigre squelette
Voisin du funèbre trépas. (3)

1. Lortigue, le Desert 1637.

2. See for example Grunewald's Rétable d'Issenheim (musée de Colmar) and in particular his portrayals of the temptations of St. Antony.

3. Lortigue, op cit, Livre VII

These are the remains of one Barony, driven to despair and ultimate death by the cruelty of his mistress. He is not yet dead but the process of decay in which Lortigue takes such a deep if sordid interest, is well advanced:

Sur ses os déjà découverts
On voyait grouiller mille vers
Qui sortaient de sa chair puante.(1)

Lortigue's wanderings bring him to the seaside where he lives in epicurean fashion on oysters, employing his leisure in examining the flotsam of the beach:

Les hommes morts couverts d'écume
La plus part mangez de poissons
Sont portez contre les buissons. (2)

The crows hasten the process of decay:

A l'abord ils pochent les yeux
Le morceau le plus délicieux
Qui soit en la dépouille humaine,
Ces oiseaux comme des mastins
Arrachent avec plus de peine
Tout le reste des intestins. (3)

And so it goes on. More lovers' skeletons are discovered, more worms, more decay, until even Lortigue seems to tire of it, and decides that city life is perhaps preferable after all. He still maintains however, that the désert has its attractions:

Le Désert est rare au Printemps
Le russeau coulant qui murmure
Contente l'esprit pour un temps.(4)

One of the most striking features of the poem in fact, is the contrast between the sordid descriptions of decomposing bodies, and

1. Lortigue, op. cit. Livre VII.
2. Livre XI.
3. Livre XI.
4. Livre XII.

others, in a completely different tone, of streams and trees and flowers. It is only in Book VII that the horror supersedes the bird-song.

This horrific element is a feature of Le Temple de la Mort of Habert, who, writing ten years later than Lortigue, shows that the vogue has not yet abated. The temple of death where death is worshipped as a divinity, is located in "un vallon Affreux". Here are to be found the now familiar images - "tous les oyseaux de malheureuse augure". Here too, are the human remains:

Tous les champs d'alentour ne sont que cimetières,
Mille sources de sang y font mille rivières
Qui trainant des corps morts et de vieux ossements,
Au lieu de murmurer font des gémissements. (1)

Such an image may be said to be typical of much of the poetry of the time. It is first of all an intensely sensuous image, but the various parts of the total image are combined in such a way as to lead to the conceit of the final line. As in the case of the Désert of Lortigue, we should note that the horror occupies but a small proportion of the poem, the major part of which is given over to the tragic love of Lysidor for Amaranthe.

A similar stress on the sordid and the macabre is to be found in those poems which give an account of a vision. Such a subject lends itself admirably to the introduction of hideous images of death - skeletons, coffins, corpses, and the various animals and birds which are normally associated with the theme. Saint-Amant's Les Visions

1. Habert, (Ph.) Le Temple de la Mort, Paris Sommaille, 1646.

for example, contains the following:

Un grand chien noir se traînant lentment
Accompagné d'horreur et d'épouvantement
S'en vient toutes les nuit hurler devant ma porte.(1)

Later the poor dreamer sees approaching:

Ce fantosme leger coiffé d'un vieux suaire
Et tristement vestu d'un long drap mortuaire....

The despair of the disappointed lover brings Motin an equally disturbing experience:

Que de monstres incroyables
Que de fantosmes effroyables
A mes yeux se viennent offrir
M'ouvrant leur caverne profonde.(2)

Even the delicate Tristan is disturbed in his sleep by nightmare
(3) visions and Baudouin sees in his dream the very home of despair:

Ah je le vois ce lieu funeste
L'air y vomit toujours la peste
Qui sort du gouffre d'un Etang
Passage à la Parque facile
Et sa retraite est dans une isle
Ceinte de rivières de sang (4)

The shore is littered with an assortment of corpses and bones -
"triste dépouille des cercueils."

It should therefore be evident that there was a certain preoccupation with the theme of death in the poetry of the time. With some

1. Saint-Amant, Les Visions, 1.7-9.
2. Motin, Stances : Est-ce mon erreur ou ma rage? Délices, 1618, and often reprinted.
3. See for example: Songes funestes, Les Terreurs Nocturnes, and Le Desespoir.
4. J. Baudouin: L'isle du désespoir, IIIème livres des Délices, 1620
Not only in France were such poems popular. L'isle du desespoir may well be compared, for example with The House of Time of Davies of Hereford.

poets it may be seen as a serious contemplation of the subject with religious or moral aims in view, though some of the religious poets seem nevertheless to be obsessed by decay itself. Other poets seem intent on producing an impression of horror by a conscious imitation of a current fashion. If we remember the use to which Théophile put imagery of the sea and water, we should not expect him to make use of the theme of death for purposes of moral teaching. We are not likely to find him contemplating death in the manner of a Gody or a Chassignet. His interest is in this life rather than the next. However, we should expect Théophile to be influenced to some extent by a theme which so possessed the minds of his contemporaries.

We must look first at one of his earlier poems, the Ode au Prince d'Orange. Although there is some disagreement as to the date of its composition, it seems that it must have been composed before 1618, and Théophile may have brought it back with him from the Low Countries in 1615.⁽¹⁾ This, it should be remembered was the time of the publication of Les Tragiques (1616) and a time when interest in the more sordid aspects of death seems to have been strong. The poem celebrates the victory of Maurice of Nassau over the Spaniards in the early years of the century. It is therefore the celebration of a protestant victory over a catholic power, written by a protestant, which may in part account for the vigorous and at times violent nature of the imagery contained in it. While there is nothing to suggest that Théophile's protestantism was of a very militant kind, it is as well to remember that his own brother was a lifelong and active defender of his faith,

1. Adam assigns the poem to the years 1617-18. See Théophile de Viau at la libre pensée française en 1620, p. 139.

and that the memory of the religious wars had not yet faded from men's minds. The Spaniards, we are told, brought death with them in their attempt to conquer the Low Countries:

Et venoit avec des vaisseaux
Qui portoient peintes sur la proue
Des potences, et des bourreaux. (1)

The slaughter of battle is recalled:-

Ses troupes à plaine licence
Venoient fouler votre innocence,
Et l'appareil de ses efforts
Craignoit de manquer de matière;
Où vos champs tapissez de corps
Manquoient plustost de cymetière
Pour le sépulchre de ses morts. (2)

Such lines as these recall D'Aubigné's Tragiques which are so full of scenes of death and battle.

In the Ode a M. de L. the personified figure of death appears with its retinue of worms, already familiar to us in contemporary poetry:

La Mort grosse de deslairs
De tenebres et de souspirs
D'os, de vers, et de pourriture
Estouffe dans sa sepulture
Et nos forces, et nos desirs. (3)

But this is not the obsessional interest of a Lortigue. Théophile seems rather to be making a cool statement of fact. The physical details of decay are evoked too in the elegy Cloris lorsque je songe voyant si belle. Those, says Théophile, who swear eternal allegiance to their lady have not taken into account the physical effects of

1. Théophile, Ode au prince d'Orange. O.P. I, p. 39, 1.56-58.

2. Ibid. 1.59-65.

3. Théophile, Ode a M. de L. O. P. II, p.214, 1.28-32.

death upon the human body; they have not seen tous les efforts

Que fait la mort hideuse à consumer un corps
 Quand les sens pervertis sortent de leur usage,
 Qu'une laideur visible efface le visage,
 Que l'esprit deffaillant et les membres perclus
 En se disant adieu ne se cognoissent plus,
 Que dedans un moment apres la vie esteinte,
 La face sur son cuir n'est pas seulement peinte,
 Et que l'infirmité de la puante chair
 Nous ouvrir la terre afin de la cacher.(1)

On several occasions Theophile touches on the theme of old age. In the play Pyrame we find a reference to its decay:

Un pauvre corps usé qui n'est que pourriture
 One vieille à qui l'age a seiché les humeurs,
 A qui les sens gastez ont perverty les moeurs.(2)

Like Saint-Amant and Tristan and so many others at the time Théophile narrates the story of a vision, which he includes in La Maison de Silvie. Ode V. of this poem is devoted to an account of the vision supposedly experienced by Théophile's friend Thyrsis, at the time of the poet's capture. The sun is in eclipse, suggesting that something unnatural is about to be revealed:

dans ce froid sommeil
 La visible ardeur du Soleil
 Se fut du tout esvanouie. (3)

Here again a phantom appears from the abyss:

Un grand fantosme souterrain
 Sortant de l'inferralle fosse
 Eproué comme de l'airain
 Où rouleroit un carrosse. (4)

1. Ibid O. P. II p.26, l.43-52.

2. Pyrame ed. Alleaume, II. p.112.

3. La Maison de Silvie, Ode V, O.P. II, p.155, l.25-27.

4. l.31-33.

The spirit announces the demise of the sieur Théophile. This message is later confirmed by a second apparition - un messager

Qui portoit les couleurs des Parques.....
 Un garçon habillé de deuil
 Qui sembloit sortir du cercueil.(1)

The third instalment of the vision includes Théophile's capture. Again the atmosphere is one of hallucination; once again, as in the dream of La Mère in Pyrame, the spilled blood threatens violent death:

Je te vis suivre en un tombeau
 Par une foule desbordée.
 Les Juges y tenoient leur rang,
 L'un d'entr'eux espànchia du sang
 Qui me jaillit contre la face. (2)

Such samples as these are no more than we might expect from a poet living in an age which was so conscious of the skull beneath the skin; but while the sordid details of decay do not interest him unduly, the theme of death is of some importance in his poetry. His concern with it is best revealed, not in individual poems of which the subject is death, but in a certain kind of imagery, much of it connected with the désert, so familiar in the poetry of the time.

The macabre atmosphere of this désert is created by a fairly constant set of images - dark forests, rocks, precipices, and noisome caves where lurk the crow, the basilisc and the wolf. It is a landscape which is completely different from the tamed nature of quiet woods and cultivated fields, from the ordered gardens and avenues of the natural description of the time. There is something fantastic

1. 1.61-3 and 65-66.
 2. 1.100-107.

and unreal about many of these descriptions. A typical passage is the following by Du Mas:

Ces champs de l'horreur habités
Retraite de la solitude
Ces bois tout par tout désertés
Fors que de mon inquiétude

.....
Ces rocs de mousse tapissés
Simulacres de sépultures
Sinistres augures de mort
Semblent refigurer mon sort.

Ces antres reclus et relants
Cachette d'hiboux et d'orfraies
Me sont pronostiques sanglants
De morts de meutres et de plaies.....(1)

This stock décor is used in a great number of poems; it is often considered a suitable background for the laments of the despairing lover. Tircis, in Saint-Amant's Plainte de Tircis, is discovered in "L'horreur d'un bois solitaire":

Comme il achevait cette plainte
Un long cri de hibou douloureux et tremblant
D'un mortal effroy l'accablant
Le fit pâlir de crainte. (2)

Motin claims to be in search of such a place as we have been describing - a spot situated Dans le sein ténébreux^{des} roches ombragées
D'éternelles forests de dix siècles âgées,
Bois sacrés à l'horreur, noirs ennemies du jour
Et des aigles cruelles l'effroyable séjour.(3)

In such poems as these the images suggestive of horror, are

1. Du Mas, Lydie, Paris, 1609, p.200. Reprinted by A-M Schmidt in his anthology of baroque poems L'Amour Noir, éditions du Rocher, Monaco, 1959.

2. Saint Amant Plainte de Tircis.

3. Motin Elegie Délices, 1618, p.761. See also Racan Plaisant séjour des âmes affligées O. P. I, No. XXX, p.111; and Boisrobert:

Os non ensevelis précipiteuses roches.
Murs herbus, autrefois des hommes habitez,....
Cabinet des Muses, 1619.

consonant with the mood of the poet-lover: the lover in despair delights in images of death. In other poems the poet is attracted by the solitude of the désert. In his Solitude, which seems to have given impetus to the vogue, Saint-Amant is recounting a pleasurable experience; into his account, however, he introduces the thrill of horror which adds to the attraction of the scene. For example we find the ruined castle, haunted by the serpent and the owl:

Que j'ayme à voir la décadence
De ces vieux châteaux ruinez,
Contre qui les ans mutinez
Ont déployé leur insolence!
Les sorciers y font leur sa bat;
Les démons follets s'y retirent.....
.... Là se nichent en mille trous
Les couleuvres et les hibous.(1)

The picture is completed by the introduction of the skeleton swinging in the ruins:

L'orfraye avec ses cris funèbres,
Mortels augures des destins,
Fait rire et danser les lutins
Dans ces lieux remplis de ténèbres
Sous un chevron de bois maudit
Y branle le squelette horrible
D'un pauvre amant qui se pendit
Pour une bergère insensible. (2)

Lortigue follows in the vogue, though with him we have a more vivid impression of horror. His taste is for the bristling rock, the deep caves, inhabited by dragons, basilisks and bats. In words which are very close to those used by Saint-Amant he expresses his liking for

1. Saint-Amant La Solitude l.71-76, and 79-80
See also Racan Les Bergeries I, 4, 435, III, 4, 1547.
2, Saint-Amant op cit, l.81-88.

ruins:

J'aime à voir ces vieux Colisées
 Qui sont à demi ruinez
 Et les Pyramides brisées
 Par l'effort des ans mutinez. (1)

Théophile too makes use of this convention, though often with a different intention to that of Saint-Amant. The scene is the same, the familiar imagery is used, but the mood is much different. The Ode Au Roy: Céluy qui lance..... for example, opens with a reference to the justice of the deity; the high tone of the imagery in the opening stanzas indicates that this is no trivial plea:

Celuy qui lance le Tonnerre,
 Qui gouverne les elemens,
 Et mout avec des tremblemens
 La grande masse de la terre:

 Ce grand Dieu qui fit les abysmes
 Dans le centre de l'Univers
 Et qui les tient tousjours ouvers
 A la punition des crimes
 Veut aussi que les innocens
 A l'ombre de ces bras puissans
 Trouvent un assureé refuge.....(2)

Théophile then turns to his own situation. He is in exile from the "doux climat de la Cour." He underlines the unpleasantness of his situation with an image often used to suggest the death in life paradox of the love poetry of the time:

Il me semble que l'oeil du jour
 Ne me luit plus qu'avecques peine.(3)

There follows an image which obviously derives from the désert con-

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1. Lortigue, op.cit.
 2. O.P. I, p. 53-54, l. 1-4, and 11-17.
 3. l.23-24.

vention and through which Théophile makes concrete his feelings of insecurity and despair:

Sur le faiste affreux d'un rocher,
D'où les ours n'osent approcher:
Je consulte avec des furies,
Qui ne font que solliciter
Mes importunes resveries
A me faire precipiter. (1)

The image of the precipice is, as we shall see, of some importance in Théophile's work. He goes on to give some account of the place he has chosen for his exile:

Aujourd'huy parmy des Sauvages
Où je ne trouve à qui parler,
Ma triste voix se perd en l'air
Et dedans l'echo des rivages,
Au lieu des pompes de Paris,
Où le peuple avecques des cris,
Benit le roy parmy les rues,
Icy les accens des corbeaux,
Et les foudres dedans les nues
Ne me parlent que de tombeaux. (2)

Of course the landscape described in this poem has as its point of departure the countryside which Théophile saw around him in his exile, but under the influence of his personal despair the scene takes on a nightmarish quality. The connection with the theme of death is obvious enough, in such images as "les accens des corbeaux", and "les foudres dedans les nues tombeaux". Imagery of a similar kind occurs in the following stanza:

J'ay choisi loing de vostre Empire
Un vieux désert, où des serpens
Boivent les pleurs que je respans,
Et soufflent l'air que je respire:
Dans l'effroy de mes longs ennuys,

1. 1.25-30.
2. 1.31-40.

Je cherche insensé que je suis
 Une lionne en sa cholere,
 Qui me deschirant par morceaux
 Laisse mon sang, et ma misere,
 En la bouche des lionceaux. (1)

The ~~serpent~~ image is a familiar one in Théophile's poetry. Here the image suggests the all-embracing nature of his despair; he can only escape, it appears, through death, hence "je cherche....une lionne", a reminiscence, perhaps, of Pyrame, and it is a particularly violent and horrible death which he imagines. While these images are undoubtedly infused by strong personal feeling on the part of the poet, there is no doubt that most of them belong the tradition of the désert. Such a landscape, and such creatures have traditionally been associated with horror and evil. In fact, therefore, Théophile is following a literary convention, though in this poem it appears successfully renewed.

Théophile makes use of the same imagery in the sonnet Quelque si doux espoir. The poem probably has a love motif, but the situation of the poet is the same as in the poem we have just examined: he is in exile from the source of life, hence the images are images of death:

Je viens dans un desert mes larmes espancher,
 Où la terre languit, où le Soleil s'ennuye,
 Et d'un torrent de pleurs qu'on ne peut estancher,
 Couvre l'air de vapeurs et la terre de pluie.
 Parmi ces tristes lieux trainant mes longs regrets,
 Je me promene seul dans l'horreur des forests
 Où le funeste orfraye et le hibou se perchent,

1. 1.41-50.

Là le seul reconfort qui peut m'entretenir,
 C'est de ne craindre point que les vivans me cherchent,
 Où le flambeau du jour n'osa jamais venir. (1)

Here again the feelings of the poet are projected into the physical landscape around him. The images are once more the images of the tradition - "le soleil s'ennuye", "le funeste orfraye et le hibou...", "l'horreur des forests", apart from one or two which bear a more original stamp - "Parmy ces tristes lieux trainant mes longs regrets".

But Théophile's references to the désert do not always contain the horrific element. Sometimes the absent lover merely finds the countryside uninviting. With the beloved absent there is nothing attractive about this wasteland of forest and marsh:

La froide horreur de ces forests
 L'humidité de ces marests
 Cette effroyable solitude.....(2)

A little later in the same poem he speaks of the "grands deserts" and the "sablons infertiles". In such a place the memory of the "chauds regards", of the "amoureux baisers" is all the more vivid. Much of Théophile's period of exile was spent in the Landes, hence the references to the "forests suantes" in the elegy Je pensois au repos. A similar attitude is apparent in the elegy Dans ce climat barbare, of which the title itself gives some idea of his feelings:

Je ne voy rien que champs, que rivieres, que prez,
 Où le plus doux rosier me pût comme cyprez,
 Où je n'ay plus l'aspect de la Place Royale.....(3)

1.O.P. I, p. 154, l. 5-14.

2.Aussi franc d'amour que d'envie, O.P. I, p. 134, l. 45-48.

3.O.P. II, p.36, l. 75-77.

In other poems, reflecting other moods, the forests he so reviles will provide him with a tranquil retreat from the insincerities of court life. Théophile the courtier, bored by the life of the country, is much different from the Théophile who, during his imprisonment, longs for the simple rustic life.

In considering the images of death used by Théophile, such as the crow, the serpent, the precipice, we are reminded not only of the use to which many of his contemporaries put such images in creating a wilderness full of horror, but also of a pictorial and literary tradition of some antiquity. We have already mentioned the name of Grunewald in this respect. Indeed the descriptions of the désert we have been discussing have much the same unreal and fantastic quality as the paintings of fifteenth century "gothic" painters. That the tradition is still alive in painting at the beginning of the seventeenth century may be seen from the strange rock formations painted by Greco (see his Mount Sinai for example). By the fifteenth century a stylised landscape of this kind had come to represent the wilderness, menacing and evil, which lay outside the security of the paradise garden. There is often an association of the désert with evil in the poems we have been discussing, since it is the abode of such creatures as the serpent. To the Middle Ages of course, the wild nature of mountains and forest was indeed a genuinely frightening nature, a destructive and violent force, beyond the control of man. To the seventeenth century such nature was less so, or rather it was frightening in a different way. With the growth of interest in the

fantastic and in the creation of a pleasing horror, poets turn to the nature which, as in the Middle Ages, lies outside the ordered park, and portray it in certain stylised forms. The nature of mountain and torrent is not yet considered beautiful. As we shall see, the seventeenth century appreciated a natural scene which was the result of a collaboration of man with nature. However, the wildness of untamed nature satisfied the desire for the thrill of horror, especially if it could be peopled with serpents and bats, ruins and skeletons. The reader is not expected to be horrified, his emotions are not involved. He is given rather a vicarious thrill, and is asked to admire the skill of the artist in creating an artificial horror, so like the real thing.

We often have a similar impression on reading much of the love poetry of the time, in which many of the images of death associated with the désert are used. When we read the spectacular imagery of the lover's despair we may well conclude that the artifice of the poet in affecting such despair is more important than the actual emotions which are supposed to be involved.

Of this kind of spectacular imagery used by Théophile that of the serpent is worthy of note. In the poem Eloigné de vos yeux où j'ay laissé mon âme the lover has been forced to leave behind him the lady he adores, as he follows the king into battle. As in the poems of exile he sees himself as absent from the source of life:

Eloigné de vos yeux où j'ay laissé mon âme
Je n'ay de sentiment que celui du malheur.(1)

1. Théophile. O. P. I, p.147 l.1-2.

Life is all but death, and the desert is now the desert of the mind,
peopled however by the same creatures:

Mon ame est dans les fers, mon sang est dans la flame
Jamais malheur ne fut à mon malheur esgal;
J'ay des vautours au sein, j'ay des serpents dans l'âme,
Et vos traicts qui me font encore plus de mal. (1)

We find the same image in the elegy Proche de la saison où les plus
vives fleurs. Here again the theme of absence from the beloved is
involved; the lover calls on destiny which is responsible for his
situation to bear witness to his fidelity:

Tu respondras pour moi si je lui suis fidelle,
Si depuis son depart j'eus un mauvais dessein,
Si je n'ay tousjours eu des serpents dans le sein.(2)

In the elegy Depuis ce triste jour we can see the determination of
the lover to affect the grief-stricken pose of the genuine lover in
order to prove his fidelity. He insists on the suffering which he is
anxious to feel, by using a series of spectacular death images:

J'entens que ma pensée esprouve incessamment
Tout ce que peut l'ennui sur un fidele Amant;
J'entens que le Soleil avecques moi s'ennuye,
Que l'air soit couvert d'ombre, et la terre de pluye,
Que parmi le sommeil des tristes visions
Envelopent mon Ame en leurs illusions,
Que tous mes sentiments soient meslez d'une rage,
Qu'au liect je m' imagine estre dans un naufrage,
Tomber d'un precipice et voir mille serpens
Dans un cachot obscur autour de moy rampans. (3)

1. Ibid, l.17-20.

2. Ibid O. P. II, P.70, l.80-82.

3, O. P. II, p. 45, l.61-70.

See Tristan's L'Absence de Philis for a further example of this
hysterical kind of imagery: Si les riguers que mon coeur vous reproche
M'avoient lié sur le haut d'une roche
En un désert ou le bec d'un Vaultour
Vint en mon sein^{se} cacher nuit et jour.

This crescendo of images leading up to a climax in the last two lines quoted, with their load of nightmare horror, creates an impression of despair so exaggerated as to seem a parody of the traditional lover's plight; the more so since the poet is not here describing his actual feelings but rather those he promises to experience at a later date.

The occurrence of such images in poems of love serves to underline the importance of the association of the themes of love and death, which has for centuries been characteristic of certain kinds of poetry. We find it in the guilty passion of Tristan and Iseult, a passion which can find satisfaction only in death, as well as in the laments of the lover who declares that the lady's absence, or her cruelty, makes life more insupportable than death itself.

The two themes are associated, of course, in the poem which points to the transience of life as a sufficient reason for present enjoyment; as Marvell puts it:

Had we but World enough and Time
This coyness, lady, were no crime.(1)

Tristan associates the two themes in a way which is typical of the age, in its play on words:

Sitot que notre esprit raisonne tant soit peu
En Avril de nos ans, en l'age le plus tendre,
Nous rencontrons l'Amour qui met nos coeurs en feu
Puis nous treuvons la Mort qui met nos corps en cendre.

The consciousness of death unites here with a belief in the life of the senses, for Tristan concludes that we must make the best use of our

1. Andrew Marvell To his coy Mistress.

time:

C'est pour nous avertir de le bien mesnager
Et faire des bouquets en la saison des roses (1)

Such passages as this owe something to the tradition of the early Pléiade. Théophile however, examines the possibility of death in more spectacular terms, using the disordered imagery of storm. His conclusion is the same:

Mais quoy que le Ciel et la terre
Troublassent nos contentemens,
Et nous fissent souffrir la guerre
Des astres et des elemens;
Il faut rire de leurs malices,
Et dans un fleuve de delices
Noyer les soings injurieux,
Qui privent nos jeunes années
Des douceurs, que les destinées
Ne permettent jamais aux vieux.(2)

Sometimes the lover's declaration of constancy is clothed in hyperbolic imagery evoking violence and death. Thus Théophile:

Le Ciel m'envoie un traict de son tonnerre
Et sous mes pieds face crever la terre
Dès le moment qu'un sort injurieux
De ma memoire effacera tes yeux. (3)

This kind of thing was a commonplace in the poetry of the time. Saint-Amant, for example, uses similar imagery when Lyrian calls on death to release him from the torment his unrequited love is causing him:

Profondes horreurs du trépas
Gouffres béants, noirs précipices

-
1. Tristan Consolation à Idalie, Les Amours, ed. Garnier, p.48.
 2. Théophile Cloris ma franchise est perdue, O.P. I., p.138, l.91-100
 3. Théophile, Chere Philis, j'ay bien sçeu que tu meures. O.P. I, p.100
l.37-40.

Si vous voulez m'être propices
 Présentez-vous devant mes pas. (1)

It is the absence or the cruelty of the beloved which usually calls forth this kind of imagery in Théophile's love poetry. Even a happy love is expressed by a negative use of the death image:

Quand Cloris me faict bon visage
 Les tempestes sont sans ruage,
 L'air le plus orageux est beau;
 Je ris quand le tonnerre gronde
 Et ne croy point que tout le monde
 Soit capable de mon tombeau.(2)

In the longer elegies we find a series of antitheses - presence and absence expressed as darkness and light, night and day, spring and winter, life and death. Frequently the sun is used as an image of the life-giving power of the beloved. In the following lines the absence of the sun is associated with other images of death - poison and the abyss:

Le clarté du Soleil ne m'estoit point visible,
 La douceur de la nuit ne m'estoit point sensible,
 Je sentoie du poison en mes plus deux repas
 Et des gouffres par tout où se portoient mes pas. (3)

The lady's presence however, will release him from the vision of death:

Quand mes esprits seront dans un mortal sommeil
 Vos regards me rendront la clarté du Soleil.(4)

1. Saint-Amant La Métamorphose de Lyrian et de Silvie ed. Garnier, p.24. On this theme see also La Mesnardière, Sonnet, Ombres des malheureux qui pasles et sanglantes Poésies 1656. This poem, though much later than the poems of Théophile, retains all the horror imagery earlier associated with the theme of death.
2. Théophile, S'il est vray Cloris, que tu m'aimes O.P. I, p.144, l.85-90.
3. Idem Depuis ce triste jour, O. P. II, p.45. l.7-10.
4. Ibid, l.81-82.

Or again in another poem:

Cloris est le Soleil dont la clarté puissante
 Console à son regard mon ame languissante
 Escarte mes ennuis, dissipe à son abord
 Le chagrin de la vie et la peur de la mort. (1)

This then is the hope - the removal of the fear of death, of the tragic instability of life, by the presence of the beloved; but the very passage which follows seems to destroy the hope:

Mais depuis peu de jours sa flame est si tardive
 Pour estre comme elle est si perçante et si vive
 Que l'ingrante me laisse à petit feu mourir. (2)

The death of absence is suggested too, by the image of winter, with the complementary image of spring; in the elegy Depuis ce triste jour, a sharp contrast is drawn between the actual spring which the poet sees around him, and the winter which he feels in his mind:

Moy seul dans la saison où chacun se contente
 Accablé des douleurs d'une cruelle attente,
 Languy sans reconfort et tout seul dans l'hyver
 Ne voy point de printemps qui me puisse arriver. (3)

Love is treated then, as a fatal passion; the lover is at the mercy of his lady, or rather perhaps at the mercy of destiny which subjects him to such a cruel fate. This is the impression we obtain from the Satyre Premiere where Théophile gives an account of love and its effects on the sufferer:

C'est un heureux tourment, qui travaillant nostre ame,
 Luy donne des accez et de glace et de flame,
 S'attache à nos esprits comme la fievre au corps,
 Jusqu'à ce que l'humeur en soit toute dehors.

1. Ne me fais point aimer avecques tant de peine O.P. II, p.56, l.45-48.
2. ibid. l.49-51.
3. l.95-98.

Contre ses longs efforts la resistance est vaine,
 Qui ne peut l'eviter il doit aimer sa peine.
 L'esclave patient n'est qu'à demy dompté,
 Il veut à sa Contraincte unir sa volonté.
 Le Sanglier enragé, qui d'une dent pointue
 Dans son gosier sanglant mort l'espieu qui le tue
 Se nuit pour se deffendre, et d'un aveugle effort
 Se travaille luy-mesme, et se donne la mort.(1)

In this, the poet's fatalistic comment on love and its effects, appear the expected images of the convention - illness, fire, ice, slavery; but Théophile also introduces the quite spectacular picture of the wild boar which contributes to its own death by its struggles; it is an image chosen for its dramatic content, for its capacity to surprise; moreover it prepares the enlargement of the theme, for from it the poet goes on to draw more general conclusions about the human situation. In another poem however, Théophile treats love quite differently. Here he drops the pose of the despairing lover and puts forward ideas which are more consistent with those he expresses elsewhere. In Cloris lorsque je songe en te voyant si belle he abandons any attempt he may have made to find stability in the love relationship, realising that by persisting in the pose of eternal devotion he is playing into the hands of fate. In face of the mortality of the flesh he cannot expect love to endure beyond the grave, even if it is able to endure for long on this side of it. He has no conception of a noble, self-sacrificing love, which could look forward with confidence to some sort of immortality. The passion which in the Satyre Première he has described as all powerful, is here reduced to a subordinate position:

1. O.P. I, p. 82, l.145-156.

Chacun s'ayme un peu mieux tousjours que son amy,
 On les suit rarement dedans la sépulture,
 Le droit de l'amitié cède aux Loix de nature. (1)

The realities of death and decay make the pose of eternal devotion
 absurd:

Ceux qui jurent d'avoir l'ame encore assez forte
 Pour vivre dans les yeux d'une Maistresse morte,
 N'ont pas pris le loisir de voir tous les efforts
 Que fait la mort hideuse à consumer un corps, (2)

Of course, in many of the conventional love poems, the lover attempts to disentangle the threads of love which bind him so securely. But here Théophile seems to stand outside the game for a moment, and to consider the incongruity of the lover's position in view of the realities of life and death. The lady would make of love an eternal, static devotion, knowing that the alternative is the love of the moment, impermanent and fleeting like the moment itself. For the lover the only antidote to the inhumanity of the lady and of destiny is the enjoyment of the present. Here in this poem we find a striking recognition of the fact of mutability. Since all is change, and since the inevitable immobility of death succeeds the flux of life, there can be no point in a love which looks always to the future and is never rewarded in the present. The thought that one day the lady's beauty will decay leads him to question the sense of their relationship:

Cloris lors que je songe en te voyant si belle
 Que ta vie est sujette à la loy naturelle,
 Et qu'à la fin les traicts d'un visage si beau
 Avec tout leur esclat iront dans le tombeau,

1. Théophile, Cloris lors que je songe.. O.P. II, p.26, l.32-34.
 2. ibid l.41-44.

Sans espoir que la mort nous laisse en la pensée
 Aucun ressentiment de l'amitié passée,
 Je suis tout rebuté de l'aise et du soucy
 Que nous fait le destin qui nous gouverne icy,
 Et tombant tout à coup dans la melancholie,
 Je commence à blasmer un peu nostre folie
 Et fay voeu de bon coeur de m'arracher un jour
 La chere resverie où m'occupe l'amour. (1)

Old age is akin to death in that it sees the beginning of immobility:

Aussi bien nous faudra-t-il qu'une vieillesse infame
 Nous gele dans le sang les mouvemens de l'ame. (2)

Thus he reaches his conclusion:

Ainsi je me resous de songer à ma vie
 Tandis que la raison m'en fait venir l'envie. (3)

He must rather base the conduct of his life on the present, so that he is not obliged to anticipate the passage of time in hoping or in fearing about the future:

Je veux prendre un object où mon libre désir
 Discerne la douleur d'avecques le plaisir,
 Où mes sens tout entiers sans fraude et sans contrainte,
 Ne s'embarrassent plus ny d'espoir ny de prainte,
 Et de sa vaine erreur mon coeur desabusant,
 Je gouteray le bien que je verray present,
 Je prendray les douceurs à quoy je suis sensible
 Le plus abondamment qu'il me sera possible. (4)

In this poem then, we can see how his awareness of death leads him to postulate the validity of the life of the senses. Because of his deep awareness of death and instability, his appreciation of the sensual pleasures of life is all the more intense.

In examining the importance of the theme of death in the poetry of Théophile we have not yet considered the poems which were written

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1. 1.1-12.
 2. 1.13-14
 3. 1.17-18.
 4. 1.19-26.

during his period of imprisonment. We have seen how the images of death reveal his consciousness of death and mutability, a consciousness which is such as to cause him to reject the traditional love relationship in order to enjoy to the full pleasures which his short human life affords. We must now go on to discover how he makes use of these images, and how he treats this theme at a time when the threat of death becomes more immediate, and his capacity for enjoyment is restricted.

In 1623 Théophile was arrested after his effigy had been burned with due ceremony in his absence, and he spent the next two years in prison with the threat of execution hanging over him. Most of the poems written during this period were intended for the eyes of various people, who might conceivably have some influence on the case against Théophile. In these poems therefore, the poet puts on a good face, as it were, letting it be known that he is confident of his innocence; he still claims to trust in the justice of those who are judging him. It is not surprising, therefore, that in such poems he does not employ to any great extent, the tortured kind of imagery which we have previously discussed. Such imagery does, however, appear in his outburst to his brother, in which his despair at his situation and his hatred of his enemies the jesuits finally break through.

In the Requete au Roy he gives an account of his capture, and of the events leading up to it. Only a few friends remained with him in his disgrace:

Quelques foibles solliciteurs

Faisoient encore un peu de mine
 D'arrester mes persecuteurs
 Sur le panchant de ma ruine.(1)

Here is a suggestion of the precipice image, which he uses later on when he appeals directly to the king's mercy:

Sire jettez un peu vos yeux
 Sur le precipice où je tombe.(2)

In this poem, despite the seriousness of the situation he is able to write with a certain grim humour of the circumstances of his capture:

deux meschan's: Prevosts,
 Fort grands volleurs et tres-devots,
 Priants Dieu comme des Apostres,
 Mirent la main sur mon collet,
 Et tous disans leur Paternostres,
 Pillerent jusqu'à mon vallet. (3)

His description of the prison cell has something of the quality of Villon:

Icy donc comme en un tombeau,
 Troublé du péril où je reve,
 Sans compagnie et sans flambeau,
 Tousjours dans le discours de Greve,
 A l'ombre d'un petit faux jour
 Qui perée un peu l'obscure tour
 Où les bourreaux vont à la queste,
 Grand Roy, l'honneur de l'Univers,
 Je vous presentela Requeste
 De ce pauvre faiseur de vers. (4)

Here, naturally enough, death is near to him, as we can see in the first line as well as in the reference to the Place de Grève.

In the Plainte a un Amy in which Théophile complains of the infidelity of a friend, who has seen the storm approaching and has

1. O. P. II, p.97, l.21-24.

2. l.291-292.

3. l.55-60.

4. l.161-170.

taken the precaution of leaving Théophile to fend for himself, the imminence of death is conveyed by the imagery of the fates:

Sçache aussi que mon ame est presque usée,
Que Cloton tient mes jours au bout de sa fusee! (1)

Later the precipice image appears once more:

Pour le moins fay semblant d'avoir un peu de peine
Voyant le precipice où le Destin me traisne.(2)

And the same image appears in the Requete à Monseigneur le Premier Président. Here again he maintains his outward calm as he claims:

Qu'encore j'ay tousjours esté
Sur le bord de mon precipice
D'un visage assez arrêté. (3)

Here the precipice seems almost to be a physical ailment with which he has always to contend.

As we have suggested, many of these poems are written frankly to solicit the help of those in authority, so the the "franchise" which Théophile claims elsewhere to regard so highly, is abandoned. He is adroit in his addresses to Nos Seigneurs du Parlement. He accuses himself of having devoted too many poems to the insincere life of the court, and consequently of having neglected them; he now recognises that these are men of worth. "Mais vous estes des dieux", he says, and how can gods judge an innocent man to be guilty? Then there is the poem La Penitence de Théophile about which it is difficult to come to any conclusion. It may be that at the time Théophile

1. O.P. II, p. 85, l. 13-14.
2. *ibid.* l. 21-22.
3. O.P. II, p. 114, l. 38-40.

found solace in the good Augustine, but it is also possible that the poem represents yet another type of propaganda, and that Théophile's change of heart was nothing more than a hopeful gesture performed for the sake of the effect it might have on the case against him.

However, when we come to the Lettre à son Frère the tone has changed. His brother is now his only support. In spite of his attempts to retain his trust in a divine will, he cannot help feeling despair:

Cependant je suis abatu;
 Mon courage se laisse mordre
 Et d'heure en heure ma vertu
 Laisse tous mes sens en desordre (1)

His despair is conveyed once more in the spectacular images of death:

Mon sens noircy d'un long effroy
 Ne me plaist qu'en ce qui l'attriste,
 Et le seul desespoir chez moy
 Ne trouve rien qui luy resiste.
 La nuict mon somme interrompu,
 Tiré d'un sang tout corrompu,
 Me met tant de frayeurs dans l'ame
 Que je n'ose bouger mes bras,
 De peur de trouver de la flame
 Et des serpens parmy mes dras. (2)

He claims that he still possesses a belief in God, and yet the guiding of the universe seems to be in the hands of an unthinking, unfeeling fate; and here he uses once again the dynamic imagery of storm, which first appeared in the Ode au Prince d'Orange:

En quelle place des mortals
 Ne peut le vent crever la Terre,
 En quel Palais et quels Autels

1. O.P. II, p. 185, l. 41-44

2. 1.51-60. A quotation from the Fragments d'une histoire Comique will perhaps shed some light on the use by Théophile of this serpent image. He says, "je me treuve toujours avec antipathie et horreur aux serpens, aux rats, aux vers et à toute sorte de saleté et de pourriture." ch. III. ed. All. II. p. 18.

Ne se peut glisser le tonnerre ?
 Quels vaisseaux et quels matelots
 Sont toujours asseurez des flots ?
 Quelquefois des villes entieres
 Par un horrible changement
 Ont recontré leurs Cimetieres
 En la place du fondement. (1)

He is not completely without hope; however; his mind wanders from the despair of his present situation to the imagined joys of the woods and fields of the Garonne. Here in fact, we see the twin poles of his thought. On the one hand the consciousness of death and instability, expressed in violent and striking imagery, and on the other the desire to enjoy life through the pleasures of the senses.

However, after this vision of the paradise he cannot enjoy, he turns with increased venom to attack those who are the cause of his misfortunes:

Dois-je donc aux races meutrieres
 Tant de fievres et tant de pleurs,
 Tant de respects, tant de prieres,
 Pour passer mes nuits sans sommeil,
 Sans feu, sans air, et sans Soleil,
 Et pour mordre icy les murailles ?
 N'ay-je encore souffert qu'en vain,
 Me dois-je arracher les entrailles
 Pour souler leur derniere faim ? (2)

Finally he looses the rein of abuse and uses all the images of evil and death to castigate the jesuits:

Ouvriers de cousteaux et de flames,
 Pasles Prophetes de tombeaux,
 Fantosmes, Lougaroux, Corbeaux,
 Horrible et venimeuse engeance.....(3)

1. Lettre à son Frère, 11 141-150.

2. *ibid.* 1.302-310.

3. 1.314-317. It is worth noting perhaps that d'Aubigné refers to the jesuits in a similar way:

Corbeaux courans aux morsts et aux gibets en joie
 S'@sgayans dans le sang et jouans de leur proie.

In this poem then, when he writes without restraint about his situation, he uses imagery of a violent and emotional kind. It is imagery which he has used before, in the poems on his exile and in certain of the love poems for example. In this poem as in the poems of exile he appears emotionally involved and can no longer look in a detached way upon death. In the love poetry he would often seem to be affecting involvement and he uses the same imagery to create an impression of despair.

The prison poems however are a special case; normally he looks at death in a more detached way; he does not allow the fact of death to interfere with his enjoyment of life, which, though unstable, is still worth while. He sees life and death as separate; for him they are not part of a whole as they are for Sponde or Gody. Even here in the Lettre à son frère, the threat of death remains quite separate from his conception of the ideal life at Boussères. He observes death as an event but he seldom allows it to influence the other experiences of life. This attitude of detachment and this separation of death and life can be seen in the Ode à M. de L. sur la Mort de son Père

Vostre pere est ensevely
 Et dans les noirs flots de l'oubly
 Ou la Parque l'a fait descendre,
 Il ne sçait rien de vostre ennuy,
 Et ne fut-il mort qu'aujourd'huy,
 Puisqu'il n'est plus qu'os et que cendre,
 Il est aussi mort qu'Alexandre
 Et vous touche aussi peu que luy.(1)

1. Theophile, O.P. II, p.214, l.49-56.

The man is dead, he therefore has ceased to have any influence on those that are alive. There is no suggestion here of continuity, of an after life. In another poem to the same M. de L. Théophile says:

Après nous il ne faut attendre
Que la pourriture et la cendre: (1)

And later

Aussy bien l'estre de la vie
Au tombeau comme nous est mis.
Et quel bon sens ou quelle estude
Nous peut oster l'incertitude,
Du futur qui nous est promis ? (2)

He is aware of death then (the imagery he uses reveals this) but as an unrelated fact; he does not, for example, take the fact of death as a starting point for a poem on the vanity of human life and desires, as do many of his contemporaries. The same kind of separation may be seen in his use of water imagery; he uses it largely for the sake of the image itself, not in order to relate it to the conduct of life. It will be seen too, in the way he treats the natural world, splitting it up into its separate parts, and examining each object in detail.

1. A Monsieur de Liencour, O.P. II, p. 220, 1.85-86.
2. ibid. 1. 136-140.

CONCLUSION

The importance of the themes of Inconstancy and Death in the poetry of the time, would suggest that poets saw instability and change as an essential feature of the world. Man's life is recognised as being but a transient moment in an unstable world. This awareness of instability is evident in the imagery which conjures up a picture of the storm, or the universe in collapse, and in that which suggests, often in a strange and hysterical way, the sordid details of death. It is evident too, in the use made of the dream, the vision and the play within the play, in which the normally accepted, rational bases of reality are questioned. (1)

This heightened awareness of instability must, of course, owe something to the troubled years of the second half of the sixteenth century, when the unity of Western Christendom was finally shattered, and the authority of Rome rejected. But the religious divisions were perhaps only symptoms of a deeper change in man's view of himself. Man could no longer see himself as an integral part of a larger whole. Previously the flux of the sublunar world could be seen to be matched by the incorruptibility of the heavens; the instability of the world and the mutability of man could be understood as part of a whole which was in itself purposeful. Now man becomes isolated in a universe everywhere subjected to change, for observation was suggesting that change might well be a feature of the entire universe, that

1. See for example, Corneille L'illusion Comique, Shakespeare's Hamlet, and Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy.

nowhere was there stability and perfection. Thus, in a universe which could no longer be fitted into the accepted modes of belief, a sense of insecurity was inevitable.

Of course the new ideas were not formulated in such terms immediately. The poets we have been discussing show little interest in the new scientific discoveries themselves, their interest is much less than that shown by their contemporaries in England;(1) but the ideas must have had some influence on their outlook. While they do not speak of the collapse of the Ptolomeic spheres, they do present a general picture of a disordered universe. It is useful to remember that Saint Amant is known to have had contacts with Campanella and Galileo. He was well acquainted with the poet D'Alibray who was in turn a friend of Mersenne.(2) While Théophile makes no mention of scientific discoveries, he must be classed as a modern in his rejection of supernatural explanations of strange events. (3)

As we have seen, Théophile shares the consciousness of his age in his awareness of instability. He too, makes use of imagery which suggests, through its violence, a world in disorder. Moreover the

1. Théophile, for example, speaks of the sun in the traditional manner when he uses it as an image of incorruptibility. Cloris' beauty, he hopes, is like the sun - Et comme le soleil a qui le viel usage
N'a point oté l'ardeur, ni changé le visage.
2. See on this subject Dalibray, le Pailleur and the new astronomy in French 17th century poetry. Journal of the History of Ideas, XVII, 1956, p.327.
Saint Amant and the new Astronomy B.S. Ridgely. Mod. Lang. Rev. Jan. 1958, LIII, No.i.
Lenoble Mersenne ou la naissance du Mécanisme Paris, 1943.
Busson, La Pensée religieuse française de Charron à Pascal. Paris 1933
3. See the incident of the girl possessed of the devil in Fragments d'une Histoire Comique ch.III, ed. Alleaume, p.18.

sense of instability suggested by theme and image often seems to be reflected in his method of composition and in his style.

In the first chapter of the Fragments d'une Histoire Comique, Théophile has this to say about his style: "Or ces digressions me plaisent, je me laisse aller à ma fantaisie, et quelque pensée qui se présente, je n'en destourne point la plume: je fais icy une conversation diverse et interrompue, et non pas des leçons exactes ny des oraisons avec ordre." (1) He does not, therefore, consider himself bound by a predetermined plan; he enjoys an exploratory kind of writing, which takes delight in following each by-way of thought which may present itself. Of course, he is speaking here of the prose work - Les Fragments - but it is unlikely that he should feel the desire to follow his "fantaisie" solely when he is writing in prose. In much of what he says about poetic compositions he reveals an impatience with rules, a desire to be free of the limitations which he feels they would impose upon him:

Mon ame imaginant n'a point la patience,
De bien polir les vers et ranger la science:
La reigle me desplaist, j'escris confusément
Jamais un bon esprit ne faict rien qu'aisément.(2)

He refuses to submit the first results of invention to critical scrutiny; he admits however that he writes "confusément", thus admitting also the existence of an accepted standard, yet finds his excuse in the last line quoted, which seems to express a belief in the superiority

1. Théophile, Fragments d'Une Histoire Comique, ed. Alleaume II, p.13
2. Théophile, Elegie à une Dame O.P. I, p.7, l.117-120.

of the first fruits of inspiration. We feel however that Théophile's preferences may not be based on artistic considerations but stem from a temperamental suspicion of rules and systems which would pin down his thought. He is not concerned with opposing another system of composition to that of Malherbe; he is merely anxious to assert his independence of systems, his freedom from the limitations of dogmatism; for systems offer a total interpretation, be it of life or of poetics; Théophile is not concerned with wholes, but with parts; he will not subordinate the thought of the moment to the interests of the whole experience.

Many of Théophile's poems, therefore, have a structure which is very different from that adopted by the classical artist, who keeps a single theme in view: here the separate parts of the poem contribute to the effective rendering of this theme; the parts are subordinate to the whole, each part standing in a logical relationship with the other parts; the argument can thus be followed from one part to the next until the logical conclusion of the whole is reached. Vauquelin de la Fresnaie, for example, insists that there should be ~~this~~ proportion and balance between the parts of the poem, when he advises: "que ton poème égal et pareil soit."⁽¹⁾ Godeau stresses the same point. Three things, he says are essential to successful composition - "l'ordre", "la liaison" and "le nombre". "L'ordre dispose les matières, donne la place aux raisons selon qu'elles sont ou plus

1. Vauquelin de la Fresnaie Art Poétique, 1605.

fortes ou plus faibles, et retranche ce qui est superflu..... La liaison unit toutes les parties du discours, en forme un corps agréable et fait que celui qui lit ou qui écoute, étant conduit d'un à l'autre, par une méthode facile, imprime si parfaitement les choses dans sa mémoire qu'elles n'en peuvent plus échapper."(1)

In contrast to this classical style, of which the hall-mark is a unity of thought and expression, stands much of the prose of Montaigne, who says of his own style: "Mon stile et mon esprit vont vagabondant de même!" and "Mes fantasmes se suivent, mais parfois c'est de loing, et se regardent, mais d'une vue oblique!"(2) It is this apparently wandering style, this oblique relationship between the different parts of the work of art which can be seen in the poetry of Théophile.

Seldom do we find a poem of Théophile's of any length which may be said to express one theme to which the parts of the poem are subordinate. A poem may contain several themes, linked not by the reason but the image. An image used as illustration may lead the poet on to another different theme. Sometimes it is the images themselves which become the principal interest in the poem. An image used in the development of a theme may arrest the poet's attention, so that he forgets the original purpose of the image. Such poems as these become a series of separate sketches, each one complete in itself. This type of poetic structure may well be the result of that

1. Godeau, Discours on the works of Malherbe.

2. Montaigne, Essais, Livre III, Ch. IX: De la Vanité . Pléiade edition, p. 1116 and 1115.

consciousness of instability which has already been revealed in the content of the poems. The world, human life are no longer seen as wholes, but as a series of separate parts which have lost a unifying principle. Time is not seen as a progression, as a continuous duration, but as a series of separate moments; and the poet invites us to stop and examine the minute details of each moment before passing on to the next.

Théophile himself recognises the presence of these characteristics in his own style. In the Elegy à une Dame, for example, he acknowledges at one point that he has forgotten the theme he was previously discussing, and has permitted himself to wander into an illustrative digression. He pulls himself up with:

Mais déjà ce discours m'a porté trop avant
Je suis bien pres du port, ma voile a trop de vent;
D'une insensible ardeur peu a peu je m'esleve
Commençant un discours que jamais je n'acheve.(1)

This brings him to a consideration of his own style, which he admits is far from disciplined; he rejects the unity which is the aim of the classical artist, in favour of the indiscriminate pursuit of idea or image, wherever it leads him:

Je ne veux pas unir le fil de mon sujet
Diversement je laisse et reprens mon object.(2)

Saint-Amant makes a similar comment on his own composition:

Voilà comme selon l'objet
Mon esprit changeant de projet
Saute de pensee en pensée. (3)

1. O. P. I, p.7, l.111-114.

2. l.115-116.

3. Saint-Amant, Le Contemplateur, l.135-137.

Once again we find this insistence on the inconstancy of thought, on the mind's tendency to flit from thought to thought, which we found in Durand and Motin quoted earlier (1) The pursuit of this inconstant thought, and the recording of its different stages, is more important to Théophile than the unity of the poem.

Two types of structure, both equally distant from the balance of classical unity, may be distinguished in the poetry of Théophile. In the first there is a unity of a kind: the thought is continuous from one portion of the work to the next, but the connection is, as Montaigne puts it, "oblique". The elegy Déjà trop longtemps la paresse me flatte (2) may be used to illustrate this type of structure. We are told first of all that the poet may have abused the freedom granted to him by a considerate patron, but, he says, temperament forbids him to be a mere servant. Fortune however has decreed the lines on which his life shall run, and he must be contented with it. He has in fact been fortunate in his choice of patron "En ma captivité j'ai beaucoup de licence." The character of the patron is evoked: we are told that it is the admirable personality, not the riches or the rank, which Théophile admires. Such things as riches are no more than "un lustre pipeur qui s'escoule et qui fuit". It is the spirit of the patron which is important:

Si d'un esprit commun le Ciel t'avoit fait maistre
Je serois bien marry de t'avoir eu pour maistre.(3)

1. See page 12.
2. Théophile O.P. I, p.71.
3. op. cit. 1.41-42.

Théophile then takes up the word "esprit" and continues:

Qu'un homme sans esprit est rude et desplaisant,
Et que le joug des sots est fascheux et pesant.(1)

We find him now embarking on a full length portrait of the "sot", which continues for some sixteen lines. This is not a logical method of composition; he has been praising the patron for his good qualities, for not being a "sot", and this last detail of the theme opens up another avenue of thought. The description of the fool ends as follows:

Si dieu m'avoit un tel maistre donné
Je pourrois bien jurer que je serois damné
Et croy que mes destins auroient moins de cholere
De m'avoir attaché des fers d'une galere
Bourrellé comme ceux que tu voyois ramer
Quand un si beau dessein te porta sur la mer.(2)

This in turn leads to a long and vivid description of a storm at sea, in which the patron has been involved. This simple comparison - I would be better off as galley slave than in the service of such a master - becomes the basis of a long description, which then, itself takes on the importance of a principal theme.

In the same way, when Aeneas is introduced by way of comparison we leave the patron battling against the storm, and learn of the feelings of Aeneas during his journey to Italy, of his sadness on leaving his homeland where his comrades lie buried. Out of this last idea Theophile conceives his next theme:

Jamais tes sentimens n'auront tant de malaise....(3)

1. op.cit. l.43-44.
2. idem. l.63-68.
3. idem. l.97.

Wherever the patron is, at home or abroad, he will bear all with equal calm. In this way the poem proceeds, following the associations of thought which arise in the poet's mind.

The Satyre Premiere (1) is based on the same kind of structure. We will not examine the whole poem, but there is one portion of it which ought to be mentioned in this context. The poet is here developing the theme of change and decay in human life; man's desires, he says, change with age "Tel est grave et pesant qui fut jadis volage". From this point we see old age itself taking the front of the stage, relegating the idea of flux to the background. Théophile draws a vivid picture, first of old age, then of old age in the figure of "un vieux Pere resveur" who seeks to restrain the normal expressions of the passions of youth.(2) The point of attack has changed, almost imperceptibly, so that at the end of this sketch the poet does not return to the theme he was considering when he started it: he turns instead to the theme of the benefits of the natural life. Once again the image dictates the course of the poem.

Such examples of Théophilian style confirm what the poet tells us about himself: he dislikes the imposition of control and discipline and seems more concerned with the thought of the moment than with producing a poem which would be the whole expression of a particular theme.

1. O.P. I, p.82.

2. idem. l.75, et seq. A passage recalling Rénier's description of old age in his Satire V.-*Toute chose en vivant avec l'age s'altère.....* etc.

The second type of structure is even more indicative of a concern with the parts rather than the whole, for it results in a complete breakdown in the unity of the poem. It is mainly apparent in the earlier descriptive pieces, but it does occur later from time to time. In the Ode: Plein de cholere et de raison,⁽¹⁾ for example, we are told that the poet has a grudge against winter, that he is preparing "une rude guerre"; we are informed that winter is guilty of some kind of unspecified crime and that the gods sympathise with the poet. Théophile then embarks on a description of different aspects of winter. Each stanza contains a delicate thumbnail sketch of some object, revealing how it is affected by the cold of winter. As we read each one, it retains our interest for its own intrinsic value, not because of its contribution to the general theme, of which we are but vaguely aware. Each sketch is important in its own right; it has an individual unity which makes it quite distinct from the stanzas which precede and follow. It is as if we were looking at a series of pictures, all illustrating one theme, which, while they hold the viewer's attention, are complete in themselves, without reference to a theme outside themselves.⁽²⁾ After reading the poem, the reader discovers that the individual sketches were not in fact the motive of the poem; they were in effect images in a poem of which the real point is that winter's cruelty in its effect on natural objects, is as nothing compared with its cruelty in imposing illness on the beloved Cloris.

1. O. P. I, p.33.

2. See p.125 for a more detailed examination of this dissection of Nature.

The Ode on Solitude (1) is comparable in its structure. The first fifty lines describe the solitude of the forest, and again the small sketch technique is employed. Then suddenly Cloris is introduced and we find ourselves in a love poem set against the background of idyllic woods. Here however, there is evidence to suggest that this poem was originally two or even three separate poems; but even if this were so, the fact that Theophile put them together in this way would suggest a certain lack of consideration for the unity of the whole.

(2)

The Ode Pour Monsieur le marquis de Boquingant may be placed in the same category. The first two stanzas consist of a conventional eulogy of Buckingham. They say very little except that the noble lord is a very likeable and pleasant individual, who uses his numerous gifts to give pleasure to others. This gives Théophile his cue, and leads him on to a series of descriptive sketches, all evoking the bounty of Nature. Once again the overall unity of the poem has been lost, and, in his delight in describing the fruits and flowers of the earth, Théophile seems momentarily to have forgotten Buckingham. At the end of a long enumeration of natural objects we return to the theme under consideration - the bounty of Buckingham. This enumeration, we learn, has been intended to illustrate the goodness of the good marquis.

In the Ode Perside je me sens heureux (3) this splitting of the

1. O. P. I, p.16.
2. O. P. I, p.185.
3. O. P. II, p.41.

unity of the poem is particularly striking. The theme is the superiority of nature over art; descriptions of natural objects lead up to the statement of this theme after the initial argument that Perside's beauty is sufficient without the addition of paint, but these images, each separate picture, take the major share of attention. Other poems might equally well be used to exemplify this technique. Other poets use it too; in Tristan's Le Promenoir des Deux Amants, and in the Le Soleil Levant of Saint Amant, the separate parts of the poem have a unity of their own.

Poems constructed on such a model possess what we might call a multiple unity, when the unity of the whole is lost and the proportions of the poem upset. Such a form of artistic expression perhaps reveals what Jean Rousset would call "la domination du décor". This is, he says by analogy with architecture "la soumission de la fonction au décor, la substitution à la structure d'un réseau d'apparences fuyantes, d'un jeu d'illusions".(1)

The sense of discord, the lack of a unifying principle in life, which such a structure reflects, is perhaps even more apparent when the splitting of the unity of the poem is carried one stage further, when each line of the poem becomes complete in itself. This is one of the most characteristic features of Théophile's poetic style, more noticeable in the octosyllabic poems. Here a series of single sense lines gives a curious staccato effect, which has been likened to the

1. Jean Rousset, La Littérature de l'Age Baroque en France.

effect of Pointillisme in the plastic arts. This device is often used in descriptions of battles to give a heightened impression of violence. This is the case in two passages which may be classed together. One occurs in the Ode au Prince d'Orange, and the second in the Ode sur la Paix de 1620. We quote from the Ode au Prince d'Orange:

Aux coups que le Canon tiroit
 Le Ciel de peur se retiroit
 La mer se veid toute alumée
 Les astres perdirent leur rang
 L'air s'estouffa de la fumée.....(1)

There is a third passage, very similar in form and content to these two, but here the unnatural phenomena are caused by the presence of the beautiful Silvie. It should be noted that these passages were composed at widely different dates, the first not later than 1618, the second in 1620 and the third in 1623-4. It cannot therefore be contended that this point of style is confined to Théophile's early period. There are many examples of this same device throughout his poetry. In the Ode Maintenant que Philis est morte for example, we read:

Tes propos ne sont que du vent,
 Tes regards sont tous pleins ruses,
 Tu n'as point pour tout d'amitié,
 Je me mocque de tes excuses.(2)

In another poem the splitting of the verse is carried still further, and the line disintegrates into two separate halves:

Je n'ay repos ny nuit ny jour,
 Je brusle, je me meurs d'amour,
 Tout me nuit, personne ne m'ayde,(3)

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1. Théophile, O. P. I, p.39, l.150-155.
 2. O. P. I, p.128, l.8-11.
 3. O. P. I, p.29, l.1-3.

And of course the Ode Un corbeau devant moi croasse is entirely written in this way: each line is an entity in itself; the poem thus conveys the almost delirious nature of the visions recounted, through its very structure.

It may be true to say that, as Théophile developed a certain acquaintance with the alexandrine, together with a more subtle and flowing style, this technique became less prevalent, though it is still to be found from time to time in the elegies written in alexandrines:

J'ay leu toute la nuit, j'ay joué tout le jour,
J'ay fait ce que j'ay pu pour me guerir d'Amour,
J'ay leu deux ou trois fois tous les secrets d'@vide....(1)

and a little later:

J'ay veu cent fois le bal, cent fois la Comedie,
J'ay des Luts les plus doux doux gousté la mélodie... (2)

When, during his imprisonment, Théophile turns once again to the octosyllabic line, this same style tends to reassert itself. In fact, in the Lettre à son Frère the line is split to such an extent that the result is enumeration:

Dois-je donc aux races neutrieres
Tant de fievres et tant de pleurs
Tant de respects, tant de prieres.(3)

And later in the same poem Théophile castigates those responsible for his misfortunes with a violence which recalls that of D'Aubigné:

Parjures infracteurs des lois
Corrupteurs des plus belles ames,

1. Elegie J'ay fait ce que j'ay peu O. P. II, p.60, 1.3-5.
2. idem, 1.9-10.
3. O. P. II, p.185, 1.302-304.

Effroyables meutriers des Rois
 Ouvriers de cousteaux et de flames,
 Pasles Prophetes de tombeaux,
 Fantosmes, Lougaroux, Corbeaux,
 Horrible et venimeuse engeance... (1)

Theophile is not alone among his contemporaries in his use of such a verse form. Auvray too, uses a similarly broken style to convey powerful feeling:

Crucifier un dieu! pendre le Roi des Rois.
 O justice, nuict, fiel, haine, guerre inhumaine,
 Oui mais pour sauver toute la race humaine
 O paix, miel, jour, amour, repos et douces loix.(2)

Saint Amant describes the apocalypse in the same way:

Les estoiles tombent des cieux,
 Les flammes devorent la terre,
 Le mont Gibal est en tous lieux
 Et partout gronde le tonnerre..... (3)

It would seem then that the awareness of instability, which is so evident in the imagery used by Theophile and his contemporaries, is reflected in the structure of the verse. Theophile's nonchalant style, his concern with the thought of the moment, with the immediate image, with the parts rather than the whole, reflect an unstable world which has lost its unity, and which man can no longer appreciate as a totality; man himself is but an isolated part of a universe composed of parts, his life composed of independent moments of time.

1. idem. l.311-317.

2. Auvray La Pourmenade de l'âme Dévote, Rouen, 1622.

3. Saint-Amant Le Contemplateur, l.411-417.

A
SENSUOUS WORLD

NATURE AND THE NATURAL LIFE

If most of the poets of the time are conscious of the instability of the world and of the mutability of man, they differ in their reactions to the situation in which they find themselves. Some, like Malherbe, oppose the inconstancy they see around them with a constancy of their own; whence the vogue for stoic ideals of resignation, ideals which are often tempered by the addition of Christian hope. Others, despairing of the world, turn from it and look to the next for contentment and repose. Some, among whom we must place Théophile, express a desire to enjoy what this world offers and to regard what they call the natural life and the pleasures of the senses as the ultimate good.

It is of course in created nature that are to be found many of the experiences satisfying to the senses. However for Théophile, the natural life implies much more than simply seeking the pleasures of the countryside or the park; it involves, too, following Nature in the conduct of one's life. In this context the word Nature is used to signify the force which is responsible not only for the creation of the natural scene, but also for the harmonious movement of the universe.

A lengthy passage is devoted to the creative activities of Nature in La Maison de Silvie. Here Nature is seen as the artist responsible for the beauties of the natural scene:

Ce cabinet tousjours couvert
 D'une large et haute tenture,
 Prend son ameublement tout verd
 Des propres mains de la Nature,
 D'elle de qui le juste soin
 Estend ses charitez si loin,
 Et dont la richesse feconde

Pareist si claire en chaque lieu
 Que la providence de Dieu
 L'establit pour nourrir le monde.

Tour les bleds elle les produit;
 Le sep ne vit que de sa force....(1)

Similarly in Perside je me sens heureux... :

Nature a mis tout son credit
 A vous faire entierement belle....(2)

In the passage quoted from La Maison de Silvie, Nature, although responsible for the beauties of the park, stands beneath the ultimate authority of God. The lines which follow confirm this inferior position while ascribing to Nature much wider powers:

Elle donne le mouvement
 Et le siege a chaque element,
 Et selon que Dieu l'autorise,
 Nostre destin pend de ses mains....(3)

And in the final ode of the poem the ultimate authority is placed unmistakably in the hands of God:

Devant luy c'est une peinture
 Que le Ciel et chaque Element,
 Il peut d'un trait d'oeil seulement
 Effacer toute la Nature. (4)

This conception of Nature naturans as the handmaid of God was of course familiar in the middle ages. In the Roman de la Rose for example, Nature is seen carrying out the work of God under his direction. With Théophile, however, the distinction between the functions

1. Théophile, O.P. II, p.167, l.11-22. See also O.P. II, p.180, l.16-17:
 Chaque feuille et chaque couleur
 Dont Nature a marqué ces marbres....
2. O.P. II, p.41, l.7-8.
3. O.P. II, p.167, l.25-28.
4. O.P. II, p.183, l.87-90.

of Nature and those of God is not always clear, and the situation is complicated by the fact that Théophile seems to place the power which controls the world and human affairs, not only in the hands of God and of Nature but also with destiny, the stars or fortune. We are not always conscious of the presence of the deity behind the activities of Nature. In the following lines from Pyrame it is quite clear that Nature is regarded as a controlling force, but it is far from clear what the role of the gods is intended to be:

On ne demande point congé d'une aventure;
S'il en faut demander, c'est donc à la nature,
Qui conduit nostre vie, et s'adresser aux Dieux,
Qui tiennent eh leurs mains nos esprits et nos yeux.(1)

Elsewhere Théophile claims that the personality of man is formed by God (2), yet it is destiny which apportions the number of years which each man shall live, and Nature has also an important part to play:

Ainsi te mit nature au cours de la fortune.... (3)

In the Lettre à son Père Nature is said to be the source of human intellect:

Car l'esprit ny le jugement
Dont a pourveus la Nature,
Quoy que l'on vueille presumer
N'entend non plus nostre aventure
Que le secret flux de la Mer. (4)

In another poem Nature performs a task which one would expect to belong to destiny:

Je sçay que la nature a voulu que tu prinsses
Et le sang, et le nom d'une race de Princes. (5)

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1. Pyrame Les Amours Tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé, Act.I, Sc.2, ed. All. II, p.100.
 2. Quand la Divinité, qui formoit ton essence ...O.P. I, p.66, l.13.
 3. O.P. I, p.66, l.13.
 4. O.P.II, p.186, l.26-30
 5. Desja trop longuement.... O.P. I, p.71, l.37-8.

In the Satyre Première Nature is said to be responsible for the term of life:

Elle (la bête) compte sans bruit et loing de toute envie
Le terme dont nature a limité sa vie. (1)

However, although there is some confusion about Nature's precise role, it is evident that she is regarded as a force with some considerable control over the lives of men, as well as over the movement of the universe. The system of the universe will return to chaos when Nature is no longer able to sustain harmonious movement:

Les planettes s'arrestent,
Les eslements se meslerent
En ceste admirable Structure
Dont le Ciel nous laisse jouyr.
Ce qu'on voit, ce qu'on peut ouyr
Passera comme une peinture:
L'impuissance de la Nature
Laissera tout evanouyr. (2)

Sometimes there is a suggestion in Théophile's references to Nature of the influence of such thinkers as Vanini and Bruno, for whom God seems to have been identical with Nature and destiny. There was for them therefore no divine transcendence, no providence, no miracles and no after life. We have already seen something of Théophile's scepticism with regard to the possibility of survival after death (3); moreover he often seems to identify the divinity with Nature and destiny, as he uses now one, now the other term to describe the influence which directs the events of the world. That such an outlook was

1. O.P. I, p.83, l.37-8.

2. A Monsieur de L sur la mort de son Père. O.P. II, p.217 (Appendice)

3. See A Monsieur de Liancour O.P. II, p.220 (Appendice) and page 80 of this thesis.

prevalent at the time may be seen from Racan's view of the subject:

Ils disent que le sort seul règne dans les Cieux
 Que les foudres sur nous tombent à l'aventure;
 Ils disent que la Crainte est mère des faux Dieux
 Et n'en connaissent point d'autres que la Nature. (1)

Indeed Théophile found it expedient to refute this charge against him in a poem written at about the time of his arrest:

Mon coeur se porte là d'un mouvement tout droit
 Et croit asseurement ce que l'Eglise croit.
 Bien que des imposteurs, qu'une aveugle ignorance
 Oppose absolument aux libertez de France,
 Fassent courir des bruits que mon sens libertin
 Confond l'Auteur du monde avecque le Destin.(2)

In spite of this however, it does seem that at times he substitutes Nature for a personal God, though there is no fully worked out philosophy behind his references. There is no suggestion for example that he subscribed to the idea of Nature as "l'ame du monde", as a spirit infused through all things, which was an important part of the thought of such as Bruno. In fact it would seem that in Théophile's work we have the remnants of a system of thought which belongs to the Renaissance. Although he speaks of Nature, in a way which had become habitual, as the creative force of the universe, he does not see the universe as a whole. As we shall see in discussing his descriptions of created nature, he is concerned with the parts rather than the whole.

Nevertheless, although we can no longer find a philosophy which

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1. Racan. Pseume Beatus vir qui non abiit Oeuvres, ed. Latour, II, p. 33.
 2. Théophile, La Plainte de T. à son amy Tircis. O.P. II, p.85, 1.55-60.

will explain the world as a whole, Théophile does make use of the concept of Nature to provide a way of life for the individual consciousness. It is the law of Nature, as he understands it, and not the law of God exemplified in the Christian religion, which he determines to obey:

J'approuve qu'un chacun suive en tout la nature,
 Son Empire est plaisant, et sa loy n'est pas dure:
 Ne suivant que son train jusqu'au dernier moment
 Mesmes dans les malheurs on passe heureusement. (1)

By following the laws of Nature man can, according to Théophile, live a satisfying life, enjoying what is good and remaining indifferent to misfortune. Nature prescribes a certain line of conduct, which man's personal nature, if he remains faithful to it, will enable him to follow.

Here another meaning of the word nature is apparent. Theophile very often uses it to signify man's essence. In his references to this personal nature of man we may discern an attempt to discover some stable point, some unifying principle within the individual, which will compensate for the lack of stability and unity he finds in the external world. Now that the belief in an external authority is no longer valid, man must find a personal basis for the conduct of his life. As so often in a consideration of the writers of this period in France the name of Montaigne must be quoted. The scepticism of Montaigne had considerable influence, and we are continually coming across echoes of his thought. Montaigne too, conscious of the flux

1. O. P. I, p.82, Satyre Premiere 1.85-88.

of life and sceptical of the validity of absolute values, was led to seek a stable basis for personality which would be valid for the individual consciousness. He seems to have found such a basis in the individual nature of man with which he is born and which remains with him throughout the vicissitudes of his life. It is his maitresse forme, the essence of his personality to which man must remain faithful in the conduct of his life.

Théophile too, points to the existence of a personal nature or génie with which man is born but which is easily corrupted:

Celuy qui de nature, et de l'amour des Cieux
Entrant en la lumiere est nay moins vicieux,
Lors que plus son Genie aux vertus le convie,
Il force sa nature, et fait toute autre vie.....(1)

The source of this génie is not clearly stated. There are oblique references to a divine source, as in the lines just quoted. Later it would seem that destiny may be responsible, though the term "celeste feu" is also used:

Je croy que les destins ne font venir personne
En l'estre des mortels qui n'ait l'ame assez bonne,
Mais on la vient corrompre, et le celeste feu
Qui luit à la raison ne nous dure que peu:
Car l'imitation rompt nostre bonne trame,
Et tousjours chez autrui fait demeurer nostre ame.(2)

Later still Nature herself would seem to be the source:

...Suivant le libre train que Nature prescrit....(3)

The possession of this nature, génie or naturel gives man a certain

1. O. P. I, p.88, l.159-162.

2. ibid l.169-174.

3. ibid. p.89, l.176.

freedom, but he very easily loses it as desires, passions, ambition,
love come to divert him. Man is said to be

D'un naturel fragile, et qui se vient ranger
A quel point que l'humeur le force de changer...(1)

Attacked by love -

Ton naturel ployable à la première atteinte
Souspira son tourment d'une si douce plainte. (2)

Mais les regards impérieux
Qu'Amour tire de vos beaux yeux,
M'ont bien fait changer de nature.(3)

In spite however, of the frequent references to human weakness and the dangers of imitation, Théophile still feels that it is possible to follow the way pointed out by Nature; indeed he claims that he has achieved as much himself:

Je pense que chacun auroit assez d'esprit,
Suivant le libre train que Nature prescrit.
A qui ne sçait farder, ny le cœur, ny la face,
L'impertinence mesme a souvent bonne grace:
Qui suivra son Genie, et gardera sa foy,
Pour vivre bien-heureux, il vivra comme moy. (4)

The natural life which Théophile determines to live, is a life which takes advantage of the good that Nature offers in this world. The pleasures of the senses are considered a positive good, since they are natural; to attempt to repress the senses can only be contrary to the laws of Nature:

Jamais mon jugement ne trouvera blasmable
Celuy-là qui s'attache à ce qu'il trouve aimable.(5)

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1. O.P. I, p.66, l.15-16 - Quand la Divinité.....
 2. *ibid.* p.68, l.57-8.
 3. Aussi franc d'amour... O.P. I, p.134, l.5-7.
 4. Satyre Première O.P. I, p.82, l.175-180.
 5. *ibid.* l.89-90.

Thus while the Christian poets of the time see the world negatively, as unstable and deceiving, Théophile, and others like him such as Saint-Amant, will seek the pleasures of each fleeting moment and thus fulfil their nature in the world. The point is put as follows by Théophile:

Bref nostre sort est assez dous,
 Et pour n'estre pas immortelle,
 Nostre nature est assez belle
 Si nous sçavions jouyr de nous.
 Nostre mal c'est nostre foiblesse,
 Rien que nous-mesmes ne nous blesse.
 Le sot glisse sur les plaisirs:
 Mais le sage y demeure ferme,
 Attendant que tous ses desirs
 Et ses jours aient finy leur terme. (1)

Their vision is restricted to this world, but, since they find here something positive, they speak less of death and more of the satisfactions of life. It is perhaps because they are so conscious of instability and so sceptical of survival, that they insist on the validity of sensuous enjoyment. Théophile's view is diametrically opposed to that of Gody, for example; to the latter's contention:

Le temps te fera voir qu'il vaut mille fois mieux
 Gémir en telles choses
 Que pour pleurer sans fin dans la perte des Cieux
 Vivre parmy les roses. (2)

Théophile would reply:

Après nous il ne faut attendre
 Que la pourriture et la cendre. (3)

There is an important passage in the Fragments d'une Histoire

1. O. P. II, p.212 (Appendice)
2. Gody, Stances, Poésies, 1632, Livre 4.
3. Théophile. A Monsieur de Liancour, O. P. II, p.220 (Appendice).

Comique in which Théophile makes what may be regarded as a statement of faith in the natural life, the life of the senses: "Il faut avoir de la passion non seulement pour les hommes de vertu, pour les belles femmes, mais aussi pour toute sorte de belles choses. J'aime un beau jour, des fontaines claires, l'aspect des montagnes, l'estendue d'une grande plaine, de belles forests; l'Océan, ses vagues, son calme, ses rivages; j'ayme encore tout ce qui touche plus particulièrement les sens: la musique, les fleurs, les beaux habits, la chasse, les beaux chevaux, les bonnes odeurs, la bonne chère; mais à tout cela mon désir ne s'attache que pour se plaire, et non point pour se travailler; lorsque l'un ou l'autre de ces divertissements occupent entièrement une âme, cela passe d'affection en fureur et brutalité; la passion la plus forte que je puisse avoir ne m'engage jamais au point de ne la pouvoir quitter en un jour."(1)

This is a remarkable passage for what it reveals of a sensitive as well as of a sensuous nature. The natural objects mentioned are among the subjects of Théophile's descriptive poetry, and it is they which provide much of the sensuous imagery to be found in his work as a whole. The last part of the passage in particular should be noted, since it introduces the idea of control. While the pleasures of the senses are natural, excessive devotion to them is contrary to the Nature which provides them and is therefore to be avoided. The self love of the natural man is to be tempered by reason.

1. Ed. Alleaume, II, p.16.

The theme of the natural life is touched on at various points in Théophile's poetry. In the Elegie Cloris lors que je songe en te voyant si belle, which we have already discussed in connection with the theme of death, Théophile returns to it after rejecting the doubtful pleasures of ideal love:

Je gouteray le bien que je varray present,
 Je prendray les douceurs à quoy je suis sensible
 Le plus abondamment qu'il me sera possible.
 Dieu nous a tant donné de divertissemens,
 Nos sens trouvent en eux tant de ravissemens
 Que c'est une fureur de chercher qu'en nous mesme,
 Quelqu'un que nous ayons et quelqu'un qui nous ayme. (1)

The life of the natural man is composed of a succession of divertissemens enjoyed through the senses. The filling of each moment of life with divertissemens is what Pascal condemns, since, he says, it blinds man to the reality of his situation.(2) Théophile sees such a life, however, as a response to a situation which offers no other stable basis; as he maintains in the lines quoted above, self love is the only kind of love which can be relied upon. In this passage Théophile shows that like Montaigne he has come to terms with the passage of time; for Montaigne seizes on the passing moment in order to savour it to the full: "Principalement à cette heure que j'aperçoy la mienne si briefve en temps, je la veux estendre en pois; je veux arrester la promptitude de sa fuite par la promptitude de ma sesie, et par la vigueur de l'usage compenser la hastiveté de son

1. O. P. II, p.27, l.24-30.

2. See page 44.

escoulement."(1) So Théophile, in this poem, decides to return to the only things which can be relied upon to give him pleasure and contentment; he will return to the Garonne:

Je sens que mon esprit reprend sa liberté,
 Que mes yeux desvoilez cognoissent la clarté,
 Que l'objet d'un beau jour, d'un pré, d'une fontaine,
 De voir comme Garonne en l'Océan se traine,
 De prendre dans mon Isle en ses longs promenoirs
 La paisible fraischeur de ses ombrages noirs,
 Me plaist mieux aujourd'huy que le charme inutile
 Des attraicts dont Amour te fait voir si fertile. (2)

The pleasures provided by the contemplation of natural beauty, though they are of great importance in his poetry, are not the only pleasures to which he is susceptible. There are too, the pleasures of la bonne chère:

Et si comme tu dis vous avez tous envie,
 De me faire passer un jour de douce vie,
 Appreste des bons vins: mais n'en prends point d'autrui,
 Car je sçay que ton Pere en a de bon chez luy. (3)

Had he remained in the solitude of Boussères, he tells his friend Tircis:

J'aurois eu le plaisir de boire à petits traits
 D'un vin clair, petillant, et delicat, et frais....(4)

The man who lives the natural life, being sufficient unto himself relying for his pleasures on his senses, can disregard the opinion of the world and can remain unaffected by misfortune:

Innocent que je suis, plein de repos dans l'ame,
 Qui tiens indifferent qu'on me loue ou me blasme

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1. Montaigne, Essais, Livre III, ch.XIII, De l'Expérience, ed. Gallimard, Pléiade, p.1251-2.
 2. O. P. II, p.28, l.63-70.
 3. Je pensois au repos ... O.P. I, p.49, l.47-50.
 4. La Plainte de T. à son amy Tircis, O.P. II, p. 85, l.111-112.

Qui fais ce qui me plaist, qui vis comme je veux,
 Qui plaindrois au destin le moindre de mes vœux,
 Qui ris de la fortune, et couché dans la boue
 Me mocque des captifs qu'elle attache à sa roue. (1)

This is the feature of the natural life on which Théophile places some stress, especially in the short ode Heureux tandis qu'il est vivant.

The poem is devoted to an account of the life of the man who follows le naturel, although here it is not Nature herself but "le grand Maistre de la nature" who is the guide. Unaffected by the "soucis du monde" he is true to himself and to his own nature, obeying only the control of reason:

Il est tousjours plein de loisir,
 La justice est tout son plaisir,
 Et permettant à son envie
 Les douceurs d'une sainte vie,
 Il borne son contentement
 Par la raison tant seulement. (2)

He is above the petty jealousies and passions which disturb the lives of other men; he is above ambition, above flattery, even the sighs of the lover have no appeal for him:

Il n'est ny serviteur ny maistre,
 Il n'est rien que ce qu'il veut estre:
 Jesus-Christ est sa seule Foy,
 Tels seront mes amis et moy. (3)

It is perhaps this desire for what he refers to as "franchise", the desire to be himself, to be independent of the opinions of others, which is the most obvious feature of Théophile's version of the natural life. It is however unusual to find him associating this life

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1. Elegie. Dans ce climat barbare.... O.P. II, p. 36, l. 89-94.
 2. O.P.I, p. 184, l. 13-18.
 3. *ibid.* l. 31- 34.

with Christianity as he does in the last two lines of the poem we have been discussing. The contentment he speaks of is to be sought here on earth, through the sensuous pleasure the world offers.

Sensual Love

If Théophile does see time as a series of separate moments, it is unlikely that we will find a conception of love as a state of mind which endures. We have already seen that, in the elegy Cloris lors que je songe..., Théophile rejects the love which keeps the lover trembling between hope and despair. Love is far more likely to be valued as a source of momentary pleasure.

Much of the love poetry of the time makes use of imagery of a conventional kind. A substantial number of Théophile's poems deal, for example, with love as a disease. It is a disease of which the lover is constantly trying to cure himself:-

Enfin guery d'une amitié funeste...(1)

Les remedes les plus doux qui touchent à ma plaie
Irritent ma douleur. (2)

Et Plus je cherche de remede
Moins je trouve d'allegement...(3)

The old antithesis is brought into service: in spite of the pain and the grief which love brings her devotees, the lover could not bear to be without them. Frequent too, is the image of imprisonment. So powerful is the lady's beauty "que deslors j'aymay ma prison"(4). As a prisoner the lover wears the traditional bonds, sometimes contemplates the possibility of escape, but, should he actually achieve freedom, returns like a domesticated bird to the familiar cage.

1. Théophile, O.P. I, p.106.
2. Stances Que mon espoir... O.P. I, p.98. 1.5-6.
3. Ode, Je n'ay repos... O.P. I, p.29, 1.5-6.
4. Aussi; franc d'amour que d'envie O.P. I, p.134, 1.18.

Among such imagery as this occurs, too, imagery of a religious inspiration, which recalls the devotional tone of the courtly lover. In itself this type of imagery, which treats the lady as a goddess to be adored and the lover as a sacrificial victim, suggests a purified idealistic kind of love relationship.

L'autre jour inspiré d'une divine flame
 J'entray dedans un temple, où tout religieux,
 Examinant de près mes actes vicieux,
 Un repentir profond faict souspirer mon ame.

Tandis qu'à mon secours tous les Dieux je reclame,
 Je voy venir Philis: quand j'apperceus ses yeux,
 Je m'escriay tout haut: Ce sont icy mes Dieux,
 Ce temple et cet autel appartient a ma Dame. (1)

In another poem Théophile makes use of a conceit typical of this type of poetry to prove that the lover's adoration of his mistress is greater than that of worshippers for their God:

Les plus devotieux mortels
 Rendant leur service aux Autels
 Qu'on dresse aux deitez supremes,
 Ne font brusler que de l'encens,
 Et pour vous adorer, je sens
 Que je me suis bruslé moy-mesme.(2)

The presence of such imagery is not in itself surprising, since it has been used in innumerable poems of the kind; what is remarkable, however, is the combination of religious imagery with sensuous imagery which suggests a physical love relationship rather than eternal devotion. In one of his poems Théophile describes himself

Comme un devot devers les cieux
 Mes yeux tournez devers tes yeux...(3)

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1. Théophile, Sonnet, O. P. I, p.142, l.1-8.
 2. J'ay trop d'honneur d'estre amoureux, O. P. I, p.149, l.7-12
 3. Quand tu me vois baiser tes bras. O. P. I. p. 150, l.6-7.

The impression given by other parts of the poem, however, is of a rather less ethereal love:

Quand tu me vois baiser tes bras
 Que tu poses nuds sur tes draps
 Bien plus blancs que le linge mesme;
 Quand tu sens ma bruslante main
 Se pourmener **dessus ton sein,**
 Tu sens bien Cloris que je t'aime. (1)

This sensual strain can be found in many of Théophile's poems of love, along with the traditional imagery of devotion. The distinction between the sensual pleasure of love and the attitude of eternal devotion is made explicitly when the poet asks:

Cloris pour ce petit moment
 D'une volupté frenetique,
 Crois-tu que mon esprit se pique
 De t'aymer eternellement ?
 Lors que mes ardeurs sont passées,
 La raison change mes pensées....(2)

It is quite clear from this poem that it is the divertissement of the moment which Théophile seeks in love. Love which takes away his liberty without compensations is not for him. He is frank about his requirements in the elegy Souverain qui regis....:

J'entens que le salaire egale mon service,
 Je pense qu'autrement la constance est un vice,
 Qu'Amour hait ces esprits qui luy sont trop devots,
 Et que la patience est la vertu des sots. (3)

There seems to have been a strong current of such feeling at the time. The naiveté necessary for the heroics of eternal devotion is lacking; instead we find realism and irony, which cause a poet to follow lines

1. idem 1.1-6.

2. Théophile, Cloris pour ce petit monent O. P. II, p.75, 1.1-4.

3. Souverain qui regis.... O. P. II, p.16, 1.147-150.

expressing devotion to his mistress with an attack on the gods he has just adored. And if we find the traditional imagery - the wounds, the fires, the bonds, the fever, it is the cleverness with which such images are treated which we are expected to admire, not the quality of the personal feeling of the poet.

Satisfaction of desire, therefore, was the aim to be pursued; constancy without satisfaction is seen to be pointless and is often regarded as something of a bourgeois virtue. Moreover, once love has been consummated it begins to fade; marriage is anathema to it, as Théophile maintains in the poem he addressed to le comte de Candale:

Mais tu sçavais qu'Amour meurt en la jouissance,
 Qu'il nous travaille plus, moins il a de licence,
 Qu'en des baisers permis ceste vertu s'endort,
 Et que le lict d'Hymen est le lict de sa mort. (1)

This sensuality is perhaps most easily recognisable in the poems which deal with the lover's dream, in the course of which the lover experiences the pleasures which his beloved refuses to grant him in reality. One of the most curious of such poems is Théophile's sonnet Je songeais que Philis..... This poem is a strange mixture of the conventional, the sensual, and the macabre:

Je songeais que Phyllis des enfers revenue
 Belle comme elle estoit à la clarté du jour
 Vouloit que son phantosme encore fit l'amour
 Et que comme Ixion j'embrassasse une nue.

Son ombre dans mon lict se glissa toute nue
 Et me dit: Cher Thyrsis, me voicy de retour,
 Je n'ay fait qu'embellir en ce triste sejour
 Où depuis ton despart le sort m'a retenue.

Je viens pour rebaiser le plus beau des Amans,
 Je viens pour remourir dans tes embrassements.
 Alors quand cette idole eut abusé ma flamme,
 Elle me dit Adieu, je m'en vay chez les morts:
 Comme tu t'es vanté d'avoir ...tu mon corps,
 Tu te pourras vanter d'avoir ...tu mon ame. (1)

This conception of love as a source of sensuous enjoyment, rather than as a rarefied abstraction, is natural enough in an unstable world in which life is transient and death not only imminent but possibly the end of all pleasure. Such a situation encourages the desire for the sensation of the present moment. This dependence on the life of sensations, of which love is but a part, coupled with incredulity where survival after death is concerned, is one of the obvious characteristics of the so-called libertins of the time, at least according to l'abbé Cotin who describes those persons known as "Les Forts esprits, encore qu'ils n'ayent point de plus elevez sentiments que les bestes; car ils font profession de ne rien croire que ce qu'ils peuvent voir et toucher, afin d'assujettir les Ames aux Corps...." (2). In effect, for Théophile, it is bodily pleasure rather than spiritual union which has meaning; and as we have already suggested, the experience of the

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1. Théophile, O.P. II, p.202, A similar stress on the sensual may be found in Tristan's Les Vains Plaisirs:

Et d'une ardeur bruslante atteint
 Je la fais tomber sur sa couche,
 Où par mille plaisirs charmez

Nous demeurens tous deux pasmez. Les Amours ed. Garnier
 p.69.

and in Théophile's: Dans ce petit moment ô songes ravissans
 Qu'amour vous a permis d'entretenir mes sens
 J'ay tenu dans mon lict Elise toute nue.

Sonnet Ministre du repos.... O.P. II, p.32, l.9.11.

2. L'Abbé Cotin Discours à Théopompe sur les Forts Esprits du Temps. 1629.

senses, in whatever sphere, is the only trustworthy experience of life, since it alone provides objects which can be seized and enjoyed in the ephemeral present. And naturally enough it is these objects which are the effective images of his poetry.

Nature and the retreat from the world.

For Théophile it is in the world of nature that the natural life may best be lived and the sensuous pleasures of life may best be experienced. In certain poems therefore, he renews a venerable poetic theme. He renews it in the sense that in his concept of the natural life and in his description of the natural world he stresses not the moral superiority of the country over the town but the sensuous beauty of the natural scene; he is far more sensitive to the beauty of form and colour than many of his predecessors - authors of poems describing the pleasures of rustic life. This is a theme which achieved a certain popularity during the troubled years of the late sixteenth century. Antonio de Guevara's devotional work in praise of rustic life was translated into French in 1568 as Le Mépris de la Cour avec la Vie Rustique. In 1575 Pibrac's Plaisirs de la Vie Rustique appeared in which he described a cultivated nature of fields and orchards. There are realistic touches such as the description of the preparation of a simple rustic meal:

elle coupe
Des tranches de pain pour en faire la soupe
Y mettant quelque peu d'un fromage moisi. (1)

He admires above all the simplicity and naturalness of country life, and contrasts these qualities with the deceit and artifice of city life, emphasising the moral superiority of rustic over town life. The natural is always to be preferred to the artificial - he too, has lines in praise of natural beauty unadorned by paint. Yet in spite

1. See also Desportes Sur les Plaisirs de la Vie Rustique
Gauchet Le Plaisir des Champs 1583

of the realistic touches and the continual stress on the natural it is obvious that the world created by Pibrac is itself an artificial one, created by the poet to serve an idea.

In the first years of the seventeenth century, so conscious of change in the real world, the cry of Vanitas, vanitas sends poets to this idealised nature in search of the harmony of the natural life. Mainard, tired of the insincerity of court life, tired too, of the humiliating attempts to obtain preferment, takes the path of horatian retreat:

Faret je suis ravi des bois où je demeure
Je trouve la santé de l'esprit et du corps,
Approuve ma retraite et permets que je meure
Dans le même village où mes pères sont morts. (1)

Again and again we find the contrast made between the temptations of the town and the purity of rusticity:

O bien heureux celui de qui l'âme contente
Fuyant l'ambition, l'orgueil, les vanités
Jouit parmi les champs des naïves beautés
Des fleurs..... (2)

Plus j'aime la condition
De ceux qui sans ambition
Passent leurs jours dans le village
Et qui nous font paraître encore
Au règlement de leur ménage
L'innocence du siècle d'or.(3)

For many of these poets in fact, life in the simplicity of nature has all the advantage of the Golden Age, which Racan describes as follows:-

Qu'heureux estoit le siècle où parmi l'innocence

1. Mainard, Oeuvres, 1646. Mod. Ed. Oeuvres Complètes, vol.2 & 3, ed. Garrisson
2. Pyard de la Mirande from a poem printed in Le Cabinet des Muses, (1881) 1619.
3. Frenicle, Ode Dedans ces lieux. Les Premières Oeuvres Boétiques du Sieur Frenicle, Paris, du Bray, 1625.

Soutenir de ma main mon front apesanty,
 comme par la douleur en pierre converty;
 Et tantost contempler la gazouillante course
 D'un ruisseau dont mes yeux semblent estre la source(1)

And the poet too, is often to be found in the solitude of the woods in search of inspiration. The movement of the waves on a solitary sea-shore lulls Saint-Amant into a state of reverie:

La[^], songeant au flux et au reflux,
 Je m'abisme en cette idée;
 Son mouvement me rend perclus
 Et mon âme en est obsédée. (2)

Tristan seems to have experienced similar feelings; once again it is the sea which produces the state of reverie:

Nul plaisir ne me peut toucher
 Fors celui de m'aller coucher
 Sur le gazon d'une falaise
 Où mon dueil se laissant charmer
 Me laisse rêver à mon aise
 Sur la majesté de la Mer. (3)

As for Théophile, he tells us himself that it was one of his greatest pleasures to wander in the solitude of the woods, writing freely in the tranquility of nature:

Je veux.....
 Employer toute une heure à me mirer dans l'eau
 Ouyr comme en songeant la course d'un ruisseau,
 Ecrire dans les bois m'interrompre, me taire,
 Composer un quatrain sans songer a le faire.(4)

And Théophile's preference is in this case confirmed by Saint-Amant who addresses his fellow poet as follows:

1. Durand Elegie VI Le Livre d'Amour... op cit
2. Saint-Amant Le Contemplateur l.91-94.
3. Tristan La Mer, Ode Les Vers Héroiques l.5-10.
4. Théophile, Elegie à une Dame O.P. I, p. 7, l.143-146.

Vous qui dedans la solitude
 D'un bois d'un antre, ou d'un estude
 Imaginez vos beaux escrits.
 Lorsque la sainte poésie
 Vous anime et vous rend espris
 De sa plus douce frénésie.(1)

The theme of retreat into the natural world, whether it involves moral considerations or not, may be compared with the use of the dream, also very popular at the time. That these two possibilities of escape should be used with such frequency suggests a dissatisfaction with, or lack of confidence in, the world of reality. Similarly the court ballet with its emphasis on disguise may be seen as a means of escape. The world created in poems about retreat is in its way just as artificial as the worlds of the dream and the ballet. The pure and simple rustic life free of the evil of modern society is an unreal world which owes much to tradition and very little to actual life in peasant communities in the seventeenth century; equally the nature of the poems on solitude is artificial in that it is created by the imagination of the poet who is following certain models and who wishes to create a certain kind of feeling. We are seldom given in these poems a realistic presentation, but rather landscapes which are constructed to fit an emotion.

1. Saint-Amant. A Théophile.

See also Marbeuf Le Solitaire in Recueil des Vers de Marbeuf, Rouen

1628: Agréable forest où j'ay comme en depos
 De mon coeur travaillé consigné le repos,
 Où mon esprit flattant a trouvé son rivage,
 Que je t'ayme ô forest et que le bruit sauvage
 Des arbres de zephire et des oyseaux du bois
 A mon oreille triste est une douce voix.

Also of course, La Solitude of Saint-Amant, with its affected melancholy and its carefully calculated suggestion of horror.

In the examples which we have quoted nature is sought largely as a background against which may be set the thought and the feelings of the poet concerned, whether he be moralist, lover or dreamer. Realism in such cases is unimportant; the poet is not here concerned with the details of the natural scene. Frequently however, we encounter poems in which the principal interest is in the realistic portrayal of detail. In several poems of Théophile it is apparent that the poet is very much concerned with describing a nature with which he is familiar, and not merely with reproducing the elements of a convention. In this respect he is not alone; Saint-Amant and Tristan, among others, reveal a similar kind of interest.

In some poems of course, Théophile expresses a nostalgia for the countryside and for rustic life in more general terms, somewhat in the manner of Pibrac or Gauchet, though without the moral implications of the latter. Always however, it is a particular countryside which he evokes: the Garonne is always at the centre of his nostalgia. Here the river appears, not as an image of the transient life of man, but as a source of fertility. In the Plainte à un Amy, written shortly after his arrest, Théophile's thoughts turn to the peaceful, rustic life he might have lived, had he remained at Boussères:

Que mon sort étoit doux s'il eust coulé mes ans
 Où lesbords de Garonne ont les flots si plaisans.
 Tenant mes jours cachez dans ce lieu solitaire,
 Nul que moy ne m'eust fait ny parler ny me taire,
 A ma commodité j'aurois eu le sommeil,
 A mon gré j'aurois pris et l'ombre et le soleil.
 Dans ces valons obscurs, où la mère Nature
 A pourveu nos troupeaux d'éternelle pasture,
 J'aurois eu le plaisir de boire à petits traist
 D'un vin clair, petillant, et delicat, et frais,
 Qu'un terroir assez maigre, et tout coupé de roches,
 Produit heureusement sur des montagnes proches. (1)

It is to this particular countryside of cultivated fields, this nature which he knows and which is therefore not merely a figment of the poet's imagination, that he proposes to take Cloris:

Là tu verras un fonds où le Païsan moissonne
 Mes petits revenus sur les bords de Garonne,
 Le fleuve de Garonne où des petits ruisseaux
 Au travers de mes prez vont apporter leurs eaux,
 Où des saules espais leurs rameaux verts abaissent
 Pleins d'ombre et frescheur sur mes troupeaux qui paissent.(1)

Here, as in the passage quoted above, other senses are appealed to besides that of sight:

Dans ce petit espace une assez bonne terre,
 Si je la puis sauver du butin de la guerre,
 Nous fournira des fruits aussi délicieux
 Qui scauroient contenter ou ton goust ou tes yeux. (2)

Such passages as these, though they are without implications of moral superiority, belong to a recognisable poetic tradition. We are reminded for example of Pibrac's description of the countryman who:

Dresse dans son verger des petites allées:
 Maine paistre ses boeufs sur le soir aux vallées... (3)

It is however, in the Lettre à son Frère that Théophile makes the most striking use of the theme. Here again he is thinking of a particular part of nature; in his prison cell he dreams of Boussères and of the contentment he might find there in the countryside of his youth:

Je verray ces bois verdissants
 Où nos Isles et l'herbe fraîche
 Servent aux troupeaux mugissants
 Et de promenoir et de Creche....(4)

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1. Théophile, Elegie Souverain qui regis... O.P. II, p.16, l.251-256.
 2. idem l.263-266.
 3. Pibrac op cit.
 4. Théophile Lettre à son Frère O.P. II, p.185, l.181-184.

He proceeds then, from a general description of the scene, to a consideration of its details, and for the moment the idea of escape is forgotten as the poet evokes the colours and taste of fruit, the smell of flowers:

Je paistray ma dent et mes yeux
 Du rouge éclat de la Pavis,
 Encore ce brignon muscat
 Dont le pourpre est plus délicat
 Que le teint uny de Caliste,
 Me fera d'un oeil mesnager
 Estudier dessus la piste
 Qui me l'est venu ravager.

Je cueilleray ces Abricots,
 Les fraises à couleur de flammes

Je verray sur nos Grenadiers
 Leurs rouges pommes entrouvertes,
 Où le Ciel comme à ses lauriers
 Garde tousjours des feuilles vertes;
 Je verray ce touffu Jasmin
 Qui fait ombre à tout le chemin
 D'un assez spacieuse allée,
 Et la parfume d'une fleur
 Qui conserve dans la gelée
 Son odorat et sa couleur. (1)

La Maison de Silvie may be compared with the Lettre à son Frère, for it was written, at least in part, while the poet was in prison, obliged to recreate in imagination the peace and security which he so obviously lacked in practice. Here once more Théophile turns to the natural world as a means of escape, but it is a natural world of a rather different kind. No longer do we find the fields and orchards

1. idem 1.203-212 and 221-230. This kind of description may well recall Gauchet: Tout le long d'un haut mur les Grenadiers verdissent
 Des Citronniers gentils les richesses jaunissent....
 ..Le mignard Jassemain d'une blanche couleur
 Y jette abondamment sa bien flairante fleur.

of Boussères, but the elegant park of the Château de Chantilly. The poet imagines a world as different as possible from the world of actual experience. It is not surprising that it should be an artificial world in the sense that it describes a nature which is itself a work of art and contains the mythological creatures of a golden age. Death has been removed; all animals live in peace and harmony, so that we are presented with a kind of paradise, an ideal world born of the dreams of a man threatened with sudden death.

In this artificial setting, however, Théophile describes with contrasting realism certain details of the natural scene. In contrast to many poets who turned to an idealized Nature because they had rejected life and wished to preach against its evils, Theophile finds in this nature, life of a more vivid kind - the life of the senses. Sound receives particular attention in this poem. The song of the nightingale is described as follows:

Il ramasse dedans son sein
Le doux charme des voix humaines,
La musique des instrumens
Et les paisibles roulemens
Du beau cristal de nos fontaines. (1)

As he imagines the park from the darkness of his prison, it is through several senses together that the effect is conveyed;

Mes sens en ont tout le tableau,
Je sens les fleurs au bord de l'eau,
Je prens le frais qui les humecte,
La Princesse s'y vient asseoir,
Je voy comme elle y va le soir
Que le jour fuit et la respecte. (2)

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1. La Maison de Silvie Ode IX O.P. II, p.176. l.86-90.
 2. Ode VIII O.P. II, p.171. l.105-110.

A Dissected Nature

In spite of the fact that Théophile still makes use of the idea of Nature as the creative force, of this natura naturans, responsible for the whole of created nature, the natural descriptions which we find in his poetry have, as one of their most striking characteristics, a lack of wholeness. We no longer see created Nature as a whole, but rather separate manifestations of it, each examined in detail, and each independent of the other. The small details of the natural scene which Théophile delights in describing are no longer subordinated to the demands of the total harmony of Nature, or for that matter of the poem; they might in the past have done no more than contribute to the general impression of the whole, now they are given an importance of their own. When we read a poem of Théophile in which he looks at Nature in this way, it is as if we were examining a painting through a magnifying glass, concentrating on the small details which we then saw larger than life and out of proportion to their actual importance in the whole scene.

Théophile himself mentions his delight in the small details of Nature; in the Elegie à Une Dame for example, he writes:

je veux
Promener mon esprit par de petits dessains.(1)

And in the Plainte à son Amy he recalls nostalgically the peaceful life of Boussères where:

L'aïslé d'un papillon m'eust plus fourny de vers
Qu'aujourd'huy ne feroit le bruit de l'Univers.(2)

1. O.P. I, p.7, l. 140.

2. O. P.II, p.85, l.131-132.

In the tenth ode of La Maison de Silvie he enumerates the small objects of Nature which attract his poet's attention:

Je sçay qu'un seul rayon du jour
 Meriteroit toute ma peine,
 Et que ces estancs d'alentour
 Pourraient bien engloutir ma veine;
 Une goutte d'eau, une fleur
 Chaque feuille et chaque couleur
 Dont Nature a marqué ces marbres
 Merite tout un livre à part. (1)

There are several examples of poems which are composed of a series of separate pictures of the natural world. First of all are the pictures of rustic life, small vignettes illustrating the life of the peasant or the fisherman:

Le pescheur en se morfondant
 Passe la nuit dans ce rivage,
 Qu'il croist estre plus abundant
 Que les bords de la mer sauvage.
 Il vend si peu ce qu'il a pris
 Qu'un teston est souvent le prix
 Dont il laisse vuider sa nasse... (2)

.....
 Je reverray fleurir nos prez,
 Je leur verray couper les herbes;
 Je verray quelque temps apres
 Le paysan couché sur les gerbes. (3)

La charrue escorche la plaine,
 Le bouvier qui suit les seillons
 Presse de voix et d'aiguillons,
 Le couple de boeufs qui l'entraîne, (4)

In the Ode Plein de cholere et de raison we are given a series of views of the winter scene, among which appear the tortoise and the

1. Ode X, O.P. II, p.180, l.11-18.
2. Lettre de Theophile a son Frère, O.P. II, p.185. l.191-197.
3. idem l.231-234.
4. Le Matin, O.P. I, p.13, l.33-36.

snail. La tortue et les limaçons
 Jeusnent perclus sous les glaçons;
 L'oyseau sur une branche nue
 Attend pour dire ses chansons
 Que la fueille soit revenue.

The Ode Perside je me sens heureux shows the same technique at work. Here the flowers, birds, water and finally the very pebbles all receive individual attention. The argument of the Remonstrance a M. de Vertsmont is supported by three separate views of Nature in Spring. Each is tied syntactically to the beginning and end of the poem, but while each is before us it has its own independent existence:

Desormais que le renouveau
 Fond la glace et desseiche l'eau
 Qui rendent les prez inutiles,
 Et qu'en l'object de leurs plaisirs,
 Les places des plus grandes villes
 Sont des prisons à nos désirs.

Que l'oiseau, de qui les glaçons
 Avoient enfermé les chansons
 Dans la poictrine refroidie,
 Trouve la clef de son gosier
 Et promeine sa melodie
 Sur le Myrthe et sur le Rosier:

Que l'Abeille, apres la rigueur
 Qui tient ses aisles en langueur
 Au fonds de ses petites cruches,
 S'en va continuer le miel
 Et quittant la prison des ruches
 N'a son vol borné que du ciel

Que les Zephires s'espansans
 Parmy les entrailles des champs
 Laschent ce que le froid enserre;
 Que l'Aurore avecque ses pleurs
 Ouvre les cachots de la terre
 Pour en faire sortir les fleurs;.....(1)

Théophile does not attempt to give us a full picture of Spring; he is content to select certain aspects of it. He does the same thing in Le Matin, but here the links which bound the stanzas of the Rémonstrance together are absent. We see a series of separate scenes, apparently selected quite arbitrarily:

Je voy les Agneaux bondissans
 Sur les bleds qui ne font que naistre;
 Cloris chantant les mene paistre
 Parmy ces costeaux verdissans.

Les oyseaux d'un joyeux ramage
 En chantant semblent adorer
 La lumiere, qui vient dorer
 Leur cabinet et leur plumage.(1)

The subject of this last stanza is one which often receives a particularly detailed treatment; here again. Théophile substitutes detailed description of the individual parts of Nature for the wider treatment of the whole, which for him seems to be no longer obtainable. Very often the bird is set against a background of winter:

L'oyseau sur une branche nue
 Attend pour dire ses chansons
 Que la feuille soit revenue...(2)

But the fullest treatment is to be found in La Maison de Silvie. Here it is the very smallness of the creatures which seems to interest the poet. There is great delicacy about the following description, in which perspective is maintained through the mention of the twigs which even these fragile creatures cause to bend:

Leurs coeurs se laissent desrober,
 Insensiblement ils s'oublent

1. O.P. I, p.13, 1.25-32.

2. O.P. I, p.33, 1.46-48.

Et les rameaux qu'ils font courber,
 Quelquesfois leurs pieds se deslient,
 Leur petit corps precipite
 Se fie en la legereté
 De la plume qui les retarde:
 Ils planent sur leurs eslerons
 Et voletent aux environs
 De Silvie qui les regarde. (1)

A similar passage in which the smallest detail is carefully noted occurs in the ode on solitude:

Oy le Pinçon et la Linotte
 Sur la branche de ce rosier,
 Vois branler leur petit gosier
 Oy comme ils ont changé de notte.(2)

The air of the idyllic parklands of La Maison de Silvie is filled with the song of birds, usually the song of the nightingale. And though Théophile makes use of a literary tradition in his use of this particular bird (3) he is probably more interested in the evocation of sound. Once again we should note that the sound of birds or of water is another separate part of Nature which receives treatment in depth. In the ninth Ode a stanza is devoted to the song of the nightingale:

Ainsi finit ces tons charmeurs
 L'oyseau dont le gosier mobile
 Souffle tousjours à nos humeurs
 Dequoy faire mourir la bile,
 Et bruslant apres son dessein
 Il ramasse dedans son sein
 Le doux charme des voix humaines,

-
1. Ode VII, O.P. II, p.167, l.61-70.
 2. Ode Dans ce val solitaire et sombre, O.P. I, p.16, l.133-136.
 3. See La Maison de Silvie Ode VIII and Ode Dans ce val solitaire et sombre O.P. I, p.16, l.21-24.
 For an examination of the theme in the Middle Ages see: J.M. Telfer The Evolution of a Mediaeval Theme, (art) Durham Univ. Journal, Vol. XLV. No. I. Dec. 1952.

La musique des instrumens
Et les paisibles roulemens
Du beau cristal de nos fontaines.(1)

The flower is another detail of the natural scene which attracts the poet's attention. It is not for him, as it was for Ronsard, an image of transience; the fading beauty of the future is hardly mentioned. Théophile is too concerned with the enjoyment of present beauty to be distracted by thoughts of mutability. Thus the flowers of the parc at Chantilly for example seem stable and eternal, separate phenomena, cut off from the normal processes of change and decay. One of the most striking images pictures a flower surviving, almost miraculously, the cold of winter:

Et la parfume d'une fleur
Qui conserve dans la gelée
Son odorat et sa couleur. (2)

Here again the sense of smell is of considerable importance:

L'odeur de ces fleurs passeroit
Le musc de Rome et de Castille.(3)

Fruit too, is treated with considerable attention to detail. Sometimes we see each individual fruit:

Je verray sur nos Grenadiers
Leur rouges pommes entrouvertes....(4)

Always the descriptions are sensuous - the colour of the fruit is

1. O.P. II, p.179, l.81-90.

2. Théophile, Lettre à son Frère, O.P. II, p.185, l.228-230.

3. La Maison de Silvie, Ode VI, O.P.II, p.161, l.41-42. A similar attention to small details may be seen in Tristan's:

L'ombre de cette fleur vermeille
Et celle de ces joncs pendants... (Le Promenoir des
Deux Amants, Les
Amours)

4. Théophile, Lettre à son Frère, l.221-222

strongly painted and its taste too, is suggested:

Je paistray ma dent et mes yeux
Du rouge éclat de la Pavie.....(1)

The same interest in the small and often unnoticed beauties of Nature may be sensed in the description of the play of sunlight on the water of the parc and in Théophile's picture of the snow:

Lors qu'à petits floquons liez
La neige fraîchement venue,
Sur des grands tapis desliez
Espanche l'amas de la nue,
Lors que sur le chemin des cieux
Ses grains serrez et gracieux
N'ont trouvé ny vent ny tonnerre,
Et que sur les premiers coupeaux
Loing des hommes et des trouppeaux,
Ils ont peint les bois et la terre.(2)

This treatment of winter is very different from that of Gauchet at the end of the previous century. He finds the season "rude et mal plaisant" here there is none of the detailed treatment of the effect of light which we have noticed in later poets. He gives us rather a general picture of the countryside under snow:

Je voy le blanc naif sur les veufves bocages
Sur les buissons couvers, sur les lointains villages
Faire une couleur perse..... (3)

Not only therefore is Théophile's manner of describing the natural scene very different from that of previous poets but he also seems to show increased sensitivity to the details. In the lines we have just been discussing for example, he is very conscious of the

1. idem. 1.203-204.

2. La Maison de Silvie, Ode II, O.P. II, p.141, 1.81-90.

3. Gauchet, Le Plaisir des Champs, 1583.

importance of light and colour. It is as if the concentration of effort on individual aspects of Nature has led to a more exact rendering of each one.

Although this attention to the small details of Nature may be said to be characteristic of Théophile, he is by no means alone among his contemporaries in making use of it. Saint-Amant, in Le Soleil Levant, treats in a similar way the eagle, the deer, the swan, the salmon, the bee, and the butterfly; of the last of which he says:

Le gentil papillon la suit (l'abeille)
 D'une aile tremoussante
 Et voyant le soleil qui luit,
 Vole de plante en plante
 Pour les advertir que le jour
 En ce climat est de retour. (1)

Tristan spotlights the nightingale in a shaft of sunlight:

Il reprend sa note premiere
 Pour chanter d'un art sans pareil
 Sous ce rameau que le Soleil
 A doré d'un trait de lumière. (2)

Later with Jean de Bussièrès the description of Nature becomes the description of individual objects in separate poems, a method which recalls the blason technique of the previous century. In many ways these descriptive pieces remind us of Théophile; there is a similar delight in the details of small objects, together with a strong interest in colour; but the two writers have different aims. De Bussièrès insists on using the objects described to force home a moral

1. Saint-Amant Le Soleil Levant 1.115 - 120.

2. Tristan, Les Amours, Le Promenoir des Deux Amants, ed. Garnier, p.50.
 (The piece first appeared in the collection entitled Les Plaintes d'Acante, in 1633.)

point; as he says in his preface he writes "pour renouveler le dessein de Dieu la formation de ses Créatures." Among the subjects of his poems are the tortoise, tulips, marble, the rainbow, snow, rain, the spider. Of the tortoise he says:

Que ton escaille est admirable
 En sa juste dimension!
 Que sa belle proportion
 Est à ton petit corps sortable
 Comme elle couvre tout et laisse de ses bords
 Sortir les pieds hardis de son timide corps. (1)

In its precision this is comparable with Théophile's description of the birds in the park at Chantilly. His description of the rose too, is noteworthy for its delicate evocation of colour:

Je voy des feuilles entassées
 Teintes d'une rouge couleur
 Que quelque reste de paleur
 Tient un peu ramassées.(2)

Although de Bussières insists on attaching a moral lesson to his descriptive pieces, it is obvious that in his detailed descriptions and his vivid evocation of colour and form he may be compared with his predecessors and in particular with Théophile.

1. Les Descriptions Poétiques. Lyon 1649.
2. Other poets who employ the same technique may be briefly mentioned. Frenicle describes the blackbird in his Aminte, Premières Oeuvres Poétiques. We find it later in the century in Les Promenades de Richelieu of Desmarests (1653) and later still in Perrin Oeuvres de Poésie 1661.

The Concrete Image

We have already had occasion to refer to the sensuous quality of much of Théophile's imagery. With Saint-Amant he regards poetry as a pictorial art, though he does not restrict himself to the creation of visual effects. It is this stress on the concrete, on things which can be seen, smelt or tasted, rather than on intellectual concepts, which distinguishes the poetry of the early decades of the seventeenth century from that which will follow. There seems to have been a tendency away from the concrete towards the abstract during the later part of the century: a tendency which can be seen in the emendations made by Corneille to the text of his plays, which involved the removal of imagery of a concrete nature and its replacement by terms of a more abstract kind. In the early part of the century too, writers think of the deity as the giver of beautiful things, of the concrete things which men's senses tell them are good; hence the many translations of the psalms praising the deity through the beauty of his creation. Later a more intellectual conception of God takes the place of the earlier sensuous one.

It is in the religious poetry of the time that the emphasis on the sensuous can most readily be seen. Jean de la Ceppède describes the Passion with great emphasis on physical detail. His sonnets are alive with colour and full of concrete imagery;

O pourpre, emplis mon tet de ton jus précieux,
Et lui fais distiller mille pourprines larmes...(1)

1. J. de la Ceppède, Les Théorèmes, I, 1613, II, 1621. From the sonnet Or sus donc....

..... Ta sanglante couleur figure nos péchés
 Au dos de cet Agneau par le Père attachés,
 Et ce Christ t'endossant se charge de nos crimes.
 O Christ, o saint Agneau ! daigne-toi de cacher
 Tous mes rouges péchés - brindelles des abîmes -
 Dans les sanglants replis du manteau de ta chair ! (1)

Du Perron uses highly sensuous natural imagery to describe the Virgin

Mary:

C'est la myrrhe et la fleur et le baume odorant
 Qui rend de sa senteur nos âmes consolées,
 C'est le jardin reclus souevement flairant,
 C'est la rose des champs et le lis des vallées.(2)

Such imagery as this, when it lacks the support of taut intellectual content, can become weak and sentimental, as in Du Bois Hus' reference to the tears of Christ:

Les Anemones et les fleurs
 Pasliront partout où ses pleurs
 Mouilleront le bord du rivage.(3)

It is the religious poetry of the time which usually makes best use of this type of imagery because here the image is matched by intense feeling. In some of the love poetry the sensuous quality of the imagery often seems excessive. Tristan, for example, has these lines:

Et le nectar sembla couler
 Des roses de sa belle bouche
 Aussi tost qu'elle sceut parler.(4)

Théophile's preference for the concrete and the sensuous expresses itself in his imagery just as it does in his ideas on the good life.

One of the most noticeable results of this liking for the concrete is

1. idem.
2. Jacques Davy du Perron (1556-1618) Cantique de la Vierge Marie. Diverses Oeuvres, 1622.
3. Du Bois Hus, La Nuit des Nuits et le Jour des Jours, 1641.
4. Tristan l'Hermite, Eclogue Maritime, (1634) Vers Héroïques.

his tendency to humanise different aspects of nature. In his ode on Solitude, for example, the stream is described as the home of the

Naïade De ceste source une Naïade
 Tous les soirs ouvre le portail
 De sa demeure de crystal,
 Et nous chante une serenade.(1)

The details of this picture are given such precision, by the use of the words "ouvre le portail" and "demeure" for example, that the mythological image takes on a concrete reality and the Naïade becomes a real human being possessing human qualities and needs.(2)

The same humanising tendency is apparent in the ode Plein de cholere et de raison (Contre l'Hiver) where the natural phenomenon of rain is explained in human terms:

L'air est malade d'un catterre,
 Et l'oeil du Ciel noyé de pleurs
 Ne sçait plus regarder la terre.(3)

As we have already noticed the sense of smell receives particular attention in Théophile's poetry. In the lines quoted below it is combined with other senses in a way which reminds us of the correspondences

of Baudelaire: Preste moy ton sein pour y boire
 Des odeurs qui m'embasmeront,
 Ainsi mes sens se pasmeront
 Dans les lacs de tes bras d'yvoire.

Je baigneray mes mains folastres
 Dans les ondes de tes cheveux,
 Et ta beauté prendra les voeux
 De mes oeillades idolatres.(4)

-
1. Théophile, Dans ce val solitaire et sombre, O.P. I, p.16, l.5-8.
 2. For further examples of this treatment of mythology see page 162 et seq.
 3. O.P. I, p.33, l. 38-40.
 4. Dans ce val solitaire et sombre, O.P. I, p.16, l. 141-148.

In the first two lines occurs an example of the fused image which was to be perfected by the symbolists. This juxtaposition of dissimilar objects to create a striking image is typical of some of the poetry of the time and has been seen as characteristic of the baroque in poetry. It was on this question that much of the discussion between the old and new schools of thought turned at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Mlle de Gournay, for example, gives her full support to this type of imagery which she describes in these terms:

C'est l'art de représenter (deux objets) l'un par l'autre, bien que souvent ils soient esloignez d'une infinie distance; l'entendement de l'Ecrivain semblant par son entremise, transformer les sujets en sa propre nature, souple, volubile, applicable à toutes choses.(1)

In her Advis she was at pains to defend Du Perron's use of an image very similar to the one used by Théophile in the lines quoted above:

.....le chariot.....
D'un fleuve de flambeaux à longs flots précédé. (2)

It was this type of imagery in particular which was to disappear from poetry in the name of clarity and good sense. At times Théophile himself appears critical of it.(3)

Théophile makes a most effective use of concrete imagery in the

1. Les Advis ou les Presens de la Demoiselle de Gournay, Paris, Libert, 1634.
On this subject see Holmes (Peggy, P), Mlle de Gournay's defence of baroque imagery, French Studies, April, 1954.
It is interesting to note that the Theophilian image quoted above was singled out by Du Marsais in his work on metaphor (Des Tropes, 1730) as a good example of a bad use of metaphors. Metaphors, said Du Marsais, should not be taken from base subjects, nor should they be forced; Théophile fails to obey the second of these conditions.
2. Le Tombeau de Daphnis. These lines are quoted in the article mentioned in Note 1.
3. See his comments in the Fragments d'une Histoire Comique ed. Alleaume, v.II, p. 11.

longer love elegies. Frequently the antithesis between Spring and Summer provides images suggesting hope, satisfaction, or despair and melancholy. The effect of the lady's return may be compared with that of the return of the Spring to the frozen countryside:

Dessus moy vostre voix agira de la sorte
Que le Zephire agist sur la campagne morte:(1)

This comparison introduces a description of the return of Spring, which may be taken as a pictorial representation of the lover's feelings at the return of his lady:

Voyez comment Phylis renaist à son abord,
Des-ja l'hyver contre elle a finy son effort,
Desormais nous voyons espanouyr les rozes,
La vigueur du printemps reverdit toutes choses,
Le Ciel en est plus gay, les jours en sont plus beaux,
L'Aurore en s'habillant escoute les oyseaux,
Les animaux des champs qu'aucun soucy n'outrage
Sentent renouveler et leur sang et leur âge.....(2)

His melancholy at her continued absence is conveyed by imagery which creates a picture of a personal winter in the midst of Spring.

Seul je voy les forests encore desolées,
Les parterres deserts, les rivieres gelées,
Et comme ensorcelé ne puis gouster le fruit
Qu'à la faveur de tous ceste saison produit.(3)

In the elegy Proche de la saison... imagery of a similar kind is used. Here is one of those paradoxes of which poets of the time are fond: Winter will see the return of the lady and is therefore much kinder than Spring which has acquiesced in her absence. The poem includes a long description of the countryside in winter, which starts from a

1. Elegie, Depuis ce triste jour... O.P. II, p.45, l.83-84.
2. l. 85-92.
3. l. 99-102.

simple comparison, but which, as is often the case with Théophile, is given far more importance than its position as illustrative imagery would warrant. Here again, it seems, the interest is in the image itself, rather than in the idea:

Lors que les Aquilons vont déchirer les arbres,
Et que l'eau n'ayant plus humidité ny poix,
Fait pendre le cristal des roches et des bois,
Que l'onde applanissant ses orgueilleuses bosses,
Souffre sans murmurer le fardeau des carosses....(1)

The cruelty of Winter, we are told, is limited to the destruction of the products of Nature:

Car l'hyver au plus fort de sa plus dure guerre,
Nous oste seulement ce que nous rend la terre,
N'emporte que des fruicts, n'estouffe que des fleurs,
Et sur nostre destin n'estend point ses malheurs.(2)

The Spring - Winter antithesis is made the basis of Théophile's appeal to Monsieur de Vertamont, which is composed of a series of sketches illustrating the renewal of life - so many images of the life which Théophile is unable to enjoy:

Que l'Abeille, apres la rigueur
Qui tient ses aisles en langueur
Au fonds de ses petites cruches,
S'en va continuer le miel
Et quittant la prison des ruches
N'a son vol borné que du ciel; (3)

Imagery of this kind has, of course, been used by many poets before Théophile, especially in connection with the theme of

1. Elégie, Proche de la saison...., O.P. II, p.70, 1.20-24
2. idem, 1.51-54.
3. Remonstrance de Théophile à Monsieur de Vertamont, O.P. II, p.133, 1.13-18.

absence.(1) What is striking about Théophile's treatment of it, is the direct way in which he conveys the abstract feelings of the lover in terms of the concrete objects of nature, so that his despair is felt by the reader in terms of physical sensation - cold, heat, the sight of the frozen countryside, the taste of fruit. In his use of this imagery Théophile usually achieves a balance between the intellectual content and the sensuous means of expression, a balance which was sometimes lacking in the poetry of the time.

Not only are ideas expressed in concrete terms, but the same idea is often expressed in several different ways, each image giving a different version of the original idea. It is as if the poet is not satisfied with one aspect of the subject but must view it from every angle. This is in fact what happens in such poems as Le Matin and the Remonstrance à M de Vertamont, in which each stanza gives a different interpretation of the subject. Very often too, a new image is contained in each line of the poem. Thus in the poem Souverain qui

1. Among Théophile's contemporaries Malherbe writes in Pour Alcandre:

Ces bois en ont repris leur verdure nouvelle
L'orage en est cessé, l'air en est éclairci
Et même ces canaux ont leur course plus belle
Depuis qu'elle est icy.....

See also Jamyn: Mon printemps amoureux a esté miserable...

...Mon automne d'amour n'est que sterilité. Sonnet XXXIV

and Sponde: Et je n'embrasse rien au Monde que supplices,
Ses gais printemps ne sont que funestes Hyvers,
Le gracieux Zephyr de son repos me semble
Un Aquilon de peine... Stances de la Mort.

and Desportes: Amours d'Hypolyte, le cours de l'an.

Grevin L'Olympe, I

du Bellay Olive, XXXI Le Grand Flambeau

Ronsard Amours, CLXV, Quand le grand oeil dans les jumeaux arrive.

regis l'influence des vers, the poet first makes a statement of an idea:

Il est vray que tout cede à l'amoureuse peine,

He follows it with several illustrations:

Que Paris et sa ville ont bruslé pour Helene,
Et les antiquitez font voir aux curieux
Que l'Aube mit Titon dans le siege des Dieux,
Et de tant de beautez qui furent les Maistresses
De l'ainé de Saturne on en fait des Deesses.....(1)

The same device is found later in the same poem:

L'esclat des Diamans ny du plus beau metal,
Bacchus tout Dieu qu'il est, riant dans le cristal,
Au pris de tes regards n'ont point trouvé la voye
Qui conduit dans mon ame une parfaite joye.(2)

This same poem offers another example of this hyperbolic piling up of imagery, in this case used to stress the pleasure a kiss would afford the lover:

Si le sort me donnoit la qualité de Roy,
Si les plus chers plaisirs s'adessoient tous à moy,
Si j'estois Empereur de la terre et de l'onde,
Si de ma propre main j'avois basty le monde,
Et comme le Soleil, des mes regards produit
Tout ce que l'Univers a de fleur et de fruict,
Si cela m'arrivoit je n'aurois pas tant d'aise
Ni tant de vanité que si Cloris me baise.(3)

Such a passage as this reveals a delight in décoration for its own sake. The poet lingers over the imagery, supposedly introduced to illustrate a point. In the elegy Depuis ce triste jour... the poet gives three concrete illustrations of an idea:

Comme un corps a son ombre, un costau sa valée,
Ainsi que le Soleil est suivy de la nuict,
Tousjours le plus grand bien a du mal qui le suit.(4)

-
1. O.P. II, p.16, 1.83-88.
 2. 1.121-123
 3. 1.125-132
 4. O.P. II, p.45, 1.20-22.

Not content with this however, he then introduces a much longer illustration of the same point, which recounts in eight lines the rape of Helen and the disaster which overtook Troy. Later in the same poem the poet, anxious to give proof of his grief in the absence of the beloved explains it in several different ways:

Depuis tous mes plaisirs dorment dans le cercueil.
 Aussi vraiment depuis je suis vestu de deuil,
 Je suis chagrin par tout où le plaisir abonde....
 Au milieu de Paris je me suis fait Hermite,
 Dedans un seul object mon esprit se limite:
 Quelque part où mes yeux me pensent divertir
 Je traîne une prison d'où je ne puis sortir,
 J'ay le feu dans les os et l'ame deschirée
 De ceste fleche d'or que vous m'avez tirée.(1)

In the sonnet On n'avait pas posé les fondemens de Rome, the listing of imagery occupies the whole poem except for the final tercet where the point is made. The poem is nothing more than a parade of mythological references.(2) This desire to view the subject from several different angles is perhaps best illustrated by the sonnet which Théophile wrote to describe the ruins of Clairac. The accumulation of descriptive terms suggests that the poet is walking around the ruined town noting the different spectacles of destruction:

Ornemens de l'autel qui n'estes que fumée,
 Grand Temple ruiné, mysteres abolis,
 Effroyables objects d'une ville allumée,
 Palais, hommes, chevaux, ensemble ensevelis;

 Fossez larges et creux tous combles de murailles,
 Spectacles de frayeur, de cris, de funeraïlles,
 Fleuve par où le sang ne cesse de courir.....(3)

1. 1.37-39, and 1.43-48.

2. O.P. II, p.31 See also O.P. I, p.32 Si j'estois dans un bois...

3. Sacrez murs du Soleil.... O.P. II, p.34, 1.5-11.

The different objects tumble out in a fashion suggestive of the chaos of a ruined town, one line being reduced to a list of single words, until the point is made in the last two lines.

In its poetic imagery, just as in its court entertainment, the early seventeenth century exhibits its liking for ostentation, for an abundance of decoration. The concrete imagery we have been discussing reveals a sensuous approach to the external world; but this imagery has often a spectacular quality about it as well. The piling up of such imagery, particularly when it is of a spectacular kind, carries with it an impression of movement and a sense of impermanence which links the sensuous with the unstable world we examined earlier. We have already seen some of the spectacular imagery of the sea, the storm and the earthquake to be found in Théophile's poetry. It is very often used in the love poetry and here the hyperbolic imagery seems out of all proportion to the point which is eventually made. The spectacular images of the sonnet Si j'estois dans un bois... may be quoted as an example. The poet begins by listing a number of highly dangerous situations:

Si j'estois dans un bois poursuivy d'un lion,
Si j'estois à la mer au fârt de la tempeste,
Si les Dieux irritez vouloient presser ma teste,
Du faix du mont Olympe et due mont Pelion....&c

He would, he says, endure such situations as these with greater fortitude than the situation in which his lady's cruelty has placed him:

Pour un mauvais regard que m'a donné mon Ange,
Je voy desja sur moy mille foudres pleuvoir,
De la mort de son fils Dieu contre moy se venge,
Depuis que ma Philis se fasche de me voir.(1)

1. O.P. I, p.32, 1.1-4 & 11-14.

However, the drama inherent in such spectacular imagery does not always serve so small an idea. It is used to good effect, for example in the Ode au Prince d'Orange:

.... tes yeux, dont le feu reluit
 Dans le sang, et parmy la poudre,
 Comme aux orages de la nuict
 Brillent les flammes de la foudre.(1)

Here the dramatic effect is achieved through the violent contrast between light and dark. However, the dramatic effect which the concrete image often produces does not always depend on violence or spectacle. Sometimes a simple incident is presented in a dramatic way:

Le forgeron est au fourneau
 Oy comme le charbon s'alume,
 Le fer rouge dessus l'enclume,
 Etincelle sous le marteau. (2)

Here the dramatic effect is achieved by the direct appeal to the senses of hearing and sight. In the same poem appears this picture of rural life:

La charrue escorche la plaine,
 Le bouvier qui suit les seillons
 Presse de voix et d'aiguillons,
 Le couple des boeufs qui l'entraîne.(3)

There is even a suggestion of drama in Theophile's reference to the first sunshine of the morning:

Ceste chandelle semble morte,
 Le jour la faict esvanouyr,
 Le Soleil vient nous esblouyr,
 Voy qu'il passe au travers la porte.(4)

Here we find a dramatic effect dependent to some extent at least on

1. O.P. I, p.39, l.94-97.
2. Le Matin, O.P. I, p.13, l.53-56.
3. idem. l.33-36.
4. idem. l.57-60.

the implied contrast between light and dark. This interest in light and dark is to be found several times in Théophile's poetry as it is in the painting of the time.(1) In the Ode Dans ce val solitaire et sombre the darkness of the woods is shattered by a sudden ray of

light: Cupidon d'une douce flamme
 Ouvrant la nuit de ce valen,
 Mist devant les yeux d'Apollon
 Le garçon qu'il avait dans l'ame.(2)

The relationship between light and dark is not always based on contrast. In Le Matin Théophile describes the almost imperceptible change from night to day:

La Lune fuit devant nos yeux,
La nuit a retiré ses voiles,
Peu à peu le front des étoiles
S'unit à la couleur des Cieux.(3)

And later in the same poem we find:

Une confuse violence,
Trouble le calme de la nuit,
Et la lumière avec le bruit,
Dissipent l'ombre et le silence.(4)

Here the outlines are blurred; there is no clear contrast between

1. In Caravaggio for example; his Conversion of Paul uses the contrast between light and dark fo great dramatic effect.

2. O.P. I, p.16, l.41-44.

3. O.P. I, p.13, l.9-12.

4. l.41-44. Saint-Amant's treatment of the same subject shows a comparable interest in the fluidity of light and shade.

Bref, la nuit devant ses efforts,
En ombres séparée,
Se cache derrière les corps
De peur d'estre éclairée,
Et diminue et va croissant,
Selon qu'il monte ou qu'il descend.
(Le Soleil Levant)

light and dark; it is the fluidity of the subject which seems to interest the poet. In his use of the violent, spectacular contrast Théophile echoes the violence of a previous generation, that of D'Aubigné in particular, but the echo grows more feeble, giving place to a more decorative and delicate treatment of changing form.

The use of imagery of a sensuous kind, the liking for spectacle and drama, the piling up of images, the interest in chiaroscuro, all reveal a world to be apprehended by the senses. However this very insistence on the senses and this desire for the heightened reality of the spectacular and hyperbolic image suggest too, that this sensuous world is also a world of flux and impermanence.

Conclusion

While certain of the themes and images of Théophile's poetry reveal an awareness of instability, he lays less conscious stress on the unstable world than do other poets of his time. He refuses to dismiss the world as unstable, illusory and therefore unworthy of attention, not only because he has no certainty that there is any other world or any other life more enjoyable than the present one, but also because he finds in the world sources of enjoyment which do much to compensate the disadvantage of transience. The natural world, as we have seen, occupies much of his attention; here is experience of a sensuous kind which can be seized and enjoyed in a direct, immediate way. This insistence on sensuous enjoyment, on the value of things which can be seen, touched and tasted, is natural enough in an age of instability: abstractions are too tenuous for the man who is conscious of Time's winged chariot at his back.

Not only does the poet pick on those aspects of the world which he enjoys as subjects of his poetry, but it is evident from the images he uses that his experience of life and of the world is on a sensuous level. Throughout the poetry, whether the theme is the good life, love, death or inconstancy, ideas are continually expressed in a concrete and often a spectacular and dramatic form, in a way which can be immediately comprehended.

However, in considering the sensuous world of Théophile's poetry we are often conscious of the sense of instability which underlies it. This almost feverish search for sensuous experience reflected in the

spectacular, accumulated images, gives an impression of impermanence. Moreover the instability of the world is revealed in Théophile's treatment of nature as a series of separate phenomena. Duration becomes a series of separate moments which are to be filled by a series of divertissements afforded by the objects of the natural world. Nature is no longer available as a whole, but is split into its separate parts which are treated in great detail, without reference to their place in a wider scheme. Indeed it would seem that there may not be a wider scheme at all, for there no longer seems to be a basis for a belief in a complete and harmonious nature. Balance, order and harmony have disappeared from man's conception of the world and of nature, for although Théophile speaks on occasions of Natura naturans, far greater stress is laid on each individual manifestation of Nature's creative activity; the parts have ceased to be subordinated or even related to the whole. Like man himself, like each experience of life and each moment of time, the objects of nature have become isolated in a world which gives no evidence of order or harmony.

AN
ARTIFICIAL
WORLD

Introduction

In insisting on the validity of obedience to the law of Nature through the life of the senses, Théophile frequently brings into opposition the two concepts Art and Nature. His conclusion is invariably that Nature is superior to Art. He admires the man who obeys the natural law by following his natural bent and who scorns to affect attitudes which are not properly his own. The beauty created by Nature is to be preferred to that which the art of man can devise, from which it follows that the natural inspiration of the poet is sufficient without the polish which art can give it, since Art cannot improve on Nature. Moreover the poet should write in clear simple language, unburdened by the artificial adornment of far-fetched conceits, learned allusions and the devices of rhetoric.

The superiority of Nature is asserted by Théophile in all these cases. His own poetic practice, however, is far from being consistent with his theory. It is true that his theoretical scorn for the acquired art of the poet allows him to write without necessarily blotting a line: his careless nonchalance and his distaste for the laborious work of the professional artist find convenient support in the theory of the superiority of Nature over Art. However, Art is by no means absent from his poetry. In fact, as we hope to show, artifice would seem to be as important a characteristic of his work as instability and sensuality.

Art and Nature - the theory of Poetry.

The relationship between art and nature forms an essential part of the discussions about poetic theory which were taking place at this time. Théophile's stated preference for the natural implies a belief that the composition of poetry is primarily a matter of inspiration, and that the application of a set of rules should have little to do with it. Art in this context seems to be taken by Théophile to mean the skill and technique of the poet, by which he shapes and orders his work to make it conform to a standard.

As we have already suggested (1) his scorn for technique is probably an expression of his desire for carefree independence rather than proof of a concern with an alternative doctrine. Passages in which he asserts the primacy of inspiration and in which he dismisses the claims of art are normally framed as an expression of personal taste. He does not claim that rules are bad for poetry, merely that he prefers not to obey them.

When he speaks of inspiration he still uses ~~the~~ imagery which Ronsard had used to denote a gift of divine origin, outside the control of the poet. He uses terms such as "une fureur mieux animée", "une chaleur d'esprit", and "le celeste feu qui me fournit des vers".(2) He begins the elegy Souverain qui regis. . . with an appeal to the gods responsible for the gift of poetic inspiration. Of course such imagery may be no more than a conventionalised ornament, the remnant of a

1. See p.84.

2. Ode (à M. de Montmorency) O.P.I , p.92, l. 47. Ibid. l. 71.
Je pensois au repos.... O.P. I, p. 49, l. 1-2.

traditional poetic doctrine; we cannot make of them a doctrine of poetic theory such as Ronsard professed; but there are indications to suggest that he regards his personal inspiration as something which does not require the support of reason: the gift of nature is sufficient without the aid of art:

Je veux faire des vers qui ne soient pas contraincts,
 Promener mon esprit par de petits dessains,
 Chercher des lieux secrets où rien ne me deplaise,
 Mediter à loisir, resver tout à mon aise,
 Employer toute une heure à me mirer dans l'eau,
 Ouyr comme en songeant la course d'un ruisseau,
 Ecrire dans les bois, m'interrompre, me taire,
 Composer un quatrain sans songer à le faire. (1)

To muse, to dream, to give free play to his imagination untrammelled by the rules of art, this would seem to be his vein. There is no suggestion here of the controlled imagination of Ronsard, and of course, his approach is far removed from that of Malherbe. His scorn for the art of such as Malherbe is made clear in the following lines:

Ils travaillent un mois à chercher comme à fils
 Pourra s'apparier la rime de Memphis.
 Ce liban, ce turban, et ces rivieres mornes,
 Ont souvent de la peine à retrouver leurs bornes,
 Cest effort tient leurs sens dans la confusion,
 Et n'ont jamais un rais de bonne vision.(2)

It is obvious that Malherbe is the target since the lines include fairly precise references to two of Malherbe's poems.

The natural spontaneity of inspiration is then what Théophile looks for: in this context also he would maintain that art can do

1. Elegie à une Dame, O.P. I, p.7, l.139-146.

2. ibid, l.83-88. His scorn here echoes that of Régnier who despises the art of these poets who are bereft of inspiration:

Et voyant qu'un beau feu leur cervelle n'embrase etc.

little to improve on what nature provides. The desire for order, balance and a proper harmony in poetry, which was beginning to be accepted as the ideal of beauty, became of course the dominant force. There were however other poets besides Théophile, who regretted the strictness with which Malherbe would control the imagination of the poet. Lortigue was one who maintained the view of the poet as one who relied on the gift of inspiration rather than the acquired knowledge of technique:

Nous pouvons aux neuf soeurs ce métier requérir,
Et non pas par l'estude ou par art l'acquérir:
Car c'est un don gratuit que la Muse nous donne
"Par art ou par estude un Orateur se fait,
"Mais le Poete n'est en son métier parfaict. (1)

Claude Garnier, perhaps the best known of the remaining ronsardisants, laments the fact that the poet whom he regards as "un poète ignorant, un rimeur imparfait", should be the leader of fashion while the true poet is neglected. (2)

This impression of Théophile's views finds confirmation in two poems which concern his contemporary poets. In the Priere aux Poetes de ce temps, written during his imprisonment, he mentions Malherbe, Porchères, Saint-Amant, Gombault, Boisrobert, Mainard and Hardy. It is however the last of these writers who receives the honour of a separate poem. It seems to have been the unbridled nature of Hardy's inspiration which Théophile admired. In the Priere aux poetes he says:

Une autre veine, violente,
Tousjours chaude et tousjours sanglante

1. Lortigue, Le Plaisir Rustique, Poésies Diverses, 1617, p.164-5.
2. Garnier, La Muse Infortunée (1609) reprinted in Fournier: Variétés Historiques et Littéraires, Paris 1855.

Des combats de guerre et d'amour,
 A tant d'esclat sur les theatres
 Qu'en despit des freslons de Cour
 Elle a fait mes sens idolastres...(1)

In these lines the opposition between the violent, unpolished and, Théophile would say, natural productions of writers such as Hardy, and the refined taste of the court is apparent; that Théophile finds nothing to admire in this refinement is evident from his use of the expression "freslons de Cour", but, as we shall see, he himself does not always limit his writing to the natural style he so admires in Hardy. In the Ode à Hardy this most prolific of playwrights is compared with his contemporaries, who could not have derived much satisfaction from the terms of the comparison:

Tu parois sur ces arbrisseaux
 Tel qu'un grand Pin de Silesie,
 Qu'un Ocean de Poesie
 Parmi ces murmurans ruisseaux. (2)

We may therefore think of Théophile as the partisan of a disordered creation, of an inspiration which can afford to ignore the technicalities of art and taste. In the Au Lecteur of the second part of his poems he admits the lack of order and technique revealed by the poems he is introducing. He throws them off as " ce petit ramas de mes dernieres fantaisies", referring to them as "mon ouvrage si peu étudié" and promising to give his attention to some theme more worthy of his pen than this "ouvrage superflu". (3) This too, is how critics later in the century regarded him, and even his contemporary

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1. O. P. II, p.126, l. 103-108.
 2. O. P. II, p.206 (Appendice).
 3. O. P. II, p. 15.

de Balzac is strong in his condemnation of his irregularities:

"Je luy ay souvent monstré qu'il faisait de mauvais vers. Mais voyant les règles que je luy proposais de faire mieux estoient trop sévères...(1)

In this context at least, therefore, art has little attraction for him.

In the matter of language too, he claims to prefer the natural to the artificial, which he frequently condemns by using the image fard. So far the dislike he bears for the rules, and his complementary belief in the power of inspiration unaided by art, have served to emphasise the difference between his conception of poetry and that of Malherbe. As far as language is concerned, however, there is some similarity between the two. It would of course be wrong to attempt to associate him with any particular school. His ideas have the stamp of the amateur, independent of schools and systems.

In the first chapter of the Fragments d'une Histoire Comique, he is highly aritical of Ronsard's invocations to the gods of mythology as the source of the poet's inspiration. Surprisingly enough for a poet of Théophile's outlook he rejects such allusions on religious grounds. The reliance which the poet claims to place on the gods of paganism is said to be incompatible with the morality of a Christian society: "L'invocation des Muses à l'exemple de ces payens est profane pour nous et ridicule". And later: "C'est une devotion louable et digne d'une belle ame que d'invoquer au commencement d'une oeuvre des puissances souveraines; mais les crestiens n'ont que faire d'Appolon

1. Letter of Sept. 20th, 1623.

ny des Muses."(1) There are other references to this literary survival of paganism in the poems themselves:

Je fausse ma promesse aux vierges de Permesse.
Je ne veux réclamer ny Muse ny Phebus,
Grace à Dieu bien guari de ce grossier abus.....(2)

Tout le monde a dit qu'Apollon
Favorise qui le reclame,
Et qu'avec l'eau de son valon
Le sçavoir peut couler dans l'ame:
Mais j'estouffe ce vieil abus
Et banis desormais Phoebus
De la bouche de nos Poetes....(3)

There is a certain irony in the fact that the poet who could here object on grounds of faith to the use of pagan mythology was believed by some of his contemporaries to be no better than an athée. At the time of the Pléiade, of course, there seemed nothing incompatible in the use of pagan myth by poets of a christian society. The mythology of the ancients was seen as but one expression of the ultimate Truth. According to certain neo-platonic doctrines, all cultures and all knowledge were held together in some sort of unity, although Pontus de Tyard, the best known theorist of the encyclopaedic interpretation of truth, is careful to maintain the superiority of the Christian religion in his Dialogues. This delicate balance, however, was soon to be disturbed. The unity of the encyclopaedie was felt to be as illusory as the Ptolomeic system was to become. The religious controversies and conflicts of the later years of the sixteenth century made Christendom more highly conscious of its own tradition and more sensitive to

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1. Fragments d'une Histoire Comique, ed. Alleaume, v.II, p.13.
 2. O.P. I, p.9, l.62-4.
 3. O.P. II, p.137, l.11-17.

what was alien to it. Thus there was an increased suspicion of pagan mythology on the part of both catholic and protestant, although this suspicion did not always ensure a consistent attitude to the classical inheritance. Decorations taking their inspiration from classical sources were still to be found adorning the walls of Christian churches, and in literature poets still make use of the Fable of the ancients, though sometimes with a feeling of discomfort. Du Bartas in La Semaine may be quoted as an apologetic user of mythology. The problem was in fact never fully resolved, and right at the end of the seventeenth century the debate between the ancients and the moderns rested in part on the suitability or unsuitability of pagan models for Christian writers.

Théophile's criticisms of Ronsard's use of mythology are not based entirely on religious grounds however. There is, too, the suggestion that Ronsard's mythologising is now somewhat out of date, that it reveals an obsession with the past as the time of the great achievements in literature, and that it depends on the imitation of a mode of writing which is out of touch with the taste of the time: "Ces larcins qu'on appelle imitation des auteurs anciens, se doivent dire des ornemens qui ne sont point à nostre mode. Il faut escrire à la moderne; Demosthène et Virgile n'ont point escrit en nostre temps, et nous ne scaurions escrire en leur siècle; leurs livres, quand ils les firent, estoient nouveaux, et nous en faisons tous les jours de vieux.(1)

1. Ed. Alleaume, v. II, p.11-12.

It is evident from this that Théophile has no time for the idea that the ancients achieved an ideal of beauty which is universally valid. He expresses admiration for Ronsard, but not when the latter was intent on imitating classical forms. Imitation of the ancients he feels, produces a poetic diction which the modern ear cannot understand: "Il semble qu'il (Ronsard) se vueille rendre incogneu pour paroistre docte, et qu'il affecte une fausse réputation de nouveau et hardy escrivain. Dans ces termes estrangers, il n'est point intelligible pour François; ces extravagances ne font que desgouster les sçavans et estourdir les foibles. On appelle ceste façon d'usurper des termes obscurs et impropres, les uns barbarie et rudesse d'esprit, les autres pédanterie et suffisance."(1)

His independence with regard to classical mythology is evident on occasions in his poetry. The time-honoured legend of Aeneas, which had achieved considerable significance by virtue of its connection with the legendary founding of the French nation, is shown scant respect. Aeneas, he says "ne fut qu'un vagabond."(2) The poem A Monsieur du Fargis contains a lengthy condemnation of mythology:

Je n'entends point les loix, ny les façons d'aimer,
Ni comment Cupidon se mesle de charmer:
Ceste divinité des Dieux mesme adorée,
Ces traits d'or et de plomb, ceste trousse dorée
Ces aisles, ces brandons, ces carquois, ces appas,
Sont vraiment un mystère où je ne pense pas.
La sottie antiquité nous a laissé des fables
Qu'un homme de bon sens ne croit point recevables

2. *ibid.* p. 12.

2. Desja trop longuement la paresse me flatte O.P. I, p.71, l.173
et seq.

Et jamais mon esprit ne trouvera bien sain
Celuy-là qui se paist d'un fantosme si vain.(1)

In rejecting the artifice of classical allusion, he advocates the simplicity, le naturel of a poetic diction which the poet does not attempt to decorate by using the artistic procedures of a past age. "Il faut, he says, que le discours soit ferme, que le sens y soit naturel et facile, le langage exprès et signifiant: Les affecter^{ies} ne sont que mollesse et artifice, qui ne se trouve jamais sans effort et sans confusion."(2)

Here he would seem to be opposing, not merely the use of classical mythology, but more generally the conscious effort to affect an artificial style. His use of the word fard in this context reveals a distaste on his part for the kind of artificial overlay which is to be found in much of the poetry of his age. He may also be criticising more particularly the use of far-fetched metaphor, which has been seen of recent years as a characteristic of baroque poetry. This use of metaphor which brings totally dissimilar objects together was stoutly defended by Mlle de Gournay against the criticisms of the Malherbians who maintained that it offended against clarity of meaning. The terms used here by Théophile suggest that he too, found such imagery excessive, though his distaste is not such as to prevent his using it himself.(3)

1. O.P. I, p.80, l. 15-24.

2. Fragments, ed. Alleaume, v.II, p.11.

3. See for example the lines quoted on p.136 of this thesis.

Théophile's criticisms of artifice in poetry may be compared with the account given by Colletet of a collection of poems La Nouvelle Muse published by Jean Godard in 1618: "Quiconque les voudra consulter y trouvera sans doute assez de pointes d'esprit ou du moins assez d'antithèses et de contre batteries de mots. Ce qui estoit à peu près le genre d'écrire à la fin de l'autre siècle et de l'entrée de celui-ci."

One of the reasons for Théophile's admiration for Hardy is that he makes no use of artifice: his verse, says Théophile, is direct and natural:

Jamais ta vene ne s'amuse
A couler un Sonnet mignard,
Detestant la pointe et le fard
Qui romp les forces à la Muse.

Que c'est peu d'ouyr Cupidon
En Sonnets mollement s'esbatre
Au pris de voir sur le Theatre
Le desespoir de ta Didon.(1)

In his scorn for technique and the decoration which art may bring to the poem, in his insistence on the superiority of the natural, Théophile expresses ideas which are close to those of Régnier, who is well known for his bitter attacks on Malherbe and his followers. Régnier's lines, quoted below, look forward to Théophile's ode Perside je me sens heureux: he is defining his idea of perfect beauty:

Rien que le naturel sa grace n'accompagne,
Son front lavé d'eau claire eclate d'un beau teint,
De roses et de lys la Nature l'a peint,
Et laissant là Mercure et toutes ses malices,
Les nonchalances sont ses plus grands artifices. (2)

However, we must be wary of associating Théophile too closely with the opponents of Malherbe. His criticisms of Ronsard, his demand that poets should write for moderns in a modern way, together with his criticisms of affected imagery are enough to set him apart. The contempt, which he shares with Régnier, for the work of polishing the inspiration of his Muse, is an expression of his affected negligence, of the nonchalance which allows him to taste the ideas which strike his fancy

1. Au Sieur Hardy O.P. II, p. 206. Appendice.
2. Régnier Satire IX, 90-94.

and avoids the limitations imposed by a unified system of ideas.

It is evident that Théophile did not feel himself to be in any way committed by the theories his poetry contains. He continues to make use of the mythological imagery which was part of the poetic stock of the time. In dealing with the theme of death, for example, he frequently alludes to the myth of Charon, the ghostly boatman of the Acheron. This imagery appears in the Ode au Prince d'Orange:

Mais que pour te deifier
 Il te falut sacrifier
 De sang au tenebreux Monarque;
 Que pour espargner le denier
 Qu'on paye aux rives de la Parque,
 Tu fis riche le nautonnier
 Qui conduit la mortelle barque.(1)

In the Satyre Premiere (2) mythological imagery is used to describe man as being assailed by the fear of death. The beast, says Théophile, "ne cognoist pas l'effroy de l'Acheron trompeur." (3) Later in the same poem the same imagery is further developed:

Aussi bien mesme fin à l'Acheron nous rend;
 La barque de Charon à tous inevitable,
 Non plus que le meschant n'espargne l'equitable.
 Injuste Nautonnier..... (4)

But the effect of such imagery is much less than it was seventy years earlier, when poets drew on a whole range of classical imagery. Now Théophile's references to classical sources are limited to a few conventionalised allusions. In the case of the imagery we have been discussing, words like Charon, Acheron, Parque are used almost like

1. O.P. I, p.39, l. 117-123.

2. O.P. I, p.82.

3. l. 32.

4. l. 92-95.

counters, to be introduced automatically into the text when the appropriate subject is mentioned. We no longer see these images as belonging to a living whole.

At times the mythological personages introduced by Théophile are treated so realistically that they exist and act on a concrete, human plane. They seem to step out of their context and we see not gods and heroes but courtiers of seventeenth century France. We have already mentioned the Naiade of the poem Dans ce val solitaire et sombre (1); later in the same poem the deity of the stream appears as a conventional human lover:

Entends ce Dieu qui te convie
A passer dans son Element,
Oy qu'il souspire bellement
Sa liberté desjà ravie.

Trouble luy ceste fantasie,
Destourne toy de ce miroir,
Tu le mettras au desespoir,
Et m'osteras la jalousie.(2)

In the Maison de Silvie there are several examples of this type of imagery. A party of cupids goes bathing:

Le bandeau, l'arc et le carquois
De mill'amours qui se despouillent
A l'ombrage de ses roseaux
Et dans l'humidité des eaux
Trempent leurs jeunes corps qui bouillent.

L'estanc leur preste sa fraischeur,
La Naiade leur verse à boire...(3)

Such is the beauty of these naked babes that the Nereides hide their

1. See page 136.

2. 1.117-124.

3. Ode III O.P. II, p.147, 1.46-52.

wrinkled brows in shame: (les Nereïdes)
 Qui devant leur teint mieux uny
 Cachent leur visage terny
 Et leur front coupé de rides.(1)

Elsewhere Charon himself becomes an old man of human proportions; when Thisbé calls on him to await her death before his departure:

Si ton esprit me garde encore un peu d'amour,
 Et si le vieux Charon, touché de ma misère,
 Retarde tant soit peu sa barque à ma prière,
 Attends moy je t'en prie.....(2)

The frequent use of certain images in set situations and the realistic treatment of mythological figures has debased the value of imagery which, to the poets of the Pléiade, represented a new source of poetic expression which they used in a new way.

Nor is Théophile's love poetry free of the artifice he condemns elsewhere. Pointes such as the following adorn it:

La nature icy vaut bien peu,
 Qu'un front de neige, un coeur de glace
 Puissent tenir contre le feu.(3)

Embrassé d'un feu qui me suit
 Partout où le Soleil me luit,
 Je passe les monts Pyrenées,
 Où les Neiges que l'oeil du jour,
 Et les foudres ont espargnées,
 Fondent au feu de mon amour.(4)

Antithesis abounds:

Cloris vous estes bien maistresse de mon sort:
 Car ayant eu pouvoir de me donner la vie,
 Vous avez bien pouvoir de me donner la mort. (4)

1. ibid., l. 58-60.
2. Pyrame et Thisbé, Act V, Sc. 2, ed. Alleaume, II, p. 140.
3. Maintenant que Philis est morte, O.P. I, p.128, l. 58-60.
4. Aussi Franc d'amour.. O.P. I, p. 134, l. 25-30.
5. Sonnet Vos rigueurs me pressoient, O.P. I, p.131, l. 12-14.

..... ô Ciel! peux tu bien
 Tirer d'une si belle chose
 Un si cruel mal que le mien ? (1)

In such poetry as this he is following a convention and making use of an artificial poetic diction of the kind he claims to despise in the Ode au Sieur Hardy.

A similar impression of artificiality results from his attribution of human feeling to natural objects. This anthropomorphic device occurs with some frequency in his poetry. In his poem addressed to the king Le dessein que j'avois de saluer le Roy...(2) Théophile praises the monarch by describing the effect of his greatness on the sun. The sun's happiness is complete when it is able to shine unimpeded on the king of France:

Le Soleil est ravi quand son œil vous reluit,
 Et ne voudroit jamais de repos ny de nuict:
 Ses rayons n'ayment point à chasser le nuage,
 Que pour n'estre empeschez de vous voir au visage;
 C'est pour l'amour de vous qu'il bastist ses maisons,
 Qu'il rompist le chaos, qu'il changez les saisons.....(3)

The sun is equally impressed by the beauty of Phillis:

Que penses tu que le Soleil est aise,
 Lors qu'un rayon de sa clarté la baise;
 Lors que Phillis regarde son flambeau
 D'un air joyeux, le jour en est plus beau:
 Et quand Phillis luy fait mauvais visage,
 Le jour est triste et chargé de nuage:(4)

Many other natural phenomena are said to respond like sentient beings to events which take place on earth. There are three passages

1. Quand tu me vois baiser tes bras, O.P., I, p.150 l.28-30.

2. O.P. I, p. 171, l. 1-4.

3. l.81-86.

4. Elegie, Chere Phillis, j'ay bien peur.... O.P. I, p.100, l.85-90.

in three different poems in which the same objects are involved in a very similar way. In the Ode au Prince d'Orange (1) the poet describes the effect of violence and war on the sky, the sea and the earth:

Aux coups que le Canon tiroit,
Le Ciel de peur se retiroit,
La mer se veid toute alumée,
Les astres perdirent leur rang,
L'air s'estouffa de la fumée,
La terre se noya de sang.(2)

In the ode on the peace of 1620 (3) occurs a passage of almost identical inspiration:

La campagne estoit allumée,
L'air gros de bruict et de fumée,
Le Ciel confus de nos débats,
Le jour triste de nostre gloire,
Et le sang fit rougir la Loire,
De la honte de vos combats. (4)

In the third passage, this time from the Maison de Silvie, the same objects are involved, but now the situation is more peaceful. It is the presence of Silvie which is said to provoke fear and awe:

Elle fait qu'abordant la nuict
Le jour plus bellement decline.
Le Soleil craignoit d'esclairer,
Et craignoit de se retirer,
Les estoilles n'osoient paroistre,
Les flots n'osoient s'entrepousser,
Le Zephire n'osoit passer,
L'herbe se retenoit de croistre.(5)

It is a characteristic of this artificial world of the park at Chantilly that the animals and birds are capable of human thought and feeling.

1. O.P. I, p.39.

2. l. 150-155.

3. O.P. I, p.165.

4. l. 95-100.

5. Ode II, O.P. II, p.141. l.13-20.

The fish are conscious of the great beauty of the mistress of the garden, and are only too anxious to be caught.(1) The birds follow her about in constant admiration, and sing her praises continually.(2) The deer, which have undergone a complete metamorphosis at the hands of Silvia feel honoured in her presence:

Ils s'estiment heureux pourtant
De prendre l'air qu'elle respire....(3)

Silvie's effect upon the water is no less radical:

Ses yeux jettoient un feu dans l'eau:
Ce feu choque l'eau sans la craindre,
Et l'eau trouve ce feu si beau
Qu'elle ne l'oseroit esteindre.(4)

The device is used in a similar way in the poem Je pensois au repos...(5) Théophile in exile, has received a letter from a friend. The friend's verses, he says, have filled him once more with the sacred fire of inspiration; but it is not Théophile alone who is moved by the arrival of the letter:

Clairac en est esmeu, son fleuve en a grossi,
Et dans ce peu de temps que je t'ecris cecy,
D'autant qu'à ta faveur il sent flatter son onde,
Lot s'est rendu plus fier que riviere du monde.(6)

In the Ode Dans ce val solitaire,(7) love has the same effect on the streams and woods as on the heart of the lover:

D'un air plain d'amoureuse flame,
Aux accens de ta douce voix,

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1. *ibid*, l.7-10.
 2. Ode VII, O.P. II, p.167. l.71-80.
 3. Ode II, O.P. 141, l.71-2.
 4. *ibid*. l.21-24.
 5. O.P. I, p.49.
 6. l.9-11.
 7. O.P. I, p.16, l.11-12.

Je voy les fleuves et les bois
S'embraser comme a faict mon ame.(1)

This kind of conceit was something of a commonplace in the poetry of the time. In Tristan's Plaintes d'Acante the trees and streams listen with sympathy to the lover's lament:

Cependant qu'il luy tient un si charmant discours
Les arbres les plus droits se courbent pour l'entendre;
Un ruisseau qui l'escoute en arreste son cours
Et pres de luy se va respandre.

Malherbe produces the following:

Ainsi le grand Alcandre aux campagnes de Seine
Faisoit, loin de tesmoins, le recit de sa peine,
Et se fondoit en pleurs:
Le fleuve en fut émeu, ses nymphes se cachèrent,
Et l'herbe du rivage où ses larmes touchèrent
Perdit toutes ses fleurs.(2)

Conceits of this kind seem inflated and far-fetched. The intellectual content does not seem strong enough to match the artifice of decoration in which they are expressed. Indeed the device is sometimes carried to quite absurd lengths, as in the play of the word rougir in lines already quoted:

Et le sang fit rougir la Loire
De la honte de vos combats.

This is the sort of thing which Boileau was to castigate. He dealt scornfully with another couplet of Théophile's which uses the same play on words:

Ha voicy le poignard qui du sang de son maistre
S'est souilly laschement: il en rougit le traistre.(3)

1. 1.101-104.
2. Stances Que d'espines Amour, accompagnent tes roses.
3. Pyrame, ed. Alleaume, II, p. 142.

He might well have chosen a pointe of a similar kind from the elegy

Je pensois au repos:

..... son fer inhumain
A me voir si constant luy trembloit à la main.(1)

In spite, therefore, of Théophile's call for a natural language, the language he uses himself owes much to the devices of art. His use of unconnected bits of classical mythology, of antithesis, hyperbole, and the anthropomorphic conceit, gives an air of artificiality to much of his work. That he was conscious of this is evident from the example he gives at the beginning of the Fragments, of an artificial style: "L'aurore, toute d'or et d'azur, brodée de perles et de rubis, paroissoit aux porte de l'Orient; les estoilles, esblouyes d'une plus vive clarté, laissoient effacer leur blancheur et devoient peu à peu de la couleur du ciel; les bestes de la queste revenoient aux bois et les hommes à leur travail; le silence faisoit place au bruit, et les ténèbres à la lumière."(2) This passage seems to be a paraphrase of parts of Théophile's own poem Le Matin which begins:

L'Aurore sur la front du jour,
Seme l'azur, l'or et l'ivoire,
Et le Soleil lassé de boire
Commence son oblique tour.(3)

This humorous self-criticism is yet another example of the nonchalance of this poet who refuses to be pinned down to any particular system, who pretends to despise art and yet who makes frequent use of it himself.

1. O. P. I, p. 49, l.89-90.
2. Ed. Alleaume, II, p.11.
3. O.P. I, p.13, l.1-4.

Art and Nature - description.

There is a sense, of course, in which any work of art, however realistic its pretensions, is artificial: a work of art shows not reality itself but a representation of reality. There have been, however, interpretations of the function of Art which have ascribed to it the task, not merely of imitating Nature as closely as possible, but of embellishing Nature. According to this conception, Art must improve on Nature in order to make it conform to a preconceived and generally accepted idea of beauty, in order to make Nature conform to an ideal. This interpretation of the function of Art goes back to Aristotle but it had considerable influence in the seventeenth century as can be seen from the ideal landscapes of Claude or of Poussin.(1)

Théophile claims in his poetry that Nature needs no embellishment, and moreover that the efforts of Art to perfect natural beauty are vain. This is the theme of the poem Perside je me sens heureux, which starts with the poet's disapproval of the lady's use of cosmetics:

Il est bien vray que je me fasche
Du fard où vostre teint se cache,
Nature a mis tout son credit
A vous faire entierement belle,
L'art qui pense mieux faire qu'elle,
Me desplaist et vous enlaydit.(2)

The objects produced by Nature are perfect in themselves; Art cannot improve upon them.

Ces petits cailloux bigarez
En ses diversitez si belles,

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1. See for example Claude's Landscape with the Flight into Egypt, and Poussin's St. John on Patmos.
 2. O.P. II, p.41, 1.5-10.

Où trouveroient-ils des modelles
Qui les fissent mieux figurez ?(1)

The superiority of Nature is explicitly stated:

La Nature est inimitable
Et dans sa beauté véritable
Elle esclate si vivement
Que l'art gaste tous ses ouvrages,
Et luy fait plustost mille outrages
Qu'il ne luy donne un ornement.(2)

If Nature is already perfect, poetry's task can only be imitation, the painting of a picture which reproduces as closely as possible natural beauty. Théophile does seem to consider this to be the primary aim of the poet:

Vous qui pouvez mettre en peinture
Le grand object de l'Univers
Et tous les traicts de la nature....(3) he says to his

contemporary poets. Saint-Amant seems to have held the same opinion, since the preface to his works, written by Faret, contains the following account of the role of poetry: "ceste chaleur que les anciens ont appelée génie ne se communique qu'à fort peu d'esprits, et ne se fait principalement remarquer qu'aux descriptions, qui sont comme de riches tableaux où la nature est représentée: d'où vient qu'on a nommé la poésie une peinture parlante. Et de fait, comme elle est le plus noble effort de l'imagination, on peut dire aussi que son plus noble chef d'oeuvre est celui de bien décrire."(4)

However, in spite of Théophile's stated preference for the natural and his claim that Nature needs no improvement, an artificial world may, we think be discerned in his poetry. In fact art occupies a far more

1. *ibid.* l.41-43.

2. *ibid.* l.44-50.

3. O.P. II, p.126, l.4-6.

4. Nicolas Faret (1600-1646) was a friend of Saint-Amant and one of the first members of the Academy.

important role in the thought of the time and in his own work than Théophile would seem to allow in the poem from which we have quoted above. Nature herself is very often treated as a superior kind of artist (1) Moreover poets often find no higher praise for the beauties of nature than to compare them with man's own works of art. Théophile compares the beauty of the dawn with the ideal dawn of a painting:

ce premier éclat du jour
Lors que sans ride et sans nuage,
Dans le Ciel comme en un tableau
Il fait luire son beau visage
Tout freschement tiré de l'eau.(2)

And d'Arbaud Porchères uses art as a yardstick to judge the beauty of the flowers:

Grands et riches tapis de riante verdure
Roses, jasmins, oeillets, pompeux amas de fleurs,
Incomparable émail des plus vives couleurs
Qui sans art surpassez les traits de la peinture.(3)

In general it seems that created nature is explained in terms of art, and that this is so because nature was appreciated at second hand, through other works of art which presented an ordered, harmonious, and idealized nature.

There are, however, noteworthy exceptions. Théophile, among

1. See for example Malherbe on flowers:

Et trouverez-vous une où le soin de nature
Ait avec tant d'art employé sa peinture
Qu'elle soit comparable aux roses de son teint
(Plainte sur une Absence)

And Du Bois Hus on the sun: Peintre de la terre et de l'eau
Soleil prête-moi ton pinceau
Seul artisan des belles choses.

La Nuit des Nuits et le Jour des Jours.

2. Théophile, Thisbé pourle portraict de Pyrame, O.P.II, p.68, l.46-50.
3. Rimes D'Arbaud Porchères (Modern Edition) Paris, 1855.

others at the beginning of the seventeenth century, seems often to reject the idea that artifice is to be preferred. There is a certain realism about some of his descriptions which suggests that the subject has been experienced at first hand. This for instance:

Oy le Pinçon et la Linotte,
 Sur la branche de ce rosier,
 Vois branler leur petit gosier,
 Oy comme ils ont changé de notte.(1)

Or this: Je verray ce touffu Jasmin
 Qui fait ombre à tout le chemin
 D'une assez spacieuse allée,
 Et la parfume d'une fleur
 Qui conserve dans la gelée
 Son odorat et sa couleur.(2)

On the other hand the following lines may be said to present an idealized version of reality which belongs to an artistic convention:

Dans ce val solitaire et sombre,
 Le cerf qui brame au bruit de l'eau,
 Panchant ses yeux dans un ruisseau,
 S'amuse à regarder son ombre.(3)

 Les Nymphes que la chasse attire
 A l'ombrage de ces forests,
 Cherchant des cabinets secrets,
 Loing de l'embuche du Satire.(4)

It will be noted that the examples of realism we have quoted above are descriptions of individual objects of nature. It is when he is concerned with the details of nature, even when they are within the framework of a convention, that we notice a certain freshness of vision, which seems to be derived from first-hand experience; on these

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1. Théophile, Ode Dans ce val solitaire et sombre, O.P. I, p.16, l.133-136
 2. Lettre de Théophile à son Frère, O.P. II, p.185, l.225-230.
 3. Ode, O.P. I, p.16, l.1-4.
 4. ibid. l.9-12.

occasions he is not setting out to make nature conform to what the artist thinks it should be. When, on the other hand, we are given a general picture it is very often the picture of an ideal nature. It may belong to an artistic convention, as in the last of the two quatrains quoted, or it may be the direct description of a scene which has itself been ordered by man, as in the case of the following lines describing the park at Chantilly:

Que ces arbres sont bien ornés!
Je suis ravi quand je contemple
Que ces promenoirs sont bornés
Des sacrés murs d'un petit Temple.(1)

In this case the nature which is described is composed of selected features of created nature, combined through art to form a whole which is consonant with the taste of the time. Within the bounds of the garden, nature is, in fact, a work of art, to the perfection of which both Art and Nature contribute. Nature is regarded as the creator but is thought to require the help of man's artifice in order to produce an acceptable artistic whole.

It is with this association in mind that Porchères describes a typical garden in one of his sonnets:

Parterres émaillés, vivante enluminure
Qui charmez l'odorat en ravissant les yeux,
Fils de nature et d'art, jardin délicieux....(2)

In one of Tristan's poems we find an interesting account of the processes involved in drawing order out of the primary chaos of Nature's creation. La Maison d'Astrée describes the perfecting of created

1. La Maison de Silvie, Ode X, O.P. II, p.180, l.61-64.
2. Rimes d'Arbaud Porchères, Sur les Arbres et les Plantes.

nature: the laying out of a garden and the carving of a park from the raw material of the natural fields:

Tandis que l'un donnant des loix
 A la course des eaux rend leurs flots plus superbes;
 L'autre en mettant de l'ombre dans ce Bois,
 Epand de la fraicheur dessus l'émail des herbes.

Here too, the affirmation of the superiority of Art over Nature:

Un de ces Ouvriers emplumez
 De qui Timante mesme eut appris la peinture
 A déjà fait mille trais animez
 Qui témoignent que l'Art surpasse la Nature.

The desire for order and balance which becomes more insistent as the century progresses is here fully expressed:

Ces terres sont bien esgalées
 L'oeil de la perspective est assez satisfait.(1)

If we leave poetry for a moment for the practical sphere of gardening itself, we find that the same relationship between Art and Nature is considered necessary for the production of an attractive scene. In 1638 Jacques Boyceau published his Traité du Jardinage.(2) For him a knowledge of architecture and geometry is as important as an acquaintance with the properties of the flowers and plants to be grown. However beautiful the individual components of the scene, it will fall far short of perfection if the gardener does not obey the rules of symmetry: "Toutes les quelles choses, si belles que les puissions choisir, serent défectueuses et moins agréables, si elles ne sont ordonnées et placées avec symétrie, et bonne correspondance."

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1. Tristan l'Hermite, La Maison d'Astrée, Vers Héroïques, ed. Garnier (Les Amours et autres Poésies Choisies) p. 244.
 2. Jacques Boyceau Traité du Jardinage selon les raisons de la nature et de l'art. 1638.

His aim is to reproduce the diversity of nature without her disorder. He does however, express a liking for curves: "Mais je ne suis pas d'avis, que s'arrestant du tout à ces lignes droites, quelques beautés qu'elles ayent, nous n'entremesliens aussi des rondes et des courbes: et parmy des carrées des obliques afin de trouver la variété que nature demande."(1) The sense of movement inherent in the curve is present too, in the flowing water which Boyceau recommends for the ideal garden: "...spécialement l'eau vive et courante en ruisseaux et celle qui bouillonne ou jaillit dans les fontaines."(2) The desire to place Nature under the control of Art, which is present in all Boyceau says about the ordering of the garden, finds its most obvious expression in his suggestion that artificial birdsong and manufactured trees should be installed: "On peut faire mouvoir des engins et des machines par l'ayde desquels marchent des figures, jouent des instruments de musique, sifflent et chantent des oyseaux"...."des arbres et plantes y sont moullés.." and here is the crowning paradox - "formez et peints comme s'ils étaient naturels."(3)

However much Théophile may insist on the value of the natural, he cannot entirely escape the influence of ideas such as these, which are evidently dictated by the taste of the time. Thus much of his own poetry which has as its subject created nature is artificial in the sense that it reproduces a natural scene which is itself a work of art. One thinks particularly of the park of Chantilly described in the

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1. Boyceau op cit. Ch.III - de la Forme des Jardins.
 2. *ibid.*
 3. *ibid* Ch. XI - Des Crottes.

Maison de Silvie. Not content, however, with merely reproducing the nature he finds there and with imitating an already artificial nature, he proceeds to adorn it with mythological personages, and to create a nature which is not only the nature of the park but also that of the convention which peopled the woods with gods and nymphs. His purpose - to paint a picture of the place where he found refuge - is stated in the first lines:

Pour laisser avant que mourir
 Les traits vivans d'une peinture
 Qui ne puisse jamais perir
 Qu'en la perte de la Nature.....

That this will be an idealized picture is suggested by the lines which follow:

Je passe des crayons dorez
 Sur les lieux les plus reverez
 Où la vertu se refugie.....(1)

The image "les crayons dorez" suggests that the artist will embellish and not restrict himself to imitation.

The streams which have been harnessed to man-made channels and fountains are not merely streams but also the home of the Naiade and

the Tritons: Je panchois mes yeux sur le bort
 D'un licot où la Naiade dort....(2)

Les Tritons en la regardant
 Au travers leurs vitre(s) liquides,....(3)

Là Melicerte, en un gazon
 Frais de l'estanc qui l'environne,
 Fait aux Cygnes une maison
 Qui luy sert aussi de couronne.(4)

1. O.P. II, p.137, l.1-4, and 5-7.

2. Ode II, p.141, l.5-6.

3. ibid. l.31-32.

4. Ode III, p.147, l.21-24.

At the end of the series of odes which make up the poem, Théophile leaves the woods to their original inhabitants:

Je laisse à gauche ce quartier
Pour le Faune et pour le Satyre.(1)

Throughout the poem we find examples of this personification of natural objects, a device which belongs to an artistic convention and which is certainly not consistent with Théophile's claims on behalf of the natural.

The artificiality of this world is also apparent in the references to a kind of golden age which is said to subsist there. As in the world of the ballet (2), pain and death have been removed. In winter the creatures of the park are always certain of food, the birds rear their young in perfect security:

Là les oyseaux font leurs petits
Et n'ont jamais veu leurs couvées
Souler les sanglants appetits
Du serpent qui les a trouvées.(3)

The cultivated nature which we find in other of Théophile's poems might seem at first sight to be a truer representation of reality, but in fact it too, belongs to a well-used literary and pictorial tradition. Théophile's version of the rustic life, in common with that of his predecessors in the genre such as Desportes or Pibrac, gives an impression

1. Ode X, p.180, l.53-4.

2. See for example Théophile's excursions into the genre, e.g. Les Nautonniers or Les Princes de Cypre from which the following lines are taken: Nostre Ciel est tousjours serain,
Nostre joyeux destin n'est jamais en disgrace,
Et chez nous le Soleil ne void aucune trace
Du siecle de fer ny d'airain. O.P.I, p.181, l.33-36.

3. La Maison de Silvie, Ode III, O.P. II, p.147, l.31-34.

of Virgilian harmony and fertility. However, Théophile bases his description ostensibly on a reality with which he was familiar, and some details of the picture once again suggest a first-hand experience of reality: for example when he speaks of the wine

Qu'un terroir assez maigre, et tout coupé de roches,
Produit heureusement sur des montagnes proches.(1)

The same may be said of the description of the details of the orchard in the Lettre à son Frère. In such cases as this he is not looking at nature through a convention; on the other hand when he deals in generalities the convention is apparent:

Dans ces valons obscurs, où la mère Nature
A pourveu nos troupeaux d'éternelle pasture.(2)

Le fleuve de Garonne.....
.... Où des saules espais leurs rameaux verts abaissent
Pleins d'ombre et de frescheur sur mes troupeaux qui paissent.(3)

Artificiality may also be detected in the desert landscape which is calculated to provide a pleasing horror. Here we find rocks, caves, mountains, forests, savage beasts and birds of ill omen, but this is not the wildness of reality. Wild untamed nature outside the bounds of the park had little attraction for the age (4). On the other hand a simulated wildness would sometimes be introduced into the park, where

1. Plainte de T.à Tircis, O.P. II, p.85, l.113-114.
2. ibid. l.109-110.
3. Elégie Souverain qui regis.... O.P. II, p.16, l.253-256.
4. See for example D'alibray's reaction to wild mountain scenery. He does not find it attractive: L'Horreur du Désert, Vers Héroïques p.43. Oeuvres Poétiques Paris 1653. And Desmarests describes the mountain only to draw from it a lesson in humility: Les Promenades de Richelieu ou les Vertus Chrestiennes 1653 - La Foy, Première Promenade p.4.

it could be controlled and enjoyed. Boyceau even goes so far as to suggest the construction of caves which would reproduce through art the quaint and grotesque which occurs in nature: "comme pierres spongieuses et concaves, espèces de rochers, et caillaux bigearres, congelations et pétrifications estranges et de diverses sortes de coquillages...."(1) Similarly a stylised version of the wildness is used in poetry to inspire the thrill of horror which was considered pleasing. In describing a desert landscape the poet makes a conscious effort to affect the horror of a convention, and Théophile cannot be excluded from this. There is a strong impression of artifice about his desert scenes:

Icy les accens des corbeaux,
Et les foudres dedans les nues
Ne me parlent que de tombeaux.

J'ay choisi loing de vostre Empire
Un vieux desert, où des serpens
Boivent les pleurs que je respans,
Et soufflent l'air que je respire.(2)

In such a passage as this we have an impression of exaggeration; the horror suggested by the images seems slightly out of proportion to the situation which the poem describes. This seems to be because the poet is consciously striving after effect; he is choosing certain images which belong to a conventional idea of horror, with the result that the pictures created have something artificial about them.

The poem Un corbeau devant moy croasse is perhaps the best example

1. Boyceau, op. cit. Les Grottes.
2. Au Roy Ode, O.P. I, p.53, l.38-44.

of contrived effect, with its long list of images of death and instability. The dream of La Mère in Pyrame also bears the mark of artifice. All the usual images of the convention are here:

Un grand vol de corbeaux sur moy s'est assemblé,
La lune est devalée et le ciel a tremblé.(1)

The conscious effort to reproduce the horror of a convention tends to dilute the savage nature of the original subject, so that the result is often not so much horror as quaintness. This is particularly noticeable in Théophile's description of the lion:

Je voy le genereux Lion,
Qui sort de sa demeure creuse
Herissant sa perruque affreuse,
Qui faict fuyr Endimion.(2)

Images are chosen for their ability to surprise, and the selection of images is a conscious process; as a result the imitated horror or violence appears slightly larger than life - the artifice is apparent. Such artifice is very obvious in the love poetry, in such lines as the following:

Mon ame est dans les fers, mon sang est dans la flame,
Jamais malheur ne fut à mon malheur esgal:
J'ay des vautours au sein, j'ay des serpens dans l'ame,
Et vos traicts qui me font encore plus de mal.(3)

Je me promene seul dans l'horreur des forests,
Où le funeste orfraie et le hibou se perchent...(4)

Qu'au lict je m'Imagine estre dans un naufrage,
Tomber d'un precipice et voir mille serpens
Dans un cachot obscur autour de moy rempans.(5)

1. Pyrame et Thisbé, Act IV, Sc. 2, Ed. Alleaume, vol. II, p. 130.
2. Le Matin, O.P. I, p. 13, l. 17-20.
3. O.P. I, p. 148, l. 17-20.
4. Sonnet Quelque si doux espoir... O.P. I, p. 154, l. 10-11.
5. Elegie Depuis ce triste jour.... O.P. II, p. 45, l. 68-70.

Such pictures as these are calculated to surprise or even shock the reader as he would be shocked by the real thing, with this important difference: here he is well aware throughout that this is but an artificial creation.

In selecting his images in order to create a certain effect of horror which will conform to contemporary ideas of what horror should be, the poet is creating an artificial world. There is here a conscious affectation of horror which will be as like nature as art can make it, without ever becoming uncomfortably frightening. Art then, disguises Nature in order to make it acceptable to current taste.

At several points in Théophile's poetry, therefore, we are introduced to an artificial world which provides some kind of escape from reality. A different level of reality is offered, a reality seen through the protective and distorting glass of art. This we can see quite clearly in the paradise described in La Maison de Silvie. The desire to escape into an artificial world from which normal reality is excluded is also apparent in the use of the dream as the basis of a poem.⁽¹⁾ We see it, too, in the world of the ballet, in which the players taken from among the nobles of court, put on a physical disguise. Théophile's contributions to this form of entertainment give us a glimpse of the ideal, artificial world which the ballet provided:

Soubs un climat heureux, loing du bruit du Tonnerre,
Nous passons à loisir nos jours délicieux,

1. See the sonnets Ministre du repos... O.P. II, p.32.
Au moins ay-je songé... O.P. II, p.32.
Je songeois que Philis... O.P.II, Appendice, p.202.
and the dream of La Mère in Pyrame.

Et là jamais nostre oeil ne desira la Terre
 Ny sans quelque desdain ne regarda les Cieux. (1)

The popularity of such themes may itself stem from the awareness of instability and inconstancy in the real world. Since it was becoming difficult to see the real world as a harmonious whole, new artificially harmonious worlds were created. Théophile provides the world of the Parc at Chantilly, the rustic life at Boussères, imagines his desires fulfilled in dreams, creates a perfectly harmonious world in the ballet poems. In all this he is using Art to embellish Nature, just as, in other poems, he uses it to create an artificial impression of horror.

The importance of Art may therefore be seen in all these aspects of Théophile's poetry. At this time man sees created nature, not as something to be admired for its own sake, but as something to be imitated and embellished by the forms of art; he does not shudder in terror at the artificially produced horror, nor weep with the lover for the cruelty of his fate; rather he admires the skill of the artist who is able to create, by means of art, a picture of nature, a desert landscape or a lover's lament, which is so pleasing to his taste. And while we must remember the importance in Théophile's poetry of the vivid descriptions of the details of nature, it is evident that many of his poems present an artificial world.

1. Les Nautonniers. O.P. I, p.179, l.13-16.

Conclusion

Much of Théophile's work may therefore be said to possess an artificial quality. Artifice may be seen at work in his descriptions of nature, whether it be the nature of the garden, cultivated nature, or the nature of the desert landscape, as well as in the selection of the language of much of his work. His references to the relationship between art and nature make it obvious that he is conscious of the artificiality of contemporary taste and that he is not unaware of the part it plays in his own work. It is evident that he regards art as a means of disguising the natural appearance of things; he does not always admit that it is capable of perfecting the natural. As far as literature is concerned, however, he adopts readily enough the disguise of art, since he is writing, of necessity, within certain conventions. His condemnation of art, however, does not apply only to literature; it extends to the sphere of social relationships. It is his awareness of the disguise which art affords in this sphere that gives bite to his discussion of the natural life.

In the Au Lecteur to the second part of his works he has this to say about the society of his day, which he feels to be conspiring against him: "Il est vray que la coustume du siecle est contraire à mon naturel. Je voy que dans la conversation des plus sages, les discours ordinaires sont choses feintes et estudiées; ma façon de vivre est toute differante. Ceste mignardise de compliments communs, et ces reverances inutiles qui font aujourd'huy la plus grande partie du discours et des actions des hommes, ce sont des superfluitez où je nē

m'amuse point....En un mot ma société n'est bonne qu'à ceux qui ont la hardiesse de vivre sans artifice."(1) Here is the explicit condemnation of artifice as a means of disguising true feelings; it is the declaration of a man who demands to be allowed to remain true to his own nature. Similar criticisms of the pretence and affectation demanded by society are to be found in his poetry. The Elégie à une dame opens with a discussion of the difficulties presented by life in society, when man is continually obliged to betray the génie which Théophile places at the centre of personality. There are, he says, people of integrity

Mais leur divin génie est forcé de se feindre
Et les rend malheureux s'il ne se peut contraindre.(2)

The dominant opinion obliges such people to conform:

La coutume to le nombre autorise les sots,
Il faut aymer la cour, rire des mauvais mots,
Acoster un brutal, luy plaire, en faire estime:
Lors que cela m'advient je pense faire un crime.
.....
Cependant il faut vivre en ce commun malheur,
Laisser à part esprit, et franchise et valeur,
Rompre son naturel, emprisonner son ame,
Et perdre tout plaisir pour acquerir du blasme:(3)

This is a theme which Théophile takes up again in the Satyre Première:

Je croy que les destins ne font venir personne
En l'estre des mortels qui n'ait l'ame assez bonne,

1. O.P. II, p.14.

2. O.P. I, p. 8, l.29-30.

3. O.P. I, p. 8, l.31-34, and 39-42. The degradation of the age is of course a theme which no satirist could ignore. Régnier has a similar comment to make: Apprenons à mentir, nos propos déguiser,
A trahir nos amis, nos ennemis baiser,
Faire la cour aux grands.....

Mais on la vient corrompre, et le celeste feu
 Qui luit à la raison ne nous dure que peu:
 Car l'imitation rompt nostre bonne trame,
 Et tousjours chez autrui fait demeurer nostre ame.(1)

In living the natural life man must refuse to conform with the pretence he finds around him. There is something of Alceste's point of view in Théophile's treatment of the theme, when he advocates complete honesty:

A qui ne sçait farder, ny le coeur, ny la face,
 L'impertinence mesme a souvent bonne grace.(2)

Here the idea of disguise is conveyed by the word "farder;" Théophile, it will be remembered, uses the same image in a description of literary artifice in the Ode au Sieur Hardy.

The poet is under particular pressure to disguise reality. The system of patronage requires of the poet flattery rather than truth. The process of disguise is described in the first stanza of an ode addressed to M. de Montmorency:

Lors qu'on veut que les Muses flattent
 Un homme qu'on estime a faux,
 Et qu'il faut cacher cent deffaux,
 Afin que deux vertus esclattent;
 Nos esprits d'un pinceau divers,
 Par l'artifice de nos vers
 Font le visage à toutes choses;
 Et dans le fard de leurs couleurs,
 Font passer des mauvaises fleurs
 Sous le teinct des lis et des roses.(3)

There is an obvious connection between the thought of this passage with its particular application, and that of the Ode Perside je me sens heureux which reaches a general conclusion about Nature and Art. In

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1. O.P. I, p.82, l.169-174.
 2. ibid. l.177-8.
 3. O.P. I, p.92, l.1-10.

this poem Théophile maintains that he at least has never bowed to the necessity of this kind of artifice:

Moy qui n'ay jamais eu le blasme
De farder mes vers ny mon ame. (1)

The first part of the Ode au Prince d'Orange (2) is also concerned with the theme of truth in poetry, but here Théophile gives a rather different account of his own practice. He excuses himself of any insincerity of which he may have been guilty:

Lors que la force du devoir
Pousse mon ame à decevoir
Quelqu'un à qui je fais hommage:
Si quelques fois pour un mortel,
Je tire un immortel image;
C'est afin qu'il se rende tel
Qu'il se voit peint en mon ouvrage. (3)

It is only "la force du devoir" which obliges him to deceive the object of his praises. This is presumably what leads him to sacrifice his sincerity in the ode addressed to the duc de Luynes where the immortal

images appear: A qui plus justement qu'à luy
Se doivent nos saintes louanges ?
Quel des humains voit aujourd'huy
Sa vertu si proche des Anges ? (4)

And it was surely expedience which led him to write the sonnet on the death of Durand and the Siti brothers broken on the wheel in 1618:

J'ay veu ces criminels en leur supreme Sort,
J'ay veu les fers, les feux, les bourreaux, et la Mort,
Mon Ame en les voyant benist vostre bon Ange. (5)

1. *ibid*, l.35-6.

2. O.P. I, p.39.

3. l.33-39.

4. O.P. I, p.60, l.21-24.

5. O.P. II, p.203-4 (Appendice) Durand and the Siti were executed as a result of the publication of an apparently obscene book which has not been traced. See Lachèvre Estienne Durand, 1905, p.9.

Fear of a similar fate must have inspired such servility, which, from his own admission, is contrary to his nature:

Je ne puis estre esclave, et vivre en te servant,
Comme un Maistre d'hostel, Secretaire, ou suivant:
Telle condition veut une humeur servile,
Et pour me captiver elle est un peu trop vile.(1)

His patron he maintains, must be prepared for the truth:

Mon esprit plein d'amour, et plein de liberté
Sans fard et sans respect, t'escrit la verité;
Et sans aucun dessein d'offencer ou de plaire,
Je fais ce que mon sens me conseille de faire.(2)

What emerges from this discussion of artifice in the social context is Théophile's genuine desire to be true to what he regards as his own nature. He would prefer to follow his own desires without heeding social convention, but in the circumstances of the time it was inevitable that he should make use of the artifice he condemns in others and thus compromise his ideal. The natural ideal he formulates would permit no interference from art, but social intercourse as well as the creation of works of art demands of necessity a combination of nature and art. Théophile's own poetic practice reveals a more complicated relationship between the two than he would seem to recognise in theory; and as the ideal of the honnête homme was to show, some kind of art may well be necessary if the individual is to be free to follow his own nature in its essentials, in the social context.

1. O.P. I, p.71, l.7-10. Poem addressed to Candale.
2. O.P. I, p.67, l.31-34. Poem addressed to Candale.

General Conclusion

The poetry of Théophile de Viau would seem to possess three main characteristics. It reflects the sense of instability which appears to have been widespread at the time. That the world which Théophile experienced seemed unstable, men inconstant, and events haphazard, that the world could no longer be experienced as a harmonious whole, may be inferred from his account of the human condition, from the imagery he uses and from his treatment of his material. For Théophile man is placed in a universe where events are contingent and death the end of pleasure. His imagery of the sea and of storms suggest violence, impermanence and sudden destruction. Evidence of this sense of instability may also be found in the desire for escape into an artificial world of the poet's creation - the paradise at Chantilly, the dream, the blissful rustic life. It is reflected, too, in Théophile's dislike of the rigidity of systems and the comparative fluidity of his poetic theory and practice. He deals with the world not as a whole but in its separate parts; he treats life as a series of separate moments. Moreover the very structure of some of his poems reflects the splitting of the world and of his experience of it, into isolated parts.

However, the impression of instability given by Théophile's poetry is not as strong as that given by the work of some of his contemporaries. A sense of instability is present, but often beneath the surface. He recognises the fact of mutability, for example, without allowing it to colour the whole of his poetry. The world may be unstable, man may be

inconstant, life may be transient, but having accepted this, Théophile tends to put it behind him and get on with the business of living. His realisation of transience may well encourage the desire to enjoy life while it is within one's grasp, but it is not allowed to interfere with that enjoyment. Death and instability are but parts of experience, which do not invalidate the remaining parts. For the religious poets of the time, the fact of death flows over into life; for Théophile it is yet another isolated event. The moments of time may be few, but they can be enjoyed by the man who comes to terms with his own nature and accepts the fact of death without allowing it to destroy the validity of life. The natural man relies on his own senses to provide the series of divertissements which enjoyment of life in an unstable world demands. So it is that the interest in the movement of water, for example, while it may reflect the underlying instability of the world, is primarily an interest in the decorative qualities of movement. So too the flower is no longer a symbol of impermanence, but a thing to be enjoyed in the moment of its beauty, without reference to the change which time will bring about.

Thus the awareness of instability forms a background to the sensuality which is the second main characteristic of Théophile's poetry. This sensuality may be seen in the subject of certain poems; obviously it is most marked in some of the love poems, but it may also be seen in Théophile's sensitive treatment of the objects of nature, his delight in the colour and the taste of fruit, in the smell of flowers and in the sound of birds and flowing water. In his treatment of the

natural scene he reveals a sensuous delight in detail, which is perhaps the most distinctive feature of his poetry. But his sensuous appreciation of the world around him is apparent also, throughout the poetry, in the concrete and often intensely sensuous imagery he uses.

However, the importance of the sensuality of Théophile's poetry should not make us forget a third characteristic which, though perhaps less tangible is no less important, for without it our understanding of the roles played by instability and sensuality is incomplete.

Even in the choice of pleasures, of the divertissements with which he filled the passing moments of life, artificiality plays a part. In the Fragments d'une Histoire Comique it will be remembered that Théophile does not recommend wholesale indulgence of the senses, but makes a careful and conscious choice of controlled pleasures. It is in the conscious choice of means in order to achieve certain effects that artificiality may be seen at work in his poetry.

In considering the theme of instability we have already said that there is on Théophile's part, an intellectual realisation of the fact of mutability, for example. However, in using imagery of sea and storm he is seldom interested in getting over to the reader concepts concerning instability or the vanity of life; by the choice of certain images he is simply seeking to create an impression of violence which is very often a visual impression, though other senses are frequently involved. It is the sensuous impression in which he is interested not any concept which might be associated with it. We may quote as an example the seascape in the elegy Desja trop longuement la paresse me flatte.

He is not in any way committed when he creates such impressions. He uses such imagery in a way very different from the way Sponde used it. Having accepted change and decay he stresses it much less explicitly than Sponde. There remains an attraction, which other poets of the time felt, in movement and violence.

This affectation of violence for the sake of sensuous effect has a quality of artificiality about it, as has the affected horror of his desert pieces. He is not concerned with frightening the reader, nor with utilising the horror to drive home a moral point, but with using his artist's skill to create a picture which imitates the real thing. It must be added, however, that there are poems in which the violence or horror is not unrelated to actual experience. In the Lettre à son Frère, for example, he is certainly involved personally. Here the violence of the imagery may be said to spring from the danger of his situation and not primarily from a desire to surprise the reader by means of art.

However, in choosing images belonging to certain literary conventions in order to surprise the reader and make him admire the skill of the artist, Théophile may be said to be making use of artificiality. Similarly, in choosing certain features of the natural scene which belong to other established conventions, Théophile continues the creation of an artificial world. It is important to remember, however, that, within the bounds of the artificially created nature, Théophile describes with realistic detail its individual components. When he concentrates on the details, the artifice we have been discussing is

noticeably absent.

Whether he is creating a picture of violence or of horror, or describing the objects of nature, it is the image itself which holds his attention. Many of his descriptive pieces are developed, apparently incidentally, in the course of a poem which did not set out to be descriptive. The decor is very often much more important than the intellectual framework of the poem. He affects the nonchalance of the uncommitted artist who is able to follow a thought or an image through to its conclusion, without considering the wholeness of the poem. In insisting on the value of the natural and despising art he seems in effect to be stating his refusal to conform to a priori ideas of what a poem should be. To the writers of the second half of the century it was this lack of concern for order, this refusal to bow to the necessity for technique which constituted his principal failing. Of course he uses art in another sense when he creates effects which conform with literary conventions, but although this idéalization of nature is characteristic of classical art, Théophile must obviously be clearly distinguished from the classical artist. The importance of concrete sensuous imagery in his work points to a vital difference in feeling between his poetry and that of the later part of the century. Théophile does not analyse on an intellectual level but makes of poetry a vehicle for sense impressions. This, together with the open form of many of his poems, makes it clear that he is not merely a forerunner of classical art.

Must he therefore be called a baroque artist? The period in which

the senses are so important has frequently been referred to as the period of the baroque. If the baroque sensibility can be described as revealing an awareness of instability, of change, of discord, of death, and a concern with movement and if it may be said to express this awareness in a sensuous way, then the period under discussion in which all these features are to be found, may be justly described as baroque. However, when we come to consider the individual writers of the period the question is less easy to answer. There are writers who reveal several of these characteristics and yet one would hesitate to refer to them as baroque writers. Moreover, although many of the writers of the time have certain characteristics in common, there are also many points of difference. If the term baroque is to have any value as a term of literary criticism, it cannot be applied indiscriminately to writers as diverse as Sponde or D'Aubigné and Théophile. There is little of the tension and the anguish of Sponde in Théophile's work, and while his violence sometimes seems to echo that of D'Aubigné, as for example in the Ode au Prince d'Orange or the Lettre à son Frère, he is far more interested in the decorative effect of the image than in its role as a concrete expression of concepts. It is true, of course, that he makes frequent use of piled up imagery and that he seems attracted by violence and movement, but his scenes of violence and of horror as well as his descriptions of water have sometimes a quaint and artificial quality.

While we can recognise in his poetry certain features which he shares with his age and which may be said to spring from a baroque

sensibility, we cannot pin to him the label "baroque" without omission and over-simplification. It is more important to establish Théophile as a poet in his own right than to attempt to force him into a particular school. This poetry, with its recognition of instability coupled with a rejection of didacticism, its sensuous imagery, its sensitive attention to detail and its evocation of the colourful beauty of the natural world with its artifice and its delicacy, is without doubt the product of a mind of considerable individuality. Indeed it is his consciousness of his own individual nature and his desire to live and write according to it, that are the most obvious features of Théophile's attitude. This in itself should make us wary of confining him to a particular poetic school. In attaching labels to the literature of any period posterity at best simplifies what once was complex and hardens divisions that were fluid. Such a process is of little value in the case of a poet who is so determined to maintain his independence, who affects the nonchalance of one whose mind can follow, without restriction, the thought of the moment. We may best allow the last word to Théophile himself, in a passage in which his sense of his own individuality is most apparent: "Pour moy je ne me trouve que rarement dans l'opinion commune, et peu de proverbes viennent à mon sens; je ne diffère (sic) gueres aux exemples, et me desplais surtout en l'imitation d'autrui. Je me retire dans mon ame, où je m'accoustume à l'examen de mes pensées. Un autre n'y est pas tousjours present."⁽¹⁾

1. Lettre à un sot amy, ed. Alleaume II, p. 328.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used in the bibliography:

- B.B.B. Bulletin du Bibliophile et du Bibliothécaire.
 B.H.R. Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance.
 C.A.I.E.F. Cahiers de l'Association International des Etudes Françaises.
 C.S. Cahiers du Sud.
 F.L. Figaro Littéraire.
 Fr. Quar. French Quarterly.
 F.R. French Review.
 F.S. French Studies.
 Hor. Horizon.
 J.A.A.C. Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism.
 K.F.L.Q. Kentucky Foreign Language Quarterly.
 M.L.N. Modern Language Notes.
 M.L.R. Modern Language Review.
 M.P. Modern Philology.
 N.R.F. Nouvelle Revue Française.
 P.M.L.A. Publications of the Modern Language Association of America.
 R.H.L. Revue d'Histoire Littéraire.
 R.S.H. Revue des Sciences Humaines.
 T.L.S. Times Literary Supplement.

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