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'The Development of Paul Eluard's Poetic Language',

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by

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## INTRODUCTION

The whole, prolific body of Paul Eluard's writings bears witness to a consistent fascination for words: words for their power to create as well as to signify, for their evocation of dream or reality, for their sonorities or their shape upon the page, and above all for their potential ability to change the world. His preoccupation with language is manifested not only in those prose works which examine the meaning and functions of poetry, but also in the poems themselves; voix, langue, parole, image and mot are all important elements in Eluard's vocabulary. His desire to communicate is constantly evident, even at the height of his involvement with Surrealism.

From a cursory reading of Eluard, however, one is at once aware that his work has a distinct continuity of tone whilst on the other hand there are subtle changes in emphasis in the later poetry, written between the late 1930's and his death in 1952. Several critics have insisted upon the continuity of his writing; some have preferred the work written before 1938; others have dismissed the surrealist verse and upheld the committed poetry of the war and post-war periods. This study attempts to assess those elements in Eluard's language which are constant and those whose nature is changed by the metamorphosis in his ideology. For whilst, as Chapter V of the study explains, there was a distinct rupture with Surrealism in 1938, it would be foolhardy to attempt to divide the poet's work in two halves



when there is so much evidence of continuing themes and preoccupations. Nevertheless, Paul Eluard was an enthusiastic surrealist and subsequently a dedicated communist, and although the two movements could be said to have certain shared views, they proved uncomfortable companions in the 1920's and ultimately have widely different aims; so it would be surprising if his poetic language did not bear considerable traces of his evolution from the influence of the one to a commitment to the other.

Within any artistic movement or political party are to be found men and women of a variety of views, sometimes even on fundamental issues, and one must beware of unqualified use of labels such as surrealist and communist. Surrealism's rejection of literary genres is only one of the aspects of its doctrine which is incompatible with Eluard's inclinations, whilst in the later phase, his poetry is by no means exclusively socialist-realist. To what extent, then, was his language surrealist at the time of his adherence to the movement and to what extent did it remain so afterwards? To what extent did his later poetry submit to communist theory? Did commitment increase his existing desire to communicate, and if so, how does this affect his language? Whilst attempting to answer these questions, and hence to assess the constant and evolving aspects of Eluard's poetic language, the present study takes into account not only ideology but also the important matter of the changing and unchanging elements in his conception of love.

The core of key words in Eluard's poetry has been studied several times, particularly by the phenomenological

critics. Obviously this network of characteristic vocabulary is of central importance in any study of his language, and this thesis studies the use of key words, both those which have already been examined and some others; the chronological development of this usage is its particular concern, so that imagery, the prime mechanism involved, is examined from two points of view: firstly, the semantic relationships within his metaphors during the surrealist and the post-surrealist phases and secondly, the extent of their clarity, of their accessibility to the reader, during the two periods. Eluard's various experiments with language are studied, from the early influence of Paulhan and his proverbs, through the disintegration of meaning in Dada and the ellipsis of Surrealism to the conscious adoption of new vocabulary in the later years; the contribution of these experiments to the abiding central core of Eluard's idiom is assessed. His feeling for the dualities of nature and the words which describe it is analysed from the point of view of his personal moral outlook, of the surrealist theory of the reconciliation of antimonies, and of the later influence of dialecticism.

Grammar and syntax have a very minor place in the study, for on the whole, unlike Mallarmé, unlike Valéry, Eluard adheres to conventional syntax and does not set out to destroy grammatical rules. During the Dada phase reversals in syntax do have a place in the disruption of traditional semantic links, but his grammar cannot be faulted; as Vadja says, he wishes to 'créer une contradiction entre la

détermination grammaticale et l'indétermination sémantique.<sup>1</sup> During his adherence to Surrealism grammar and syntax are usually conventional; Carrard, in his linguistic and literary study of 'La terre est bleue comme une orange', following Chomsky's 'Degrees of grammaticalness', claims that there is not a single non-grammatical 'énoncé' in the whole of L'Amour la poésie<sup>2</sup>. The semi-grammatical elements he detects in the poem he analyses result from the succession of clauses whose relationships are semantically odd, and it is just this rich and startling association of words which is the preoccupation of the poet at this time. As for syntax, as Anna Balakian notes, freedom from rhyme brings freedom from the necessity to juggle with word-order<sup>3</sup>; the omission of conjunctions and prepositions, however, is important in any analysis of the highly concentrated imagery of the surrealist verse. The later, less elliptic verse deviates hardly at all from the conventions of grammar and syntax.

Throughout the thesis the poet's own theories are given considerable space. Much of Eluard's 'art poétique' is contained in prose works such as L'Évidence poétique, Premières vues anciennes or the didactic radio broadcasts Les sentiers et les routes de la poésie, but many of his ideas on language are to be found in his verse; as we shall see, he is the most self-critical of poets, and on the whole

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1. Andras Vadja, 'Dada dans la poésie d'Eluard', p.240.

2. 'Un poème de Paul Eluard: Essai d'approche linguistique et littéraire', p.247.

3. 'The Surrealist Image', p.280.

criticism of self means, for him, appraisal of the efficacy of his language. Poets, however, are not always to be trusted when writing about themselves, and we match theory and practice with caution; professed enthusiasm for automatic writing for instance, does not necessarily lead to the strict practice of the technique, nor does the alleged belief that everything may be a fit subject for poetry embrace colonial wars disapproved of by the communists.

It is true to say that there are grave dangers in a study which spans the whole of an author's writings, for as Stephan Ullmann declares, 'as one widens the circle one is bound to lose in depth what one gains in breadth, and to move farther away from that close vision of stylistic realities which only a "micro-context" can afford.'<sup>4</sup> The present study has undoubtedly omitted a great many useful examples to the points discussed, and been forced to refuse useful methods of approach, whilst Richard Vernier's admirable study of 'Poésie ininterrompue'<sup>5</sup> illustrates the value of a deep analysis of one poem. However, the question of the changes in nuance which events and the passing of time brought to Eluard's poetic language is a fascinating one, and it is hoped that close analysis of certain poems which are of central importance narrows the focus constructively.

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4. Language and Style, p.128.

5. 'Poésie ininterrompue' et la poétique de Paul Eluard, Mouton, The Hague/Paris, 1971..

In drawing evidence from the frequency of key words, I have been helped considerably by Rolland Pierre's statistical study of Eluard's vocabulary<sup>6</sup>, which illuminates its development at three distinct phases, and by Östen Södergard's word-count of Capitale de la douleur<sup>7</sup>, with which my own count of the characteristic vocabulary of Une leçon de morale is compared in Chapter VI and in Appendix (ii).

The present study is divided into two parts; the first covers the development of Eluard's use of language during the period before 1938, whilst the second spans the period from the break with Surrealism to 1952. Within these two parts the chronology is loose; although Appendix (i) shows the main works referred to in each chapter, the chapters are not dated, for to do so would be to impute to the work a strict chronological pattern which does not exist and to leave no room for an examination of abiding tendencies. Thus in Part One, analysis of the experimental techniques and the surrealist image, in Chapters II and III, is relevant to a large part of the first period, whilst the transition from introspection to commitment, described in Chapter IV, is a gradual process to which it is impossible to assign dates and which certainly persists, if to a much smaller degree, into the later phase.

References to Eluard's work are taken from the two volumes of the 1968 Gallimard edition of Eluard's complete works, edited by Marcelle Dumas and Lucien Scheler.

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6. 'Le vocabulaire de Paul Eluard' Europe Nov-Dec. 1962 no.403-404, pp.161-178.

7. 'Etude sur le vocabulaire de "Capitale de la douleur" de Paul Eluard', Studia Neophilologica, 1960, 32, 1, pp.106-116.

Finally, I should like to offer my warmest thanks to Professor Garnet Rees, for all the help and support he has provided whilst supervising the present study.

PART ONE: 1913-1938.

## CHAPTER I

### THE SEARCH FOR AN IDIOM

Essayons, c'est difficile, de rester absolument purs. Nous nous apercevrons alors de tout ce qui nous lie.

Et le langage déplaisant qui suffit aux bavards, langage aussi mort que les couronnes à nos fronts semblables, réduisons-le, transformons-le en un langage charmant, véritable, de commun échange entre nous.

Preface to Les animaux et leurs hommes, O.C. I, p.39

'Tout jeune, j'ai ouvert mes bras à la pureté', writes Eluard in "La dame de carreau"<sup>1</sup>. This poem of 1926 provides insight into the motivation behind Eluard's early search for purity in language. The innocence of youth, the virgin he dreams of, the innocence of her eyes, the poet's absorption of light - 'j'en garde assez en moi pour regarder la nuit, toute la nuit, toutes les nuits' - and his love of love itself, all contribute to the purity of this dream vision, so that Bachelard indicates the significance of the poem in these terms: 'Le poète saisit donc ici la pureté comme une donnée immédiate de la conscience poétique.'<sup>2</sup> The present chapter examines Eluard's early search for a poetic language which will meet the demands of this instinct for purity.

The preface to Les animaux et leurs hommes, les hommes et leurs animaux, published in 1920, is an energetic plea for a new honesty and purity in poetic language, an attack on the stale language of a pre-war literature preoccupied with aestheticism. For Eluard, purity in this context is

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1. Les Dessous d'une vie, O.C. I, p.202.

2. L'Air et les songes, p.192.



far from the pure poetry of a Valéry or a Brémond; Valéry envisages a strict 'chemical' separation of the poetic elements of discourse,<sup>3</sup> whereas Eluard sees the poet's rôle in these terms:

Le poète...nous rendra les délices du langage  
le plus pur, celui de l'homme de la rue et du  
sage, de la femme, de l'enfant et du fou. (4)

These words are from 1942 but the same belief is to be found in the preface of 1920; the language he advocates will be 'de commun échange entre nous' and will illuminate 'tout ce qui nous lie.' The rejection of intellectualism and artifice, which he later calls 'poétisation', and the desire for a simple language of communication, remain guiding principles for Eluard.<sup>5</sup>

Certain elements of his 'langage charmant, véritable, de commun échange entre nous' had been established before 1920. From 1913, the poet had adopted a recurring vocabulary of words which are within the experience of all: the elements and the weather, birds and flight, the human face and its expressions, the eyes and all aspects of sight. In the six Premiers poèmes written between 1913 and 1918, and published or republished in 1948, the following words occur, all of which are to be profoundly characteristic of Eluard's vocabulary:

chaud	froid	fraîcheur	saisons	printemps	
neige	vent	pluie	murs	chambre	fenêtre
mer	terre	ciel	feu	eau	
oiseau	vol		fardeau		

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3. Cf. 'Cours de Poétique' leçon 11. Quoted by R. Gibson, Modern French Poets on Poetry, p.149.

4. Poésie involontaire et poésie intentionnelle, O.C.I, p.1133.

5. At times, under the influence of Surrealism, however, as we shall see, easy communication with the reader is diminished.

regard	yeux	lumière	soleil	étoiles	jour
amour	cœur	rire			
branches	fleurs	verdure	feuilles		

Already his concern to name and enumerate what he sees is apparent:

J'ai peint des cieux toujours pareils,  
la mer qui a tous les bateaux,<sup>6</sup>  
la neige, le vent et la pluie.

Already, too, use of repetition creates a song-like effect which later, when extended, becomes litany in such poems as "Liberté". In the third poem, "La petite chérie arrive à Paris", parallelism of this first line and 'la petite chérie traverse la rue' and 'la petite chérie est sur le trottoir', coupled with repetition of 'Paris fait du bruit' and the rhyming line 'Le bruit tombe en pluie' conveys with charming naïveté the imagined visit of Gala, whilst repetition of 'j'ai peint', in "Mon dernier poème", forms the framework for enumeration of natural detail.

Much of the same vocabulary occurs in Le devoir, of 1916, but now the poet's reactions are coloured by his reaction to war. The line 'la mer qui a tous les bateaux' is now mentioned in the context of 'un pays moins froid que celui-ci pays de boue et d'eau.' In "Il y a tant de choses", the streets of Paris are the setting for his last parting with a dead friend, so that they accompany profound sadness instead of joy, and the banality of the question 'Penseras-tu à tes devoirs?' emphasises this sorrow. Similarly, simple intimacy of gesture 'déplions les couvertures...' is offset by fear: '...où dorment des

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6. O.C. I, p.7.

bêtes noires.' But the poems are not devoid of hope, which is always found in close human contact, soldiers huddling round dancers to keep warm, marching together across the cornfields in the sun, or the father and son who are to go away together on a long voyage. Eluard's affectionate feelings for the streets of Paris and the ordinary people who occupy them are reminiscent of those of Apollinaire's "Zone":

J'ai vu ce matin une jolie rue dont j'ai oublié le nom  
 Neuve et propre du soleil elle était le clairon  
 Les directeurs les ouvriers et les belles sténo-  
 dactylographes  
 Du lundi matin au samedi soir quatre fois par jour y  
 passent...  
 ...J'aime la grâce de cette rue industrielle.

Here, as in Apollinaire's poem, the sun is very much in evidence and the only real outburst of indignation is 'Oh! vivre un moins terrible exil du ciel très tendre!' Initially, Eluard feels forced to accept the necessity of war, and there is no expression of bitterness or revolt until Le devoir becomes Le devoir et l'inquiétude in 1917; nevertheless, the uncomfortable nature of his duty is apparent throughout the poems of 1916, and especially in the startling simplicity of:

Travaille-tout,  
 Creuse des trous  
 Pour des squelettes de rien du tout.

This rhythmical little poem has the ring of a children's rhyme, and this aspect, together with the expression 'rien du tout', stops short of irony to reveal the stark fact that more and more graves are being dug.

In Le devoir et l'inquiétude, written in 1917, Eluard's criticism of war becomes explicit. He revolts against such

platitudes as 'Le mal, c'est comme les enfants, sur terre on doit en avoir'<sup>7</sup>, and against all the talk about war which seems detached from the realities of the trenches: 'On nous enseigne trop la patience, la prudence, et que nous pouvons mourir.'<sup>8</sup> The smouldering reaction against a language which directs and records the atrocities of war, a reaction which Eluard is to share with the post-war "Littérature" group, is already evident: 'Les mots sont mauvais et pour d'autres vies.'<sup>9</sup> The prose poems of Le rire d'un autre express his sense of pain and outrage in simple, conversational tones, and there are a great many exclamations like 'Rien n'est plus dur que la guerre d'hiver!' Unlike Apollinaire, Eluard now sees nothing but evil and sorrow in war, so that whilst this cry echoes the simple emotionalism of Apollinaire's, the emotion expressed is very different; Le rire d'un autre is charged with words like 'mal', 'mort', 'terrible'. The poet's present impression of war is summed up in the second part of "Notre mort", in which those who greeted it with enthusiasm found it to be a nightmarish, noisy war in which men died like rats.

In the verses of Le devoir et l'inquiétude, the poet's "inquiétude" is more indirectly expressed; feelings are conveyed in the same kind of terms as in Le devoir; in the face of chaos, the hope of life is symbolised by the essential images of nature, cold and heat, sun, rain and wind,

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7. "Pluie", O.C. I, p.26.

8. "Notre mort", ibid.

9. "Quand on est vieux...", O.C. I, p.22.

the absence and presence of light. But now cold is more evident than heat: 'Ils ont les pieds gelés...Toutes les mains sont froides' ('Supplique'). Night is a time for digging trenches, rather than, as it ought to be, a time for the old to rest in warmth and lamplight. The contrast between the aims of the warmongers and the plight of those who suffer from war is ironically expressed in this distich:

Tout est divers comme ce que la nuit laisse voir:  
Visages des gens et promesses de gloire.

however, an air of hope is again sustained in the references to human relationships: 'mère, enfants, père, femme' and to the simple life of the fireside:

Contents d'avoir trouvé dans la pluie et le vent  
Une tiède maison où boire et reposer.

("Le plus tot en allé")

It is easy to see in such references the influence of 'unanimisme' on the young poet. Romain and his followers, like Whitman, revealed to him a language which was strongly realistic, free of the restraints of symbolism, and which in striving to correspond with the 'âme unanime', should be pure and simple, comprehensible to everyone. Zurowski<sup>10</sup> and Parrot<sup>11</sup> see in the young Eluard a convergence of 'unanimisme', and a very different school, Cubism. It is not part of our purpose to trace influences, but it is important to note that Eluard's feeling for the gravity of the simplest and most common of words was a legacy of

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10. M. Zurowski: "Paul Eluard et la tradition", p.270.

11. L. Parrot: Paul Eluard, p.21.

'unanimisme'. In these war years, Eluard has established a certain style of writing whose essentials are to change very little:

Il parle déjà une langue épurée, simplifiée à l'extrême, sans appareil rhétorique, mythologique, sans déclamations, sans artifices. C'est le vers libre, les mots les plus simples, une syntaxe sans détours, qui lui servent à exprimer son attitude devant la vie.<sup>12</sup>

His "vers libres" are, however, as Whiting<sup>13</sup> points out, quite conservative compared with those of Claudel and Apollinaire, and the first two poems of Le devoir et l'inquiétude, like some of the poems of the two previous anthologies, have regular stanza forms. Also, although Eluard rejects symmetry for whole poems, he uses standard metres. In "Un seul être", he uses assonance and alliteration to produce a song-like quality, and the effect of assonance and repetition in "Et passe et rage, fière..." is similar. Even some of the sentences and paragraphs of the prose poems are very carefully balanced; in "Crépuscule", for instance, there is a preponderance of phrases of six syllables. The young poet is certainly no innovator in matters of form. He has a feeling for pattern and order in poetry, but form is not an important concern for him. As early as 1917 he writes 'Vers, prose rythmée ou autre chose, à mon avis ce n'est pas cela qui enveloppe la poésie, mais le poète.'<sup>14</sup> Eluard's overriding interest is in words, their weight of meaning and sound, and their relationships

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12. R. Pantanella, L'amour et l'engagement d'après l'œuvre poétique de Paul Eluard, p.17

13. Charles Whiting, "Verlainien reflections in Eluard's poetry," p.182.

14. Letter to Gonon, 17 September 1917.

to each other, and he chooses simple forms to express simple words; like Verlaine<sup>15</sup>, he seeks 'a quintessential poetry, stripped of verbiage,' and although he rejects the constraints of those traditional forms which certainly encourage verbosity, he is content to use the more simple regular metres as a vehicle for his uncomplicated language.

The early poems of the Dialogues des inutiles are headed by this interesting epigraph from a fifteenth century manuscript:

Avant de penser, apprenez à parler.  
C'est beaucoup moins profond, mais c'est bien plus utile  
On peut savoir très vite un langage facile  
Et les résultats sont propres à étonner.

Apart from conveying the young poet's eagerness to learn "to speak", and his preoccupation with simplicity in language, this quotation reminds us of Eluard's erudition and especial predilection for mediaeval and renaissance poetry. In his Premiers poèmes he has experimented with the "ballade", sonnet and "rondeau" forms, and has practised rhyming and using the most traditional of metres. Again, some of the prose poems of the Dialogues can be scanned; "Invitation à la découverte" has a final paragraph which consists of four alexandrines. So although Eluard later denies the value of most of the early poems, he has experimented with traditional forms and subjects before going on to experiment with a modern idiom, which is more suited to his unanimist-inspired view of life. He retains a high regard for pre-Classical poetry, however, and his later poetry sometimes

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15. Whiting, op.cit., p.183.

betrays the influence of Renaissance "blasons", or the charming simplicity of the mediaeval poets which is so much in tune with his own.

The vocabulary of the family comes into its own in Poèmes pour la paix. The numerous references to family relationships are now exclusively linked with sun, laughter and lightness as the soldiers return from the war:

Toutes les femmes heureuses ont  
Retrouvé leur mari - il revient du soleil  
Tant il apporte de chaleur.  
Il rit et dit bonjour tout doucement 16  
Avant d'embrasser sa merveille.

and the poet shares his sense of joy with his "camarades", his "amis". There is no room in this calm atmosphere for words of revolt, but Eluard sends his poems to 'toutes les personnalités engagées dans - ou contre - la conduite de la guerre'<sup>17</sup>, and his relief is expressed in these significant lines:

J'ai eu longtemps un visage inutile.  
Mais maintenant  
J'ai un visage pour être aimé,  
J'ai un visage pour être heureux.

Imagery of the face is to become one of the most significant transmitters of mood in Eluard's poetry, and will be commented on in Chapter III. The hands, too, are important, and whereas in Le devoir et l'inquiétude they were cold, now 'le Soleil brûle en feu sombre sur mes mains': (the capital letter is significant). Night, which before brought suffering, cold and insomnia, is now calm and moonlit.

These were the poems which first caught the attention of Jean Paulhan, and when Eluard was demobilised in 1917,

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16. O.C. I, p.31.

17. O.C. I, p.XXIII.



he was able to develop his friendship with the man whose influence was to be apparent in his ensuing poetry, and in experiments with language of the type to be found in his review, Proverbe. Before examining the influence of Paulhan, however, it is important to situate Eluard in the atmosphere of Dada, and the young writers who collaborated on Littérature, to whom Eluard was introduced by the older man. The introduction took place shortly before the appearance of the review in March, 1919 and in May, the month when Eluard was demobilised, a poem of his appeared in it.<sup>18</sup>

We have seen how Eluard's disapproval and bitter experiences of the war were expressed in Le devoir et l'inquiétude. On emerging from these experiences, he shared with Breton, Aragon, Péret and Soupault a sense of disgust and anger. The régime under which they lived had failed, and when the country began to recover from the devastation of war, there was no sign of the hoped-for change in society and its attitudes; but most important for them was the failure of art: it too, like science and philosophy, had been used to serve the war, and deserved as much scorn as all the other manifestations of contemporary society. Tzara says of Dada:

L'impatience de vivre était grande, le dégoût s'appliquait à toutes les formes de la civilisation dite moderne, à son fondement même, à la logique, au langage, et la révolte prenait les formes où le grotesque et l'absurde l'emportaient de loin sur les valeurs esthétiques. Il ne faut pas oublier

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18. "Vache", O.C. I, p.40.

qu'en littérature une sentimentalité envahissante masquait ce qui était humain et que le mauvais goût à prétension élevée s'étalait dans tous les domaines de l'art, caractérisait la force de la bourgeoisie en ce qu'elle avait de plus odieux. 19

Against the bourgeois notion of "good taste", Dada set its nihilist values, its "spectacles-provocations" and its writings, which denied logic, good taste, and the division into literary genres. We are not concerned here with all the outrageous manifestations of Dada, but only with the movement's overwhelming desire for the destruction of a language which they feel has been terribly debased, and for its replacement with a new and purified means of expression; this preoccupation Eluard developed under Dada and retained throughout his life. The Dada Movement, however, unlike the surrealists, did not wish to follow the precept of Rimbaud and develop new forms to express new truths; it accepted no aesthetic values and no truths, but was purely anti-philosophical and nihilistic. According to Tzara:

Sa volonté de destruction était bien plus une aspiration vers la pureté et la sincérité que la tendance vers une sorte d'inanité sonore ou plastique se contentait de l'immobilité et de l'absence. La présence de Dada dans l'actualité la plus immédiate, la plus précaire et provisoire, était sa riposte à ces recherches de l'éternelle beauté qui, situées hors du temps, prétendaient atteindre à la perfection. (20)

and:

Dada préconisait la confusion des catégories esthétiques comme un des moyens les plus efficaces de donner du jeu à ce rigide édifice de l'art, pris lui-même pour un jeu, à cette notion abâtardie servant à couvrir derrière un soi-disant désintéressement le mensonge et l'hypocrisie de la société. (21)

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19. Radio interview, Tzara and Ribemont-Dessaignes: Chaîne nationale, May 1950.  
 20. G. Hugnet: L'Aventure Dada, Preface by Tzara, p.5.  
 21. Ibid, p.7.

All the traditional modes of expression were rejected, and for the brief period of the existence of Dada, its writers experimented not only with "shock" imagery and the unusual and illogical juxtaposition of words, techniques which had already been attempted by poets immediately before the war, but also with words assembled by chance and invented languages with strange sonorities which sound like the songs of primitive tribes. The privileged notion of the poet and his "sacred" art is destroyed and ridiculed in this startling advice to those who wish to 'faire un poème dadaïste:'

Prenez un journal  
Prenez des ciseaux.  
Choisissez dans ce journal un article ayant la longueur  
que vous comptez donner à votre poème.  
Découpez l'article.  
Découpez ensuite avec soin chacun des mots qui forment  
cet article et mettez-les dans un sac.  
Agitez doucement.  
Sortez ensuite chaque coupure l'une après l'autre dans  
l'ordre où elles ont quitté le sac.  
Copiez consciencieusement  
le poème vous ressemblera  
Et vous voilà un écrivain infiniment original et d'une  
sensibilité charmante, encore qu'incomprise du vulgaire.<sup>22</sup>

For the Dada group, all art criticism is useless, since for them there is no such thing as beauty or ugliness in art; 'Une oeuvre d'art n'est jamais belle, par décret, objectivement pour tous.'<sup>23</sup> At its outset, Littérature included contributions by such established writers as Valéry and Gide, but by the time it reached its thirteenth number, it was completely dedicated to Dada.

Eluard took a very active part in Dada, and was present at its most important "manifestations" in 1920. In February

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22. "Aa l'antiphilophe", Littérature no.15, juill/août, 1920.

23. "Manifeste dada", Dada no.3, 1918.

of that year, the first number of his review Proverbe appeared, and its contents bore the very definite mark of Dada. But as M. Sanouillet points out<sup>24</sup>, Eluard was too preoccupied with his own experiments with language to be completely involved in the spirit of Dada. The preface to Les animaux et leurs hommes... shows the poet's approval of Dada's denial of traditional aesthetic values, but more importantly it urges the constructive transformation of the old language. The sense of purity which is evident in the poems written during the war now develops into a positive effort to find a pure means of expression through various experiments with words; Eluard, unlike the uncompromising "révoltés" within Dada, is not content with the spontaneous incoherence of its revolutionary utterances. His replies to the well-known questionnaire in Littérature are conspicuous by their consistent disagreement with the majority:

La poésie trouvera-t-elle encore place dans Littérature?

Answer: No, 6 votes to 2 (Eluard and Fraenkél)

Le langage peut-il être un but? Eluard is the only contributor to answer in the affirmative.<sup>25</sup>

Nothing is more odious to him than language which is "poétisé", that 'langage déplaisant qui suffit aux bavards', and the whole of his work bears witness to this distaste:

La poésie enfante souvent sa plus grande ennemie: sa poétisation. Rien de plus affreux qu'un poème poétisé, où les mots s'ajoutent aux mots pour détruire l'effet de surprise, pour atténuer l'audace de la simplicité, la vision crue d'une réalité inspirante et inspirée, élémentaire. (26)

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24. M. Sanouillet: Dada à Paris, p.317.

25. December, 1920.

26. 'Aujourd'hui la poésie', Poèmes retrouvés O.C. II, p.873.

From the beginning, he is concerned to capture the spontaneity of everyday speech, to return to the source of language in clichés, proverbs and puns. Banality is an element he admires in Baudelaire whom he quotes in Donner à voir: 'Grand style (rien de plus beau que le lieu commun)<sup>27</sup>;' for Eluard, 'La poésie, c'est de rendre banal ce qui ne l'est pas.'<sup>28</sup>

In his researches into popular forms of expression Eluard was helped and influenced, as we have suggested, by Paulhan. He wrote to Gonon on 17 January:

Je fais des poèmes et des proverbes (c'est TRÈS difficile) et des embryons de doctrines et des définitions. (29)

and Paulhan recognised in these pursuits, preoccupations similar to his own. The attraction of the proverb for both writers is the freedom it allows; for whilst it is a rigid phrase, it yet allows for our own interpretation. Both are concerned, as indeed are all the young writers of the Littérature group, that we should question the idea of words as signs, as simple translations of thought. The latter notion, to Paulhan, is a misrepresentation which 'néglige la première ressource des mots, leur ressource naïve',<sup>30</sup> and in his analysis of his own reaction to Malagasi proverbs: "L'expérience du proverbe", he concludes that 'le proverbe est à la fois moins et plus qu'un raisonnement ou une métaphore: il est l'un et l'autre à l'état figé.'<sup>31</sup> His preoccupation then, is to 'démontrer

27. O.C. I, p.966.

28. D. Desanti, Nous avons choisi la paix, pp.92-3.

29. Eluard, Lettres de jeunesse, p.120.

30. Jacob Cow ou siles mots sont des signes, p.133.

31. Commerce, no.V, 1925, p.48.

que les mots ne sont pas une traduction des pensées (comme il arrive pour des signes télégraphiques, ou les signes d'écriture) mais une chose eux-mêmes, une matière à réduire et difficile.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from the fixed character of the proverb, which takes it out of the realm of the normal, logical expression of an idea, another of its characteristics which appeals to Eluard is its extreme concentration of expression. Most proverbs make a deep impression on our minds in the space of one short sentence; Rolland Pierre says, 'Le proverbe fait image grâce à un vertigineux dépouillement verbal',<sup>33</sup> in a study which underlines the reduction of language which is evident throughout Eluard's work. The concentration of language, and its concretisation, was to be an important surrealist principle, and by exploring the possibilities of the technique and throwing doubt on the traditional relationship between the "signifiant" and the "signifié", Eluard was, in Proverbe, making a very important early contribution to the tenets of Surrealism.

The first number of the review bears this quotation from Apollinaire as its heading:

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

This is followed by an article by Paulhan entitled "SYNTAXE", which is an important introduction to the aims of his protégé. Words, like men, wear out with use, he says, 'et

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32. Letter to Eluard, quoted by Sanouillet, op.cit., p.213

33. R. Pierre, "Le vocabulaire de Paul Eluard", Europe, Nov.-Dec., 1962, p.176.

quand ils ont une fois réussi ne donnent plus beaucoup d'eux-mêmes;' once uttered, words quickly lose their initial force, and this is even more true of "termes trop ingénieux". He cites "comme" and "puisque" as 'des lieux communs épuisés; de sorte que leur suppression seule, où ils sont trop attendus, peut contraindre un sens neuf.' He defends Breton and Reverdy, who are not concerned with syntax; art, he says, must not be confused with logic, and the works of those writers who concern themselves too much with perfection of language are 'les plus ternes qui soient.' A tabula rasa is called for: 'sans doute faut-il aller jusqu'à l'oubli.' There follow some lines from Soupault, who has already begun to practise the kind of verbal automatism which is to become so important in the surrealist movement, and a list of "proverbs" by various contributors, such as the following one by Breton:

La volonté de grandeur de dieu le père ne dépasse pas 4810m. en France, altitude prise au dessus du niveau de la mer.

and the outrageous dadaist line by Aragon:

Homère ne mets plus tes doigts dans ton nez.

This first number, then, includes a serious statement of Eluard's purposes by his mentor, and a selection of examples of proverbs which illustrate the developing principle of juxtaposing unexpected elements to produce an effect of surprise. This technique had, of course, been used by Apollinaire, but with the young men of Littérature it becomes an essential; this unexpected juxtaposition is naturally evident in Soupault's automatic text, but there

the power of shock is less strong because the expression is less concentrated.

The second number, which in Sanouillet's opinion has degenerated<sup>34</sup>, nevertheless contains some interesting attacks on the logical nature of language. A quotation from the right-wing newspaper L'Intransigeant: 'Il faut violer les règles, oui, mais pour les violer, il faut les connaître', has its syntax changed in five different ways, so that its meaning is changed each time; the original statement is made to look ridiculous by this demonstration to our 'Messieurs Jourdain', as Sanouillet expresses it, that '"la première manière" n'est pas forcément...la meilleure.' The following proverb: "Les DANCINGS sont un PRÉTEXTE, les PRÉTEXTES sont un DANCING" shows a disregard for meaning; indeed certain formulae in Proverbe remind us of some of the gratuitous lines in La Cantatrice Chauve; 'Il n'y pas que les boxeurs qui portent des gants'<sup>35</sup> prefigures Ionesco's 'Celui qui vend aujourd'hui un boeuf, demain aura un oeuf', or 'Dans la vie, il faut regarder par la fenêtre.' This blatant taste for absurdity serves to underline several scathing criticisms of the conventional idea of art, and of Cubism:

DADA est une promenade  
Le Cubisme est une procession.

The contributions of Eluard, however, are generally in striking contrast to those of his friends; most of them are verses, such as "Fins" in no. 2, or "Une", in the special number of the review, in his characteristically

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34. Sanouillet, op.cit. p.213.

35. Proverbe, no.5, 1er mai 1920.



simple style. "Fins" is printed in two thin columns, placed horizontally across the page, but it contains none of the absurdity or violence of most of the other utterances in the review:

Les hommes seuls, les maisons vides. Il n'y a pas d'abandon. Simple, trop simple et vieux, trop vieux pour être heureux. Depuis sa fondation rien ne reste dans la maison.

"Une" speaks of 'une tristesse de mauvais temps, les ébats bondissants de la fumée et du vent...' The musicality of this piece is surely the product of a poet's mind; some of its lines are expertly measured, and alliteration ensures a musical effect:

Et, surveillant le ciel,  
Négligeant la chaleur.

His song "Hoo! que disions-nous?", also in the special number, although vastly different from "Fins" and "Une", reminds us of a folk song, and prefigures Eluard's demands in Poésie involontaire et poésie intentionnelle, and in Les Sentiers et les routes de la poésie, for all kinds of popular expression.

Ribemont-Dessaignes holds the view that Eluard never really had any dadaist leanings, and that Proverbe was 'la revue d'un poète, et Eluard exploitait avant tout les vertus du langage.'<sup>36</sup> Number three may bear the heading "BAS LES MOTS" in thick type, but the special number, the 'échantillon gratuit', contains this one stark phrase on its middle pages: 'PROVERBE n'existe que pour justifier les mots.' Eluard's disquiet about the traditional attitude

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36. Ribemont-Dessaignes, Déjà-jadis ou Du mouvement dada à l'espace abstrait, p.166.

to words is expressed in this "proverbe": 'au milieu du mot "poésie", un homme se gratte et ronchonne'.<sup>37</sup>

Proverbe, however, is the beginning of a long experiment on Eluard's part, in the search for a certain language which Jean Onimus calls "un idiome personnel":

quelque chose à la fois de primitif et de savant qui rappelle par certains côtés le langage cinématographique d'Alain Resnais...C'est un style elliptique, allusif, où l'image succède à l'image sans moyen terme et sans explication. (38)

and which at the time of Proverbe, Tzara expresses as:

une concentration de mots, cristallisés comme  
pour le peuple, mais dont le sens reste nul. 39

Eluard's respect for words is boundless, and if he wishes to 'humilier la parole'<sup>40</sup>, it is only to replace debased language with a new kind of expression. His poetic career is an endless experiment with the potentialities of language, or consistently guarded questioning and judgement of words, and concern for the possibility of their renewal:

Les mots la commune mesure  
Entre les hommes les mots la vie.<sup>41</sup>

The language of Les animaux... is as characteristically simple as that of the poems written during the war, but there is a startling conciseness about it which bears witness to Eluard's experiments with "proverbs"; the poet is now committed to the 'vers libre', which as Spire points out is 'le vers du concret'.<sup>42</sup> The poems are short, and

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37. Proverbe, no.3.

38. J. Onimus, Les images de Paul Eluard, p.148.

39. Proverbe, no.6.

40. Letter to Tzara, 3rd Jan. 1920.

41. "Les suites d'un crime", Cours Naturel, O.C. I, p.826.

42. A. Spire, Europe, juill/août 1953, p.37.

in the main they are made up of unusually short lines. They express the basic human feelings of joy and loneliness, within the simplest concrete terms: walls and streets, grass, the coats of animals and the wings and feathers of birds, eggs and milk; and again there are many references to night, to the sun and sky, and to water, which always figure largely in Eluard's imagery. But as yet, the use of imagery is limited, and the images which do occur are clear. Grass is:

...douce comme un fil de soie  
Un fil de soie doux comme un fil de lait.

The pig is 'comme un canon', the spider 'comme le plomb du fil à plomb', and 'l'eau, telle une peau'. However, there are traces of a more startling kind of imagery which does away with the middle term 'comme', and which Eluard is to develop in later poems: the mouth 'ouvre ses ailes', and 'le ciel battait de l'aile'. There is also the first sign, in "Vache (1)"<sup>43</sup> of a technique which Eluard is to make use of frequently: the breaking up of a cliché into two lines, with the addition of an association it makes in his own mind:

Pour les enfants, ce n'est pas le déjeuner,  
Mais le lait sur l'herbe.

And there are examples of the kind of short, pithy phrase we have seen in Proverbe, which Baudouin calls 'une sorte de proverbe lyrique':<sup>44</sup>

Tous les chiens s'ennuient  
Quand le maître est parti. 45

43. O.C. I, p.40.

44. D. Baudouin, "Jeux de mots surréalistes: l'Expérience du proverbe", p.296.

45. "Chien (2)", O.C. I, p.43.

Découverte dans un oeuf,  
L'Araignée n'y entrera plus.<sup>46</sup>

It is in such whimsical formulae that we see the mark of Dada. Paulhan writes to Eluard:

J'ai enfin ces Animaux et leurs hommes qui m'ont  
fait inquiet...aujourd'hui je me sens dada. Un  
faux peut-être, direz-vous. 47.

and if we examine "Vache (2)", which admirably sums up the spirit of the collection, we are tempted to say that Eluard, too, is 'un faux dada':

Adieu!  
Vaches plus précieuses  
Que mille bouteilles de lait.  
Précieuses aux jeunes qui se marient  
Et dont la femme est jolie.  
Précieuses aux vieux avec leur canne  
Dont la richesse est chair, lait, terre,  
Précieuses à qui veut bien vivre  
De la nourriture ordinaire,  
Adieu!

This is poetry, and Dada denies the distinctions of genres; it has a pleasing fluidity which is achieved by assonance and the repetition of "Précieuses"; it is an early example of the effect of incantation which is characteristic of Eluard's poetry. Its vocabulary is of the utmost simplicity, conveying the richness of life in its most basic manifestation. Eluard shows us that the very words which are the most frequently used can be imbued with a new charm if they are taken from their traditional contexts and put into fresh constructions.

There is a similar simplicity of vocabulary in the Exemples, which precede Les nécessités de la vie et les

46. "Araignée", O.C. I, p.43.

47. Letter included with St. Denis manuscript of Les animaux...

conséquences des rêves, of 1921. These poems have the same kind of arresting, short titles (usually made up of one word) as the poems of Les animaux et leurs hommes, but here they are descriptive either of human characters or of scenes. The same terms recur: night and shadows, light, death, birds, streets, houses and walls. The effect of banality in these poems reinforces the contempt of Dada for centuries of writers who looked for perfection in rhetoric, preciousness or intellectualism:<sup>48</sup>

La table à voir, la chaise pour s'asseoir  
Et l'air à respirer ("Enfermé, seul")

Les toits portant cheminées,  
Le ciel parallèle aux rues.  
Les rues,  
La fumée sur les trottoirs,  
TROUVAILLE ("Air noir")

And amongst the concrete nouns, the word "cœur" appears several times, and, with the notions of old age ("Vieillir" and "Fins") and motherhood, ("Promeneurs"), links the essential feelings of human beings with their surroundings.

M. Dhainaut, like Marcel Raymond,<sup>49</sup> insists upon the importance of these poems as "dessins verbaux", as "compositions" whose typography has a distinct effect on the eye. He also reminds us that the Doucet manuscript has no punctuation and that it is set out in the manner which had become conventional with Symbolism, that is, with each line beginning at the margin; this version deprives us of the visual effects of the many short, abrupt lines, often

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48. Eluard had considerable respect for Hugo, not least for his introduction of banal expressions into poetic language. Cf. Hugo, poète vulgaire, O.C. II, pp.920-924.

49. Pierre Dhainaut: "'Les Exemples' d'Eluard". p.36 and note 18.

single words, as in "Quatre Gosses", and the gradation of increasingly short lines, as in "L'Art de la danse (2)"

La pluie fragile, soutien des tuiles  
 En équilibre. Elle, la danseuse,  
 Ne parviendra jamais  
 A tomber, à sauter  
 Comme la pluie.

Although only one of Eluard's subsequent poems, the unusual Quelques-uns des mots qui jusqu'ici m'étaient mystérieusement interdits displays a serious interest in unusual typography, these Exemples show a similar awareness of the relationship between subject and typography to that of Mallarmé's more revolutionary Un coup de dés and Apollinaire's Calligrammes.

But M. Dhainaut insists so much on the visual aspect, and on Eluard's choice of words in unusual contexts, that he goes so far as to say that: 'Eluard n'écoute pas les mots, il les observe', and that 'Les similitudes phonétiques entre les mots ne déterminent aucun mouvement créateur original.'<sup>50</sup> The instances of assonance and alliteration however, are far less rare than Dhainaut would have us believe; the following are only a few of the numerous examples of assonance:

La plante sera prête pour la fête à souhaiter. (Fêtes)  
 Les nuages, leur contraire  
                   A terre, (Promeneurs)  
 Masses lourdes, masses légères.  
 Ma mère  
 Danse comme une poussière.

Certainly these rhymes are not an essential technique in Exemples, as they are in Desnos' phrases inspired by Rose Sélavy, such as 'Possédé d'un amour sans frein le

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50. Dhainaut, ibid, p.41.

prêtre savoyard jette aux rocs son froc pour soulager ses reins';<sup>51</sup> but it is unwise to underestimate Eluard's feeling for the musicality of words, even at this early stage in his development. Dhainaut holds that the rhythm of these poems 'surgit de la composition même, c'est un rythme évidemment plastique, il vacille, il reprend vie, vacille encore selon les nécessités suggérées par tel ou tel mot'; but if the rhythm, and the rhymes also, ensue from a preoccupation with certain words, this is not to say that the poet is not susceptible to their musical value. In "L'Art de la danse (2)", the repetition of the "i" sound, together with the rhythm created by the use of two couplets and a short final line, create an impression of musicality which is altogether appropriate to the subject. The rhythm is all the more easily grasped as Eluard has retained the punctuation. In "Modèle", for instance, the movement of the verse is abruptly arrested by the use of a full stop after a short line, or even one word:

Destinée.  
L'homme, le seul, a tout trouvé.  
Entrée.  
Des horizons sont en scène.  
Coulée.

Most of the dadaist compositions of this period are without punctuation, but in Exemples, it is precisely in the more obviously dadaist poems that punctuation contributes the most to the effect:

Ah! Mille flammes, un feu, la lumière.  
Une ombre!... ("AH.'")  
Le soleil me suit.

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51. Desnos: Littérature nouvelle série no.7, 1er dec. 1922, p.18. Dhainaut disputes Sanouillet's suggestion (Dada à Paris, p.212) that Eluard's "proverbs" are inspired by this kind of "jeux de mots."

L'animal comme la lampe  
 Un peu plus que l'allumette.  
 Qui le guide? Et son bâton,  
     Borne-barrière, ("Berger")  
     Est-il plus sûr?

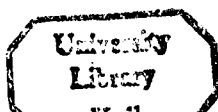
From 1922, punctuation in most of Eluard's poems was strictly limited, a limitation which Yves Sandre calls

un moyen de restituer le caractère continu du flux poétique. Plus de cloisonnement, plus de corset: les sentiments et les images doivent couler de source, comme à l'état pur. 52

but just as Aragon needs question marks in "Persienne"<sup>53</sup> to produce an effect of absurdity, and possibly uneasiness, in a poem which consists solely of repetition of the word persienne, twice in the interrogative, so does Eluard, to ask the startling questions in "Berger"; and like Tzara's cry of "Capitaine!"<sup>54</sup>, Eluard's "Ha!" bears the disturbing mark of Dada. The lack of punctuation in dadaist and surrealist works points to their desire for the unrestrained expression of the word in its original innocence and 'vertu créatrice originelle'<sup>55</sup>, but in some cases, punctuation, coupled with irregular, and particularly very short lines, helps to produce a halting effect which is in contrast to the traditional fluidity of poetry. Again, the influence of Mallarmé's and Apollinaire's experimental work cannot be overlooked; Un coup de dés is unpunctuated, and Apollinaire achieves the same effect of verve and spontaneity by suppressing punctuation in Alcools.

The Exemples were written as illustrations, as short "manifestoes", of the theories of Paulhan, and were

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52. Yves Sandre: "Rythmes et structures chez Paul Eluard" Europe Nov-dec. 1962, p.156.  
 53. Proverbe, no.5, mai 1920.  
 54. Ibid., no.1, février 1920.  
 55. Breton: Entretiens, p.79.





published in no. 15 of Littérature, which also included the second part of Paulhan's Si les mots sont des signes. Even more than in Les animaux et leurs hommes..., he has achieved a breakdown of the normal links of logic between words, and reinvented links which produce an effect of strangeness and a new simplicity. He is still preoccupied with the kind of experiments with words which are evident in Proverbe, especially with the succinct "maxim" form:

Ce qui est enterré ressuscite,  
Ce qui est couché, fondu, se lève, se limite ("Entrer,  
sortir")

Quelle mouche de sa vie  
Est la mère des mouches de sa mort?

Like Paulhan in his introductory article in the review, he also is questioning the efficacy of traditional syntax. In Exemples, there is very often no main verb; in some sentences there is no verb at all. Expression is reduced to its minimum, to create an immediate effect. These poems reflect the beginnings of an economy of expression which is to be ideally adapted to Surrealism, where words are juxtaposed without the use of intermediate, linking words, and Eluard again uses the technique of enumeration;<sup>56</sup>

Ombre de neige,  
Coeur blanc, sang pauvre,  
coeur d'enfant.  
Le jour. ("Vieillir")

Chaleur  
Le jour des massues,  
Le jour des épaules,  
Du luxe.  
Armes devant la vitre,  
L'armure de cristal  
Parée de feuillage,  
Ombrage, plumage. ("Jongleur")

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56. This technique will be dealt with in detail in Chapter V, since we agree with M. Picon's theory that its fuller development coincides with what he calls "l'ouverture du poème sur le monde". "Tradition et découverte chez Paul Eluard", p.967.

The limited imagery in these poems is hardly distinguishable, as Dhainaut says: 'tant l'aspect général du recueil est non l'étrange, mais l'évidence, l'étrangeté de l'évidence.'<sup>57</sup> The images 'Le jour des massues', and 'Le jour des épaules' in "Le Jongleur" express in simple terms the art of juggling and tumbling, and the image of the 'grimace usée jusqu'à la corde' fits the grimness of the poem "Sensible (2)" which speaks of shadow and 'perte d'une joie', with its unusual use of the commonplace expression in an abstract context. Similar imagery appears in the poems of Les nécessités de la vie et les conséquences des rêves: the sad and desperate woman, "L'Héroïne"; 'garde la bête sur son visage.' In this collection, however, imagery is altogether more widespread, and more striking in its references. The range of vocabulary is very similar to that of previous poems, but in these dream landscapes and dream situations, there is more play of light and shade and the words used for the effects of light, together with the already familiar "oiseau", "pierre", "mains", "arbre", "rue", "maison", are very often incorporated into images, thereby creating more striking sensual effects. In "Force", hands are the 'branches sans feuilles ou racines d'un ciel lourd', and in "Comédienne", the poet speaks of 'ce chagrin plus lourd que les deux mains'; in these two poems, as in "L'Héroïne", Gala's emotional problems and the resulting difficulties of their relationship are reflected in the manifestations of sorrow on the face and in the

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57. P. Dhainaut, op.cit., p.41.

gestures of the hands. Like the Baudelaire of "Le Spleen de Paris", the poet here is very much in evidence, confiding in us the discoveries of his daydreams, making confessions. The verb is very often in the first person, and his mood is reflected in his own face, his own hands:

Mes yeux et la fatigue doivent avoir la couleur de  
mes mains. ("Les Fleurs")

He is particularly susceptible to effects of light, and images of sun and shadow are often coupled with those of the face and hands:

Les déserts changent leur lumière et me couvrent la face.  
...Le ciel vient et me regarde dans les yeux...

("Les Autres (1)")

Ombres creuses, ombres vides, ombres transparentes,  
ombres de l'imagination, au lieu des dix doigts tenant  
dix ailes de plumes pour toujours.

("S'ils n'étaient pas toujours morts")

And the sensations of heaviness and lack of weight, conveyed by images of stones and feathers are mingled together, as they are mixed in turn with the other key images:

Mais le maître est dur comme un vol de pierres ("L'heure")  
...sur un tissu d'armes longues aussi molles qu'un mur  
de plume... ("L'Inévitable")

These two similes retain the conventional link words "comme" and "aussi...que", which are to occur more and more infrequently as Eluard develops the principle of the "surrealist image", whose terms are juxtaposed without the traditional aids to association. In 1921, Surrealism had not yet emerged from Dada, but this was the year of Breton's and Soupault's Les champs magnétiques, the first of their experiments in automatic writing. Certain lines in the poems of Les nécessités, such as the first of the "Définitions" reflect the automatic style:

Boire du vin rouge dans des verres bleus et de  
l'huile de ricin dans de l'eau-de-vie allemande,  
horizon lointain. (58)

On closer examination however, these apparently gratuitous phrases illustrate the conscious fascination with the relationships between words which was evident in Proverbe, rather than a completely spontaneous expression of the subconscious. Indeed, these poems abound in maxims of the type we have examined from the review:

On dit que la robe des robes partout se pose et se  
repose ("Malice")

S'asseoir à l'aube, coucher ailleurs.  
Tous les poètes savent dessiner. ("Un mot dur"- no.58)

Moreover, the kind of preoccupation with language which Eluard shares with Paulhan is explicit in some poems:

Sous l'aile épaisse de votre langue, les mots les plus  
innocents gardent leur sens.

("En trois mots langage clair")

Les nécessités... like les Exemples, bears witness to his desire to renew and purify poetic language; the humour of many of his "proverbs", and the absurdity of such a poem as "Berceuse", which like Aragon's "Persiennes" simply repeats the same words again and again, are a direct attack on the seriousness and pedantry of traditional, and especially Symbolist, poetry. In "Rendez-vous, n'importe où", we are again reminded of Ionesco, whose orator in Les Chaises cannot utter the great truth:

(l'orateur commença par déclarer qu'il n'avait  
absolument rien à dire.)

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58. O.C. I, p.76.

59. O.C. I, p.80.

The period from 1916 to 1921, then, sees Eluard in search of a personal idiom and his involvement in the Dada movement contributed a great deal to the preoccupation with purity which was already evident in "Fidèle", in Le devoir et l'inquiétude<sup>60</sup>. According to Raymond Jean:

Son passage à travers le dadaïsme lui a apporté, à un moment décisif, le sens des épreuves auquel le langage doit savoir se plier pour mesurer en lui ce qui résiste et ce qui s'écroule. Il fallait casser, briser, miner, pulvériser. Il fallait tenter toutes les dérisions possibles. Ce qui restait était 'linguistiquement' pur et poétiquement inaltérable. Un langage était créé qui pouvait dire les choses communes, les choses concrètes, les couleurs, les formes, les odeurs, les images de l'eau, et de la terre, les gestes de l'amour. (61)

Even before Dada, however, Eluard knew the language of domesticity, of gardens and trees, birds and the sky, streets and houses, but after the war he and the other young contributors to Littérature determined to make a systematic effort to follow Mallarmé and Rimbaud in their search for a pure, lost language, to 'donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu.'<sup>62</sup> For:

Depuis Mallarmé la poésie soupçonnait, et avec Dada elle découvre l'existence indépendante et absolue du langage. L'expérience du proverbe semble bien mener plus avant. 63

The paths chosen by Breton and Eluard are different: whilst Eluard is experimenting with all kinds of commonplace expressions and play on words, Breton experiences the revelation of the 'phrase qui cognait à la vitre', and writes, with Soupault, Les champs magnétiques. Whilst Eluard's character, both as a poet, as we have seen from his answers

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60. O.C. I, p.19.

61. R. Jean: "La langue de la vie nous fondait dans la bouche." Le monde (des livres) no.7302, 6 juillet, 1968, p.IV.

62. Mallarmé: "Sur le tombeau d'Edgar Poe."

63. Baudouin: "Jeux de mots surréalistes: l'expérience du proverbe." pp.300-301.

to the questionnaire in Littérature and as a man, is unsuited to the complete iconoclasm of Dada, his attack on established poetry and the vigour of his desire for renewal and for truth contribute a great deal to both Dada and Surrealism.

## CHAPTER II

### THE EXPERIMENTAL TECHNIQUES.

Demandons au poète du nouveau-idées et formes.

Rimbaud: Letter to Paul Demeny, May 15, 1871.

In many respects, Eluard was one of the most active members of the surrealist movement. He was a very close friend of Breton, and produced some essentially surrealist texts in collaboration with him and with artists and other writers of the movement; he was also a signatory of the most militant manifestoes, such as Un Cadavre, and the Déclaration du 27 janvier 1925. So that although it will be argued that he has certain reservations concerning surrealist doctrine and that his style of poetry often differs radically from the texts of those who adhere closely to automatic techniques, development of his poetic language during the 1920's and 1930's is essentially tied to the development of Surrealism; for Surrealism was a group activity, and its members, free from the ties of regular employment, spent a great deal of time together, exchanging ideas and composing texts in collaboration. Above all, Breton was, from all accounts, such a magnetic personality, such a successful leader that he managed, at least until the end of the 1920's, to draw together the ideas of his followers to form a coherent ideology. It is against the background of this ideology, and the experimental techniques which examine and corroborate it, that Eluard's progression in the 1920's must be viewed.

Although a great many definitions of Surrealism have been attempted by critics who argue from philosophical, historical or etymological standpoints<sup>1</sup>, our chief concern in this study is a definition in terms of the surrealist attitude towards language, which we hold to be the most important element in the surrealist revolution. Surrealism, says Breton, is 'une opération de grande envergure portant sur le langage'<sup>2</sup> and he demands a radical execution of the ideas of Rimbaud:

Alchimie du verbe: ces mots qu'on va répétant un peu au hasard aujourd'hui demandent à être pris au pied de la lettre. Si le chapitre d'une Saison en Enfer qu'ils désignent ne justifie peut-être pas toute leur ambition il n'en est pas moins vrai qu'il peut être tenu le plus authentiquement pour l'amorce de l'activité difficile qu'aujourd'hui seul le surréalisme poursuit. (3)

Only by changing language could the movement achieve its Rimbaudian aim to 'changer la vie', and in a speech to the students of Yale in 1942<sup>4</sup>, Breton expressed his view that Apollinaire had come closer than any other writer to an understanding of this fact, quoting the lines from "La Victoire" which Eluard had chosen as his epigraph to Proverbe:<sup>5</sup>

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

Breton, in his speech, also quoted Denis de Rougemont, who says that:

The twentieth century will appear in the future as a kind of verbal nightmare, of delirious 'cacophony',

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1. Listed by Angenot, M., "Qu'est-ce que le surréalisme?" Revue des sciences humaines, XXXV no.139, juill-sept 1970, pp.455-466.
  2. Breton, "Manifestes", p.179.
  3. "Second Manifeste", ibid., p.134.
  4. Yale F.S., p.71.
  5. See Chapter I.



as the time of the widespread prostitution of that word which was to be the measure of the true, and of which the gospel says that in its source, it is the life and the light of men.

This quotation illustrates admirably the dual attitude of the surrealists towards language: they are outraged by a language which has been debased and prostituted by such establishment writers as Anatole France, subjected to the demands of good taste and formed the empty political rhetoric of the Great War; and yet they have a profound respect for the Word, and hope for the rebirth of language in a pure and innocent form. Surrealism emerged from the iconoclasm of Dada with the concrete aim of exploring domains which had not yet been systematically explored: the unconscious, dreams, states of hallucination and madness, manifestations of the marvellous in the external world; in short, all that was opposed to reason and logic. The elevation of the subconscious to a position of importance and the repudiation of logic naturally brought with it the destruction of logical language. Desnos advocated avoiding the 'FORMES-PRISONS' of the old poetry, whilst logic for Breton was 'la plus haïssable des prisons'<sup>6</sup>, and he explained the bonds which had to be destroyed by the exponents of Surrealism before they could attain complete freedom:

Pour rendre le verbe humain à son innocence et à sa vertu créatrices originelles, il était indispensable de couper les entraves qui le rendaient incapable de tout nouvel essor. Ces entraves étaient de l'ordre de la logique (le rationalisme le plus étroit veillait à ne rien laisser passer qui n'eût été estampillé pas ses soins) de l'ordre de la morale (sous forme de tabous sexuels et sociaux) de l'ordre enfin du goût, régi par les conventions sophistiquées du bon ton, peut-être les pires de toutes. (7)

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6. Breton, Nadja p.166.

7. Breton, Entretiens, pp.79-80.

Logic then, is anti-surrealist, and the meanings of words are of secondary importance, for the imagination plays many tricks on language to upset our logical notion of meaning:

En effet, l'expression d'une idée dépend autant de l'allure des mots que de leur sens. Il est des mots qui travaillent contre l'idée qu'ils prétendent exprimer. Enfin même le sens des mots ne va pas sans mélange et l'on n'est pas près de déterminer dans quelle mesure le sens figuré agit progressivement sur le sens propre, à chaque variation de celui-ci devant correspondre une variation de celui-là. (8)

Following the extreme criticism, and even complete dislocation, of language by Dada, Surrealism reinstated the 'Verbe' as a powerful force capable of transforming the world; words are no longer 'ces petits auxiliaires pour lesquels on les avait pris'<sup>9</sup>, and the 'signifiant' no longer leads inexorably to its own particular 'signifié'. Breton goes as far as to completely deny communication and meaning, claiming that on meeting a woman he has not seen for some time he might as well say 'adieu' as 'bonjour'; words do not lie, and if they present themselves to the poet's mind, they must be poetically relevant. To illustrate this point he tells us that:

Il m'est arrivé d'employer surréellement des mots dont j'avais oublié le sens. J'ai pu vérifier après coup que l'usage que j'en avais fait répondait exactement à leur définition. (10)

Eluard's own deep preoccupation with words is evident in Proverbe, and the key words which first recur in the early poetry hold a special importance for him for the whole of his life. These words, however, are not a mere

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8. Breton, "Les mots sans rides", Les Pas perdus, p.169.

9. Ibid., p.167.

10. Breton, "Premier Manifeste", Manifestes du surréalisme, p.47

translation of recurring ideas, for as L.G. Gros points out:

Le mérite d'Eluard réside précisément en ceci que les thèmes n'ont pas chez lui plus de signification que les mots considérés en eux-mêmes. (11)

Moreover, apart from the key words, on which Eluard builds his concepts of love, fraternity and purity, words appear which have evidently been chosen for their novelty value, either because they sound unusual, or because they evoke bizarre images: "scaphandrier", "libellule", "paratonnerre". The poet's fascination for words is frequently manifested in lists of those which preoccupy him at the time of writing:

Des mots quels mots noir ou Cévennes  
Bambou respire ou renoncule  
Parler c'est se servir de ses pieds pour marcher<sup>12</sup>

Il y a des mots qui font vivre  
Et ce sont des mots innocents  
Le mot chaleur le mot confiance  
Amour justice et le mot liberté<sup>13</sup>

The most striking list of nouns is contained in the poem Quelques-uns des mots qui jusqu'ici m'étaient interdits; although few of the words are individually striking, their definitions and the choice of them as 'forbidden' words are highly significant. For Eluard, the act of naming is highly prestigious, to call each thing by its name is a sign of great respect; hence:

Picasso, ici je te vois, et je te nomme,<sup>14</sup>  
Je suis né pour te connaître  
Pour te nommer  
Liberté.<sup>15</sup>

and in sadder poems, the poet, bestower of names, has the

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- 11. 'L'oeuvre exemplaire de Paul Eluard', p.568.
  - 12. "La fin du monde", La vie immédiate, O.C. I, p.378.
  - 13. "Gabriel Péri", Au rendez-vous allemand O.C. I, p.1262.
  - 14. "Picasso bon maître de la liberté," O.C. II, p.163.
  - 15. "Liberté", Poésie et vérité 1942, O.C. I, p.1107.

power to make them forgotten:

C'est ici que l'on voit le créateur de mots  
Celui qui se détruit dans les fils qu'il engendre  
Et qui nomme l'oubli de tous les noms du monde. (16)

Eluard then, shared the enthusiasm of the whole surrealist movement for the 'Verbe', that is the word as a powerful force, which if used with pure intentions might change life completely:

la force absolue de la poésie purifiera les hommes,  
tous les hommes. (17)

Equally, to a large extent he shared their Dionysian view of inspiration:

Il faut effacer le reflet de la personnalité pour que  
l'inspiration bondisse à tout jamais du miroir. (18)

With Breton, he criticises Valéry and collaborates with him on a parody of the aphorisms of the poet who said:

Voici le premier de ces mots: le plus de conscience possible. Et voici le second: Essayer de retrouver avec volonté de conscience quelques résultats intéressants ou utilisables que nous livre (entre cent mille coups quelconques) le hasard mental. (19)

Breton calls Valéry's technique a 'police method of the intellect', and himself advocates a continual Rimbaudian, 'Etat de poésie', whereby the poet waits for poetry to irrupt in his life, and then submits himself to the 'murmure'.<sup>20</sup> For Aragon, the romantic notion of inspiration even constitutes a definition of Surrealism:

Le Surréalisme est l'inspiration reconnue,  
acceptée, et pratiquée. (21)

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16. "Boire", Capitale de la Douleur, O.C. I, p.181.

17. L'Evidence poétique, O.C. I, p.514.

18. Preface to Ralentir travaux, O.C. I, p.270.

19. "Fragments des Mémoires d'un Poème", Valéry, O.C. I, Gallimard 1957, p.1481.

20. Manifestes du Surréalisme, p.43.

21. Traité du style, p.187.

The creation of poetry for Eluard is just as 'convulsive' a process as it is for Breton: 'Le poète agit comme un phénomène contagieux', he says<sup>22</sup>, and the results of inspirational poetry are cataclysmic: 'l'imagination change le monde...cette reine du monde est la mère du progrès.'<sup>23</sup> But whilst Eluard does undergo certain experiments which purport to unleash the subconscious and eclipse the conscious mind, and whilst he also approves of automatic writing, he rarely submits entirely to the dictates of the subconscious, whereas Breton advocates, and often experiences, a submission so complete that he himself has very little understanding of what he has written.<sup>24</sup> Eluard is conspicuous in the surrealist movement, and indeed in the poetic movement of the twentieth century, for his enduring wish to communicate. Certainly the Dionysian principle is important, but:

Le poète est celui qui inspire bien plus que celui qui est inspiré. Les poèmes ont toujours de grandes marges blanches, de grandes marges de silence où la mémoire ardente se consume pour recréer un désire sans passé. Leur principale qualité est non pas, je le répète, d'invoquer, mais d'inspirer. (25)

Having insisted on this point, Eluard makes it clear that his view is in fact opposed to Breton's. He is always conscious of the effect of his work on his reader; in short, he is always conscious:

Mais à l'exemple d'Eluard, pour Nougé, pour Magritte, jamais il n'a été question de concevoir autrement l'activité poétique que sous l'angle de la préméditation, c'est-à-dire de l'invention d'un objet (poème ou image peinte) susceptible de toucher, de bouleverser le lecteur,

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22. A. Delattre, 'Personal notes on Paul Eluard', p.105.

23. Aujourd'hui la poésie, O.C. II, p.873.

24. Cf. Chapter V, note 9.

25. L'Evidence poétique, O.C. I, p.515.

le spectateur. Une telle démarche, il va sans dire, exclut le hasard en tant que facteur primordial. Elle réclame une attention soutenue, la méditation prolongée, des précautions, des ratures, des reprises, une hésitation, une prudence infinies. (26)

Eluard's manuscripts do not betray either 'reprises' or a 'prudence infinie', neither would it be true to say that he has dismissed chance as a prime element in his poetry; but it is significant that his enthusiasm is always tempered, in references to automatic writing, with an insistence on its value as a renewing force in consciously poetic texts:

L'écriture automatique ouvre sans cesse de nouvelles portes sur l'inconscient, et, au fur et à mesure qu'elle le confronte avec la conscience, avec le monde, elle en augmente le trésor. Elle pourrait aussi, dans la même mesure, renouveler cette conscience et ce monde si, délivrés des conditions atroces qui leur sont imposés, ils pesaient moins lourdement sur l'individu. (27)

...Elle augmente, développe seulement le champ de l'examen de conscience poétique, en l'enrichissant. Si la conscience est parfaite, les éléments que l'écriture automatique extrait du monde intérieur et les éléments du monde extérieur s'équilibrent. Réduits alors à l'égalité, ils s'entremêlent, se confondent pour former l'unité poétique. (28)

It may be argued that Eluard, by incorporating the automatic technique into conscious compositions, was the one surrealist to come to terms with what Breton called the "vicissitudes"<sup>29</sup> of the automatic technique, for Breton's insistence on pure automatism, unhindered by poetic aims, led him to admit that its history was 'celle d'une infortune continue',<sup>30</sup> and that 'un minimum de direction subsiste

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26. M. Marien, 'Eluard contre Breton', p.18.

27. Premières vues anciennes, O.C. I, p.551.

28. Ibid., p.550.

29. Entretiens, p.82.

30. Point du jour, p.171.

généralement dans le sens de l'arrangement en poème.<sup>31</sup>

But it may equally be argued that Eluard hardly explored the technique, and therefore was hardly aware of an exciting, if frustrating, experiment whose potential has still not been fully explored. Ribemont-Dessaignes<sup>32</sup> holds that Eluard has no first-hand experience of automatism at all.

Eluard's poetry, however, even before Surrealism, has the effect of being spontaneous, and he learned a great deal from surrealist experiments in which he was only partly involved. It is still possible to say, with Novalis, that 'Parler pour parler est la formule de délivrance'<sup>33</sup>, and to repeat the phrase 'parler sans avoir rien à dire'<sup>34</sup>, without being a strong advocate of automatism; the emphasis, again, is on the Word, and Eluard also quotes Novalis' phrase: 'L'homme entièrement conscient s'appelle le voyant.'<sup>35</sup> He accepts the rôle of chance in poetry, and indeed in Poésie involontaire et poésie intentionnelle, he places 'chance' poetry by the side of his favourite poetic utterances, together with folk-proverbs, children's nonsense and counting-rhymes.

Breton's original "cut-up novel", recently readopted by Burroughs, and automatic writing are his own techniques for exploring the potential of the rôle of chance, but his claim to have made surrealist use of words whose meanings he has forgotten and later to have found that his usage corresponded with their definition, coincides exactly with

31. Ibid., p.96.

32. Déjà-jadis, p.166. Roger Caillois even claims, from personal experience, that 'il la dédaignait ouvertement.' Cf. Europe, jan. 1973, p.81.

33. Premières vues anciennes, O.C. I, p.552.

34. 'L'Amoureuse', Mourir de ne pas mourir, O.C. I, p.140 and Poésie ininterrompue, O.C. II, p.46.

35. Premières vues anciennes, O.C. I, p.535.

Eluard's type of spontaneity. Certain words and phrases do appear automatically in our minds when prompted by other preceding words, for our minds are storehouses of clichés and word-association. One has but to hear the first few lines of a proverb to be able to complete it, and to utter the 'langage antérieur' devoid of direct meaning, of which Paulhan speaks<sup>36</sup>. When Eluard rearranges proverbs, practises a 'continuel déplacement du sens', he shocks us by replacing words which come automatically to our minds. Similarly, he often makes us wait for the end of a cliché:

Il faut les croire sur baiser  
Et sur parole et sur regard (37)

Ancien acteur qui joue des pièces d'eau  
De vieilles misères bien transparentes (38)

The word association in this last example is not necessarily a cliché, but illustrates how this technique becomes an integral part of Eluard's poetry, a typical facet of the surrealist collections, where an extreme concentration of language produces such sentences as 'la terre est bleue comme une orange.'

Chance for Eluard appears to play a much more important part in literature than in life; Aragon claims to live by it,<sup>39</sup> and Breton's particular theory of 'le hasard objectif' also formed a basis for living. Eluard refers only once to objective chance, and then only in speaking of similarities between Tzara's Grains et Issues and Mesens' Alphabet sourd et aveugle<sup>40</sup>; however, the poem

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36. Le Don des Langues, Paulhan, O.C. III, Pléiade, 1968, p.420.

37. A Toute épreuve, O.C. I, p.303.

38. La vie immédiate, O.C. I, p.388.

39. Le Paysan de Paris, p.139.

40. Premières vues anciennes, O.C. I, p.544.



"Au Hasard", in Capitale de la douleur, like Mallarmé's Un Coup de dés, points to the omnipotence of chance in life:

Et l'éternel ciel de ma tête  
S'ouvre plus large à son soleil,  
A l'éternité du hasard.

Like the other surrealists, Eluard was eager to explore the rôle of chance in writing. He participated in the game of the 'cadavre exquis',<sup>41</sup> which produced such examples as:

La vapeur ailée séduit l'oiseau fermé à clé.  
L'huitre du Sénégal mangera le pain tricolore.  
Le mille-pattes amoureux et frêle rivalise de méchanceté  
avec le cortège languissant. (42)

René Alleau, in his Dictionnaire des jeux, reminds us that Breton called Surrealism 'une opération de grande envergure portant sur le langage', and describes some less renowned surrealist games such as "Définitions", giving the example:

Queneau: Qu'est-ce que Benjamin Peret?  
Maurice Noll: Une ménagerie révoltée, une jungle, la liberté.

In a similar example Alquié<sup>43</sup> shows how the reversal of answers to two questions produces the poetic grace of metaphor:

Qu'est-ce qu'un miroir? C'est le lever du jour.  
Qu'est-ce que l'aube? C'est ce qui nous renvoie notre image.

The arbitrary choice of adjectives in the 'cadavre exquis' game and chance definitions in the latter examples produce shock imagery of the kind which the surrealists strove to achieve through an exploration of the subconscious, and many phrases in Eluard's work are reminiscent of the

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41. This game is defined in Hugnet's Petite anthologie poétique du Surréalisme. p.191.

42. La Révolution surréaliste, 1927, nos. 9-10.

43. Alquié, "Le beau et l'imaginaire dans le Surréalisme," p.422.

products of the games:

Le soleil attire les hirondelles atteintes de ces  
affreuses maladies de peau qui défigurent les jours  
d'orage. (44)

L'étincelle qui amène les moustiques aux sports ne  
décore plus la boutonnière des agriculteurs des  
Alpes et du Caucase. (45)

Les malheurs des immortels is perhaps the most  
revolutionary of Eluard's works, and the stylised use of  
the automatic technique makes it sound surprisingly  
unspontaneous. There is a repeated parallelism in the  
structure of the phrases; for instance, in "Rencontre de  
deux sourires", an adverbial clause is repeatedly placed  
at the beginning of each sentence, and in "Réveil officiel  
du serin", adjoining sentences begin with conditional  
clauses. At first sight, such structures appear to be  
very contrived, and although it is impossible to judge to  
what extent this work was written automatically, frequent  
parallelism suggests conscious effort. And yet repetition  
is an integral part of automatic writing; certain texts  
by other surrealists more committed to automatism than  
Eluard show obsessions with certain structures, words and  
phrases; Breton's L'Union Libre is a well-known example:

Ma femme à la chevelure de feu de bois...  
Ma femme à la taille de loutre entre les dents du tigre  
(46)

and Crevel, when in a trance, continually repeats himself:

La négresse aux bas blancs aime tellement les paradoxes!  
La saison des petites plantes dans des pots encore plus  
petits  
est pourtant passée mais je dis: la négresse aux bas  
blancs aime tellement les paradoxes, aime tellement les  
paradoxes qu'elle brode des baguettes noires sur ses bas  
blancs et encore des baguettes blanches sur les baguettes

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44. "L'aveugle prédestiné tourne le dos aux passants"

Les malheurs des immortels, O.C. I, p.125.

45. "Le fagot harmonieux", O.C. I, p.126.

46. Breton: "Entrée des médiums", p.6.

noires. Voyez cette femme qui est devenue un peu folle,  
 ma foi, le jour où elle s'est aperçue qu'elle n'avait  
 l'intérieur des mains noir. Et ceci se passait à <sup>pas</sup>  
 Dunkerque.

Words, individual sounds and phrases seem to haunt the poet's semi-conscious mind, and in the same way Eluard, in Les malheurs des immortels, makes a play on certain words which bring other words to mind:

Dans la manche du violon, vous trouverez les cris des grillons.

Dans la manche du manchot, vous trouverez le philtre pour se faire tuer...

...les ongles des aigles.<sup>47</sup>

...le père de l'héroïne arrondit les joies enfantines<sup>48</sup>

Breton makes it clear in "Entrée des médiums"<sup>49</sup> that he, Ernst and Eluard were incapable of falling into the trance-like state which produced such interesting results for Crevel and Desnos, but he and Eluard did simulate insanity in an attempt to probe the more extreme irrational aspects of the subconscious mind.<sup>50</sup> As Huxley points out in The Doors of Perception, there are many ways of producing strange, liberating images, and those chosen by the surrealist group all had an influence on Eluard's work. Les malheurs des immortels was published in the same year as Desnos' "Rose Sélavy", a collection of 'jeux de mots' purported by him to have been 'dictated' when he was in telepathic communication with Duchamp, who was then in New York. Phrases by Desnos such as: 'La solution d'un sage est-elle la pollution d'un sage?', or 'Rose Sélavy se demande si la mort des saisons fait tomber un sort sur

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47. "Rencontre des deux sourires", O.C. I, p.126.

48. "Le nettoyage des carreaux n'entraîne pas forcément la propreté en amour", O.C. I, p.125.

49. Breton, Les Pas perdus, p.158.

50. In L'Immaculée conception.

les maisons',<sup>51</sup>, are reflected in the above lines from 'Rencontre des deux sourires', in "Je n'ai plus l'âge d'avoir horreur de l'orage",<sup>52</sup> or in:

Le sang coulant sur les dalles  
Me fait des sandales. (53)

This last example is also reminiscent of the contents of Leiris' Glossaire j'y serre mes gloses, in which words are redefined according to the sounds, forms and ideas they represent in his imagination: "macabre" is "âcre et marbré", "vie" - "un Dé la sépare du viDe", and "ivrognerie" - "règne de la drogue aux rives rogues". By thus dissecting and rearranging words, Leiris was hoping to discover:

leurs vertus les plus cachées et les ramifications  
secrètes qui se propagent à travers tout le langage,  
canalisées par les associations de sons, de formes  
et d'idées. (54)

for it is in this way, he claims, that 'Le langage se transforme en oracle.' M. Baudouin<sup>55</sup> holds that Desnos, Leiris and Vitrac all wanted to be led to unreason through language; to this list of "surrealist" experimenters may be added Roussel, who explains his verbal procedures in Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres. For instance in his seventeen earliest stories, Textes de Grande Jeunesse ou Textes-Genèse, the closing phrase of each is a modification of the opening one; he also derived images and texts from the titles of books, a tradesman's address, or the captions to Caran d'Ache's drawings. Rayner Heppenstall<sup>56</sup> reminds us that he was a great admirer of Hugo who wrote:

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- 51. Littérature Nouvelle série no.7, 1er dec.1922, pp.14 & 15.
  - 52. "Immaculée Conception", O.C. I, p.321.
  - 53. "Confections", La vie immédiate, O.C. I, p.402.
  - 54. La Révolution surréaliste, no.3, 15 avril 1925, p.7.
  - 55. Baudouin, op.cit., p.298.
  - 56. Rayner Heppenstall, Raymond Roussel, p.45.

Gal, amant de la reine, alla, tour magnanime,  
Galamment de l'arène à la Tour Magne, à Nîmes.

and M. Dhainaut<sup>57</sup> underlines the rôle of chance in the play of his fertile imagination:

En effet, Roussel ne voit pas d'abord son oeuvre; il est entraîné par les mots - n'importe lesquels: lambeaux de phrases, adresses, devises, citations etc. - que le hasard lui fournit, par les mots et cette faculté de regarder longtemps la matière brute du langage, comme certains les taches d'un vieux mur, d'autres les nuages: l'imagination en somme.

A passionate feeling for, and response to, words and a humorous, whimsical treatment of the relationship between words and their sounds, were at the centre of the surrealist "faith", particularly in the enthusiastic, experimental period of the 1920's. Eluard had contributed a great deal of both in Proverbe, and his experiment continued in 152 proverbes, written with Péret in 1925, and later in 1936 in Notes sur la poésie, written in collaboration with Breton. The former is a collection partly of newly invented maxims like those of Proverbe, but mainly of rearrangements of traditional ones; like "Le Cadavre exquis", the game which Eluard and Péret are playing has a rigid ready-made structure within which chance may play a large part. The familiar rhythm is retained, but the cliché is renewed by the use of thought-provoking words:

Il faut rendre à la paille ce qui appartient à la poutre.  
Il faut battre sa mère pendant qu'elle est jeune.  
Qui sème des ongles récolte une torche.

It is easy to seize the humour in these short, pithy phrases; their absurdity seems particularly incongruous in structures we are so familiar with, and they seem to offer, even more

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57. Dhainaut, "Raymond Roussel oseur d'influence", pp.73-74.

than traditional proverbs do, 'une image de cette déraison' which Paulhan calls 'l'état normal et comme la donnée naturelle de notre esprit.'<sup>58</sup> Like 'les poètes sont beaux...' in Proverbe, no. 24 in this collection: 'Les curés ont toujours peur' is an absurd and ironical generalisation. This playful work has no didactic aim, unless it is to ridicule the generalisations involved in maxims. Notes sur la poésie, on the other hand, is a direct parody of Valéry; Breton and Eluard set out to prove that they were diametrically opposed to the poet who said 'l'enthousiasme n'est pas un état d'âme d'écrivain' by changing or omitting certain words in his aphorisms in Commerce in 1929, thereby presenting exactly the opposite meaning:

#### Valéry

Un poème doit être une fête de l'intellect. Il ne peut être autre chose. Fête: c'est un jeu, mais solennel, mais réglé, mais significatif; image de ce qu'on n'est pas d'ordinaire, de l'état où les efforts sont rythmes, rachetés.

#### Breton/Eluard

Un poème doit être une débâcle de l'intellect. Il ne peut être autre chose. Débâcle: c'est un sauve-qui-peut, mais solennel, mais probant; image de ce qu'on devrait être, de l'état où les efforts ne comptent plus.

Breton and Eluard took the idea of this procedure from Lautréamont, who modified certain maxims by Vauvenargues in the same way. Mr. Gershman<sup>59</sup> feels that Breton and Eluard 'highlight the limited utility...of the laconic maxim form', but Eluard proves that he has a good understanding

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58. Quoted by Baudouin, op.cit., p.298.

59. The exact techniques used are explained by H.S. Gershman in "Valéry, Breton and Eluard on Poetry", p.332. Mr. Gershman helpfully provides Valéry's text side by side with that of Eluard and Breton. Cf. also Andras Vajda, 'Dada dans la poésie d'Eluard', p.234. M. Vajda draws our attention to Dada's fundamental discovery of the 'réversibilité des relations, crues auparavant interchangeables.' We are, furthermore, reminded of the dadaist experiment described by Hugnet, the 'poème statique', in which cards displaying words were placed on chairs, and positions of the chairs constantly changed. Cf. Hugnet, L'Aventure Dada, p.22.

of Lautréamont's purpose when he quotes Paulhan's view of the latter's new aphorisms:

Le jeu touchant...n'est pas neuf, il n'est pas pour cela inoffensif: exactement, il implique que les phrases, et en particulier cette espèce que l'on appelle singulièrement des pensées - sont de même pâte que les idées, de sorte qu'il suffit de retourner l'ordre des mots pour avoir leur sens retourné. Une nouvelle maxime porte un témoignage opposé au premier, mais qui ne peut manquer d'être aussi pressant, aussi prégnant, - n'étant pas autre, mais le même. (60)

Lautréamont calls his aphorisms Poésies, and indeed the aphorism, an extremely concise form which expresses a truth without discussion, always involves exaggeration and is therefore very suitable for poetry. Poetry unifies opposites; the surrealists, after Lautréamont, are convinced that 'il n'y a rien d'incompréhensible', and it is the words rather than the ideas which give both of the two opposing maxims their strength. It is interesting to note that Marcel Jean has chosen one of Lautréamont's aphorisms as an illustration of the intentions of Duchamp in his "Readymade" work:<sup>61</sup>

Lorsqu'une pensée s'offre à nous comme une vérité qui court les rues, que nous prenons la peine de la développer, nous trouvons que c'est une découverte.

Camus speaks of 'les banalités laborieuses des Poésies',<sup>62</sup> but Lautréamont, Duchamp and Eluard knew the value of banality as the basis to startling discoveries. For Eluard, as we have seen, banal expressions usually provide a link with his fellowman, an identification of the poet with those with whom he wishes to communicate. But often, and

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60. O.C. I, p.547.

61. M. Jean: Histoire de la peinture surréaliste, p.35. See also, Premières vues anciennes, O.C. I, p.548, with Vauvenargues version.

62. Camus, L'Homme révolté, p.105.

especially in the prose poetry, the banality of a dream landscape or situation represents a point of departure for bizarre images and events. In most of the poems in Les dessous d'une vie, which M. Zurowski<sup>63</sup> likens to Rimbaud's Illuminations, a banal description of the scene or circumstances is followed by a startling twist of events: in one the poet covers the face of G. (obviously Gala) and pushes a brush into her mouth, in another a woman undoes the multicoloured ribbons at her breast and stomach so that her face is revealed - and this in the banal surroundings of a street in Paris, under a dull sky. In his prière-d'insérer, Eluard distinguishes between poems, surrealist texts and dreams, and indicates which texts are to be classed under each heading.<sup>64</sup> Poems, he says, are 'la conséquence d'une volonté assez bien définie, l'écho d'un espoir ou d'un désespoir formulé', whereas dreams are, 'pour un esprit préoccupé du merveilleux, la réalité vivante.' This, like his view in Premières vues anciennes that 'Le poète à venir surmontera l'idée déprimante du divorce irréparable de l'action et du rêve'<sup>65</sup>, is an obvious echo of Nerval's "Le Rêve est une seconde vie", and the tone of Les dessous d'une vie represents a similar mixture of the banal and the marvellous to that of Aurélia; Nerval, too, frequently moves from a consciousness of himself and his own surroundings to a "surrealist" scene or event, from reasoning to an eclipse of reason by fancy. The poems in Les dessous d'une vie certainly betray

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63. Zurowski, op.cit., p.272.

64. P. Eluard: Le poète et son ombre, p.103.

65. O.C. I, p.536.



conscious questioning; in "Je vois ses mains..." Eluard asks 'Quel est ce portrait que je compose?', and in "A la fenêtre": 'A quelle créature fantastique me suis-je donc confié, dans quel monde douloureux et ravissant mon imagination m'a-t-elle enfermé?' Even in the two surrealist texts, there are short banal phrases which form, as in the proverbs, a startling juxtaposition with a more bizarre element.

The recounting of dreams was an important part of surrealist activity in the 1920's, and was intended, like automatic writing, as an important means of probing the subconscious. In fact, one of Surrealism's most important achievements was the rehabilitation of dream; Breton, after Freud whom he greatly admired, believed that by noting and analysing his dreams, man may attain integral self-knowledge. Eluard's own definition of Surrealism is of 'un instrument de connaissance', which 'travaille à mettre au jour la conscience profonde de l'homme'<sup>66</sup>, and the two judgements of automatic writing which we have examined show how much Eluard thinks the subconscious mind, untrammelled by civilisation and logic, can contribute to the poetic sensibility of the conscious. But perhaps the most important step in the exploration of the subconscious was the simulation of madness undertaken by Eluard, with Breton, in L'Immaculée conception; for the insane live perpetually in a world of their own imagining, and like Nerval, frequently confuse the real world with their own internal world, or adapt their vision of what is outside themselves

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66. Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme, O.C. I, p.780.

to suit their own obsessions. The poets' approach to their subjects in this work is in keeping with the pseudo-scientific aims of the movement, with the systematic research into manifestations of the subconscious based at the "Bureau de recherches surréalistes"; various forms of madness are simulated, life is examined from the womb, through birth and life and the return to nothingness, and the sex act is examined in much the same way as modern sexologists examine it, but with surrealist definitions. In "Le sentiment de la nature", they have adapted scientific language to their own irrational ends; Eluard opens the text with:

Le procédé du miroir en boule a servi plus d'une fois à l'étude des sources de la rosée; lorsqu'il est complété par le feu de cheminée, on peut le soumettre sans peine à des mesures précises, et étudier le phénomène dans tous ses détails; on reconnaît ainsi que les taches de rousseur naissent brusquement, restent brillantes un instant très court, puis s'éteignent graduellement. Leur totale varie avec la formation des boucles de verdure dans les clairières favorables à la neige. (67)

and Breton speaks of 'acide oxalo-saccharique', 'bicarbonate de soude sec', and 'acide carbonique'.

The language of L'Immaculée conception is, of course, noticeably devoid of logic. The phrases 'Contemple bien ces deux maisons: dans l'une tu es mort et dans l'autre tu es mort', and 'Frappe à la porte, crie: Entrez, et n'entre pas'<sup>68</sup>, are typical products of the automatic technique: in fact, most of the exhortations of Le Jugement originel, like those in Proverbe, manifest the anti-logic

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67. O.C. I, p.399-40. See also O.C.I, p.1424, M. Scheler was fortunate enough to find evidence to distinguish Eluard's contributions from those of Breton.

68. O.C. I, p.355 and 356.

we expect from surrealist aphorisms. In L'Immaculée conception the different paths chosen by Breton and Eluard have briefly come together, for Breton joins Eluard in inventing "jeux de mots" and surrealist "precepts", and Eluard immerses himself, more than usual, in the technique of automatic writing. The preface to the Japanese edition announces that the volume was written in two weeks, and Eluard manages as well as Breton to indulge in 'pensée parlée', although as Renéville<sup>69</sup> points out, the automatic technique is here 'dirigée dans un sens préalablement choisi'. In "Essai de simulation de la démence précoce", the short, delirious phrases become less and less controlled, until at the end communication breaks down completely and language disintegrates into jibberish. Each poet follows the train of thought of the other, and frequently a word is taken up and repeated by both. Hence:

Eluard: Une autre paire de manches sur une autre paire  
d'avoir raison sans être là, une autre paire de  
manches  
d'autres bras sur une autre paire de manches.

Breton: On va bien voir en regard de la manche du tunnel  
sous la Manche si les pingouins et les manchois  
sont capables de reconnaître mon cerveau...

Both repeatedly indulge in word play of the Desnos/Leiris variety, and they use similar imagery. It is interesting to see Breton adopting familiar Eluardian images: the mirror, for instance, as the 'personnification courante de la vérité',<sup>70</sup> or the breaking of glass as a symbol of unpleasantness<sup>71</sup>; and his opening sentences in "La force de l'habitude" are of such banal simplicity that they could have been written by Eluard.

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69. "Dernier état de la poésie surréaliste", p.287.

70. O.C. I, p.333.

71. O.C. I, p.340.

Breton and Eluard, then, succeeded in attaining states of simulated insanity with the help of poetry, and showed that there is no impenetrable gap between the normal and the abnormal. From this point of view L'Immaculée conception is extremely important, but it is also significant as an experiment in collaboration. The surrealists were fond of quoting Lautréamont's 'La poésie doit être faite par tous. Non par un', and a 'Papillon surréaliste' announced: 'Le Surréalisme est à la portée de tous les inconscients'. Now, Breton and Eluard have attempted a practical application of a precept which would be impossible within the framework of traditional literature. Like Ralentir Travaux and Les champs magnétiques, L'Immaculée conception is based on a deliberate suppression of the "je". Jouffroy calls them 'textes où la voix personnelle se dédouble, s'aliène volontairement',<sup>72</sup> and insists that this kind of experiment can only take place in the context of a collective experience of living. Like the later advocates of the "cut-up novel", or of the experimental mixing of voices on recording tape, the surrealists introduced an element of chance into poetry. But Burroughs, like Breton, admits that material must be consciously arranged:

En ce qui concerne l'organisation des séquences et des rythmes, elle ne se fait pas d'elle-même.

Suzanne Bernard<sup>73</sup> underlines the fact that poets produce automatic texts of poetic value whereas other people do not, and quotes Aragon's Traité du Style, where he points out

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72. A. Jouffroy: "L'incurable retard des mots", p.3.

73. S. Bernard: Le poème en prose de Baudelaire jusqu'à nos jours, p.675.

that it is not enough to adopt one of the surrealist techniques and 'apprendre le truc' in order to produce a text of poetic value. She concludes that texts written in collaboration were a mistake because poetry is 'intimement liée à l'organisation individuelle du poète.' Breton, who not only rejected the notion of various genres in literature but also despised the values of traditional literary criticism, would never agree. And Eluard, throughout his adherence to Surrealism, was willing to learn from any experiment which might prove to be an 'instrument de connaissance' and 'réduire les différences qui existent entre les hommes'. The attraction of the experiments for him may be summed up in a phrase from "Il n'y a rien d'incompréhensible", where he explains the motives of certain well-known criminals assembled in a pit:

L'attraction qui a agi sur ces criminels ne doit pas être autre chose que cette pureté, ce silence de l'abîme, qui permet au langage assassin de retrouver, en quelque sorte, sa jeunesse, le point de force et d'action où il est absolument lui-même, sans que rien ne l'entrave ou ne le corrompe. (74)

Eluard, however, is still very attached to poetry, and when, in the 'prière d'insérer' of Les dessous d'une vie, he insists on the differences between accounts of dreams, surrealist texts and poems, we, like Breton<sup>75</sup>, detect a predilection for the poem:

Mais des poèmes, par lesquels l'esprit tente de désensibiliser le monde, de susciter l'aventure et de subir des enchantements, il est indispensable de savoir qu'ils sont la conséquence d'une volonté assez bien définie, l'écho d'un espoir ou d'un désespoir formulé. (76)

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74. O.C. I, p.338.

75. Entretiens, pp. 105-6.

76. Le poète et son ombre, p.103.

The idea of poetry as an end in itself was anathema to the pope of Surrealism, who later declared Eluard's distinctions of genre 'ultra-rétrograde et en contradiction formelle avec l'esprit surréaliste'; but although Eluard's poetry usually gives a strong impression of spontaneity, he is always a poet, always active and creative rather than a passive receptacle of 'le murmure'. Just as the 1920 Questionnaire betrays his reservations about the Dada movement, so his frequent use of traditional forms distinguishes his aim from that of other, more authentic surrealists. Moreover, it is significant that his "flight" from France occurred in 1924, a year of intense surrealist activity.

Ilya Ehrenbourg<sup>77</sup> denies the existence of the usual traditional techniques in Eluard's verse:

Bien entendu, même dans l'original, les vers d'Eluard peuvent paraître de la prose à un homme insensible à la poésie; il a tout fait pour dépouiller sa poésie de marques extérieures ou poétiques. Il n'y a dans ses vers ni mètre ni rime ni assonance.

This statement is ludicrous in face of the evidence. For instance from the Premiers poèmes to Poésie ininterrompue II, there is the traditional symmetry of quatrains made up of alexandrines, and the period of adherence to Surrealism is far from lacking in such manifestations of traditional versification. Three adjacent poems in Capitale de la douleur<sup>78</sup> are composed in this form, and "L'Egalité des sexes" in Mourir de ne pas mourir, is not only written in this metre but also has a regular rhyme scheme. (M. Vernier<sup>79</sup>

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77. Ilya Ehrenbourg, Cahiers français, p.243.

78. 'Paul Klee', 'Les Gertrude Hoffmann Girls' and 'Paris pendant la guerre'.

79. Vernier, 'Poésie ininterrompue' et la poétique de Paul Eluard, p.122.

has listed the poems in these two anthologies which are either entirely or occasionally rhymed.) As for assonance and alliteration, Eluard's deep fascination for the sound of words ensures a constant establishing of relationships between those sounds:

...Sa gorge montre d'un doigt impérieux  
Des corridors où glissent les sifflets de ses chevilles.

...Ta chair simple s'y développe,  
Tu t'y pourlèches dans la pourpre, ô nouveau médiateur!

(80)

The currently popular idea that Eluard's post-surrealist reorientation towards simplicity of expression involved a return to traditional metres, stanzas and rhyme is based on the fallacy that his more obscure poems of the 1920's were made difficult partly by their lack of conventional form. Apart from those poems which are evidently classical in form, the 'vers libre' and even the prose poem contain traditional rhythmical structures. It is not our purpose to make a detailed study of the metric system in Eluard's verse, but it is important to note Eluard's predilection for the most usual classical lines; for octosyllabic lines and alexandrines; and his use of "rejets", "contre-rejets", and classical caesura. M. Mazaleytrat<sup>81</sup> has made a convincing study of this aspect, and particularly of the use of the alexandrine; he shows how Eluard often begins a poem with an uncertain line and then progresses with regular lines<sup>82</sup>, how: 'la phrase prend forme métrique au fur et à mesure qu'elle se colore et s'amplifie.' He

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80. "A la flamme des fouets (1)", Capitale de la douleur, O.C. I, p.180.

81. Mazaleytrat, J., "La Tradition métrique dans la poésie d'Eluard", pp. 25-42.

82. His example is: "Gaieté", Donner à voir, O.C. I, p.921.

further shows how frequently alexandrines occur in the prose poems of Capitale de la douleur, and in these too the metric form develops as the poem progresses.

It would seem that Eluard's mind often semi-consciously turns to the alexandrine, a fact which is less surprising in a self-confessed poet who has read a great deal of poetry than it is in Desnos, who when asked to write a poem in a trance-like state writes it in quatrains of alexandrines:

Nul n'a jamais conquis le droit d'entrer en maître  
dans la ville concrète où s'accouplent les dieux  
il voudrait inventer ces luxures abstraites  
et des plantes doigts morts au centre de nos yeux.<sup>83</sup>

Eluard was in fact criticised by the other surrealists for using the alexandrine, but according to Aragon:

Il disait pour se défendre: 'vous le permettez  
bien à Aragon quand c'est dans la prose'. Et  
c'était très vrai. "Le Paysan de Paris" est plein  
d'alexandrins.<sup>84</sup>

The examples of Desnos, Aragon and Eluard tend to prove that in spite of Breton's denial of poetry and the traditional idea of literature, alexandrines, like clichés and proverbs, were an automatic, if renewed, form of expression for poets who could not help but be steeped in the traditional culture and literature of their country. Indeed, Aragon adds that he, Breton and Eluard often produced sonnets with the automatic technique. Whereas Ribemont-Dessaignes<sup>85</sup> expresses surprise that Eluard's poetry could remain pure in spite of these 'affreux cadres de fer et de plâtre, des carcans infâmes, où justement la voix perd sa liberté'.

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83. Related by Breton, in "Entrée des médiums".

84. Aragon parle avec Dominique Arban, p.64.

85. Ribemont-Dessaignes, "Sur l'art poétique de Paul Eluard," Europe, juillet-août, 1953, p.156..



Aragon protests that 'la liberté en ce temps-là était dans la tentation de l'alexandrin, et que c'était la terreur surréaliste qui le lui interdisait'<sup>86</sup>.

Mourir de ne pas mourir, Capitale de la douleur and l'Amour la poésie, although masterpieces, are all experiments to a certain extent. If their form is often classical, the poems in these three collections nevertheless bear the very evident marks of the surrealist experiments. As we have pointed out, it is impossible to judge with accuracy to what extent Eluard employs the technique of automatic writing, but most of these poems have the spontaneity of automatic texts; "L'As de Trèfle", for instance, and "L'absolue nécessité..." have the mental deviations and impulsive flow of the texts written by the trance-prone members of the movement. The main trait of Eluard's Surrealism, is, however, his imagery. The two poems cited contain the images: 'les ailes de ses oreilles' and 'prunelles des haies'. Such imagery is at the centre of the surrealists' concept of poetry, which has influenced Eluard's desire to probe consciousness, to induce thought through a surprising use of words, to 'donner à voir'. There is nothing revolutionary in either the metrical or syntactical structure of the poems in the three anthologies under discussion; the lesson of Surrealism is rather that of the 'emploi déréglé et passionnel du stupéfiant image'<sup>87</sup>, and this question will be more suitably discussed in the following chapter which necessarily cuts across the chronology of our main approach.

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86. Aragon, L'Homme Communiste, t.II, p.152.

87. Aragon, Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme, Eluard, O.C. I, p.780.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE SURREALIST IMAGE

On a beaucoup exagéré l'impuissance de l'imagination: ses trois cornes aiguës labourent aisément les glacis dérisoires de la raison rasée de près. En murmurant et portes closes on parvient à se forger des pavillons de toutes les grandeurs, des amours insensés, des lunes de réchange, on reconstitue le charbon, les gemmes, le corail, on métamorphose les rochers, les livres et le coeur des hommes.

Donner à voir, O.C. I, pp.928-9.

Several studies of Eluard's imagery have more than adequately examined the recurring themes; Raymond Jean, Norma Tatum and Pierre Emmanuel have provided detailed studies of the key words; Charles Whiting, Jean Onimus and Georges Poulet have examined, amongst other themes, the effects of light and shade; and Carrouges, the limits of space and weight, time and death. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to examine those theories and techniques of imagery which Eluard developed under Surrealism, and those which are peculiar to him, rather than to attempt any detailed analysis of themes. Our examination of the practice of this imagery will necessarily overlap with, and refer to, the above works,<sup>1</sup> since the recurring themes such as eyes, hands, birds, crystal, transparency and so on are essential bases for any discussion of his language.

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1. R. Jean: Paul Eluard par lui-même.
  - N. Tatum: Aspects of selected images from the poetry of Paul Eluard.
  - P. Emmanuel: Le monde est intérieur.
  - C. Whiting: "Eluard's poems for Gala".
  - J. Onimus: Les images de Paul Eluard
  - G. Poulet: "La Lumière Eluardienne"
  - M. Carrouges: Eluard et Claudel

### Part (i): Surrealist Aims and Techniques

The surrealists' attitude to reason is amply manifested in the early experiments. Their disregard for logical meaning in literature and their advocacy of spontaneous, revelatory inspiration; their desire to rehabilitate the evangelical idea of the Word as logos<sup>2</sup> and not as a mere instrument of 'poésie-moyen d'expression'<sup>3</sup>; their objections as expressed in Notes sur la poésie, to the literary philosophy of Valéry and their admiration for Blake, Lewis Carroll and the German Romantics; all these opinions make of Surrealism an extreme form of Romanticism. It is virulently opposed to reason in its traditional sense, ridiculing it in this definition in the Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme: 'nuage mangé par la lune', and reducing it to a minor rôle in human affairs.<sup>4</sup> However, as M. Peyre sardonically suggests:

There always remains much logic behind any French attempt at illogic, and an almost immoral passion for morals behind any Gallic denunciation of conventional ethics. The surrealists are no exception. They are logicians and moralists primarily. (5)

Where Dada rejected reason and implied that illogic was its obvious replacement, the surrealists explicitly redefine the word. Apollinaire had announced 'O soleil, c'est le temps de la Raison ardente', and Eluard, including the phrase in his "art poétique" Donner à voir, also quotes Bachelard:

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2. Cf. R. Hausmann quoting Ball in Courrier Dada, 1958, p.61.
  3. Tzara: "Essai sur la situation de la poésie", L.S.A.S.D.L.R. No. 4, p.17.
  4. Breton: Manifestes, p.18.
  5. H. Peyre: "The Significance of Surrealism", p.38.

...il faut rendre à la raison humaine sa fonction de turbulence et d'agressivité. On contribuera ainsi à fonder une surrationalisme qui multipliera les occasions de penser. (6)

Breton's entry in the Dictionnaire under "surrationalisme" accepts a conception of reason as a factor of Surrealism as long as it assumes 'l'assimilation continue de l'irrationnel, assimilation durant laquelle le rationnel est appelé à se réorganiser sans cesse.'

If this theory seems paradoxical or compromising, it will seem less so if considered side by side with the surrealists' views on reality. For them, as for Nerval, there is no distinction between dream and reality. Eluard says of the surrealist painters ('qui sont des poètes'):

Ils poursuivent tous le même effort pour libérer la vision, pour joindre l'imagination à la nature, pour considérer tout ce qui est possible comme réel, pour nous montrer qu'il n'y a pas de dualisme entre l'imagination et la réalité, que tout ce que l'esprit de l'homme peut concevoir et créer provient de la même veine, est de la même 'matière' que sa chair, que son sang et que le monde qui l'entoure. (7)

The imagination is not only powerful enough to assimilate the real, it may also affect and transform reason, which after all is the use of real facts in argument. Since Lautréamont, says Breton<sup>8</sup>, 'l'imagination n'est plus cette petite soeur abstraite qui saute à la corde dans un square', but a great hallucinatory power revealing new worlds. It is the new importance accorded to the imagination which necessitates a redefinition of reason, and we are

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6. O.C. I, pp. 959 and 960.

7. L'Evidence poétique, O.C. I, p.516.

8. Les Pas perdus, p.199.

to see that many of the analogies which Eluard makes have their own kind of "surrealist logic". In general terms, we have already established that automatism is not entirely devoid of reason. Its manifestations are almost always written in grammatical sentences, usually with a certain train of ideas which is often encouraged by obsessions<sup>9</sup>. Anna Balakian claims that the most incomprehensible sentence could be parsed, and underlines Aragon's insistence that Surrealism is not a refuge against style.<sup>10</sup> The great contribution of the automatic technique to French literature is, of course, its imagery. When one is in the completely receptive state described by Breton in the Premier Manifeste<sup>11</sup>, words emerge from the subconscious to interact, clash, and surprise us. Aragon's phrase, 'l'emploi déréglé et passionnel du stupéfiant image', is included in the Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme as a definition of Surrealism itself and it is significant that Breton compares surrealist imagery to the images provoked by opium, quoting very aptly from Baudelaire; these images come to man's mind 'spontanément, despotiquement. Il ne peut pas les congédier; car la volonté n'a plus de force et ne gouverne plus les facultés.'<sup>12</sup>

The surrealists, of course, like Baudelaire, have no intention of bringing the will to bear against the imagination, that 'reine des facultés'. The following assertion of Eluard:

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9. Breton describes the phrases he retains from sleep as 'remarquablement imagées et d'une syntaxe parfaitement correcte.' "L'Entrée des médiums", Les Pas perdus, p.149.  
 10. A. Balakian, "The surrealist Image", p.280.  
 11. Manifestes, p.42.  
 12. Ibid., p.50.

Tout est au poète objet à sensations, et, par conséquent, à sentiments. Tout le concret devient alors l'aliment de son imagination et de l'espoir, le désespoir passent, avec les sensations et les sentiments, au concret. (13)

echoes Baudelaire's famous statement of belief, in his Art romantique, that the universe is a storehouse of images to be absorbed and valorised by the imagination, 'une espèce de pâture que l'imagination doit digérer et transformer.' And just as Baudelaire sees in the world 'des forêts de symboles',<sup>14</sup> Breton speaks of his surroundings as a 'forêt d'indices', overflowing with 'trouvailles' to delight the imagination;<sup>15</sup> both poets, like Eluard and Aragon, find delightful stimuli even, or especially, in the banal décor of the Parisian streets.

Surrealist ideas on imagery have an important foundation in the poetic theories of Reverdy. The First Manifesto adheres explicitly to his definition of the image<sup>16</sup> and includes the appropriate quotation from his crucial article in Nord-Sud:<sup>17</sup>

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

It is important to note, however, that whilst agreeing with Reverdy's basic advocacy of the juxtaposition of two distant realities within an image, Breton, since he denies the intervention of the conscious mind in the

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13. L'Evidence poétique, O.C. I, p.515.

14. Baudelaire O.C. I, p.11: "Correspondances".

15. L'Amour fou, pp.14-19.

16. Op.cit., p.50.

17. Ibid., p.31 and Reverdy's article, "L'Image", pp.3-4.

creation of imagery also denies the suggestion of reasoned thought in the phrase 'lointains et justes', and emphasises the difference between the two terms of the image rather than their eventual poetic fusion.<sup>18</sup> He vividly describes his own concept of the image in terms of electricity; the greater the difference of potential between the two terms involved, the greater the spark produced. He lists seven types of shock imagery produced according to this formula, and by means of automatic writing, to which Anna Balakian has helpfully added examples from his own texts.<sup>19</sup> We will confine ourselves to only one example which Breton himself quotes:

Sur le pont la rosée à tête de chatte se berçait.<sup>20</sup>

The "spark" produced by the distance between the terms "rosée" and "tête de chatte" provokes the effect of shock intended by Breton, and this is heightened by the distance of each of these terms from "sur le pont" and "se berçait". The surrealist image allows for a freedom and purity of association which was never fully possible in the confined comparisons of traditional poetry; for when the mind is completely receptive to the delirious functioning of the imagination, one image suggests another, they spawn, and the incongruous juxtaposition of each image produces the same effect of shock as do the two unlike terms within each one. Jean Onimus describes the process in the following way:

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18. Cf. S. Bernard, Le Poème en prose de Baudelaire jusqu'à nos jours, p.667 and Tomlins: Pierre Reverdy and the visual arts, Chapter 8.

19. 'The Surrealist Image', pp.278-9.

20. Manifestes, p.53.

Chaque image est modifiée par la proximité de sa voisine. Et il s'établit entre elles un certain courant. Ce ne sont pas les images elles-mêmes qui intéressent le poète, mais l'espace qui les sépare. Cet espace (insolite ou choquant) libère quelque chose dans l'esprit du lecteur. Plus la masse des images se presse, plus cette libération s'accroît. (21)

In the Tzara manuscript of L'Evidence poétique<sup>22</sup>, Eluard has compiled his own list of "surrealist" images from Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Jarry and the poets of his own coterie, to illustrate what he calls:

...l'attraction souveraine qu'exercent sur moi les images inexplicables, les rapports absolument nouveaux que la poésie dite surréaliste nous fait entrevoir. Voici les images qui, entre tant d'autres, m'obsèdent, les images fulgurantes qui m'inquiètent et qui me rassurent, qui me font admettre qu'il n'y a rien d'incompréhensible et que rien n'est perdu pour l'esprit.

This statement, and the list of images which have seduced the poet, are preceded by a detailed examination of two particularly successful images, one by Apollinaire and one by Saint-Pol-Roux<sup>23</sup>, and it is an examination which does much to clarify the contribution of the new technique to lyrical poetry:

Ta langue le poisson rouge dans le bocal de ta voix.

Ruisseau, argenterie des tiroirs du vallon.

Each example, says Eluard, 'flatte faussement en nous le sens du déjà vu.' 'Le poisson dans le bocal' is easily imagined, and the silver stream is a commonplace enough idea. Similarly, 'ta langue de ta voix', 'le ruisseau du vallon' and 'argenterie des tiroirs' are very easily assimilated ideas. Eluard uses the words 'justesse' and 'évidence' in the context of this part of his argument,

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21. J. Onimus, 'Une poésie faite d'images: Paul Eluard'.p.30.

22. O.C. I, pp.1490-1491.

23. This 'exposé' is also to be found in Donner à voir, O.C. I, p.969, in a different, briefer, form.



and simplicity and obviousness are qualities which are important in his own poetry. Here he differs from Breton, for it is the idea of the 'justesse' of associations which Breton objects to in Reverdy's definition. He would argue that these comparisons would be easily forgotten:

Lorsque cette différence existe à peine, comme dans la comparaison, l'étincelle ne se produit pas. (24)

Eluard, however, accepts the rôle of these 'lieux communs' in the two images, their contribution to the more striking whole:

Et à la faveur de ces identités de forme et de couleur, de rapports, passent de nouvelles images composées d'une façon plus arbitraire, parce que purement formelle, le bocal de ta voix et les tiroirs du vallon.

but is careful to add that, 'pourtant, ce qui nous ravit, c'est le bocal de ta voix, les tiroirs du vallon, l'inexplicable, le vrai.'

The famous phrase of Lautréamont quoted here by Eluard:

Beau comme la rencontre fortuite sur une table de dissection d'une machine à coudre et d'un parapluie.

became a key phrase for the surrealists, attracting them because of the extreme incongruity of the presence of the two objects mentioned on an operating table; because the vocabulary of the image is patently concrete; because the juxtaposition involved is significantly called a 'rencontre fortuite'; and because Lautréamont's definition of beauty is a strong reaction against traditional definitions. The concreteness of a great deal of surrealist imagery also represents a reaction; against Mallarmé's view that:

Nommer un objet, c'est supprimer les trois-quarts de la jouissance du poème qui est faite du bonheur de deviner peu à peu; le suggérer, voilà le rêve. C'est le parfait usage de ce mystère qui constitue le symbole. (25)

...Peindre non la chose, mais l'effet qu'elle produit;

the surrealist movement sets the opinion that an accumulation of concrete nouns provides freer possibilities in the mind of poet and reader. With them, the importance of the concrete world around us is re-established, we are taught to open our eyes and notice it. Onimus, commenting on a speech by Eisenstein, says:

Un signe concret, à la différence d'un mot, est analogue à ce qu'il signifie, il y a une affinité, de nature très profonde, entre l'ombre et la peur, l'étoile et l'espérance etc. (26)

and although he is referring to concrete images in the cinema, he applies the above idea to Eluard's imagery.

Eluard's fascination for the sounds of words and the images they evoke leads him, like Rimbaud,<sup>27</sup> to enumerate, with obvious relish, object upon object.<sup>28</sup> But the effect of this enumeration is never tedious, for it always plays a part in the creation of imagery which makes some abstract impression. The overall effect, however, is always of the concrete. As Anna Balakian says of the same technique in Breton's poetry:

There is a reversal of the correspondence technique: we find that instead of the concrete becoming abstract, the abstract is crystallised into the concrete. (29)

The following examples from Eluard illustrate the point:

La neige de ses rires stérilisait la boue  
...confiance de cristal  
D'inoffensifs cailloux lac frappant de vérité.<sup>30</sup>

25. Letter to Cazalis, Oct. 1864.

26. Onimus *op.cit.* p.134.

27. See J. Rivière: *Rimbaud*, pp.63-64.

28. Cf. Chapter II, p.36.

29. A. Balakian: 'Metaphor and Metamorphosis in André Breton's poetics', p.36.

30. O.C. I, pp. 397, 394 and 387.

As we have seen, Breton rejects comparison, and with it the intermediary terms involved in the simile. Reverdy, in Self-Defence<sup>31</sup>, admits that the conjunction 'comme' can be employed without inhibiting the reader's freedom to draw his own associations from the image, but says: 'J'ai préféré rapprocher plus directement encore les éléments divers par leurs simples rapports et me passer de terme intermédiaire pour obtenir l'image.' Paulhan, on the other hand, in the first number of Proverbe<sup>32</sup>, states his definite disapproval of such terms, as 'des lieux communs épuisés'; in his opinion, even the simple technique of omitting them, where they are usually expected, will give rise to a new and vital meaning. For Breton, the word 'comme' has become irrelevant in its context of comparison; in a surrealist image, one term is not like another, it is transformed, becomes part of the other, is transubstantiated. Anna Balakian again contrasts Breton's poetry with the poetry of "correspondances" to illuminate the alchemical nature of his imagery:

In the world of correspondences, the simile most faithfully translated the parallel between the material and its spiritual counterpart. Quite to the contrary, Breton tells us that comme does not mean 'such as'. Things and beings are not like other qualities or states; through the alchemy of the Word they become something else, and the metaphor through which they are transformed draws them not from parallel spheres but from forms that are logically unrelated. (33)

Elsewhere<sup>34</sup>, she rightly points out that M. Brun is too emphatic in his statement that: 'The capital fact of the

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31. Self-Defence: critique-esthétique (n.p.).

32. Cf. Chapter I, p.16.

33. A. Balakian, André Breton, p.133.

34. A. Balakian, "The surrealist image", p.276.

entire history of the mind lies perhaps in this discovery of Surrealism: the word "comme" is a verb which does not signify "tel que", but it would be wrong to underestimate the power and influence enjoyed by this notion in poetry ever since the 1920's.

Eluard himself makes no distinction between the rôle of traditional metaphor and comparison in poetry:

L'image par analogie (ceci est comme cela) et l'image par identification (ceci est cela) détachent aisément du poème, tendent à devenir poèmes elles-mêmes, en s'isolant. A moins que les deux termes ne s'enchevêtrent aussi étroitement l'un que l'autre à tous les éléments du poème.

Une image peut se composer d'une multitude de termes, être tout un poème et même un long poème. Elle est alors soumise aux nécessités du réel, elle évolue dans le temps et l'espace, elle crée une atmosphère constante, une action continue. Pour ne citer que des poètes de ce siècle, Raymond Roussel, Pierre Reverdy, Giorgio de Chirico, Salvador Dali...ont ainsi fait vivre parfois dans le développement d'une seule image l'infinité des éléments de leur univers. (35)

It has been suggested that this text indicates his rejection of the two traditional rhetorical techniques, except where the two terms of the image are completely compatible with the main body of the poem, since they tend to destroy continuity.<sup>36</sup> It is by no means clear, however, that he disapproves of analogy and identification, nor that he wishes to reject them in favour of what Vernier calls the 'image nominale'. The emphasis is rather on the fact that an image may form a whole poem in its own right, and be made up of a great many terms. It may form a one-line poem:

Pleure, les larmes sont les pétales du coeur<sup>37</sup>

35. O.C. I, pp.969-70.

36. Vernier: Poésie ininterrompue et la poétique de Paul Eluard, p.143.

37. O.C. I, p.168.

or a long poem like "Au Revoir"<sup>38</sup>, in which the main image constitutes the framework for an extended conceit:

Devant moi cette main qui défait les orages  
 Qui défrise et qui fait fleurir les plantes grimpantes...  
 Jamais décontenancée jamais surprise est-ce ta main  
 Qui jure sur chaque feuille la paume au soleil  
 Le prenant à témoin est-ce ta main qui jure  
 De recevoir la moindre ondée et d'en accepter le  
 deluge  
 Sans l'ombre d'un éclair passé  
 Est-ce la main ce souvenir foudroyant au soleil.

It is interesting, in passing, to remember that Dr. Johnson described the conceit as 'the witty yoking of opposites', and to note the affinities between the surrealists and the Metaphysical poets, although there is no evidence that Eliot's revival of their work reached the surrealists' notice. Eluard's "L'Extase" is very like Donne's "The Extasie" in its theme and imagery,<sup>39</sup> and the following lines from the latter poem:

Our hands were firmly cimented  
 With a fast balme, which thence did spring,  
 Our eye-beams twisted, and did thred  
 Our eyes, upon one double string;

So to entergraft our hands, as yet  
 Was all our meanes to make us one,  
 And pictures on our eyes to get  
 Was all our propagation.

provide an interesting parallel with the recurring and interlinked eye and hand imagery in Eluard.

There is no real evidence, then, that Eluard refuses comparison. As we have already seen, he accepts the value of the aspect of commonplace analogy in the lines from Apollinaire and Saint-Pol Roux, and Vernier himself has

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38. O.C. I, p.370.

39. Cf. C.H. Wake, in P.H. Nurse: The Art of criticism: Essays in French Literary Analysis, p.290.

We note also that C. Day Lewis, in The Poetic Image, (p.50) describes the 'wit-writing' of the Metaphysicals in terms which could well be applied to the surrealists: 'like some gold rush of half-inspired, half-demented prospectors streamed out alike over the most homely, the most inaccessible, the most charming and the most forbidding regions of human experience in search for new veins of imagery.'

counted the word "comme" thirty times in Poésie ininterrompue<sup>40</sup>; furthermore, the word appears fifty-five times in Capitale de la douleur<sup>41</sup>, a work which also contains a great many examples of the 'image nominale', the image advocated by Breton which has developed beyond identification to definite transformation. Often 'comme' is used in the traditional way, as the vehicle for a simple comparison:

Tentantes comme du pain frais.

La table est droite comme un chêne.<sup>42</sup>

In these two lines, little imagination is required to make the link between the two terms. The following examples are more striking:

La vie est pleine comme un oeuf.

...ses yeux sombres et profonds  
comme les nuits blanches...<sup>43</sup>

but the notion of fecundity conveyed by the word 'oeuf' links it well with the plenitude of life, and sleepless nights have an implicit link with dark eyes. Sometimes, however, the word 'comme' is used to link words which would never normally bear comparison:

Sa tête remue comme une jambe.

Leurs poissons chantent comme des perles.

La terre est bleue comme une orange. (44)

These 'comparisons' oblige us, as does the 'image nominale', to re-examine our ideas of reality, and to admit links

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40. Vernier, op.cit., p.143.

41. Cf. Sodergard, "Etude sur le vocabulaire de 'Capitale de la Douleur' de Paul Eluard", p.112.

42. O.C. I, p.398 and p.1001.

43. O.C. I, p.1119 and p.188.

44. O.C. I, p.400, p.425 and p.232.

between things which we would previously have considered anomalous. May a head make the same movements as a leg; may a fish sing, and sing like a pearl; and can the earth be like an orange, and can an orange be blue? In fact, the effect produced is the same as that produced by the 'image nominale'; it is the juxtaposition of disparate objects or phrases which is important, "comme" merely constituting a convenient link between them; its normal suggestion of a comparison is replaced by a statement that one term has become the other.

However, an image of this kind is usually more effective, as Paulhan and Reverdy suggest, if the intermediary term is omitted, for the two terms produce more shock if they are immediately juxtaposed. Hence Eluard, following Apollinaire's "soleil cou coupé" and Breton's "liberté couleur d'homme" or "le soleil chien couchant" (in "Il n'y a pas à sortir de là") uses the apposition of two nouns:

Lune la feuille fleur le sein et les paupières lourdes.

La consolation graine perdue  
Le remords pluie fondue  
La douleur bouche en coeur.<sup>45</sup>

The extreme condensation of expression brought about by this technique is one of the characteristic features of Eluard's poetry in the late nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties, and the introduction into Blason des fleurs et des fruits of the apposition of a noun and a phrase, and its continuing use afterwards, contributes to the rather more ample style of the later years. As Vernier<sup>46</sup> says,

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45. O.C. I, p.385 and p.185.

46. Vernier, op.cit., p.149.

this type of image, frequently used in Poésie ininterrompue in phrases such as 'souci la route est achevée', may not be replaced by analogy or identification for syntactical reasons, and establishes a total relationship between the two terms. Similarly, Eluard occasionally carries the process of apposition one step further by hyphenating the two disparate terms: 'la fraise-rossignol', 'le miroir-cigogne',<sup>47</sup> so that an irreplaceable fusion is achieved.

The other technique of juxtaposition, with 'de' as the linking word, has been amply examined by Mr. Carmody<sup>48</sup> from the point of view of its relation to Eluard's rupture with Surrealism, and he claims that 'they reached a saturation point and a kind of paroxysm shortly before the rupture.' In fact, the phrase with "de" or "à" is the most frequent vehicle for the 'image nominale' during the surrealist period. We are reminded of the repetition of 'ma femme à' in Breton's L'Union Libre, of his assertion of the frequency of this pattern in the early automatic texts, and of its immense value as a conscious technique:

J'ajouterais qu'il suffit de relier ainsi n'importe quel substantif à n'importe quel autre pour qu'un monde de représentations nouvelles surgisse aussitôt. (49)

His Clair de terre is full of such images as 'ce coeur à cran d'arrêt', 'ses cicatrices d'évasions', 'le métier de la pluie', and his substitution of 'de' and 'à' for 'comme' conveys very well his cabbalistic notion of 'one in the other'.<sup>50</sup> As Carmody shows, Eluard's images of this kind

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47. O.C. I, p.262 and p.64.

48. F. Carmody: "Eluard's rupture with Surrealism".

49. Breton: L'Amour Fou, p.90.

50. Cf. A. Balakian, André Breton, p.141.



form relationships between forms with remarkable surfaces and natural phenomena, between mobile forms and human expressions, nouns of space and nouns of attitude, and nouns of particular form and indefinite substance. He frequently echoes the important idea expressed in the Second manifeste, that:

Tout porte à croire qu'il existe un certain point de l'esprit d'où la vie et la mort, le réel et l'imaginaire, le passé et le futur, le communicable et l'incommunicable, le haut et le bas cessent d'être perçus contradictoirement. Or, c'est en vain qu'on chercherait à l'activité surréaliste un autre mobile que l'espoir de détermination de ce point. (51)

'Rien n'est incompréhensible', says Eluard. 'Tout est comparable à tout, tout trouve son écho, sa raison, sa ressemblance, son opposition, son devenir partout'<sup>52</sup>; and, 'toutes les transformations sont possibles'.<sup>53</sup> The imagination imposes harmony upon the whole universe, its power of transformation is total. Just as Breton says: 'la beauté sera convulsive ou ne sera pas',<sup>54</sup> Eluard insists that the imagination brings about the 'catastrophe rêvée', the fusion and metamorphosis of the most unlikely elements:

Les séduisantes formes de la composition des genres dansent dans la nuit. L'oiseau prend racine dans la femme, l'homme dans un nid, ô vieille fée, fée Confuse qui mêles innocemment toutes choses, les couleurs et les formes, les rives et les larmes, les bêtes et les hommes, l'eau et le feu, le ciel et la terre, restes où tu es, j'irai. (55)

For to establish one's own 'ressemblances' is much more attractive than simply to state the likenesses which already exist in the common mind:

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51. Breton, L'Amour fou, pp.76-77.

52. O.C. I, p.1491.

53. O.C. I, p.104.

54. Nadja, p.187.

55. O.C. I, p.929.

Jusqu'à leur abolition naturelle  
 Il y a des différences plus séduisantes  
 Entre un poing et une cloche  
 Entre une pierre et une rose  
 Entre la prison et l'air libre  
 Qu'entre le poisson et la mer  
 Le cerf et le vent  
 L'homme et la femme. 56

His enthusiasm for naming things is equalled by his desire to establish relationships between them:

J'établis des rapports entre l'homme et la femme  
 Entre les fontes du soleil et le sac à bourdons. 57

The notion of 'ressemblance' has a very special place in Eluard's poetry; it is true that Breton and Péret and other surrealists create the same kind of harmony, of monistic view of the world, in their imagery; Breton's "La forêt dans la hâche"<sup>58</sup> is an excellent example, in which the physical world is all one and is in its turn at one with the poet's consciousness; but as Mary Anne Caws suggests:

To an even greater extent than Breton, Eluard occupies himself with a poetic investigation of the paradox 'one within the other'. Breton wants his life and works to have the spontaneous brilliance of the crystal, but Eluard values above all else La vie immédiate, that is, 'to participate, to move, to understand', not to be separate but to be ressemblant, to perceive things not as discontinuous but as joined. 59

Hence in one poem:

Les murs de la maison me ressemblent comme  
 Un masque  
 Ils sont fixés à ma chair<sup>60</sup>

and in another, one face is 'semblable à tous les visages oubliés',<sup>61</sup>; sometimes he expresses the idea that all objects are ressemblants, and sometimes that one person resembles

56. O.C. I, p.445.

57. O.C. I, p.369.

58. Breton: Clair de terre, p.123.

59. M.A. Caws: The Poetry of Dada and Surrealism, p.141.

60. O.C. I, p.66.

61. O.C. I, p.363.

all others. The latter idea is particularly important in the context of the loved woman: 'Pour son amant, la femme aimée se substitue à toutes les femmes désirées'. This is not the Romantic confusion of several women in one, such as is to be seen in Nerval's Aurélia, but a humanitarian identification of the loved one with all other women, which is to become more marked in the poems of the 'Nusch' period. In the period under discussion, this notion is underlined in a negative way. When the poet's relationship with Gala is upset, the whole 'ressemblance' is accordingly destroyed:

Dans les rues, dans les campagnes, cent femmes  
sont dispersées par toi, tu déchires la ressemblance  
qui les lie. (62)

The word is used most frequently in this context, for the three women whom Eluard loved were a constant source of inspiration to him; but he is careful to point out that 'ressemblance' is a subjective matter, that each imagination establishes its own likenesses, chooses its own field for the 'dissolution of antimonies':

Le poète, halluciné par excellence, établira des  
ressemblances à son gré entre les objets les plus  
dissemblables. (63)

Un soleil de plomb, un soleil de plumes, un soleil  
de fièvre. Un soleil d'eau pure, tout dépend de  
celui qui l'a dans le coeur. (64)

The poet's mind is particularly suited to the discernment of 'ressemblances', but Eluard looks forward to the time when 'un jour tout homme montrera ce que le poète a vu'.<sup>65</sup>

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62. O.C. I, p.375  
63. O.C. I, p.955  
64. O.C. I, p.929  
65. O.C. I, p.526.

This will depend upon a rebirth of society, and a rebirth of perception; these two renaissances, for Eluard the surrealist and later for Eluard, member of the Communist Party, are always interdependent. Men must learn to see again, and his object is to help our vision:

Ainsi, en méditant un poème Eluardien, on connaît la puissance de néo-transformation de l'imagination. Créer une image, c'est vraiment 'donner à voir'. Ce qui était mal vu, ce qui était perdu dans la paresseuse familiarité, est désormais objet nouveau pour un regard nouveau. (66)

### Part (ii): The Sovereignty of Vision

The idea of 'donner à voir' is the most important concept of Eluard's poetics, and one to which he subscribes for the whole of his life. For him, as for Nougé, 'voir est un acte',<sup>67</sup> and in 1948 he writes, to his 'camarades imprimeurs':

Nous avons le même métier  
Qui donnait à voir dans la nuit  
Voir c'est comprendre c'est agir  
Et voir c'est être ou disparaître<sup>68</sup>

echoing his statement in 1936 that: 'Voir, s'est comprendre, juger, déformer, comparer, oublier ou s'oublier, être ou disparaître.'<sup>69</sup>

It is this militancy of perception which Eluard admires so much in Picasso. Again one is induced to compare Eluard

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66. Gaston Bachelard, Le droit de rêver, p.172.

67. P. Nougé, "Les images défendues", p.24.

68. O.C. II, p.217.

69. O.C. I, p.526.

with Baudelaire, for he is probably the poet of the twentieth century who has shown the most sensitivity to, and understanding of, contemporary artists<sup>70</sup>. Picasso figures largely in Donner à voir, and the poet's admiration for him is summed up in the poem dedicated to him in its final section:

Et sur les fondations des souvenirs présents  
Sans ordre ni désordre avec simplicité.  
S'élève le prestige de donner à voir. (71)

as well as in the much later Anthologie des écrits sur l'art:

Voir, c'est comprendre et aimer, participer, s'engager  
et juger, construire et se connaître à la mesure des  
hommes. (72)

The importance of sight and perception in the work of Eluard cannot be over emphasised. Several of his collections include these concepts in their titles: "Les yeux fertiles", "Premières vues anciennes", "Donner à voir", "A l'intérieur de la vue, huit poèmes visibles", "Voir"; and just as the harmony of the universe is stressed in the theory of 'ressemblances', so the emphasis in the idea of perception is always on an exchange between eyes and the scenes and colours mirrored in them. Eyes are not only for seeing, but for being seen, in what Jean<sup>73</sup> calls 'cette conception des yeux "regardant, regardés"'.

Le monde entier dépend de tes yeux purs  
Et tout mon sang coule dans leurs regards.<sup>74</sup>

Nos yeux se renvoient la lumière.<sup>75</sup>

The exchange of light between the eyes of lovers in the latter example echoes the traditional idea of the exchange

70. Cf. R. Jean, "Eluard and Picasso", p.37.

71. O.C. I, p.1003.

72. O.C. I, p.521.

73. R. Jean, Paul Eluard par lui-même, p.71.

74. O.C. I, p.196.

75. O.C. I, p.238.

of lovers' hearts.

The recurring images are very closely intermixed and the eye theme is expressed hand in hand with the purity conveyed by transparency:

Je vous connais, couleur des arbres et des villes,  
Entre nous est la transparence de coutume. (76)

Poulet<sup>77</sup> has examined the connections of transparency with innocence and knowledge, pointing out that in Eluard's work the 'connaissance' which transpires from the perfect unity of the eye and the object looked at is like the knowledge of the Early Church, an ardent Light, a knowledge which is also an act of love. And again, Eluard underlines his idea with a frequent use of negatives; if the eyes are not pure, if they are clouded by misfortune or melancholy, they will not reflect:

J'ai fermé les yeux pour ne plus rien voir  
J'ai fermé les yeux pour pleurer  
De ne plus te voir

Mes yeux sont inutiles...

Mes yeux sont séparés de tes yeux  
Ils perdent leur confiance ils perdent leur lumière.<sup>78</sup>

In dark moods, he either cannot or will not see, and the mirror, normally a symbol of reflection and transparency, is shattered, as in the Baudelairian-sounding poem "Les yeux toujours purs":

Jours de lenteur, jours de pluie  
Jours de miroirs brisés et d'aiguilles perdues<sup>79</sup>

The image of the closed eye does not imply lack of sight, however; as Jean says,<sup>80</sup> closed eyelids imply an 'intérieurisation du regard', when the dreamer's perception

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76. O.C. I, p.176.

77. G. Poulet, "La Lumière Eluardienne", p.817.

78. O.C. I, p.240, O.C. I, p.175 and O.C. II, p.110.

79. O.C. I, p.186.

80. Paul Eluard par lui-même, p.73.

is unaided by the objects of the external world. Closed eyes are important in the symbolism of Surrealism, and we are reminded of the well-known photograph of the 'époque des sommeils', in which the members of the group, all with their eyes closed, surround a nude and the inscription 'Je ne vois pas la cachée dans la forêt'.<sup>81</sup> In the same way, blindness is often used in the way in which Gide uses it in La Symphonie Pastorale; Eluard invites us to 'observe la lumière dans les miroirs des aveugles',<sup>82</sup> and quotes Swinburne: 'Nous les hommes fous et aveugles qui voyons.'<sup>83</sup>

Having established the importance of the concepts of 'voir' and 'donner à voir', the obvious question which arises is whether or not Eluard is predominantly a visual poet in practice, whether or not the vocabulary of his imagery is primarily aimed at producing visual effects. As J.M. Murry warns,<sup>84</sup> there is a temptation, when one considers the word 'image', to attach too much importance to the rôle of the visual in imagery, whereas in psychology the word means 'a mental reproduction of a past sensational or perceptual experience, not necessarily visual.'<sup>85</sup> All the other senses should be taken into consideration, as well as the wholly psychological, abstract image. Eluard uses a considerable amount of auditory imagery; Södergard<sup>86</sup> counts six mentions of "bruit" in Capitale de la Douleur, twelve of "silence", five of "musique", three of "cloche", one of "grincements", etc; but there is

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81. Reproduced in Jean: Paul Eluard par lui-même.

82. O.C. I, p.355.

83. O.C. I, p.965.

84. J.M. Murry, "Metaphor" in Shibbes Essays on Metaphor, p.29.

85. René Wellek and Austin Warren: "Image, Metaphor, Symbol, Myth" in M. Linenthal: Aspects of Poetry, p.155.

86. Sodergard, op.cit., p.110.

very little olfactory imagery in this collection, and it is restricted to general terms like "parfums" and "odeur".

His index, however, shows nineteen instances of the word "couleur", fifteen of "blanc", nine of "rouge", indicating that purely visual effects do predominate, and his conclusions in this context do not take into account the visual connotations of the hundreds of concrete nouns which we have established that Eluard was fond of "naming". The extensive use of such words as "oiseau", "eau", "bateau", "soleil", "pierre", "place", "mur", and of the parts of the body (which Södergard has also indexed) is bound to create strong visual impressions, even if the images involved have undertones of the auditory, the olfactory or the tactile. In fact, sound is usually linked to sight in such a way that sight predominates:

Les yeux des animaux chanteurs  
Et leurs chants de colère ou d'ennui  
M'ont interdit de sortir de ce lit.

Au soir de la folie, nu et clair,  
L'espace entre les choses a la forme de mes paroles,  
La forme de mes paroles d'un inconnu,  
D'un vagabond qui denoue la ceinture de sa gorge  
Et qui prend les échos au lasso; (87)

perfume may be synaesthetised into an effect of the light:

Aux grandes inondations de soleil  
Qui décolorent les parfums; (88)

and the hand, rather than representing touch is usually part of a visual image:

Nous joignons nos mains à nos yeux  
Mains agitées aux grimaces nouées  
Les yeux ouverts, les mains ouvertes  
Dans le désert... (89)

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87. O.C. I, p.138 and O.C. I, p.175.

88. O.C. I, p.248.

89. O.C. I, p.1001, O.C. I, p.396, and O.C. I, p.46.



As Maryvonne Meuraud suggests, the other senses, for Eluard, seem to be subordinated to, and integrated into, his overwhelming sense of sight, perception for him being primarily a visual thing:

Le regard n'est pas seulement une ouverture sur le monde extérieur; il s'opère une sorte d'intériorisation du regard, une récupération de celui-ci par l'être tout entier, comme si l'être intérieur devait lui-même se faire regard. Toutes les sensations... finissent par tomber dans le champ visuel. (90)

The numerous references to parts of the body other than the very important hands are, again, usually expressed in terms of sight, and any eroticism conveyed by the intimate references to the "bouche", "seins", "cheveux" and so on usually derives from a startling effect of light:

Il la prend dans ses bras  
Lueurs brillantes un instant entrevues  
Aux omoplates aux épaules aux seins  
Puis cachées par un nuage.

D'une seule caresse  
Je te fais briller de tout ton éclat.

Bouches gourmandes des couleurs (91)

The importance of the eyes in Eluard's work gives natural pride of place to the face in his imagery. Where the eye is alluded to sixty-four times in Capitale de la Douleur, "tête" appears twenty-three times, "visage" twenty-two, "bouche" sixteen, "cheveux" eleven, and "gorge" four times. And again it is significant that Eluard's feelings of affinity with his painter friend Picasso prompt the following lines:

Derrière ton regard aux trois épées croisées  
Tes cheveux nattent le vent rebelle  
Sous ton teint renversé la coupole et la hache de ton front  
Délivrent la bouche tendue à nu  
Ton nez est rond et calme  
Les sourcils sont légers l'oreille est transparente.<sup>92</sup>

90. M. Meuraud: L'Image végétale dans la poésie d'Eluard, p.27

91. O.C. I, p.301, O.C. I, p.236, and O.C. I, p.236

92. "A Pablo Picasso", O.C. I, p.1001.

In spite of the strangeness of the images in the third line, Eluard has here painted an easily imagined portrait; and by using such an image as 'la hache de ton front', he has added the extra dimension to be found in some of Picasso's cubist-influenced portraits. In another poem dedicated to the painter, the dialectical aspect which we have detected in other themes, and which is to become even more important in the post-surrealist poetry, is again manifested; in despondent moods, Eluard represents the face as having lost its brilliance, just as Picasso's war-time portraits lose their composure and brightness of eye:

Le visage du coeur a perdu ses couleurs  
Et le soleil nous cherche et la neige est aveugle<sup>93</sup>

The whole face, like the eyes, has the rôle of mirror, and reflects a mood as they do; in the same way, the faces of others respond to one's own:

Il ira demander  
Au Conseil des Visages  
S'il est encore capable  
De chasser sa jeunesse. (94)

and it shares with the eyes the innocence of transparency:

Visage admirable tout nu<sup>95</sup>

Because of its connotations of purity, nudity in Eluard's work is usually much less erotic than the kind of effects of light mentioned above. The word is often connected to an abstract word to suggest innocence:

Mon esprit est nu comme l'amour.

La nudité de la femme est plus sage que l'enseignement  
du philosophe. Elle ne demande pas qu'on la considère (96)

and where it actually refers to a love scene, the suggestion of the purity of love usually reduces its erotic value, as

93. O.C. I, p.178.

94. O.C. I, p.191.

95. O.C. I, p.248.

96. O.C. I, p.187 and O.C. I, p.387.

in the rather precious line:

Toute nue, toute nue, tes seins sont plus fragiles  
que le parfum de l'herbe gelée et ils supportent  
tes épaules. (97)

It does, however, appear more erotic when joined with an  
image of visual brilliance:

Ses yeux sont des tours de lumière  
Sous le front de sa nudité. (98)

Another strong manifestation of the visual in Eluard's  
poetry is the identification, previously made by Baudelaire  
and Verlaine,<sup>99</sup> of woman and landscape. The two words are  
juxtaposed several times in La Rose publique in such lines  
as:

Où donc commence le paysage  
A quelle heure  
Où donc se termine la femme 100

or

Mon paysage féminin a tous les charmes  
Puisqu'il est notre paysage (101)

in "Rien d'autre", and the 'paysage féminin' becomes the  
central image in the later poem "L'Extase". The semantic  
link here is not particularly startling, since both words  
suggest something aesthetically pleasing, but the implication  
of a vast area, underlined in "L'Extase" by references to  
the horizon, the sea and the sky, points to the striking  
idea of love as a whole universe, and once more emphasises  
the harmony of Eluard's view of the world and those that  
people it. According to Södergård,<sup>100</sup> the word "femme" appears  
twenty-five times in Capitale de la Douleur, and throughout  
his work the feminine presence is linked inextricably with  
landscapes, both real and imaginary. Twenty-three of his

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97. O.C. I, p.375.

98. O.C. I, p.229.

99. Cf. A. Balakian: André Breton, p.142.

100. O.C. I, p.428.

101. O.C. I, p.437.

poems begin with the word "elle": 'Elle a jeté un pont de soupirs...', 'Elle est debout sur mes paupières', 'Elle surgissait de ses ressemblances' and so on.

Both "Rien d'autre" and "L'Extase" contain eye and mirror imagery which is closely linked to the landscape theme, and which helps to convey the sense of luminous vastness of which Carrouges speaks<sup>102</sup>; this theme comprises another aspect of the "regardant/regardé", for the landscape is a reflector in its own right, and is reflected in eyes; hence there is complete identification of eyes and landscape in such images as 'La géographie légendaire de tes regards' and 'la clairière de tes yeux'.<sup>103</sup>

Eluard's conception of sight as manifested in Donner à voir and in the network of images which give definite predominance to the visual, is distinctly personal, and in spite of a strong surrealist influence in the techniques he uses in these images, they betray little of the gratuity of the imagery of a Breton or a Péret. Eluard's language is always simple, its banality classical, whereas Breton, who has no concern for communication, is spontaneously attracted by strange and specialised terms, particularly those of the sciences. But the visual and luminous qualities of Eluard's poetry are aspects which he shares with Breton and other surrealists. Breton's poetry, too, is full of words such as "feu", "brillant", "soleil", "miroir", "cristal", and "eau"; for luminosity and transparency are part of the essential hallucinatory décor of the surrealist vision. The following lines of Eluard:

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102. Carrouges, op.cit., p.64.

103. O.C. I, p.382 and O.C. I, p.367.

Les dormeurs sont blancs, veinés de vert pâle,  
 aussi transparents que le cristal de roche;  
 leurs cuisses laissent passer les rayons du jour.<sup>104</sup>

echo Breton's "La forêt dans la hache":

Je n'ai plus qu'un corps transparent à l'intérieur  
 duquel des colombes transparentes se jettent sur  
 un poignard transparent tenu par une main trans-  
 parente.<sup>105</sup>

References to sun and light give the same glow to the work  
 of both poets, and yet the brilliancy of Breton's poetry  
 is much harder than that of Eluard's more fluid and musical  
 style. Breton wishes poetry to have the hard lustre of  
 crystal:

L'oeuvre d'art, au même titre d'ailleurs que tel  
 fragment de la vie humaine considérée dans sa  
 signification la plus grave, me paraît dénuée  
 de valeur si elle ne présente pas la dureté,  
 la rigidité, la régularité, le lustre sur toutes ses  
 faces extérieures, intérieures, du cristal (106)

but Eluard's poetry never possesses the inhuman, metallic  
 quality which Picon describes as an attribute of the most  
 authentic surrealist texts, which:

...nous présentent les pures concrétions de l'âme  
 humaine, évoquent un monde minéral d'où l'homme  
 est absent - et ces perles du désir et du rêve glacent  
 nos mains comme des métaux. (107)

It is significant that Eluard's images of rocks, stones  
 and pebbles relate these objects to man, usually as a  
 symbol of inertia and as a contrast to the movements of  
 human beings, and they are not merely objects whose main  
 value is in their appearance.<sup>108</sup> He frequently employs  
 the word "cristal", but rather as a representation of  
 transparency, and hence of human innocence, than of harsh

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104. O.C. I, p.920.

105. Breton: Clair de Terre, p.123.

106. Breton: L'Amour fou, p.14.

107. G. Picon, "Tradition et découverte chez Eluard, p.973.

108. R. Jean, Paul Eluard par lui-même, p.69.

and solid beauty:

Des filles de cristal aux tempes fraîches

Confiance de cristal

Entre deux miroirs

La nuit tes yeux se perdent

Pour joindre l'éveil au désir 109

Breton's poetry is certainly as visual and concrete as that of Eluard, as a comparison of "L'Union libre" and "Liberté" would show, and both poets are following the precept of the manifestoes, that, as Bosquet sums it up:

C'est avec les choses du réel - et non plus avec les sentiments, ni les notions abstraites - qu'on bâtit le surréel, aussi simplement et dictatorialement que la machine à coudre s'accouple avec le parapluie.<sup>110</sup>

Like Duchamp's surrealist objects, like Aragon's search for the marvellous in everyday Paris, like Roussel's obsessive observations of minutiae, the strange juxtaposition of concrete objects in Eluard's poetry and in Breton's poetry and prose surprise the reader into looking carefully, and with new eyes, at the concrete things which surround him.

Rolland Pierre<sup>111</sup> has drawn attention to the specifically concrete nature of Eluard's poetry by counting 40% of concrete nouns among the 1750 words he uses, compared with 14% abstract nouns, 20% verbs and 26% adjectives and adverbs; and the significant Quelques-uns des mots qui jusqu'ici m'étaient interdits, which epitomises Eluard's fascination for words, contains far more concrete nouns, such as 'cimetière', 'maisonette', 'olivier', 'forteresse', than abstract nouns ('malice', 'léthargie' etc.). Very often those abstract words which do appear acquire concrete

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109. O.C. I, p.368 and O.C. I, p.394.

110. A. Bosquet, 'Les poèmes', p.820.

111. R. Pierre, "Le Vocabulaire de Paul Eluard", Europe Nov/dec 1962 p.165.

connotations through their proximity to a visual term. For instance, colour, usually the general term but occasionally a specific colour, may transform something abstract into a predominantly visual image: 'caresse couleur de déluge', or 'un lundi soir de couleur tendre.'<sup>112</sup> This usage is very common in the context of laughter: 'des rires de couleur', 'rieur tout flambant rose', or 'L'ignorance à chanter la nuit/où le rire perd ses couleurs.'<sup>113</sup> As in this last example, lack of colour frequently conveys negative emotions<sup>114</sup>, or else such emotions are analogous with positive colour, thus suggesting vivid suffering as opposed to colourless ennui.

But if his poetry is concrete, and constantly concerned, as we have found, with the naming of objects perceived, those objects are often given only their generic names, and visually, if not sentimentally, may be as vague as Mallarmé's unnamed objects. Colour, as we have said, is much more frequently generic than specific<sup>115</sup> and whereas there are hundreds of references to birds, their species is only mentioned in rare cases: 'visage aux hirondelles', or 'la belle-de-nuit donne le jour à la chouette et au hibou.'<sup>116</sup> Animals, surely more readily named in our minds, are often given their generic title, except in the early work Les Animaux et leurs hommes, which enumerates specific animals, just as the Blason des fleurs et des fruits and the Blason des arbres are catalogues of specific vegetation,

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112. O.C. I, p.237 and p.1259.

113. O.C. II, p.342, O.C. I, p.1016, and p.246.

114. The positive/negative aspect of key words will be discussed in detail in later sections of this study.

115. Cf. M. Meuraud, op.cit., p.23.

116. O.C. I, p.1002 and O.C. I, p.925.

and are exceptions to the normal practice of the poet of using the generic terms "fleur", "arbre" or "végétation". By using these generic terms, Eluard conveys the outline of his own vision, but allows the reader the freedom to picture his own birds, animals or trees, according to the propensities of his own imagination. In "En Exil", for example, woman is identified with nature in several vegetal images, only one of which is specific: ('Un rire aux cheveux de cytise'). The general terms provide a vivid enough background, whilst yet allowing us to attach our own conceptions of colour and form to the plant/woman:

Plante majeure dans le bain  
 Végétal travaillé brune ou blonde  
 A l'extrême fleur de la tête  
 Sa nudité continuelle. 117.

This is one of the most important techniques to develop from the Donner à voir theme, for by its use Eluard manages to stimulate our imaginations without being too explicit.

### Part (iii): Conclusion: The Extent of Eluard's Surrealism

We have seen that Eluard adopts the surrealist view of the image as a 'stupéfiant', as the joining together of two entirely disparate objects into a disturbing 'ressemblance', and that he shares with Breton and other surrealists the techniques which bring the two terms as



close together as possible. His work, however, is not characterised by the kind of startling, spark-producing imagery he admires in other poets' work and lists in L'Evidence poétique; his images rarely have the gratuitous air of such lines of Breton as 'la rosée à tête de chatte se berçait', but as Gibson suggests: 'Close analysis of his image-making will in fact reveal that though he often arrives at what looks like a surrealist destination, it is not through following a surrealist route.'<sup>118</sup> The techniques of the 'image nominale', learned under Surrealism, survive this period and are used throughout his work, but the type of which Carmody<sup>119</sup> speaks, which are most commonly used in the later period, are characteristic for their banality; the juxtaposition of the 'noun of particular form plus an indefinite noun of substance', in such images as 'tes mains de pluie' or 'des oiseaux de diamant',<sup>120</sup> can be seen as part of the simple Eluardian pattern of vision, rather than as arbitrary dictations of the subconscious. Very often, an image will appear at first sight to have been automatically inspired, but then semantic connections are revealed by a knowledge of Eluard's closely linked network of key words, and the gap is narrowed between the two terms involved. 'L'immense fraise du soleil',<sup>121</sup> for instance, links the sun, with its connotations of light, life provision and growth, with the bright colour, rounded shape and plenitude of the fruit, and in "Dans les draps de ses yeux qui rêve/moi"<sup>122</sup>, the

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118. R. Gibson, "Paul Eluard and Surrealism", p.304.

119. Carmody, op.cit., p.442.

120. O.C. I, p.423.

121. O.C. I, p.397.

122. O.C. I, p.426.

eyes of the sleeper are identified with the sheets which cover him, and which suggest the closed eyes which interiorise his sleeping visions. Meschonnic<sup>123</sup> has drawn attention to a line from Poésie ininterrompue which sums up admirably the concordant nature of Eluard's attitude to the image: 'Image ô contact parfait'; Eluard's images, says the critic, 'sont plus souvent notations d'analogies qui s'imposent par leur justesse et qui enrichissent le monde sensible que des images surréalistes proprement dites.'

Eluard's reserves on the subject of automatic composition, and his predilection for the poem as a genre, produce, then, imagery which undergoes a strong surrealist influence, but is marked by his characteristic banality and "facilité", and whose almost classical limitation of vocabulary means that his terms 's'ordonnent en rosaces autour des termes constants',<sup>124</sup>. The frenetical pursuit of the startling image by other surrealists is in sharp contrast with the simplicity of most of Eluard's imagery, or even his lack of imagery. Mounin lays great stress on the lack of imagery in "La dame de carreau", which he calls 'un chef d'oeuvre terrible d'Eluard contre le surréalisme des autres'.<sup>125</sup> In this poem, and in many of the others of Les dessous d'une vie, Eluard conveys a sense of purity, the purity of the subconscious at the basis of the 'pyramide humaine', simply by relating his dreams without

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123. H. Meschonnic, "Eluard, poète classique", p.146.

124. R. Pierre, op.cit., p.165.

125. C. Mounin, 'La dame de carreau', p.309.

recourse to very much image-making, (Mounin holds that the two possible images in "La dame de carreau" are in fact 'des manières de dire toutes faites') describing the events and emotions of those dreams.

Often, however, in other works, the opposite applies, and the tendency of surrealist images to multiply produces conceits. In "En Exil", one vegetable image suggests another to the poet's mind, so that the whole poem is pervaded with this kind of image; in "Au revoir"<sup>126</sup>, a whole series of images centres attention on the hand; and in "La courbe de tes yeux", curved and rounded images are elaborated:

La courbe de tes yeux fait le tour de mon coeur  
Un rond de danse et de douceur  
Auréole du temps, berceau nocturne et sûr. (127)

There is evidence, as Mounin suggests in the context of "La dame de carreau", that Eluard sometimes rebels against the surrealist inclination, and the tendency in himself, to a preoccupation with imagery, and he admits, again in Les dessous d'une vie, that 'je devins esclave de la faculté pure de voir, esclave de mes yeux irréels et vierges, ignorants du monde et d'eux-mêmes.'<sup>128</sup> Later, in 1932, there is more self-criticism on this count:

J'ai pris l'habitude des images les plus  
inhabituelles. Je les ai vues où elles n'étaient  
pas. Je les ai mécanisées comme mes levers et  
mes couchers...j'ai mal vécu. 129.

Even at this point, there is the suggestion that Eluard resents the temptation to obscurity and to the ivory tower

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126. O.C. I, p.370.

127. O.C. I, p.196.

128. O.C. I, p.201.

129. O.C. I, p.377.

of the surrealist imagination. La vie immédiate ends with the famous "Critique de la poésie", an unusually violent poem and the first sign of the poet's transition from a temptation to live solely in the world of his imagination, towards the acceptance of a duty to apply poetry, and its imagery, to the problems of the outside world. In fact, however, Eluard never succumbed completely to the influence of automatism and the 'stupéfiant image', for in spite of his fascination for words and propensities for image-making, it is the whole poem of Eluard which impresses us, because of the harmony of his vocabulary, his conceptions and his visions, whereas in the poetry of other surrealists we may remember isolated striking images:

La poésie surréaliste, en effet, tient toutes ses vertus de la succession même des mots, de leurs rapprochements et des images qui explosent dans ces contacts. Poésie purement matérielle, je veux dire reposant sur ces éléments matériels que sont les mots et les images, tout le contraire d'une poésie formelle qui rechercherait une unité transcendante à ces éléments. Or la poésie d'Eluard est un exemple accompli de poésie formelle. Bien qu'Eluard ait donné à la poésie actuelle quelques-unes de ses images les plus neuves et les plus bouleversantes, il est évident que le poème est toute autre chose chez lui, que l'ensemble des éléments poétiques. Il est l'unité qui gouverne ces éléments, le contour ingauchissable qui les ordonne. 130.

## CHAPTER IV

### TRANSITION AND ACCEPTANCE.

Je ne veux plus dormir seul  
Je ne veux plus m'éveiller  
Perclus de sommeil et de rêves  
Sans reconnaître la lumière  
Et la vie au premier instant.

"Le front couvert", O.C. I, p.470.

In tracing Eluard's progression from 'l'horizon d'un homme à l'horizon de tous', it would be wrong to suggest that there exists an easily identified period of transformation from Surrealism to Communism, or even that the poet may be glibly placed into these categories at all. Although it is evident that he broke away from the surrealist movement in 1938, his orientation towards the humanitarian, "clear" poetry advocated by Aragon<sup>1</sup>, and away from the esoteric style of Surrealism was developing gradually for several years before the rupture; the anti-bourgeois, fraternal sentiments he expressed after 1932 were by no means incompatible with Surrealism, and the influence of Surrealism on his imagery endured throughout his life. It is undeniable, however, that there is a change in tone, which it is possible to trace even as far back as 1926; that there is a gradual reorientation of attitudes in two specific spheres, both of which are very much linked. Firstly, there is a growing disillusionment with the idea of love as an interiorised, exclusive feeling, and the development of a deep partnership with a woman with whom he is prepared to face the world and view it realistically;

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1. Aragon: L'Homme Communiste II, p.140.

and secondly, the poet turns away from the individualist perspective of the dreamlike surrealist world towards a growing commitment of his poetry to the struggle of the ordinary man against injustice.

Any study of the growth of Eluard's political consciousness must necessarily relate to the history of the poet's gradual understanding of himself in terms of his relationship with women,<sup>2</sup> and a study of the accompanying change in tone will naturally refer to both. The period 1926-1936 saw the emotional upheaval of an unsatisfactory relationship with Gala eventually change to contentment with Nusch, and it was also a time of considerable political upheaval in Europe. The 1930's witnessed the rise of Hitler in Germany and of the extremist right-wing Leagues in France, followed by the Spanish Civil War; and Eluard first joined the Communist Party as early as 1926, (with Aragon, Breton, Péret and Unik), signing an explanatory pamphlet entitled Au grand jour, one of many left-wing pamphlets to which he put his name; other notable examples are the Appel à lutte and the Enquête sur l'Unité d'action; which followed the right-wing riots of February 6th, 1934. He visited Spain in 1936, a few months before the outbreak of war.

In 1926, a great deal of sadness and disillusionment is mixed with protestations of the joyfulness of love. Pantanella<sup>3</sup> suggests that although Capitale de la douleur is a veritable "Hymne à l'amour", it is addressed to '...toi qui n'as pas de nom et que les autres ignorent'. He is

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2. Cf. R. Pantanella: "L'Amour et l'engagement d'après l'oeuvre poétique de Paul Eluard."

3. Ibid. pp.37-38

right to disagree with Parrot's view that its love poems are written about Gala, since, as he points out, she is only named in nightmares in Les dessous d'une vie, and since she is evidently the cause of a great deal of his unhappiness (Showalter<sup>4</sup> sees the flight of 1924 and the general unhappiness of the period as attributable to her affair with Ernst). Gala, it seems, invokes specific misery by her unfaithfulness and unbalanced behaviour:

Elle se refuse toujours à comprendre, à entendre,  
Elle rit pour cacher sa terreur d'elle-même. (5)

whereas the ideal woman of his dreams gives rise to a nebulous feeling of love and contentment:

La forme de ton coeur est chimérique  
Et ton amour ressemble à mon désir perdu  
O soupirs d'ambre, rêves, regards. (6)

This woman certainly has her roots in Gala, and in his memories of the happiness of their first years together, but she is a perfected Gala, a Proustian projection of the ideal on to someone imperfectly loved.

A study of the imagery representing the two moods, 'l'univers-solitude' and 'l'univers-amour' in Capitale de la douleur will be useful in tracing the poet's eventual orientation away from the former and towards the latter, for as Showalter points out<sup>7</sup>, the two concepts were fully developed by 1926, and were represented on the one hand by images of darkness, stillness and disintegration, and on the other by images of light, movement and sound. An

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4. E. Showalter, "Biographical Aspects of Eluard's Poetry", p.281.

5. O.C. I, p.173.

6. O.C. I, p.166.

7. op.cit., p.285.

examination of the themes of darkness and light will prove particularly helpful in illustrating the oscillations of his moods, and the final predominance of the external world of daylight over the interiorised world of night.

For Eluard, as for Baudelaire, night is paradoxically both a symbol of fear, sadness and desolation, and a symbol of repose and solace. The two seem less contradictory, however, in the light of the conclusions drawn from our examination of the imagery of eyes and closed eyes in Chapter Three; for whilst night is the time when we cannot see or be seen, it is also the time of dreams, when the imagination takes over the rôle of the eyes. At this period, although the impression of night as a time of solitude and hostility is very strong, the picture of it as a haven of purity and security predominates. Borel sees the Eluard of Mourir de ne pas mourir and Capitale de la douleur as:

...l'habitant solitaire, frileux, aveugle, menacé,  
sourdement inquiet, d'une nuit vide, d'une nuit hostile  
et privée d'être.

but adds that:

...assez étrangement, il semble que ce premier Eluard qui se sent si démuné et si transi dans la clôture de la solitude et de la 'nuit d'hiver', dans la séparation d'avec le monde, ne puisse supporter directement la plénitude débordante, l'éclatement du grand jour. Qu'il lui faille ce retrait de la nuit et de la rêverie, et cette solitude elle-même où il s'enferme avec angoisse ou inquiétude, mais où il s'enferme cependant, où, comme le dormeur, il s'enfouit. Comme si, entre lui et le plein jour, le monde du don, de l'abondance et du ruissellement, l'écran de la rêverie était indispensable, et qu'il lui fallût amortir une clarté trop vive. (8)

He also points to the significance of the frequency of



the gesture of putting the hand over the eyes in these collections:

Que le feuillage invisible est beau! J'ai fait un geste incompréhensible; j'ai mis ma main en visière sur mes yeux.. (9)

The nocturnal atmosphere is very much one of solitude:

Je sors au bras des ombres,  
Je suis au bas des ombres,  
Seul.

of despair:

La consolation graine perdue  
Le remords pluie fondue  
La douleur bouche en coeur  
Et mes larges mains luttent.

and bitterness, a very rare sentiment in Eluard, but momentarily provoked by Ernst and Gala:

Tout au sérieux, celui qui ne paie pas les dégats  
Jongle avec ton trousseau, reine des lavandes. (10)

And yet night is full of a strength and purity which outweighs all this. It is a refuge from disillusionment, a time of refreshing sleep:

Il dort pour éprouver sa force  
...Bonne volonté du sommeil  
D'un bout à l'autre de la mort.<sup>11</sup>

To be tempted by daylight, says the poet, he would have to be sure that it was as unsullied as the night:

A la fin, pour se couvrir d'une aube  
Il faudra que le ciel soit aussi pur que la nuit.<sup>12</sup>

Above all, he identifies night with woman. Her eyes are a 'berceau nocturne et sûr',<sup>13</sup> and her existence is tied to the hours of darkness:

Elle est - mais elle n'est qu'à minuit quand tous les oiseaux blancs ont refermé leurs ailes sur l'ignorance des ténèbres... (14)

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9. O.C. I, p.210.  
10. O.C. I, p.176, p.185 and p.180.  
11. O.C. I, p.302.  
12. O.C. I, p.194.  
13. O.C. I, p.196.  
14. O.C. I, p.169.

Through her the universe is revealed:

Nocturne, l'univers se meut dans ta chaleur<sup>15</sup>

but at this stage it is a nocturnal world full of artificial lights, and not the external, peopled world of daylight revealed later by Nusch. Even in the later period, however, he is occasionally assailed by nostalgia for the undoubted purity of night; "Notre nuit meilleure que nos jours", in Poésie et Vérité 1942, expresses the freshness of sleep and love at night, compared with the heavy monotony and hopelessness of life during the day in wartime. Although normally in the post-surrealist years woman is identified with daylight:

Par toi je vais de la lumière à la lumière  
De la chaleur à la chaleur  
C'est par toi que je parle et tu restes au centre  
De tout comme un soleil consentant au bonheur (16)

here, as in Capitale de la douleur, she is an integral part of the night: 'Nous reverrons ton soir nous reverrons ta nuit.' As Showalter says<sup>17</sup>, by 1926, the idea of the loved one as the poet's link to the world had become a definite poetic philosophy; the nature of that link, however, was to change radically when Nusch replaced Gala.

Eluard, then, shrinks from daylight at this period, but his poetry is nonetheless full of a strange and brilliant glow. Whereas day is represented in the profound sadness and monotony of such a poem as "Leurs yeux toujours purs" ('Jours de lenteur, jours de pluie...Jours de paupières closes à l'horizon des mers'), night is brightly lit by the

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15. Ibid.

16. O.C. II, p.35. Poésie ininterrompue I.

17. Showalter, op.cit., p.282.

moon and stars, enveloped in a transparent radiance  
which gives rise to brilliantly colourful images:

Tout est transparent  
C'est la lune qui est au centre de la terre  
C'est la verdure qui couvre le ciel

Ailes couvrant le monde de lumière  
Bateaux chargés du ciel et de la mer  
Chasseurs des bruits et sources des couleurs.<sup>18</sup>

Transparency, as we have seen, is a symbol of innocence in Eluard, and it is appropriate that the light of his pure, surrealist nights should frequently be manifested in terms of transparency. In Capitale de la douleur, and even more manifestly in Les dessous d'une vie, light is the light of dreams, the dazzling glow of the paintings of Chirico or Dali, casting long shadows and lending a bright luminosity to the objects created by the imagination:

Et le soleil refleurira, comme le mimosa

Le raisin des façades couchées sur le soleil

C'est par une nuit comme celle-ci que j'ai cueilli  
sur la verdure perpendiculaire des framboises blanches  
comme du lait, du dessert pour cette amoureuse de  
mauvaise volonté.

C'est par une nuit comme celle-ci que j'ai régné  
sur des rois et des reines alignés dans un couloir.  
de craie! (19)

The artificial nature proper to surrealist images does not detract in the least from their purity; for the Eluard of this period sees the products of the imagination as completely pure, and real life as dangerously corrupting:

During his period of intense Surrealism, Eluard is tempted by an absolute purity and perfection completely cut off from life. 'D'abord un grand désir m'était venu ...' describes a turning inwards on himself, dismissing all life, including his own, as corrupt and tainted and aspiring to a majestic and deathlike purity. (20)

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18. O.C. I, p.188 and p.196.

19. O.C. I, p.193, p.185 and p.206.

20. N. Tatum, Aspects of selected images from the poetry of Paul Eluard, p.7.

In "La dame de carreau", there is the suggestion that he has rejected the overpowering light of day, and finds the light of his imagination sufficient to illuminate his preferred, nocturnal landscape:

En vérité, la lumière m'éblouit. J'en garde assez  
en moi pour regarder la nuit, toute la nuit, toutes  
les nuits.

Dawn, in fact, is a time to be dreaded, 'un instant de rupture ou de désenchantement, une intrusion glacée et grise',<sup>21</sup> when one must leave the peace and purity of dreams, sleep and love:

Dans cette aube de soie où végète le froid  
La luxure en péril regrette le sommeil.  
Dans les mains du soleil tous les corps qui s'éveillent  
Grelottent à l'idée de retrouver leur coeur. (22)

In "Notre nuit meilleure que nos jours", the wrench is the same, although the poet looks forward to the next night. Normally in the later period, however, dawn is a time of sweetness and hope.

There is a little more light, a little less melancholy, in L'Amour la poésie; there is still a great deal of "nocturnal" imagery, but the shift towards optimism is by now, as Benoit<sup>23</sup> points out, becoming more and more pronounced. L.-G. Gros, reviewing the work detected 'une clarification croissante du langage, une tendance vers plus de lumière',<sup>24</sup> since Répétitions in 1922.

"Seconde nature" abounds in the vocabulary of night, absence, silence and fear:

La solitude le silence  
Plus émouvant  
Au crépuscule de la peur  
Que le premier contact des larmes.  
Les ailes aveugles de la peur. (25)

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21. Borel, op.cit., p.97.

22. O.C. I, p.168.

23. Benoit, "Poetic themes of Paul Eluard", p.220.

24. L.-G. Gros, 'Le langage au service de l'amour', p.58.

25. O.C. I, pp. 244 and 245.

There is broken glass and extinguished light:

Des vitres cassent des vitres  
Des lampes éteignent des lampes.<sup>26</sup>

and there are several images of imprisonment:

Les prisonniers de neige fondent dans leur prison.  
...prisons absurdes

L'indépendance est en prison.<sup>27</sup>

"Comme une image" paints a similar picture of desolation and solitude. For instance, in Section VII, which contains words like "ruines", "signe de zéro", "sanglots" and "absente", each line ends in the word "seul". There are references to heavy perfumes, and by specifying them, the poet creates a stronger impression of smell than if he had followed his usual practice of using the generic term:

La présence de la lavande au chevet des malades  
Armure de proie de parfum noir rayonne  
Les arbres sont coiffés d'un paysage en amande.<sup>28</sup>

There are also hard surfaces devoid of colour, strengthening the impression of the heaviness of melancholy: 'les montagnes d'albâtre', 'des étoiles d'ébène', 'l'ordre de plomb'.<sup>29</sup> Section IV, which includes the four images immediately above, is bitter and profoundly sad, full of such terms as "malheur", "ruine", "tombe", "mort" and negative images of vision:

Son visage petit matin  
S'ouvre comme une prison  
Ses yeux sont des têtes coupées.

Et l'inépuisable silence...  
(Qui)...Brise tous les miroirs des lèvres.

The birds are not the light-spreading birds of the majority

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26. O.C. I, p.252.

27. O.C. I, p.247 and p.253.

28. O.C. I, p.255 and p.256.

29. O.C. I, p.256 and p.257.

of Eluard's work, but nocturnal birds and birds of prey:

Le hibou le corbeau le vautour  
Je ne crois pas aux autres oiseaux.<sup>30</sup>

Colour is suppressed:

La poussiéreuse mort des couleurs  
L'idiotie...

L'ignorance à chanter la nuit  
Où le rire perd ses couleurs.<sup>31</sup>

whilst snow, normally an image of sparkling light, is  
powerless in the face of darkness and death:

Révolte de la neige  
Qui succombe bientôt frappée d'un seul coup d'ombre  
Juste le temps de rapprocher l'oubli des morts  
De faire pâlir la terre. (32)

Even though silence, desolation and sadness pre-  
dominate in the images of light, however, there are  
glimpses of darkness as a welcome escape. Section XIX  
is self-mocking, and shows prison as an agreeable 'ivory  
tower' of indifference, whilst in Section XX of "Première-  
ment", he is only able to say 'l'aube je t'aime' because  
he has retained the atmosphere of night in his veins. If  
woman/night leaves him, desolation/day will return:

Si tu t'en vas la porte s'ouvre sur le jour  
Si tu t'en vas la porte s'ouvre sur moi-même.

She it is who provides the light in his universe:

Ses yeux sont des tours de lumière

D'une seule caresse  
Je te fais briller de tout ton éclat.<sup>33</sup>

In spite of the amount of lines devoted to 'l'univers-  
solitude', the growing persuasion that the poet's only  
possible existence is within the couple, and that she

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30. O.C. I, p.259.

31. O.C. I, p.257 and 246.

32. O.C. I, p.261.

33. O.C. I, p.229 and p.236.

links him with the world:

Tu as toutes les joies solaires  
 Tout le soleil sur la terre  
 Sur les chemins de ta beauté. (34)

points to an increasingly outward-looking attitude.

Furthermore, there are hints of a return of the humanitarian tendencies of the poems of the First War, at the beginning of "Seconde nature". The words: 'A genoux la jeunesse à genoux la colère' open a poem of vigorous anger, a mood uncommon in Eluard before "Critique de la poésie" in 1932; "A la flamme des fouets (1)" in Capitale de la douleur, reflects an angry mood, but the anger there is tinged with bitterness against Ernst and Gala, whereas this less personal poem is lacking in bitterness. In the same way, it is less personal than "Comme une image" IV, less pessimistic and more positive. The last lines of the first section prefigure the communist poems:

Et nous sommes le sol sur quoi tout est bâti  
 Et nous sommes partout  
 Où se lève le ciel des autres  
 Partout où le refus de vivre est inutile.

Repetition of 'nous' creates a strong feeling of solidarity, and the affirmation of life in 'nous sommes' is paralleled by the vigour of 'le refus de vivre est inutile.' The linking of 'sol' and 'ciel' with 'partout' conveys an impression of spacial totality, whilst 'tout est bâti' expresses totality and communal effort. All of these are features of the mature, strongly committed verse.

As yet, however, the target of his anger is not explicit; he speaks only of a place where values are wrong, where

'L'épouvante est polie la misère a des charmes.'

The anger in A toute épreuve is of the same mould as that occasioned by Gala and Ernst in Capitale de la douleur, for now Gala has begun a liaison with Dali:

Colère sous le signe atroce  
De la jalousie l'injustice  
La plus savante. (35)

In the section which includes these lines, the words 'ciel sombre' are repeated, the sky is "impur", the poet flees from daylight. Eluard has suffered an evident setback in his progress from "l'univers-solitude" towards "l'univers-amour" because of Gala's latest affair; he is thrust deeper into a terrible isolation. Pantanella<sup>36</sup> suggests that his new love for Nusch seems almost inopportune in 1930, and his attention is turned towards the pain caused by Gala, with whom he still feels a physical tie. Even though pain and sadness are so amply manifested in the work, and especially in "Confections", there are still love poems to the idealised woman whose roots are in Gala.

Part 15 of "L'univers-solitude", whose title we, after Showalter, have adopted as a useful label for the dark side of the Gala period, typifies the mood of the work. It is a cry of pain from one in 'tourments infirmes', and full of inverted images; the eyes are closed, birds do not know where to land, "ressemblance" is rejected: 'je ne cherche plus mon semblable'; and images themselves, so often mentioned by the poet who is forever conscious of their poetic intensity and private significance, are in this case "sourdes". His solitude is expressed with the banality

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35. O.C. I, p.294.

36. Pantanella, op.cit., pp.69-70.



which he advocates: 'Je suis seul je suis seul tout seul.' There is a dying, fading quality in all this: '...la vie s'est affaissée.' In this work as in L'Amour la poésie, fading is linked with absence and solitude:

Le ciel fané qui leur tient lieu d'ombrage  
La nuit fanée la terre absente seul (37)

In spite of the sense of loss caused by his wife's affair, however, Eluard never gives himself up completely to misery, neither does he talk of hatred or blame (neither Ernst nor Dali were permanently resented). He prefers to see his state in terms of absurdity, and this is a word which is frequently used, a feeling which is predominant in the solitary universe phase:

Mais ce sinistre est inutile  
Je sais sourire  
Tête absurde. (38)

To see things as absurd is to diminish their importance, and the poet is able, here at least, to mock himself, albeit with a grim smile.

The light in A toute épreuve is not as brilliant as that of Capitale de la douleur and l'Amour la poésie, as befits its extreme melancholy. Instead of being expressed in images of transparency and colour, the light here is the muted light of the stars. In one case, like the 'étoiles d'ébène'<sup>39</sup> of l'Amour la poésie, and the 'étoiles...plus noires que la nuit'<sup>40</sup>, in La vie immédiate, a star is black: 'son coeur s'inscrit dans une étoile noire'<sup>41</sup>, reminding us of Nerval's "Soleil noir de la mélancolie". Elsewhere, night is green<sup>42</sup>, a startling colour in the

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37. L'Amour la poésie, O.C. I, p.292 and O.C. I, p.260.

38. O.C. I, p.296.

39. O.C. I, p.256.

40. O.C. I, p.385.

41. O.C. I, p.294.

42. O.C. I, p.296.

context, but not a brilliantly illuminating one, and is linked with solitude, and prison, and a negative image of fire 'le feu dort tout debout'; green in Eluard does not always represent nature, but often is part of a dreamlike, surrealist image, like the foliage seen when the eyes are closed,<sup>43</sup> or like 'les guêpes fleurissent vert.'<sup>44</sup>

If the work of Nerval is evoked by some of the strange effects of light in Eluard, it is worth noting the latter's great admiration for him, and the association of his name with that of Chirico in Donner à voir<sup>45</sup>. Eluard sees the same atmosphere in the "supernaturalist" verse of the mad poet and in Chirico's paintings, and we are reminded of the dazzling Mediterranean light in both. Eluard met the painter in Rome in 1923<sup>46</sup>, and was evidently influenced by his vision of the world; he frequently uses the image of the empty "place" so common in Chirico, to suggest solitude:

Sur cette place absurde tu n'es pas plus seule  
Qu'une feuille dans un arbre qu'un oiseau dans les airs.

C'est une place sans statue  
Sans rameurs sans pavillon noir  
Une place nue irisée (47)

A toute épreuve, then, is dominated by solitude and suffering, and it contains little idea of the hours of darkness as a refuge. When the poet speaks of:

Les merveilles des ténèbres à gagner  
D'être invisibles mais libératrices  
Tout entières dans chaque tête  
Folles de solitude (48)

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43. Cf. note 9.

44. O.C. I, p.232.

45. O.C. I, pp. 958-9.

46. R. Pierre: 'Le vocabulaire de Paul Eluard', p.165.

47. O.C. I, p.461 and p.258. Cf. also R. Jean: Paul Eluard par lui-même, pp.60-62.

48. O.C. I, p.298.

the suggestion of finding solace in being alone in the shadows is followed by a more objective statement that solitude separates man from himself, as well as from others, which, in view of his theories of the reciprocity of all things, is not a consoling thought. The isolation of the poet in "Confections" provides a strong contrast to those lines in L'Amour la poésie in which he manifests a concern for others, and gives no hint of the intense feelings of solidarity in his later work. There is, however, a move towards a more universalised concept of love in the last poem, in which he refers to all women and all love, instead of his own; "Amoureuses" is a step nearer to a realisation of the couple's link with the world than "L'Amoureuse" of 1924.

"Une pour toutes", in La vie immédiate, provides a more explicit picture of Eluard's growing awareness that all women are mirrored in one; it also provides a more realistic view of love than we have seen so far, avoiding expressing it either in terms of suffering and isolation, or of deep joy, but admitting the oscillations of his reactions to women. Here they are:

Une ou plusieurs  
Avec tous leurs défauts tous leurs mérites  
Des femmes. (49)

and images of desolation are mingled with images of beatitude:

Les bruits de la peur dans les bois revêches  
Parées de calme et de fraîcheur  
Parées de sel d'eau de soleil

The sun is much in evidence, a symbol of light and fecundity in its brightness and roundness: 'La collerette du soleil/L'immense fraise du soleil.' Some striking imagery expresses the charm of women; the 'visage ganté de lierre' recalls the romantic portraits of Valentine Hugo, in which faces are outlined and shaded in leaves, and a banal, innocent delight is conveyed by 'tentantes comme du pain frais'. Eluard's unfortunate experiences with Gala are reflected, on the other hand, in images such as that of the crow with faded wings, and the 'nuit meurtrie'. The concrete nature of the abundant surrealist imagery is balanced by an unusual amount of abstract words which make his meaning simple and clear; women are creatures of tenderness and caprice, 'de rires de sanglots de négligences de tourments ridicules.' The juxtaposition of laughter and tears echoes many other such references to Gala, of which the 'pleurer et rire' of "L'Amoureuse" is a prominent example, and one feels that her erratic behaviour is partly responsible for his mixed feelings about 'une ou plusieurs.' In the main, however, in this poem, Gala is the source of disquiet, and universalised woman the source of delight. In the last stanza, in which he speaks of the woman who has shared a violent and disturbed youth with him, that youth is described as 'saturée d'ennui', whereas earlier in the poem the plural version is 'loin de l'ennui'. Eluard is beginning to contrast Gala with universal woman rather than build an idealised picture of her; he has moved away from the idealised woman towards the generalised woman.

This poem is placed near the end of La vie immédiate, in the group of poems which, as Showalter<sup>50</sup> points out, reflect his new source of inspiration in the shape of Nusch, and the resultant optimism. The poems at the beginning, however, are full of images of darkness and solitude of the pattern which is by now well established. "Vers minuit"<sup>51</sup>, for instance, includes "Des morts des prisonniers des fous tous les absents", all key words of "l'univers-solitude". The poet's resentment here is implicitly directed against Gala and Dali; his bitterness is mainly turned upon himself, the "idiot", who provided a ring 'qu'il croyait en argent', and is once more diluted in the use of "absurde":

Lardée de mauves et de pervenches absurdes.

Here, however, the word is used in reference to Gala rather than himself, and it is impossible to ignore the bitterness in this description:

Voici la fille immatérielle  
Incomplète et laide baignée de nuit et de misère.

The disquiet of night and isolation is strongly expressed throughout the first group of poems. In the following image, the impression of the poet's nervous tension is particularly graphic:

Les oiseaux de nuit sans mouvement dans leur parure  
Ne fixent rien que l'insomnie aux nerfs assassins (52)

whilst a Lamartinian sense of emptiness in vast expanses of nature is conveyed in "La Vue":<sup>53</sup>

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50. Showalter, op.cit., p.282, suggests that the work may be divided into three groups of poems: 1. Up to O.C. I, p.377, these poems are addressed to an unidentified 'toi' once loved by Eluard (Gala). 2. Up to O.C. I, p.393, Poems about 'elle' (Gala) addressed to his poet and artist friends. 3. From p.393, The unhappy moment has passed; Nusch provides new inspiration.

51. O.C. I, pp. 366-367.

52. O.C. I, pp. 370-371.

53. O.C. I, p. 389.

Je n'aime ni les routes ni les montagnes ni les forêts...  
Je suis indifférent...

In "Nuits partagées",<sup>54</sup> Eluard examines his relationship with Gala, and the break-up of their marriage; in particular, he speaks with self-mockery of the dream woman he has created, and, with Nusch in mind, comes to the conclusion that: 'je prendrai peut-être parti pour des êtres différents de celui que j'avais inventé.' Absurdity and ennui are once more important elements in the vocabulary:

Maintenant, je ne viens plus te voir que pour être plus sûr du grand mystère que constitue encore l'absurde durée de ma vie, l'absurde durée d'une nuit.

Il y a si longtemps que la porte têtue n'avait pas cédé, si longtemps que la monotonie de l'espoir nourrissait l'ennui, si longtemps que tes sourires étaient des larmes.

and "ennui" is described as 'cet aigle aux yeux crevés' an eagle without sight being indeed an immobile, abased creature. 'Abîme' is a word which recurs, underlining the impression of the darkness into which Eluard feels plunged:

Au-dessus de toi, ta chevelure glisse dans l'abîme qui justifie notre éloignement.

Ténèbres abyssales toutes tendues vers une confusion éblouissante...

Their isolation as a couple is well expressed in the image of the empty theatre:

Nous avons refusé de laisser entrer les spectateurs,  
Car il n'y a pas de spectacle. Souviens-toi, pour la solitude, la scène vide sans décors, sans acteurs, sans musiciens. L'on dit: le théâtre du monde, la scène mondiale et, nous deux, nous ne savons plus ce que c'est;

the poet is conscious now of the extreme loneliness of their exclusive relationship.

In spite of the dark and gloomy atmosphere of this poem, however, there is some light, although it is not the natural light of the sun. To reach Gala now, to rediscover 'les couleurs et les formes conventionnelles' which make it possible, the poet confesses that he must close his eyes, 'car je ne t'aime plus au grand jour.' The light of which he speaks produces 'de belles images, des négatifs, de nos rencontres.' There is surely a play on words here, the state of their relationship at this point being distinctly negative. It is interesting to note also, however, that a few lines further on, there is a reversal of normal light effects when the abysmal shadows are described as leading to a 'confusion éblouissante', the latter adjective normally being descriptive of bright light. Light here is an agent of transformation in the surrealist, cabbalist process which is so important to Eluard and Breton:

...des êtres que je transformais comme je te transformais,  
 en pleine lumière, comme on transforme l'eau d'une  
 source en la prenant dans un verre, comme on  
 transforme sa main en la mettant dans une autre.

There is, as Showalter suggests, a definite progression towards optimism in the course of La vie immédiate, and from the poem entitled "Nusch" onwards, the atmosphere is lighter and happier. "Nusch" contains a positive eye image:

Tes yeux sont livrés à ce qu'ils voient  
 Vus par ce qu'ils regardent.

and "Pardon" speaks of 'Espoir espoir absolu.' The end of this collection, and in particular "Une pour toutes", coincides with a new phase in Eluard's experience of love, his affection for Nusch being accompanied by a realisation

of woman as a representative of all women. At the same time, his political consciousness has developed to the point where he can write the startling "Critique de la poésie". This poem is violent, succinct, and, for the first time, puts politics before poetry. Certainly Eluard's natural bent is towards succinctness, but until now, except in a few poems of bitterness against Gala and Ernst or Dali, he was never violent, and certainly never expressed hatred; and the lines:

Je crache à la face de l'homme plus petit que nature  
Qui à tous mes poèmes ne préfère pas cette Critique  
de la poésie,

are in strong contrast to the ideas of the Eluard of 1920 who thought that 'le langage peut être un but.'<sup>55</sup> From the vague intimations in L'Amour la poésie that something is wrong, Eluard has turned to an unequivocal attack on the bourgeoisie, the police and the Church, the traditional targets of anarchists and communists since the Paris Commune of 1871. At a time when Hitler's power is growing, and fascist leagues are forming in France, he decides to use his pen against the forces which are working against his ideal of purity. Aragon<sup>56</sup> says that Eluard, not being a communist at the time, suffers from a sense of sacrifice and "déchirement" in this poem, in contrast with the later, communist poems which exhibit a harmony of poetic and political ideas. It may be argued that the harmony of many of the later poems is produced because poetic concerns are subjected to political necessity; in retrospect, in any

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55. Cf. Chapter I, p.13.

56. Aragon: L'Homme communiste, vol. II, p.118.



case, Eluard's admissions in Poésie ininterrompue I, prove that he was becoming increasingly troubled by his tendency to live in a dream world divorced from reality. One feels, however, that Aragon's communist beliefs make him overstate the semi-conscious struggle in Eluard's mind at the time. The surrealists were fond of attacking the bourgeoisie in violent terms, and although the preference of the political idea over poetry is out of keeping with the poetry-absorbed Eluard we have seen so far, the surrealist group never saw poetry as anything but a means to an end, indeed disapproved of the word as signifying a literary genre, and was indulging in heavy political debate at this period. Certainly the germs of the poet's later commitment to Communism are here, however, and Aragon quotes Maiakovsky: 'J'ai mis le pied sur la gorge de ma propre chanson.'

La Rose publique, published at the end of the year of the fascist riots, contains yet more evidence of a more outward-looking attitude, as the title suggests.

Mondal est parisien  
 Il est de la vieille race des bâtards...  
 Nous le voyons gagner à grand'peine sa vie.<sup>57</sup>

Such lines mark a return to the consciousness of the hardships of everyday life manifested in Le devoir et l'inquiétude and Poèmes pour la paix, and a sympathy for the ordinary man. The bourgeoisie, from whose ranks the threat of fascism has grown, is attacked:

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57. O.C. I, p.433.

Illustre continent  
 Aussi laid que cheval et bourgeois réunis  
 Ne prends pas la forme d'une machine à faire le mort.<sup>58</sup>

By now the poet realises that the comforting internal world he has occupied for so long is unsatisfactory, and that the past is an obstacle to his present happiness, particularly in the matter of love:

Et j'oppose à l'amour  
 Des images toutes faites  
 Au lieu d'images à faire.<sup>59</sup>

The decision is made, and again the poet thinks in terms of imagery, his most important support:

C'en est fini de voler au secours infâme des images  
 d'hier. (60)

Dorothy Aspinwall points to the following lines as further proof of his resolution:

Il faut passer malgré le tour câlin qu'a pris la lutte  
 Passer les coteaux les grands lits végétaux  
 Saupoudrés de soleil (61)

The move from the internal to the external world is manifested in the predominance of imagery of light and fecundity over imagery of darkness:

Des boucles de beau temps des printemps lézards  
 Une ronde de mères lumineuses.

Il n'y a pas une goutte de nuit dans tes yeux  
 Je vis dans une lumière exclusive la tienne. (62)

Furthermore, and this is the most important sign of a transformation in Eluard's mind, light now is the light of the sun; daylight, now that he is married to Nusch, has at last come into its own:

Quand ta robe s'ouvre à pic  
 Donnant le jour à ton corps tendre...  
 Ce que j'aime dans ton visage c'est l'arrivée  
 D'une lampe ardente en plein jour. (63)

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58. O.C. I, p.430.

59. O.C. I, p.413.

60. O.C. I, p.424.

61. O.C. I, p.438 and Aspinwall, D., "Eluard's Tout aiguisé de soif, tout affamé de froid" p.22.

62. O.C. I, p.423 and p.441.

63. O.C. I, p.439.

Now the eye images are positive again, there is reciprocity of vision: 'rien ne nous est invisible', 'dans notre miroir au coeur double.'<sup>64</sup> And there are bursts of hope:

Il y a pourtant des rires sur terre  
...Des promesses de soleil frais. (65)

Pantanella<sup>66</sup> holds that in "Une personnalité...", which traces his progression from Gala to Nusch, Eluard is blaming a bourgeois life-style for the failure of their marriage. He adds, however, that although Eluard has acquired a certain social consciousness, 'il en était encore à une colère inactive, potentielle.' Although in this work the new inspiration of Nusch is in evidence, the poet has not yet made the link between love and social commitment. Apart from the change in emphasis in the imagery of light, there is no change in style. His political ideas are not yet well enough defined to demand a radical change in this area. La Rose publique is full of surrealist imagery, as esoteric, as uncommunicable to the man in the street as that of the Gala period; indeed, it has been called his most surrealist collection.<sup>67</sup>

Leurs poissons chantent comme des perles.  
Tu rejoindrais l'immensité à tête d'épingle.  
Ma chambre s'est coiffée pour la nuit (68)

His surrealist faith is reiterated in one title:

L'objectivité poétique n'existe que dans la succession,  
dans l'enchaînement de tous les éléments subjectifs  
dont le poète est, jusqu'à nouvel ordre, non le maître,  
mais l'esclave,

which places him firmly in the camp of Breton and those who, like Rimbaud, advocate submission to the 'murmure'

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64. O.C. I, p.418.

65. O.C. I, p.434.

66. Pantanella, op.cit., p.<sup>94</sup>

67. Benoit, op.cit., p.222; Parrot, Paul Eluard, p.39.

68. O.C. I, p.425, p.430 and p.431.

of the subconscious, although quite soon afterwards he is to say that 'le poète est celui qui inspire bien plus que celui qui est inspiré.'<sup>69</sup> Night is still to some extent a solace:

Boire  
Un grand bol de sommeil noir  
Jusqu'à la dernière goutte (70)

and light still, on occasions, that of the night:

Lumière noire vieil incendie  
Mon coeur bat dans tout ton corps  
Dans tes retraites préférées  
Sur l'herbe blanche de la nuit  
Sous les arbres noyés (71)

The rose is a prominent symbol in this work; it contributes vividly to the surrealist image, often as a sex symbol rather than the traditional, more romantic symbol of love which is often devoid of eroticism.

Il offrait à  
Toutes les femmes  
Une rose privilégiée.

La parfumée la rose adulte le pavot et la fleur vierge  
de la torche  
Pour composer la peau enrobée de femmes nues. (72)

Elsewhere, roses are identified with a storm, but at the same time juxtaposed with an erotic image:

On avait mis le cap aux perles aux framboises  
Au seins sensibles des merveilles  
Aux roses farouches de l'orage. (73)

In this light, the title of the work may be seen as linking his new love with the world.

In "Le front couvert", of 1936, the poet speaks with self-irony of his acceptance of the world of dreams. The scene is set in the blackest terms: "désastres", "ruines",

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69. O.C. I, p.515.

70. O.C. I, p.427.

71. O.C. I, p.428 and 446.

72. O.C. I, p.419 and p.438.

73. O.C. I, p.430.

"désespoir", and the poet recounts his daily escape from an unspecified enemy; paradoxically, however, his existence is pleasant, and he is daily allowed to indulge in fantasy:

On m'abandonnait au-dehors  
 Sur un navire de délices...  
 Un jour de plus je respirais naïvement  
 Une mer et des cieux volatils.

He is left in a 'chambre secrète sans serrure sans espoir', and his eyes, although half open, do not absorb the 'matin fraternel'. In the last stanza there is a cry from the heart, a wish to be able to shake off the clinging influence of the nocturnal world and welcome the pure, invigorating atmosphere of dawn. The self-criticism in the poem, and the progression suggested by 'un jour de plus...' are two of the elements to be much more subtly exploited in Poésie ininterrompue.

Les yeux fertiles was published after the outbreak of civil war in Spain,<sup>74</sup> an event which persuaded Eluard that a break with the past was inevitable. In this work, his attitude to the outside world is more impassioned than in the previous poems since he began to show an awareness of it. In "Durer", a list of verbs of destruction echoes the events in Spain: "dépouiller", "dévaster", "abattre", "éparpiller", "détruire", "rompre". "La tête contre les murs" conveys the same atmosphere of desolation; the enemy here, like the Germans in later poems, is represented as anti-life:

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74. The poet was in Spain at the beginning of 1936 for a Picasso retrospective, and made many contacts, including poets. Cf. R. Jean: Paul Eluard par lui-même, p.28.

Ils ne rêvent que de mourir  
Ils ignorent la vie.

Its existence is not unchallenged, however:

Nuit humide râpée  
Allons-nous te supporter  
Plus longtemps  
N'allons-nous pas secouer  
Ton évidence de cloaque

and there is a belligerent warning:

Prenez-y garde nous avons  
Malgré la nuit qu'il couve  
Plus de force que le ventre  
De vos soeurs et de vos femmes  
Et nous nous reproduirons  
Sans elles mais à coups de hache  
Dans vos prisons.

The strength of which he speaks is the life force, and this is reinforced by the words which suggest reproduction: "couve", "ventre", "de vos soeurs et de vos femmes", and "reproduirons". The "nous" is significant, for the poet no longer feels isolated, he has found a sense of solidarity with other men, and particularly with the oppressed. In "A Pablo Picasso", too, he expresses sympathy for the underdog: 'Le beau regard des gens privés de tout.' Since Mondal, in La rose publique, we are aware of a mass of other human beings outside the couple, of which there has been little evidence since the poems of the First World War.

His newfound solidarity with other men is linked, in "On ne peut me connaître", with the loved woman, although the interdependence of love and social commitment is not fully realised until 1939.<sup>75</sup>

Dans tes yeux ceux qui nous révèlent  
Notre solitude infinie  
Ne sont plus ce qu'ils croyaient être.

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75. Cf. Pantanella, op.cit., p.115.

To a large measure, his previous isolation from his fellow men was self-induced, but isolation from Gala was a desperate experience. Now, however, Nusch has brought an end to the solitude and suffering of the past: 'Nous sommes réunis par-delà le passé,'<sup>76</sup> as well as a return to the secure feeling that his existence depends upon that of the loved one: 'C'est par la femme que l'homme dure.'<sup>77</sup> As in La rose publique, love is no longer essentially a thing of the night; the wish of "Le front couvert" is fulfilled, and he can accept daylight:

J'ai vu le jour je vois cela  
Sans en avoir honte. (78)

The new awareness of the outside world coinciding with the Spanish war, brings with it a simplification of language. There are less surrealist images, now, less of the incongruous juxtapositions whose extreme condensation of expression often leads to difficulties in our comprehension of them. The influence of Surrealism on Eluard's imagery is never to die, but his increasing desire to communicate, as manifested in the tract L'Evidence poétique, which he read in London in June 1936, leads him to modify his use of language, and in particular his use of the image. The thematic images which were examined in Chapter Three are simple to understand, and continue to be used throughout his work, gathering momentum as the habitual reader establishes in his mind the network of images which convey the poet's most common themes. Here there is once

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76. O.C. I, p.504.

77. O.C. I, p.506.

78. O.C. I, p.495.

more imagery of the eye in the context of communication with the loved woman, and mirrors and hands are used in the same context.

In images not of the recurring pattern, there is often a closer rapprochement of the two terms, a diminution of the semantic gap since La rose publique: 'une ruine coquille vide', 'Une fenêtre en face/est un trou noir.'<sup>79</sup> Images of the surrealist type are still present, however:

Toits rouges fondez sous la langue  
Canicule dans les lits pleins.

La vitre aux veines de pensée. (80)

The simplification of imagery by no means detracts from their success:

D'un hameçon plus habile que vos potences  
Nous prendrons notre bien où nous voulons qu'il soit.<sup>81</sup>

Here the contrast (in the general, and not the surrealist sense) between the small but sharp fish-hook of the militants and the gallows of the Establishment, or in this case, Franco, provides a vivid picture, in terms that all can understand, of the hope of victory of those who are fighting the powers of destruction.

L'Evidence poétique codifies Eluard's new attitude to poetry and the world, and opens with a strong affirmation of his commitment to humanitarianism:

Le temps est venu où tous les poètes ont le droit  
et le devoir de soutenir qu'ils sont profondément  
enfoncés dans la vie des autres hommes, dans la  
vie commune.

His own solidarity is reflected in the idea that the modern poet is not outside society, but a part of it:

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79. O.C. I, p.495 and p.498.

80. O.C. I, p.497 and p.505.

81. O.C. I, p.498.



La solitude des poètes, aujourd'hui, s'efface.  
Voici qu'ils sont des hommes parmi les hommes,  
voici qu'ils ont des frères. (82)

"Fraternisation", he says, is man's hope against the forces of death and ruin, and this is a concept which is to be repeated again and again.

None of this is anti-surrealist, however, even though it contains the germs of a leaning towards poetry written with a communist bias. This lecture was delivered at the surrealist exhibition in London, and contains several references to Surrealism, including an excellent description of the aims of surrealist painters, and by implication, of surrealist poets, since he says the painters are poets; they are striving:

...pour joindre l'imagination à la nature, pour considérer tout ce qui est possible comme réel, pour nous montrer qu'il n'y a pas de dualisme entre l'imagination et la réalité...

His definition of Surrealism included in the Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme is taken from this work; his view of it as an 'instrument de connaissance' makes of it an excellent foundation for his humanitarian leanings, although the search for knowledge (in Breton's case the knowledge of the point of contact of the antimonies) through the probing of the subconscious was indeed a basic tenet of Surrealism. It is interesting to note, however, the change which has occurred in Eluard's attitude to reality in the four years since the original manuscript, Poetry's Evidence, was published in This Quarter.<sup>83</sup> One phrase in the 1932

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82. O.C. I, p.519.

83. Bernard underlines this change in Le poème en prose de Baudelaire à nos jours, p.684.

version reads: 'et ayant enfin bouleversé la réalité, l'homme n'aura plus qu'à fermer les yeux', and is changed in the London exhibition version to: 'l'homme, s'étant enfin accordé à la réalité, qui est sienne, n'aura plus qu'à fermer les yeux.' The difference between 'bouleverser' and 's'accorder' is remarkable, and this coming to terms with reality is reflected, as we have seen, in the poetry of 1932-6. The poet does not alter the phrase: '(l'homme) n'aura plus qu'à fermer les yeux pour que s'ouvrent les portes du merveilleux', for dreams and the marvellous must always have a place in poetry. 'Le poète sait que tout doit lui servir', he says in 1952, and 'la réalité crue' is included in his list of poetic material together with "l'hallucination", "l'actualité" with "les vieilles histoires."

It can be seen from the passages of the mid-1930's period which show a reintroduction into his language of terms referring to the mass of people that Eluard has retained the influence of Romain Rolland and "unanimité" and that the individualistic, introverted phase he underwent under the influence of the surrealist movement only temporarily clouded his concern for social harmony. Emmanuel<sup>84</sup> speaks of an 'unanimité dépouillé de tout artifice conceptuel, et naissant de l'expérience quotidienne de l'amour.' Just as the bonds of love for woman are usually expressed in the simplest language:

Même quand nous sommes loin l'un de l'autre  
Tout nous unit, (85)

so the bonds of fraternity, the power which Eluard, like

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84. Emmanuel, 'Le Je universel dans l'oeuvre de Paul Eluard', p.156.

85. O.C. I, p.423.

many writers of the time relies upon to oppose destruction in a troubled epoch, are conveyed in the simplest of terms, as we saw in these lines from L'Amour la poésie:

Et nous sommes partout  
Où se lève le ciel des autres

Partout où le refus de vivre est inutile.<sup>86</sup>

The new sense of communication brings with it a diminution of spleen:

...c'est dans la mesure où Eluard découvrira des solutions autres que les opérations magiques, de l'irrationnel que disparaîtront durablement de son oeuvre la solitude et le désespoir. (87)

and the change we have indicated in images of light. In general, light dominates from now on, and although it is occasionally obliterated in the poetry of the Second World War, this is surprisingly infrequent. The following quotation of 1948 illustrates admirably the shift of emphasis in the second period:

Le rideau de cristal noir était crevé. Je me trouvais sous la loupe épouvantable de six cent soixante-six soleils et je me supposai couvert de boues, de croûtes, de cendres, de poils emmêlés, de matières inconnues plus rebutantes que celles que je n'avais jamais osé toucher.

Le lendemain, les yeux ouverts, je me vis successivement revêtu de mousse, de flocons, de coraux, de glaciers et d'un petit feu tranquille et mordoré. (88)

Within "l'univers-solitude", the poet found comfort in the dreams of the dark hours; the eyelids kept him locked inside the imagination, and the external world of the daytime produced only fear. Gradually, this situation is reversed, until the usual pattern of the later period, except in times of deep depression, is that night represents misery, and daytime, the most usual setting for the later poems, represents love and contentment.

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86. O.C. I, p.243.

87. Pantanella, op.cit., p.107.

88. A l'intérieur de la vue, O.C. II, p.152.

PART TWO: 1938-1952

## CHAPTER V

### THE BREAK WITH SURREALISM.

Une monstrueuse aberration fait croire  
aux hommes que le langage est né pour  
faciliter leurs relations mutuelles.

Breton.

Les mots la commune mesure  
Entre les hommes les mots la vie

Eluard: "Les Suites d'un crime", Cours naturel  
O.C. I, p.826.

'Nulle rupture; la lumière et la conscience m'accablent  
d'autant de mystères, de misères, que la nuit et les rêves.'  
This title from Chanson complète serves as a reminder that  
any reference to a rupture in Eluard's life or work must  
be made advisedly, with close reference to the poems, to  
the facts, and to any utterances Eluard may have made  
outside the poems.

It is well known that Eluard disassociated himself  
from the surrealists at some time in 1938. Breton uses  
the word "rupture" in his Entretiens<sup>1</sup>, and explains how  
he came to argue with Eluard over some poems published  
by the latter in Commune, the organ of the "Association des  
Ecrivains et Artistes révolutionnaires" and a review which  
Breton claimed had discredited him in certain Mexican  
revolutionary circles. He says that he made it plain to  
Eluard, during this conversation, that any further meetings  
between them would be futile; they never, in fact, met again.  
He refers to Eluard's ambitions as a poet, to his literary,  
aesthetic criteria, which were anathema to the surrealists,

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1. pp.191-192.

and is here underlining the objections which appear earlier in the Entretiens<sup>2</sup>; Eluard has committed "l'hérésie majeure" by preferring poetry to Surrealism, by distinguishing, in the "Prière d'insérer" of Les dessous d'une vie, between dreams, automatic texts and poems. (In 1939, in Donner à voir<sup>3</sup>, he says that although some of his ideas have changed since he wrote the introduction to Les dessous d'une vie, he would still wish to make the distinction between the three. We should remember also that Eluard, although he wrote chronicles and signed manifestoes in the surrealist reviews, rarely signed automatic and dream texts.)

Eluard's view of their final meeting is contained in a letter (À H ... de Paris, 1938)<sup>4</sup>:

J'ai rompu définitivement avec Breton, à la suite d'une discussion relativement calme, au café. Ma décision a été entraînée par son affreuse manière de discuter quand il est devant les gens...J'étais, depuis longtemps décidé à ne plus supporter les puérilités, ni l'inconséquence, ni la mauvaise foi.

The letter conveys his exasperation with Breton and his mannerisms, and his disillusionment with the way in which Surrealism seems to have developed; it has become petty and predictable, and now conforms to the very description which most horrifies its leader: it has become "a school". The sense of liberation after eighteen years in the company of the same group, probably accounts for the calm tone of this letter.

These brief references by Eluard and Breton constitute the only evidence we have of the actual rupture. Its importance was not admitted by Eluard until 1951, when he

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2. Ibid, pp.105-106.

3. O.C. I, p.979.

4. Eluard, Livre d'identité, p.163.

republished four surrealist collections under the title: La jarre peut-elle être plus belle que l'eau? The critics have found no enlightening evidence outside the poetry. Carmody,<sup>5</sup> who is the only one to have written specifically and emphatically on a rupture with Surrealism, and shows his conviction by calling Cours naturel Eluard's last surrealist work, draws attention to the brief vague references which do appear in certain contemporary critical works, as well as the striking omissions in others. Nadeau, he reminds us, offers a vague statement that Eluard, moving closer to communism, left the surrealist group sometime before 1939; Claude Roy notes no change between the surrealist and the war poetry, whilst Parrot shows an awareness of the importance of Cours naturel and Chanson complète. Carmody did not have access to the evidence of Breton and Eluard, and assumes that the critics are following the wishes of the two poets by not revealing the facts of the rupture. Certainly it is strange that this episode, like Eluard's disappearance from France in 1924, is still largely undocumented. But Breton's comments in Entretiens provide a fairly comprehensive view of his profound disagreement with Eluard and show, revealingly but in few words, what effect it had on Surrealism:

Mais rien ne saurait, en profondeur, affecter  
autant le surréalisme que la rupture qui vient  
alors de se produire avec Eluard.

As for Eluard, his simple, straightforward account of the disagreement echoes the simplicity of the attitudes in his

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5. Carmody, Francis J: 'Eluard's Rupture with Surrealism'. P.M.L.A. no.76 (4) Sept. 1961, pp.436-446.

poetry; he leaves us no prose analysis of the points, be they literary, philosophical or political, on which he disagrees with Breton. In his most surrealist phase he does not, like Breton, attempt a philosophical analysis of Surrealism; and later, when his poetry is at its most evidently communistic, we have very little idea of his exact political views within the communist framework. Breton is right to say that Eluard is a poet above all else, for all his beliefs are couched in poetry. His humanitarianism, his sense of fraternity, his relating of love for one woman to the whole universe, his idea of morality, even his ideas on art, are expressed in such utterly simple, such quintessential phrases as 'Je parle de ce qui est bien.'

The rupture with Breton, as historical fact, is important only as a symptom, and not as a springboard for something completely new. The progression studied in Chapter Four, away from the esoteric occupations of Surrealism and towards a poetry concerned with commitment and communication, was bound to bring disapproval from Breton. Aragon had left the surrealist movement in 1930, after the furore over his poem "Front Rouge"<sup>6</sup>, and although Eluard's communism was not as well defined as Aragon's until the Second World War, Eluard, with his literary and aesthetic absorption, was bound to be as harshly judged as Aragon, Artaud, Soupault and many more 'heretics' had been.

Breton, of course, was not anti-communist. It was in his company that Eluard first joined the Communist Party

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6. Cf. Nadeau, Histoire du Surréalisme, pp.143-149.



in 1926, and it was he who led Surrealism through its "période raisonnante", when its organ was la Révolution Surréaliste and then le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution. It is not our intention to analyse Breton's sympathies with the communist cause, nor the implied and real contradictions between the surrealist and the materialist view of life, since Eluard's split with Breton was not overtly or primarily a political matter. The tracts of a political nature, issued by the surrealists in the 1920's are well known, and between 1925 and 1927 one sees them giving assurances that they conceive of revolution in terms of social action, arguing with Naville who demands more clarity in their approach, insisting that they must carry on their experiments without Marxist control.<sup>7</sup> A great many contradictions arose from the surrealists' political and philosophical position; Breton claimed the autonomy of Surrealism whilst he and various other surrealists were members of the Communist Party; he published "Nadja", in which he claims that the freedom to come to terms with the meaning of one's own life is plainly dependent on freedom from work, whilst he was a member of the Party; and documents such as "Hands off Love", and "Recherches sur la sexualité", would undoubtedly shock communist ideas of morality with their concern for the supremacy of spiritual freedom, (its supremacy, by implication, over the communist principles of hard work, redistribution of wealth and strict morality.) Sartre,

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7. Ibid., 'La Révolution d'abord et toujours', pp.215-218, 'Légitime Défense', pp.228-241, 'Au grand jour', pp.260-262. See also Sylvia Kantarizis, "Surrealism, Communism and love."

in Qu'est-ce que la littérature,<sup>8</sup> examines the philosophical flaws in their position, showing how their refusal of consciousness is incompatible with a realistic political outlook.

At the time of the rupture, Eluard was not a committed communist; it was the Second World War which brought full commitment. Throughout a large part of the 1930's he adhered to the general surrealist line, and this was a period when relations between the Communist Party and the surrealist group did not run smoothly. 1935, for instance, brought differences of opinion, and the formation by the surrealists of Contre-Attaque; the latter is a revolutionary document, acceptable to any Marxist, but it implies criticism of Russian-style communism by its vehement rejection of ideas of nation and fatherland. It follows disagreement between the two groups at the 'Congrès des écrivains pour la défense de la culture.'

By 1938, however, political events, as well as the progression traced in Chapter Four, are dictating the need for a clear, positive view of life. Unlike Breton, who is not writing with any reader in mind (indeed, his experience of his poem "Tournesol" reveals that even he does not immediately understand the meaning of what he writes<sup>9</sup>), Eluard has always felt the need to communicate, and by this time he has published L'Evidence poétique, with its urgent statement that it is the duty of poets to declare their involvement in the life of the community.<sup>10</sup>

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8. Cf. also M. Beaujour, 'Sartre and Surrealism'.

9. Breton, L'Amour Fou, p.65.

10. Cf. Chapter IV, p.121.

In view of his obvious exasperation with surrealist contradictions and uncertainties, and his rejection of the ivory tower in which they live (feelings which, we will see, are strong in Cours naturel, Chanson complète and Poésie ininterrompue I) and of his need for a positive ideology founded on the mass of men, Vernier's assessment of the situation seems exact:

...depuis sa jeunesse, le poète n'avait pas cessé de vouloir prendre pied sur une conception philosophique cohérente. Sa brève conversion religieuse pendant la Grande Guerre représentait déjà une tentative d'adoption d'un système élaboré. Le Surréalisme, ayant servi d'exutoire à sa révolte devant 'le règne des bourgeois...des flics et des prêtres' ne pouvait lui servir au-delà de la remise en question de valeurs pour lui périmées, ni fournir une doctrine qui puisse justifier la déclaration de sa très simple démarche intellectuelle:

'Je dis ce que je vois  
Ce que je sais  
Ce qui est vrai'

Il était donc normal qu'Eluard cherchât dans une conception collectiviste la preuve par le plus grand nombre de 'ce qui est vrai.' (11)

The rupture, then, was important as a positive step in the new direction of Eluard's view of life. We have seen that the change in his inspiration came gradually throughout the 1930's, and we must look at the language used in the collections of 1938 and 1939 to judge the degree of his break with the influence of Surrealism, and the nature of any changes which are taking place. A short study of Poésie ininterrompue I is included here rather than with the post-war poetry because it puts the break into perspective, describing the decisions taken at the end of the process traced in Chapter IV. In the "Nulle

rupture" title, Eluard seems to be insisting that he is now as much influenced by light as he is by day, and finds an equal amount of good and bad in both.<sup>12</sup> We must find out whether this statement is objective; at which stage he abandons night and sees the world largely in terms of light; and at what point he fully makes the link between love and social commitment.

Although many of the poems in Cours naturel were written and first published singly in 1937 (or in the case of "Novembre 1936", in 1936), and therefore preceded the actual rupture, there are several indications in them of dissatisfaction and anger with Surrealism, and with Breton in particular. The work opens in positive mood, with Sans âge. The poem is full of dynamism, which is conveyed by a preponderance of verbs, six of which are in the future tense. The past is rejected, and it is impossible not to see a rejection of Surrealism in these lines:

Nous en avons assez  
D'habiter dans les ruines du sommeil.

Sleep here is banished, for the emphasis is on light and life. The habits of the past are to be overthrown:

...notre air pur est de taille  
A combler le retard creusé par l'habitude,

and the acts of the 'frères contraires' are dubbed 'anciens'; a great deal of scorn is transmitted, in the context, by this simple adjective.

An air of movement and positive action is created at

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12. We dispute Carmody's view (op.cit. p.441) that "The statement is categorical: there has been no break in Eluard's devotion to poetry, though he has abandoned the recording of dreams to explore light and conscience."

the beginning of the poem by the repetition of 'Nous approchons', a technique which prefigures the movement in Poésie ininterrompue I in the repeated 'Si nous montions d'un degré.' The familiar, positive light imagery of Eluard appears in the phrase 'Encore un jour à mettre au monde'. This line is effectively placed at the end of the seven-line 'introduction', preceding the pause which separates it from the list of verbs in the future tense. Then 'l'ombre', 'la fatigue' and 'l'abandon' are rejected for the positive virtues of 'notre espace certain', 'notre air pur'. The surrealist brethren, his 'frères contraires', have eyes which reflect the night, and hands which are heavy. These familiar Eluardian images are contrasted with the equally familiar hopeful, positive ones: "lumière", is mentioned, and 'il n'y a plus d'éclipse'. 'C'est l'oiseau, c'est l'enfant, c'est le roc c'est la plaine/ Qui se mêlent à nous'; each of these appears a great many times in the network of imagery throughout Eluard's work, and is all the more reassuring by being so familiar. All these benign elements are mixed with 'nous' in the harmonious atmosphere of light and 'ressemblance'. The words 'confondues', and 'alliées' contribute to the latter impression, and the 'prisme' communicates the idea of the completeness of colour. The first person plural is used thirteen times; the self-confidence expressed throughout the poem emanates from the poet's assurance that he is a part of the universe, that 'le monde est fait à ma mesure.'

The 'frères contraires' in this poem form a strong contrast to the more general mass of brethren referred to

as 'nous'; but however much they oppose the light, these 'frères perdus' are still brothers, and Eluard continues to find it important to communicate his ideas to them in the poems which constitute a 'critique de la poésie'. Poésie ininterrompue I, published in 1946, is dedicated to 'ceux qui les liront mal et à ceux qui ne les aimeront pas', which will surely include the surrealists; and 'La poésie doit avoir pour but la vérité pratique' is for his 'amis exigeants'. This poem shows concern that his former close friends should understand the need to explain and transform the world. From the Spanish War onwards, the 'évidence' of terrible social injustice and the need to act against it turns Eluard into a proselytizer.

The two political poems in Cours naturel are inspired by events in Spain, and specifically concern the war. These are his first 'poems of circumstance'. "Novembre 1936" was taken to L'Humanité by Parrot, and as Decaunes<sup>13</sup> suggests, its publication in a communist newspaper must have annoyed Breton; also the Aragon affair had shown his disapproval of poetry of circumstance. However, although he cannot have approved either these factors or the veiled references to Surrealism, Breton is as concerned as Eluard about the fate of the people of Spain, and the diminishing freedom in Europe, and himself wrote the 'prière d'insérer' to Cours naturel:

Eluard pousse un cri d'alarme pour délier, délivrer  
l'immense pitié de ce temps sourd aux appels  
déchirants...de ce temps s'ensevelissant sous les  
ruines de la liberté. (14)

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13. Decaunes, Luc: Paul Eluard, p.54.

14. O.C. I, p.1520: note on p.797.

"Novembre 1936" brings out the sinister nature of the fascist and monarchist enemy in Spain. They are 'patients, ordonnés', adjectives which convey a cold and calculated evil, more chilling than the more obvious 'noirs et bêtes'. They are working to build ruins; this startling but simple image shows the abortive task of those who are destroying life. Again, familiar images appear in their negative form. The enemy are birds of lead, who hate all that shines. The smile of the people is 'comme une chaîne brisée.' The latter image is a simple comparison and most of the imagery of the poem is equally simple and easily communicated. The notion of the 'bâtisseurs de ruines' and the plain men whom they 'comblent d'ordures' is easily grasped, and is calculated to arouse anger. The message in this image-free line is equally clear:

Madrid ville habituelle à ceux qui ont souffert.  
and 'ils font de leur mieux pour être seuls sur terre'  
indicates in straightforward manner the isolation of fascists in the face of the brotherhood of man. It is not difficult to understand why l'Humanité welcomed the poem, whose message any proletarian could understand. Few images are 'difficult'. 'Ils plient au ras du sol des palais sans cervelle' conveys in surrealist terms the insubstantial, mindless nature of their magnificent (figurative) ruins, and 'donne à la raison des ailes vagabondes' shows the elation of solidarity and hope in a juxtaposition of abstract and concrete. Both these images, however, transmit a strong impression even without analysis.

"La Victoire de Guernica" follows the complete destruction, by German bombs, of the small Basque town in 1937. Two thousand people were killed, all civilians. The poem is subdued and stark. Divided into fourteen parts, of from one to five lines, it conveys admirably the simplicity and inevitability of the way of life in Guernica. The scene is briefly set at the beginning; it is the 'beau monde' of labourers and peasants, living in hovels. The simplicity and completeness of the people is transmitted through a repetition of 'visages': 'Visages bons au feu visages bons au froid'; the use of 'visage' here echoes its use as early as 1918 in Poèmes pour la paix:

J'ai eu longtemps un visage inutile,  
 Mais maintenant  
 J'ai un visage pour être aimé.

These faces are also 'bons à tout'; they have a completeness which makes them open to insults and blows, as well as fire and cold; and because of their hopeful and positive nature they are also open to refusal of night.

Part IV consists of the four words: 'La mort coeur renversé.' Here the shock of the apposition technique is doubly strong because the phrase is totally self-sufficient, and refers to the bombing with stark brevity; it conveys in quintessential terms the same terrible disruption as Picasso's painting; it forms the axis of the poem. Other lines express the pain of the people, but in softer terms. The incantatory distich which forms stanza XII is emphatic, but its tone is sad rather than angry:

Hommes pour qui ce trésor fut chanté  
 Hommes pour qui ce trésor fut gâché.





and the one reference in the original poem to 'cadavres' is expanded now with 'bourreaux', 'charognes', 'squelettes'. Possibly the film requires such clear description and grotesque language, although in fact the visual representation should allow for the poet to be less graphic. One feels that the events of a world war and Eluard's political experience have stimulated this more direct approach in 1950, and the more subtle, imaged version of 1937 conveys more profoundly the sense of numbness experienced at the time. It is only fair to add, too, that in writing about Guernica thirteen years after the event, the poet's feelings about it would be blunted to some extent, and his expression would suffer in consequence.

Banality, we have suggested,<sup>16</sup> is one of the charms of Eluard's poetry. He uses the word himself in "Toutes pour une":

Mène-moi par la main  
Vers d'autres femmes que moi  
Vers des naissances plus banales  
Au vif de la ressemblance.

The poem has a sad tone, and the woman is asking to be led away from herself, and 'la terreur que j'ai de moi', towards life. Banality in Eluard is always indicative of the purity of life, of the elements in it which are shared by all. Cours naturel is on the whole, excluding "Novembre 1936" and "La Victoire de Guernica", a surrealist work, for it is full of concentrated, startling images of the type which are to be found in Capitale de la douleur.

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16. Cf. Chapter One, p.14.

However, in the earlier work there is little of the banal; it figures largely in the work of Eluard's youth, but is temporarily subdued in the poetry of the period when the use of strange, esoteric imagery is at its height. The banal in Cours naturel fits well with the more startling manifestations of his imagination. For instance, in "Coeur à pic", the portrait of Nusch on the table adds an extra touch of domesticity to the surrealist but implicitly domestic images of the 'nids ravagés des armoires' and 'les palissades d'un piano.' The portrait is there to impose 'rythme couleurs santé' on the sad confusion of the dreamlike household scene. Men, women and children are mentioned again in this poem. Here there are 'villages bien peuplés'; here the air is 'teinté... d'hommes'; and 'Lampes de pain enfants de feuilles/Pain des enfants parfum des femmes' links the quite common theme of fresh bread,<sup>17</sup> the staple food, with fire, vegetation, perfume and women. (This combination is reminiscent of the network of images in Baudelaire's 'Correspondances', which includes 'des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants.' The surrealists' 'Correspondances', it may be added, are all the more closely blended because they usually omit the intermediary term of comparison, "comme"). However surrealist its imagery, "Coeur à pic" ends on a clear, fraternal note:

Trésors noués par des désastres  
Sang commun sur toute la terre.

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17. Eluard's use of the word 'pain' is discussed in Chapter VI, but an example from La vie immédiate (O.C. I, p.398) is worth noting here:

Une ou plusieurs  
Le visage ganté de lierre  
Tendantes comme du pain frais.

'Trésors' here, as in "La Victoire de Guernica", denotes the richness of hope and aspiration amongst mankind.

By now Eluard's use of surrealist imagery is well beyond the experimental stage. Gratuitous surrealist images of the apparently automatic style are very rare at this stage. 'Le rire après jouer ayant mis à la voile/ La table fut un papillon qui s'échappa', is one of few examples. Elsewhere, the startling images are expanded, and linked to similar images which subtly develop the impression created by them. In "Coeur à pic", there is parallelism of imagery in the first and last stanzas; the torrent is linked with thunder in the first verse, and with 'animaux lourds de sang' in the last, so that all three elements give an impression of strength and drama. The 'îles plus belles' of verse 1 and the 'îles des seins' of verse 4 give an impression of sensuous beauty; whilst new snow is expanded into 'neige câline de la force', so that the strength and purity of snow is linked with its caressing qualities.<sup>18</sup> The two verses form a typical dream 'paysage', which complements the surrealist interior of verse two and the villages full of people and animals in verse three.

The imagery of "Le Tableau noir" at first sight seems obscure, but in fact the strange images lend significance to each other. (According to Aragon, Eluard, like all the surrealists, said nothing inexplicable<sup>19</sup>). The 'gracieuses

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18. J.-P. Richard, in Onze études sur la poésie moderne, p.120, says that the most typically Eluardian images are those which satisfy a double need; they are both bare and 'caressants', and strong and rigid.

19. Aragon, L'Homme Communiste, t.II, p.144.

lunettes des larmes nécessaires' convey the blinding effect of tears, which is paralleled by the blindness of the child. That 'lunettes' should hide rather than illuminate is surprising, but the juxtaposition of this word with tears offers an explanation. The eye imagery is continued in the clear image of the 'coquette...aux yeux nourris de son miroir.' This woman is absent, however, and there is other negative imagery throughout the poem. The men are dispossessed, even of their rags, the women are in agony, and the list of abstract nouns, all negative qualities, is brought together with the above images in the phrase 'Toute la dentelle humaine.'

Occasionally in this collection the nocturnal side of Eluard is still in evidence. Although in "La victoire de Guernica" night is malignant:

Parias la mort la terre et la hideur  
De nos ennemis ont la couleur  
Monotone de notre nuit.

night in "Où en étais-je?" is the pale, aery night of the surrealist dreams. The scene is set with the surrealist image: 'le ciel quitte la chambre', (the semantic gap here is small, however, since we normally think of the sky as light), and the poet walks behind 'un troupeau de clartés délicates'. The night is described as 'toute en perfection en oubli de moi-même', even though absence of happiness is one of its features.

Another concept of Surrealism which lingers through and beyond the rupture, indeed which he always upholds, is the tenet which best suits his personality and style, the concept of 'ressemblance'. In "Novembre 1936" he asks

that all men show to each other 'un visage semblable', whilst in 'Toutes pour une', the word 'ressemblance' is used to express the universality of woman. Two poems express the unification of all things, echoing the earlier poem "La Nécessité";<sup>20</sup> in "Identités", he states:

Il n'y a pas de différences  
Entre le sable qui sommeille  
La hache au bord de la blessure  
Le corps en gerbe déployée  
Et le volcan de la santé.

Again, and as if to emphasise his claim, he reintroduces 'sable', 'santé', 'sommeil', and 'volcan' in different combinations towards the end of the poem. In "Paroles peintes", he wishes for the union of 'aile et rosée/  
Coeur et nuage jour et nuit/Fenêtre et pays de partout'; in this last phrase, Eluard is adding a humanitarian note of his own to Breton's theory of the fusion of opposites, and develops it a few lines later on:

Pour voir tous les yeux réfléchis  
Par tous les yeux.

If Eluard's networks of imagery are becoming more tightly knit and give the appearance of being less spontaneous, he has certainly not abandoned experimentation; if he has chosen a number of 'mots clefs' which appear again and again, he has not lost his sense of the mystery of words. Enumeration is a continuing technique; as we saw in Chapter I, it occurs in the Premiers poèmes and in Exemples; it is used in L'Amour la poésie ('Je te l'ai dit pour les nuages/Je te l'ai dit pour l'arbre de la mer') and throughout the 1930's in such poems as "Houx douze

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20. In La vie immédiate, O.C. I, p.369.

roses', where nouns or nouns and phrases are apposed; and it is of growing importance from the late 1930's onwards<sup>21</sup>. It is used to particularly striking effect in "Quelques-uns des mots qui jusqu'ici m'étaient mystérieusement interdits," and "Blason des fleurs et des fruits." Often, as is the case in the latter poem, Eluard chooses his subject matter, and subsequently takes pleasure in sounding the names of the various entities which are brought to mind by the general heading. In Cours naturel the poem "Portrait" is inspired in this way. Parts of the face are enumerated, but unlike the more or less gratuitous images which stand in apposition in the two longer poems, some of the accompanying terms here refer loosely to a theme: 'écume', 'air pur', 'marée', and by implication, 'filet' and 'un vol d'oiseaux', evoke the sea, whilst the concluding phrase links the two types of image:

Et le beau temps  
A la forme de sa tête.

The poem demonstrates the harmony of imagery which we have discovered in several other poems in Cours naturel.

"Quelques-uns des mots qui jusqu'ici m'étaient mystérieusement interdits," however, is a pure piece of verbal research with no unity of meaning in the terms used<sup>22</sup>, but only the strange resonances of the automatic technique, which in this case, as Vernier claims<sup>23</sup>, is laboriously

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21. Vernier, op.cit., p.22, is right to criticise Pierre de Boisdeffre for claiming that enumeration belongs solely to the later period; cf. also Chapter I, note 56.
22. Carmody, op.cit., p.440, has divided the 29 words under loose headings but is unable to find any clear links between the groups.
23. Vernier, op.cit., p.136.

arbitrary. Like the random enumeration of adjectives at the beginning of Poésie ininterrompue I, this is a list of words which the poet has somehow been led to use for the first time; but it is debatable whether Eluard ever submitted totally to the automatic dictates of the subconscious.

The title points to the mystery of words; but not only the words listed here are mysterious, for all words are strangely awe-inspiring, and these are merely 'merveilleux comme les autres'; even permitted words have their mystery, as suggested in "Ailleurs ici partout":

Les mots qui me sont interdits me sont obscurs  
Mais les mots qui me sont permis que cachent-ils.

If words are juxtaposed as 'deux réalités distantes', ('voyelle timbre immense', 'bolide géranium à la fenêtre') their mystery is intensified, not in the sense that their meaning is obscured, but because they produce more marvellous 'sparks'. Such phrases are surprisingly precious, (although in one 'definition', automatism leads to banality:

Le mot maisonnette  
On le trouve souvent dans les annonces des journaux)

and indeed the poem is included in an anthology of precious poetry.<sup>24</sup> Claessans claims that in Eluard's work preciousity is a 'signe de l'esprit qui repense et ordonne le réel'<sup>25</sup>, an idea which certainly fits the notion that

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24. Bray, René: Anthologie de la poésie précieuse de Thibaut de Champagne à Giraudoux, p.269. Zurovski, in 'Paul Eluard et la tradition', p.278, comments on the justice but timidity of Bray's conclusions about Eluard's preciousity in his study: La Préciosité et les précieux de Thibaut de Champagne à Jean Giraudoux.
25. Claessans: 'Introduction à la lecture d'Eluard'. Cahiers d'Analyse textuelle, no.2, 1960, pp.21-43.



the apparent arbitrariness of the poem is carefully contrived; and we know that Eluard's praise of the automatic technique never tallied closely with his own technique.

Vernier<sup>26</sup> says that from this poem onwards there is a certain verbal research which will remain constant. Certainly Eluard experiments more with the technique of enumeration after this, but his fascination with words, their form, their sound, their juxtaposition in strange groupings dates back to Proverbe and the various experimental works discussed in Chapter Two. It is worth reiterating too that Eluard, after Apollinaire, showed an interest in unusual typography as early as 1921, in his Exemples, and that this interest is manifested in the initial publication of Quelques-uns des mots...

The title of the poem does suggest some kind of turning point. Aragon<sup>27</sup> assumes it to exemplify the liberation which came after the rupture with Surrealism, but this clearly cannot be literally true, since it was first published in 1937; he seems to be overanxious to equate freedom with absence of Surrealism. In one sense he is right, for Breton himself admits that, on a literary level, Surrealism was limiting Eluard.<sup>28</sup> The work is quite compatible with Surrealism, however, for it at least pays lip-service to the automatic technique, and shows a reverence for strange words in strange juxtapositions. If it is announcing a new intention, it is that, in 1937,

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26. Vernier, op.cit., p.15.

27. Aragon, L'Homme communiste, t.II.

28. Breton, Entretiens, p.192.

when Eluard is realising the importance of words as a 'commune mesure entre les hommes',<sup>29</sup> he is announcing, for the first time, his 'grand souci de tout dire', which is to be a continuing concern, and which we examine in Chapter VII.

Chanson complète manifests to a large extent the air of fecundity and maturity suggested in its title. The phrase first appeared in Les nécessités de la vie... in a poem called "Enfermé, seul":

Chanson complète  
La table à voir, la chaise pour s'asseoir  
Et l'air à respirer.  
Se reposer,  
Idée inévitable,  
Chanson complète,

and, Eluard having fully realised his love for Nusch, his work often reflects the same simple, banal optimism which was present in the poems of his early, uncomplicated love for Gala. It is significant, however, that Chanson complète opens with a title which forms a stark contrast to the title of the early poem: "Nous sommes", and that this poem, of which five stanzas commence with the word 'tu', ends with references to men who have suffered, but who are to shake off their burden and 'cueillir tous leurs songes'. Here the dreams are dreams of desire and optimism, and not the escapist dreams of the surrealists. Eluard, as Jean<sup>30</sup> suggests, has progressed beyond the egotism of youth. The men here are 'vrais' and they are 'utiles'. Eluard is accustomed to use words in two opposing senses, the positive and the negative; the habit is to be strengthened,

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29. O.C. I, p.826.

30. Raymond Jean, Paul Eluard par lui-même, p.46.

as we shall see, by his sense of the dialectic, when in Poésie ininterrompue I and Une leçon de morale he sees words as being attributable either 'au bien' or 'au mal'.<sup>31</sup> The use of the words 'utile' and 'inutile' is an interesting example of this process; in Donner à voir<sup>32</sup> he quotes Reverdy, who says: 'Parmi les choses sans valeur et sans aucune utilité qui s'enumèrent, la poésie est très certainement une des plus impressionnantes', whilst in "Quelques-uns des mots..." he asks 'Combien me reste-t-il de ces mots qui me menaient à rien?' Here lack of usefulness is salutary; the manifestations of the imagination should not be bridled by utility. On the other hand, 'inutile' can imply sterility, as in the example we have already quoted, 'J'ai eu longtemps un visage inutile', or the lines describing Gala in her most negative mood:

Elle va partout fredonnant  
Chanson monotone inutile  
La forme de son visage. (33)

These lines reiterate the idea of the empty face, and form an interesting contrast with the usefulness of the men in the new and positive Chanson complète.

The simplicity of the poet's view of life is again stressed, in such lines as 'Je vis bien en été la chaleur m'émerveille', and by use of the term itself:

Mais la gloire de lire un bonheur sans limites  
Dans la simplicité des lignes du présent. (34)

The optimism of these two lines is encouraged by the quiet confidence of Nusch ('Ton corps chante ton assurance',

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31. Cf. Vernier, op.cit., p.55.

32. O.C. I, p.986.

33. O.C. I, p.251.

34. O.C. I, p.869 and p.874.

'ton espoir calme') and their love is linked once more with daylight in a highly positive image:

Notre jeunesse tendrement  
Fait naître l'aurore sur terre.<sup>35</sup>

If Eluard's love is now strongly linked with his social commitment<sup>36</sup>, however, his attitude towards light and darkness is more difficult to analyse. For instance, "A l'ombre de ma porte" is a poem of warmth and repose, in which the moon plays as large a part as the sun, whilst the lines:

Il n'y a de fête qu'ici  
Dans cet oeuf que la terre et le jour ont couvé  
Le repos dans la nuit d'été.

attribute fecundity to the day and rest to the night, there being no suggestion that the two are incompatible. Similarly, in "Trois poèmes inachevés", day and night are juxtaposed without any conflict in their symbolism:

Le soleil blanc a la douceur de ma fatigue  
La nuit qui vient a la couleur de ton espoir.

In Chanson complète the suffering of night is scarcely in evidence, except in "Nulle rupture" itself, and it is as though Eluard, in dialectic fashion, has made good the night by juxtaposing it with day. "Nulle rupture"..., however, of all the poems in Chanson complète, is most full of images of darkness. The chilling final line, 'Plus rien qu'un méchant crépuscule', contrasts with the other gentle twilights, for in this poem day is turned 'au mal' by the night. The lamp which Carmody quotes as a symbol of light<sup>37</sup> is in fact 'une lampe...bientôt brisée';

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35. O.C. I, p.870.

36. Cf. Chapter IV, note 75.

37. Carmody, op.cit., p.441.

there is 'la lumière qui s'enferme', and there are negative images of sight in the terms 'aveugle', 'oeil de brouillard', and 'regards mornes partagés par un miroir infâme.' The choice offered in the last two stanzas is a poor choice, depicted in depressing, negative imagery: a 'refuge sans couleurs' or 'sans vertu', a 'lampe inutile', fear, doubt and ignorance. He has obviously not yet found full peace of mind in daylight; its miseries (possibly those he sees in international events) lead him back to darkness; but perhaps fear of night's failure:

La peur de ne pouvoir conserver dans la nuit  
Ce qui bouge et qui change  
La peur de ne pouvoir vivre la nuit  
Dans des draps éternels,

is what leads him back again to light.

The final poem in the collection is "Les Vainqueurs d'hier périront", which was published in Commune in May 1938. It is dated 14th April 1938, and is another poem of bitter anger directed against Franco and his forces, who are now near to victory in Spain; in it, there is a clear reference to Eluard's faith in communism:

Mais nos désirs sont moins lancinants dans la nuit  
Frères que cette étoile rouge  
Qui gagne malgré tout du terrain sur l'horreur.

Although Breton does not appear to have been specific in his criticism of Eluard's poems in Commune, he cannot have approved of these lines featuring in that particular review. Eluard is implying alignment with Aragon and the other communist directors.

At this point it is worth noting the various critical passages of "Droits et devoirs du pauvre", in Cours naturel,

which point strongly to Breton. Bitter anger is rare in Eluard's work, and is restricted to brief passages in Capitale de la douleur at the time of Ernst's liaison with Gala, to hatred of the bourgeoisie in "Critique de la poésie", and later more systematically to hatred of the Spanish aggressors and the Nazis; the bitterness in the poems under discussion is less easily explained than that engendered by the breakdown of his first marriage, or by those in the political field who bring terrible suffering during the 1930's and during the war. Carmody's theory that many of the poems in "Droits et devoirs du pauvre" are directed against Breton seems incontestable; surely the 'arbitre' in "Le croyez-moi je suis la loi", and the title itself refer to the 'pope of Surrealism'? 'Celui qui voulait unir tout' certainly applies to Breton, and the ironical use of the corpse image which Breton himself launched is now turned against him (as it was in 1930 by Ribemont-Dessaignes.) Eluard's disapproval of the man in this poem is strongly centred on his utterances: 'Sa bouche fait des tours', 'ce modèle se répète', and:

Il parle à son tour d'injustice  
De vulgaire convoitise  
De tyrannie de barbarie  
Mais les mots sont désarmés.

We are reminded that in his letter he objects to 'son affreuse manière de discuter quand il est devant des gens.'

Since Carmody's article was published, the editors of the Pléiade edition of Eluard's works have established that "Ici à un coupable" and "Le croyez-moi je suis la loi" were initially published in 1937, so they do not coincide

with the time of the rupture, but were composed before it. This indicates that Eluard's exasperation has been growing in the latter part of 1937, and in fact in the letter he says that he has contemplated a rupture 'depuis longtemps'. His own consciousness of the need to speak out against injustice in poetry, (and not, as he thinks Breton speaks, in empty phrases to one's entourage) has led to a growing anger against this 'souverain négatif'.

In "Les suites d'un crime", and "La Somme" the corpse image is repeated; in the latter poem Breton is dispossessed and lost and it is conceivable that the 'papillons ternis' which feature amongst the dead and useless things are inspired by the early, printed 'papillons' issued from the 'Bureau de recherches surréalistes'. Yet again, in "Entre autres ombres", there is an image of death, concerning the man who has been taken for dead 'chaque fois qu'il le méritait'. Such virulent insistence is astonishing in Eluard; indeed he seems to be cruelly condemning the other poet to oblivion. However, there is acrimony in two other poems which cannot be interpreted as being directed against Breton. In "L'Heure exacte", he speaks of 'la rage aux dents de singe' (thus echoing the image of the 'museau de singe servile', in "Les suites d'un crime"), of 'mal funèbre mal d'encre', and conveys a sense of frustration, a suggestion that departure is advisable but impossible:

L'horloge enfarinée dit l'heure du départ  
Mais elle est arrêtée.

In "Pour un orgueil meilleur", the desire to wound 'cet homme de pardon' and hatred of 'ce qui est accepté'

are expressed. The latter notion brings to mind the hatred of the bourgeoisie in "Critique de la poésie" and it is probable that the 'homme de pardon' represents those dangerous people who are prepared to overlook the Nazi threat and the atrocities in Spain. It seems likely that for a brief period Breton is the scapegoat for Eluard's regret for his own excess of introversion in the past, for his anger against those who are unwilling to commit themselves to social action, and for his despair over events in Europe. If, as Carmody suggests, the poem "Vertueux solitaire", in Chanson complète represents exorcism of Breton, the poet uses the uncharacteristic word 'haine' against him at this time because 'Tu n'avais dans ton coeur que lueurs souterraines', and because of 'ta bouche écho détruit'.

Donner à voir was published in the same year as Chanson complète. It will not be discussed in depth in this chapter, since it is of vital importance to an understanding of Eluard's work as a whole, and is referred to throughout the present study. It is a confident and mature work which includes poetry, prose poems, and passages of prose in which he takes store of his ideas on poetry, reiterating in theoretical terms some of the ideas he has developed and put into practice under Surrealism:

'ressemblance' between dissimilar objects, the importance of vision, the superiority of the imagination over reason, the importance of spontaneity. At the same time it reveals a great deal of social consciousness. It is his "livre de



morale"<sup>38</sup>, in which he couples poetry with morality:

Toute véritable morale est poétique, la poésie  
tendant au règne de l'homme, de tous les hommes, au  
règne de notre justice. (39)

Eluard italicises the word 'notre' here, and the idea that poetry is for all men is reiterated throughout the work.

He insists that:

La poésie ne se fera chair et sang qu'à partir du  
moment où elle sera réciproque. Cette réciprocité  
est entièrement fonction de l'égalité du bonheur  
entre les hommes. (40)

and elsewhere, he quotes Blake: men are 'tous semblables  
par le Génie poétique'<sup>41</sup>, hence the notion of 'ressemblance'  
extends to man's potential for poetry. Out of the  
contention of Lautréamont (also quoted in Donner à voir)  
that 'La poésie doit être faite par tous. Non par un',  
which encouraged the surrealist collaboration, Eluard is  
forming his own idea of cooperation. Linked with this  
is the by now well-established idea that love links us to  
the world:

Nous sommes deux et nous sommes obéissants. Nos  
idées sont publiques nos paroles sont entendues. (42)

Eluard shows his compassion for the poor in a short  
prose poem entitled "Pauvre", and again he enumerates those  
who evoke the sentiment: children, women and men.  
Occasionally in Donner à voir his views are more specifically  
political. He quotes Lafargue's criticism of bourgeois  
values and regret that the proletariat is enslaved by the

38. Cf. L. Decaunes, review in Cahiers du Sud, 1940,  
September, no.226, p.436.

39. O.C. I, p.977.

40. O.C. I, p.990.

41. O.C. I, p.999.

42. O.C. I, p.919. This is repeated even more succinctly in  
Les Sentiers et les routes de la poésie, O.C. II, p.599:  
'Parler pour soi, quand on est amoureux, c'est parler  
pour tous.'

dogma of work<sup>43</sup>; he deplores the devaluation of the 'sauvage' by so-called civilised men.<sup>44</sup> His main aim, however, in Donner à voir, is to convey the all important relationship between social conscience and poetry. Underlining the primacy of the imagination, he deplores the stupidity of those whose ethics exclude it:

La Bêtise, essentiellement, milite. Elle sert des systèmes qui se prétendent de première utilité parce qu'ils sont exclusivement raisonnables.. (45)

and whilst it is impossible not to see the political implications of this belief, it is a wider moral credo.

Poésie ininterrompue I, published in 1946, examines the emotions and ideas of the earlier period of change. It has been comprehensively analysed by Beaujour, Aragon and Vernier.<sup>46</sup> We restrict ourselves here to a few observations which are relevant to the transition.

The poem progresses by degrees, by ascension, as in the poem "Crier". Initially, the poet is entrenched in an ideal world, an eternal present where love is static and narcissistic; then reality is glimpsed, but as a limiting and harmful element. Hope, however, helps the poet to face this reality, helps him to see that the evil of the real world must be forcibly suppressed. Again 'l'amour fou' tempts him, but subsequently reality intervenes more strongly and love between two people becomes projected out into the world. The poet's voice becomes an arm, since he has accepted the real dimensions of time and space. From

43. O.C. I, p.988.

44. O.C. I, p.925. The surrealists collaborated with the communists on an Anti-colonial exhibition in 1931, and according to Nadeau, op.cit., p.158, Eluard and Aragon were particularly involved.

45. O.C. I, p.993.

46. M. Beaujour: 'Analyse de Poésie ininterrompue' Europe Nov-Dec. 1962, pp.74-87. Aragon: Chroniques du Bel Canto Skira, Paris, 1947. Vernier, op.cit., Vernier's study is particularly interesting for its study of the dialectic method in the poem.

this point on he looks at the real world with specifically critical eyes; he examines the alienation of his former friends the surrealists, of the bourgeoisie, of the wronged proletariat, and of law- and war-mongers; and the tone of this criticism ranges through scorn, pity and disgust. Finally, the poet is critical of himself. Throughout the poem he has admitted his past mistakes, and having blamed himself, now accepts his rôle as one militant amongst all the rest, instead of that of a poet set apart from the world.

This progression takes place in dialectic form, and the closing section concludes in all confidence and hope:

Les derniers arguments du néant sont vaincus.

Liberty is finally gained, and the imagery is all positive now, all reclaimed for 'le bien'. Walls are demolished, the sun is uncovered, men embrace with their hands, the pupils of the eyes are wide open, hiding-places are opened up. Man who, when he first intrudes on the poet's consciousness is:

L'homme comme un marais  
L'homme à l'instinct brouillé  
A la chair en exil,

is now seen with hope, having passed through the recurring contradictory processes of the poet's mind. Images of time and light have undergone the same transformation, linked as they are with Eluard's changing view of dream and reality. During the early intrusion of reality, man is:

L'homme en butte au passé  
Et qui toujours regrette.

and the temptation is to cling to the innocence of the past:

Hier c'est la jeunesse, hier c'est la promesse.

In the late 1930's Eluard was contemplating his past, a subject which normally did not concern him, but which at this particular period tempted his thoughts and then brought revolt because he had broken with Surrealism and therefore his entire adult past. However, he comes to terms with these attitudes. In Chanson complète he writes:

Nous de l'avenir  
Pour un petit moment pensons au passé  
Vertu pense au malheur  
Mon passé mon présent  
Nous n'en avons plus peur;<sup>47</sup>

in Donner à voir:

J'enterrais gaiement mon passé dans la tombe  
de mon avenir, (48)

and in the poem under discussion he goes forward with Nusch, accepting his past ('Moi tel que j'ai vécu') into their future. The past is simply forgotten in the perpetual renewing motion of poetry, of 'poésie ininterrompue'. It is in this sense that the other title, "Nulle rupture", must be seen. Only briefly, whilst avoiding reality, was Eluard lured by thoughts of the past, a fact which is not without irony since it was under Surrealism that Eluard developed the idea that the past hinders transformation.<sup>49</sup>

'L'oubli joue dans les rêves un rôle constant', he says in Donner à voir.<sup>50</sup> This notion of time, however, like the idea of resemblance, remains with Eluard because it is natural to his personality and to his poetic expression. In Poésie ininterrompue, 'Tous les mots sont d'accord',

47. O.C. I, p.872.

48.. O.C. I, p.922. Expressions of time are dealt with more fully in Chapter VII.

49. Cf. A. Balakian, André Breton, p.131.

50. O.C. I, p.980.

and 'Tous les mots se reflètent', but these assurances occur early in the poem in the egocentric, introverted stage, and there is the suggestion that they are too facile, that the 'image ô contact parfait' is too perfect in a world where there is 'rien à haïr et rien à pardonner'. Finally, as Vernier points out,<sup>51</sup> it is the common hope which reconciles opposites:

La jeunesse est un trésor  
 La vieillesse est un trésor  
 L'océan est un trésor  
 Et la terre est une mine  
 L'hiver est une fourrure  
 L'été une boisson fraîche...

These clear metaphors convey, for all to understand, the unity of the universe; they form a strong contrast to the surrealist-inspired imagery translating the same idea. The strong feeling of completeness and confidence at the end of the poem comes as much from the fact that the image, in his own words, has been reconquered, as from the triumph of reality and time over dreams and an illusory eternity.

The imagery of light in this poem shows the final assimilation, after contradictory temptations, of an illuminated universe. The poem is set at daybreak, and the dominance of light is quickly established: 'Rien ne peut déranger l'ordre de la lumière', he says, and even whilst regretting the past he asks:

Pour que ses paupières ouvertes  
 Approfondissent la lumière.

At the end, when the dialectic process is over, the day is even more young and bright:

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51. op.cit., p.86.

Je vois brûler l'eau pure et l'herbe du matin  
 Je vais de fleur en fleur sur un corps auroral  
 Midi qui dort je veux l'entourer de clameur  
 L'honorer dans son jour de senteurs de lueurs.

Night has become innocuous, synthesised with day and now  
 equally bright:

Et minuit mûrit des fruits  
 Et midi mûrit des lunes.

As for love and social commitment, the relationship between the two, established positively in the late 1930's, is glowingly confirmed in the poem. Nusch is the pivot of the dilemma of choice between 'l'amour fou' and love extended from the couple to the world. The poet's vision of her at the beginning is as 'la première et la seule', and for several lines the possessive adjective in the first person singular is put into her mouth; she is 'mon bonheur nocturne'. The dialectic battle between this happiness which lacks a dimension and the reality which is waiting to provide it continues until, just as the poet is finally a man amongst men, Nusch is seen as a woman amongst other women, willing to fight by his side:

Mais du bonheur promis et qui commence à deux  
 La première parole  
 Est déjà un refrain confiant  
 Contre la peur contre la faim  
 Un signe de ralliement.

This post-war poem, then, is characterised by stern self-criticism and crusading humanitarianism. It is not specifically political, like some of the later poetry, but it is certainly a poem of circumstance, as it follows the poet's personal, internal 'circumstances'. It reiterates in doubly positive terms the decisions made during the 1930's

and which had become firm in 1938 and 9; Eluard has rejected love as a concept encompassing and limiting the couple, and at the same time purged himself of the temptation to turn his back on the real world to remain in the less demanding world of idealistic dreams. He has accepted Nusch as a loving partner in the fight against injustice, and undertaken to put his poetry to the service of that fight. The language of the poems of 1937-9 reflects the urgency, vigour and hope of his new decision, but his expression at this time, with the exception of that in the two poems in Cours naturel inspired by events in Spain, is not yet fully communicable to the common man. Certainly his sentiments are simple and usually simply expressed in vocabulary which becomes clearer with frequent appearances. But much of his imagery still appears esoteric, and if indeed he said nothing inexplicable, many of these images require careful analysis before they are communicated. A study of the war and post-war poetry will help to show the changes in style which make Eluard's poetry more readily available to the wide audience of which he is now fully aware, to the totality of men who are equal in the sight of Poetry. At the end of the 1930's the image is only beginning to be the weapon it is proclaimed to be in Poésie ininterrompue.

## CHAPTER VI

THE LANGUAGE OF COMMITMENT.

La poésie doit servir. Elle est une arme, un outil. Pendant cette guerre, l'on croyait n'avoir affaire qu'à des 'poètes', l'on a eu affaire à des hommes.

Aujourd'hui la poésie. O.C. II, p.873-4.

Part (i): Consciousness of the Needs of Others.

The period of Le Livre ouvert I, according to Pantanella,<sup>1</sup> is the last time Eluard is really pessimistic, although "Moralité du sommeil", published a year later in 1941, is as pessimistic as parts of this work and its eventual inclusion in Le livre ouvert 1938-1944 shows that in Eluard's view it fitted well amongst the poems of 'la blême avant-guerre, la guerre grise aux prises avec les éternels prodiges.'<sup>2</sup> The title "Le livre ouvert" is taken from a line in "Identités", in Cours naturel: 'Le livre ouvert de mes volets fermés', and the negative image of vision in this line, echoing other such images in the same poem, is appropriate to the tendency, expressed for the last time in this collection, towards an ivory tower existence. The war is to rid him of this temptation, and the process is fully documented in Poésie ininterrompue I. Still in Le livre ouvert, however, images subsist in which he succumbs to the urge to close his eyes and live outside

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1. R. Pantanella, op.cit., p.131.

2. Cf. O.C. I, p.1569, note to page 1011.



reality:

Et mes yeux refermant leurs ailes pour la nuit  
Vivaient d'un univers sans bornes.

Pour me parfaire au dos de mes paupières.

("Vue donne Vie")

It is in fact in the less pessimistic poems that such images occur, the poet escaping from depressing realities by such means. In "Nous n'importe où", there is a deliberate wish to separate the real world of suffering and dispossession from the lovers' picnic:

Nous parlerons ce soir de nous et des oiseaux  
Nous n'écouterons pas la longue et sourde histoire  
Des hommes chassés de chez eux.

The suffering of these men is elaborated during four lines, and then surprisingly, lightly dismissed with the hope that they will eventually find 'un asile de clarté comme le nôtre.' The vague terms of this hope can probably be explained by a comparison with a similarly indefinite hope in Poésie ininterrompue I:

Je finirai bien par me retrouver  
Nous prendrons possession du monde.

Significantly, these two lines occur quite early in the poem, where its dialectic progression has brought him back to a state of optimistic illusion, and before he begins reluctantly to face reality. They manifest what Vernier<sup>3</sup> calls: 'un optimisme débordant qui le dispense de toute autre connaissance.' At the time when Le livre ouvert is written, at least two years before he rejoins the Communist Party, he is not yet clear of the form his poetic action will take.

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3. Vernier, op.cit., p.38.

It is hardly surprising that the years 1938-1940 provoke pessimism. The long-standing threat of war, its eventual outbreak and the air of defeatism prevalent amongst many of the French must have depressed all but a Chauvin. The poems "Mourir", "Finir" and "Passer" are full of death imagery: 'l'ombre est entière', 'comme un mort dans sa tombe ouverte', 'debout les bêtes mortes', 'voici que les cerceuils enfantent', 'feuille morte', 'le tombeau des villes'. Onimus<sup>4</sup> speaks of the 'climat négatif' of the two latter poems and it is a climate largely created by verbs of devastation: noyés, détruit, s'est pendu, s'est caché, paralysé, renversé, effacé. Two images normally implying strength (and discussed later in this chapter) are in the negative: 'le sang détruit', and 'le feu est misérable.' Light is overthrown, and birds, normally light and aery, are floundering in the mud with fish; the latter are not common in Eluard's work, but normally anything which moves in water does so lightly and without effort.<sup>5</sup> The leaf, which as a positive image brings light and hope (in "Tout se marie", in Une Leçon de morale he speaks of 'eux que l'espoir charge de feuilles innombrables') is dead in "Finir".

The image of treasure, which at the end of Poésie ininterrompue I conveys, with the simplicity Eluard decides is necessary if poetry is to become an arm, youth, old age and the ocean is negative in the pessimistic poem "Mourir". Eluard calls solitude the 'marraine des trésors

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4. Jean Onimus: "Les images de Paul Eluard", (n.p.)

5. Cf. Raymond Jean's analysis of the "barque" theme in Paul Eluard par lui-même, p.64.

perdus' and similarly, in "Moralité du sommeil", speaks of 'Simulacres trésors gâchés'. Mirror imagery is also negative; in "Jouer" he says 'Je n'ai plus de reflet', and the same cry is uttered after Nusch's death in Une leçon de morale: 'J'ai perdu mon reflet'<sup>6</sup>. In "Moralité du sommeil", although the mirror is 'la mare nuptiale', yet he says:

Je ne suis plus le miroir  
Où pour la première fois  
Sans ombre tu te parlas.

Occasionally pessimism appears in the later poetry, but usually his sadness is centred on the poor lot of others, and is countered by the constantly uttered hope of improving men's conditions. Personal pessimism only figures after Nusch's death, or during rare moments of spleen. One such moment is revealed in "Dimanche après-midi", a prose poem in Le livre ouvert II. An unusual poem for Eluard, at least since La vie immédiate, it has the quality of a spleen poem of Baudelaire. He speaks of 'les cieux implacables', 'les chats mourants', 'les jours sans fin'. Another poem, "L'horizon droit", in Poésie et vérité 1942, contains the same ennui, the sense, on waking, of facing another morning in a state of grey depression. It is impossible to judge to what extent the war gave rise to these feelings and to what extent they are simply attributable to the humour of the moment. At any rate the litany of reflexive verbs and adjectival clauses in the first are effective in conveying stark monotony, whilst

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6. O.C. II, p.329.

in the second the 'panier de mauvais réveil', the 'mains à cueillir Décembre' and the 'blés du coeur couchés dans la boue' (when corn is usually an image of light)<sup>7</sup> convey the same unease, if not quite so strikingly.

Often, however, the poet's sadness is less egocentric. The pessimism in "Fresque" is uncharacteristic of the rest of Le lit la table, a work which on the whole is full of contentment and hope, and which ends with "Critique de la poésie", in which poetry and love are triumphantly set against the deaths of his friends, in startling contrast. In "Fresque" the poet's depression appears to spring from his former unconsciousness of other people's misery:

J'étais celui qui se promène  
Le nez en l'air  
Avec son chien le nez par terre.

There is sharp but amusing self criticism here as he parodies the bourgeois and his dog, who between them do not have their eyes fixed on the reality ahead. He admits with obvious shame that he had never known death; but the verb is in the imperfect and in the second part he speaks of a man 'mort d'avoir eu froid'. At the end he urges us to reject the 'injuste bonheur' of a life without anger. "Le monde est nul", as its title conveys, is also unusual in this collection for its pessimism, but was influenced by what Eluard saw whilst he was in hiding in a mental home in St. Alban in the winter of 1943, and by his observations of a particular woman there (the note "Sainte-Anne 1942" was designed to confuse the police.) One of

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7. For example, O.C. II, p.121: 'le blé de la lumière.'

the most pathetic images in this poem is again one centred on mud:

Et je commande avec une langue de boue  
Que l'on m'aime à jamais.

In a rare poem in Le livre ouvert II, the poet again gives a pessimistic view of human misery, untempered by the hope in solidarity which is usually the antidote to this mood. The poor in "Beaux reflets" see nothing, their hearts are empty, and the poem ends thus: 'Ils cernent de néant ma vie'.

The more Eluard becomes conscious of the social realities around him, however, the more he generally advocates solidarity as a source of strength, whether it be against the Nazis, against social injustice, or against the equally hostile threat of solitude. The importance of "fraternisation" is expounded earlier in L'Evidence poétique, and the hope expressed there, that it will 'vaincre les puissances de ruine et de mort',<sup>8</sup> becomes a positive reality for Eluard during the war, its "évidence" taking particularly concrete form in his resistance activities with other writers. Again and again the word "frère" is reiterated, from Sur les pentes intérieures onwards, supported and surrounded by expressions of hope. Man, or rather men united, have already inherited the earth:

Frères cette aurore est vôtre  
...Frères cette aurore est nôtre<sup>9</sup>

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8. O.C. I, p.520.

9. O.C. I, p.1220.

Invariably the poet links himself to all other men, and often in the familiar images of resemblance, such as hands and mirrors:

Leurs mains ont serré les miennes  
 Leur voix a formé ma voix  
 Dans un miroir fraternel. (10)

The word takes its place amongst a litany of special words in the poem "Gabriel Péri"; the preciousness of "Quelques-uns des mots qui jusqu'ici m'étaient mystérieusement interdits" gives way in the war-time situation to abstract words giving courage: confiance, justice, liberté, gentillesse; although 'certains noms de fleurs et certains noms de fruits' are included as innocent, life-giving words. 'Frère', however, takes on special significance, for it is personified by Péri, a communist journalist shot in 1941: 'Péri est mort pour ce qui nous fait vivre.'

Eluard's best-known enumeration of 'mots innocents' is 'Liberté'. The poem had a real rôle as ammunition during the war. Parrot<sup>11</sup> tells how it was made known to various resistance leaders in France, distributed right across the country by the R.A.F., and how 'partout ce poème souleva l'enthousiasme et réveilla les énergies'. By using pseudonyms and hiding from time to time Eluard was able to continue distributing his poetry, and was very much aware of the wider audience. An appendix to Au rendez-vous allemand, called "Raisons d'écrire", explains

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10. O.C. I, p.1287.

11. L. Parrot: L'Intelligence en guerre, p.111.

why he needed to go underground and the aim behind publishing Poésie et vérité 1942 and other poems:

'retrouver, pour nuire à l'occupant, la liberté d'expression.'<sup>12</sup> Those for whom he writes are counted in their thousands and millions:

Il n'avait pas UN camarade  
Mais des millions et des millions.  
J'ai mille amis sous la neige mortelle  
J'ai mille amours dont le coeur palpitant  
Gonfle l'été qui travaille la terre  
Pour mieux régner en jour ouvert. (13)

In this dynamic image of summer preparing itself beneath the earth, resistance to the enemy is more than implicit.

Again, he shows his awareness of the wider audience, his solidarity with it and the need to communicate with it by constant repetition of "nous". The additional poems to the fourth edition of Au rendez-vous allemand, published in 1946, are particularly full of the word in its most triumphant context:

Nous ne sommes plus nombreux  
Nous sommes à l'infini.

The poem "Eternité de ceux que je n'ai pas revus", in which these lines appear, contains a long list of comrades, literary and artistic men, who died at the hands of the Germans, again with the humanist message, echoing the Christian one, "Tous nous rendant la vie possible". In Les sept poèmes d'amour en guerre, the various forms of the second person plural appear twenty five times. After the war the message is as strong; the sense of limitlessness

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12. O.C. I, p.1606, note for p.1103.

13. O.C. I, p.1253 and O.C. I, p.1071.

of man's brotherhood and regeneration forms the basis of the poem "Notre Mouvement", in Le Dur désir de durer, for instance; but the necessarily encouraging impression created in the war poetry that the battle against injustice is already won:

Et la bêtise et la démente  
Et la bassesse firent place  
A des hommes frères des hommes,

conveyed here simply by use of the past tense, is no longer always appropriate to the post-war militant:

Un jour viendra où je serai parmi  
Les constructeurs d'un vivant édifice  
La foule immense où l'homme est un ami.<sup>14</sup>

The objective during the war was to give readers courage by showing the one immediate enemy as good as defeated; in peace time, however, the enemy is more various, and the solution a future socialist Utopia.

Fraternity has a major rôle to play in combatting solitude. It is not, however, as we have seen, the panacea for all moments of spleen, and his anguish when Nusch dies is briefly unrelieved by thoughts of brotherhood:<sup>15</sup>

J'étais si près de toi que j'ai froid auprès des autres.  
...je suis bien seul  
Je suis mal amputé j'ai mal j'ai froid je vis.<sup>16</sup>

At this black period of his life, the cries of pain echo the earlier cries of "L'Univers-solitude", before he achieved, thanks largely to Nusch, outward-looking stability as described in Poésie ininterrompue I.

14. O.C. II, p.106.

15. Cf. O.C. II, p.1310, note to page 981; Eluard revealed to Aragon and Elsa Triolet his intention to commit suicide.

16. O.C. II, p.110 and p.316.



However, the solipsism common to so many twentieth-century writers is completely foreign to Eluard. In "Picasso bon maître de la liberté", even as he admits to the great giver of sight that he himself is almost blinded by Nusch's death, he can write the following lines:

La misère noire serait de voir là où il n'y a rien  
à voir que soi, de s'arrêter sur la première marche  
du monde: sa propre vie, de se saluer mortel et de  
se retirer...Marcher en soi-même est comme un châtiment:  
l'on ne va pas loin.

Elsewhere he says simply: 'Je ne suis pas né solitaire', or 'J'ai toujours eu peur du silence'.<sup>17</sup> The desire to be an intimate part of a couple, and from there a part of a much wider community, is natural to his personality and he believes that alienation can be conquered by united action. This belief is translated into a call to arms throughout the war, for Eluard is not satisfied simply with assuring his readers that they are all brothers. Abstract terms proliferate at this period; like "Gabriel Péri", Les sept poèmes d'amour en guerre is a particularly good example of a crusading poem, calling simply upon the values which are at risk: 'Nous voulons libérer les autres/ De leur solitude glacée' he says, and conjugates 'vouloir' to underline the fusion of 'tu' and 'je' into 'nous'. He speaks of 'couples brillants de vertu', of:

La jeunesse de l'amour  
Et la raison de l'amour  
La sagesse de l'amour  
Et l'immortalité.

The poem ends with an unequivocal call to action:

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17. O.C. II, p.306 and O.C. I, p.445.

Il nous faut drainer la colère  
Et faire se lever le fer.

It is interesting that he uses the word "honte" seven times in the sixth part of the poem: a word to be treated with delicacy in an occupied country. However, it is used in a wide, humanitarian sense by Eluard. Shame for the torture inflicted, and for the torturer, should spur us on, he suggests, for we are not ashamed of our suffering, nor ashamed of our shame.

In the four editions of Au rendez-vous allemand, by far the most common abstract words on the positive side, appearing more than a dozen times, are 'vie' and 'vivre', whilst to use Eluard's own term from the dialectic Une leçon de morale, the most common term attributable "au mal" is the word death. By repetition of the two he underlines in clear terms joy and survival on the one hand, and evil on the other. Usually each term stands on its own, but when the two are juxtaposed the result can be highly effective. For instance, in a parody of the famous story of Monsieur de la Palisse, he writes:

La nuit qui précéda sa mort  
Fut la plus courte de sa vie  
L'idée qu'il existait encore  
Lui brûlait le sang aux poignets<sup>18</sup>

The juxtaposition of death with life here conveys exactly the tension of the last few hours of existence; and in the following example he again sings of those who die to prolong life:

Il n'y a rien d'essentiel à créer  
Que le respect de la vie et des morts  
Qui sont morts pour la vie. (19)

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18. O.C. I, p.1253.  
19. O.C. I, p.1257.

Another very common abstract term is 'amour/aimer', and 'haine' appears several times, although not as frequently as its opposite. Hatred, in fact, is often claimed for the side of good rather than evil, where the thing hated is bad. A survey of the collection reveals considerably more abstract words conveying evil than good. The following are used between one and three times: injustice, horreur, souffrance/souffrir, prison, assassin, inutile, absent, vaincu/vainqueur, crime/criminel, tortures, tristesse, bêtise, vide, terreur/terrorisé, désastre, ennemi. Bourreaux is more frequent; it has a hard sound and conveys an immediate link with death.

The terms of abuse against the Fascists used in the period of the Spanish war are intensified in the anti-German poetry. 'Bourreaux' is frequent throughout the war, and 'bête', used in 'Novembre 1936' reappears, reminding us of his warning in Donner à voir<sup>20</sup> that "La Bêtise, essentiellement, milite." As for the words 'fascisme', 'fasciste' and 'nazi' themselves, Marie-Renée Guyard, in her exploration of Eluard's political vocabulary, shows that they are not used to convey political organisation directly, but appear in juxtaposition with words from the semantic fields of violence and death.<sup>21</sup>

In Au rendez-vous allemand, the abstract terms of good, although fewer than the evil, are more frequent: raison, innocent, liberté/libre, and espoir are all common,

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20. O.C. I, p.993.

21. Le vocabulaire politique de Paul Eluard, p.43. Note also her comments on p.49 on the contexts in which the word 'maître' appears, negated by verbs of disappearance such as 's'enfuit', 's'éteint' etc.

and "justice" figures in every line but one of "Les belles balances de l'ennemi"; hence we are left with an overall impression of hope and of militant love.

Part (ii): 'Involuntary' Poetry and Poetry of Circumstance.

Poésie involontaire et poésie intentionnelle, published in 1942, is a collection of quotations from other poets and a short thesis by Eluard, all illustrating the notion of Lautréamont which opens it:

La poésie personnelle a fait son temps de jongleries relatives et de contorsions contingents.<sup>e</sup>  
Reprenons le fil indestructible de la poésie impersonnelle.

Unfortunately, says Eluard, personal poetry has not yet had its day; he rejects preoccupation with self in poetry, calling for poetry with a universal appeal, a universal application. Again, theories which influenced Surrealism fit neatly into Eluard's poetic scheme in the later period; for the above lines from Lautréamont echo his dictum, so beloved of the surrealists, that 'La poésie doit être faite par tous. Non par un', and the lines he quotes from Rimbaud, listing the various literary forms which pleased him, (ecclesiastic Latin, fairy tales, old operas and so on). hark back to Breton's experiments in Clair de Terre. Apollinaire was of course the important exponent of 'involuntary' poetry, urging modern writers to 'exalter la vie sous quelque forme qu'elle se présente'<sup>22</sup>, and

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22. L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes.

giving examples in his poem "Zone": 'Tu lis les prospectus les catalogues les affiches qui chantent tout haut.'

Eluard himself finds his illustrations in popular legends, nursery rhymes, a dictionary of slang and case studies from Piaget, as well as spontaneous lines by other poets from Villon to Cocteau, and including Apollinaire.

Throughout Eluard's short exposé of his views on the subject, the emphasis is firmly placed on the mass of men. There is no dichotomy between admitting the shortcomings of involuntary poetry: 'si banale, si imparfaite, si grossière soit-elle', and declaring it to be '(le) langage le plus pur, celui de l'homme de la rue et du sage, de la femme, de l'enfant et du fou.' This poetry is pure by dint of its close links with life, love and necessity. Aragon<sup>23</sup> claims that Eluard detested the term 'pure poetry' and all its implications, and in Donner à voir he mocks the Abbé Brémond's categorisations in a section called "Poésie pure". For Eluard, purity comes from the people,<sup>24</sup> for him 'l'humble voix qui se plaint ou qui chante dans la foule...est sublime.' Himself absorbing this voice, he is, as we have suggested, always conscious of the need to communicate back to the mass of people. The message of the work under discussion, however, is that only poetry with a universal appeal is truly communicable. Later, in Les sentiers et les routes de la poésie, Eluard quotes Rousseau in L'Émile, stating the view that 'la vérité est

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23. Aragon, L'Homme communiste, vol. II, p.152.

24. This notion, as we saw in Chapter I, was already contained in the preface to Les animaux et leurs hommes.

dans les choses et non dans mon esprit qui les juge, et que moins je mets de moi dans les jugements que j'en porte, plus je suis sûr d'approcher de la vérité.' Like Rimbaud, who writes:<sup>25</sup> 'Votre poésie subjective sera toujours horriblement fadasse', Eluard rejects any introspection of the Romantic kind; the idea of 'ressemblance' was developed very early: Gala, before Nusch, was portrayed as resembling all women, and his imagination always established bonds between men and women, between himself and other men, and between objects, similar or dissimilar. That he draws on his own experience, Poésie ininterrompue demonstrates forcibly; and yet, as Pierre Emmanuel points out in his analysis of "Pour vivre ici", Eluard's poetry is very impersonal in spite of this:

'Comme toujours dans cette poésie, le Je déborde infiniment le moi.'<sup>26</sup> Raymond Jean quotes Poulet, substantiating this view; only the death of Nusch, with the announcement of its date in Le temps déborde, breaks the pattern:

'Et pourtant, dans cette existence à la fois infiniment détachée et infiniment universalisée, il est un événement qu'on ne peut passer sous silence...'<sup>27</sup>

Critics such as Showalter and Carmody, attempting to draw biographical conclusions from Eluard's work, have no easy task, for Nusch's death is the only event plainly

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25. Rimbaud, letter of 13 May 1871 to Izambard.

26. P. Emmanuel: Le Monde est intérieur, p.160. We have suggested, however, that rare poems such as "Dimanche après-midi" and "L'Horizon Droit" are self-centred in the 'ennui' they portray.

27. R. Jean, op.cit., p.31. Dominique's name is mentioned in 'Le château des pauvres' and in several poems of Le Phénix. This does not detract from the universalised message of these poems, however.

mentioned; but with a prior knowledge of the events of his life, we have seen how far the poem can be dictated by the circumstance: for instance, his estrangement with Gala or his anger at events in Spain.

During the war the link between circumstance and poem becomes more direct; Eluard often names his friends who die at the hands of the Germans. After the war he specifies places and people in the Greek civil war, and pays homage in verse to communist partisans from all over Europe, thus leaving himself more open to the charge of neglecting the poetic for the didactic. With some of his critics, it is primarily his Stalinism which rankles, but the charge is nevertheless one which must be examined seriously.

Firstly, however, we must note Eluard's justification of his poetry of circumstance in Aujourd'hui la poésie and La poésie de circonstance. In the former, read in Prague in 1946, he states his firm belief that 'tout poète est un poète de la circonstance: il crée, pour répondre à une situation donnée, dont il n'est pas le maître. Le poète est dirigé.' As we saw in Chapter II, Eluard was not happy with a purely automatic inspiration, and did not feel himself to be 'dirigé' in matters of form, yet the subjects of his poems are directed by situations. An illuminating example of this direction, which he proffers in La poésie de circonstance, is the poem "Liberté", which he began writing with the intention of ending with Nusch's name, and, because of the situation at the time,

found the word "Liberté" dictating itself to him.

Unfortunately, as far as any non-communist is concerned, Eluard's argument is badly marred by lack of objectivity. For he cites poems written for Stalin's seventieth birthday (presumably meaning his own "Joseph Staline" and others) as being influenced by the greatness conferred on him by history, and as containing 'la densité et le poids humain de cette grande existence'; one notes that there is no individual assessment of the poems as works of art. On the other hand, Claudel's "Parachutistes d'Indochine" is dismissed as a "bad" subject because it concerns an episode in a war which reason and men's hearts, according to Eluard, consider as 'un abcès, un bourgeonnement hideux de l'Histoire.' Whilst elsewhere he declares that poetry may derive from any source, here he is rejecting colonial war as a subject fit for poetic treatment.

Elsewhere in the speech, Eluard claims that a poem of circumstance, either in the wider sense which he prefers or in the commonly used, narrower sense, 'n'existera, n'atteindra son but que s'il échappe à la médiocrité.' His criteria here are distinctly literary, for he says: 'l'on absout difficilement un médiocre malgré ses bons sentiments', and 'le langage du médiocre...est inutilisable', whereas one is ready to forgive the contradictions of a true poet. The question of mediocrity is complicated when Marxist doctrine and socialist realism are involved; since Eluard himself uses literary criteria, however, in our discussion of the poetry concerned with the war and social struggles afterwards it seems fair to make a judgement



on their effectiveness from the literary point of view.

All of Au rendez-vous allemand is, of course, poetry of circumstance, and we have noted the derogatory terms used to describe the war and the Germans, and the expressions of hope describing or encouraging humanity. The circumstance of occupation gives rise to some extremely evocative imagery; the Baudelairian:

Des racines aromatiques  
Séparent les chairs corrompues

or

L'aube est sortie d'un coupe-gorge  
L'aube noircit sur des décombres ("Charniers")

and where people or places are mentioned, they impress themselves on our minds either because they are known, or because their plight has a universal application. In "Tuer" and in "En plein mois d'août" Paris is depicted as the innocent victim of crime; 'le bon vieux coeur de Paris' has been violated', but in the second poem its innocence is militant: 'Paris osant montrer ses yeux/ Paris osant crier victoire' and because Paris and its predicament are well known the picture evokes our sympathy. For the same reason the Nazis' destruction of Germany invites an angry reaction to "Chant Nazi", and collaboration by certain French who 'nous ont vanté nos bourreaux', is vividly portrayed in "Un petit nombre d'intellectuels français s'est mis au service de l'ennemi", by the use of imagery which links the mouth and language with corruption and death:

Ils n'ont rien dit innocem<sup>m</sup>ent  
Belles paroles d'alliance  
Ils vous ont voilés de vermine  
Leur bouche donne sur la mort

He reminds us of 'Les femmes d'Auschwitz les petits enfants juifs', in "Les vendeurs d'indulgence", a poem which is violently against pardon for the Nazis; and in "A l'échelle humaine", he defines love in terms of Spain and the Parisian region.<sup>28</sup> All of this is distinctly circumstantial, and any reader of the allied nations, even if he was not alive at the time, will still feel strongly involved. Even in years to come, however, much of this poetry will stand, if Paris is still an attractive city, if men are still killed, and if war in any form still exists; only the bare facts of the second World War need be known, for the struggle is of universal significance. Only the list of names in "Éternité de ceux que je n'ai pas revus" will become meaningless. In "Gabriel Péri", however, the name scarcely matters, because it stands for the values for which he died, for "confiance", "liberté", "amour", "justice", "gentillesse".

The post-war poetry of circumstance, where the circumstances are political, has a less universal appeal, much of it being devoted to paying homage to Communist Party members or newspapers, to the Greek partisans, to the U.S.S.R. Eluard would claim to be communicating to all men, but to those without a commitment to communism their banality is of the worst sort. In Poèmes politiques, the poem "A la mémoire de Paul Vaillant-Couturier" is very prosaic. The poet tells where he lives in Paris, and the name of the organ of his cell; he gives the detail that

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28. One aspect of Marianne Gaudric's study, 'Le Paris d'Eluard', is Paris as the embodiment of the courage of 'le peuple'.

it is distributed free. The sentiments in the poem are sincere, but they are laboured. Every line after this introductory stanza proclaims the sense of brotherhood of the "Amis de la Rue"; the sentiment of resemblance is pushed to the point of monotony. Everyone has the same hopes, fears, loves, speaks the same words; the poet constantly identifies himself with others, and them with him, and Paul Vaillant-Couturier undergoes the same identification. Elsewhere, however, the poet does not fall into the same trap of sentimentality. In "A mes camarades imprimeurs" he identifies with the printers because they share the same task, and then elaborates on this link by portraying the nobility of that task:

Nous avions le même métier  
 Qui donnait à voir dans la nuit  
 Voir c'est comprendre c'est agir  
 Et voir c'est être ou disparaître.

Having only briefly established the bond between himself and these comrades, he universalises the question of communication and writes of the message they must put across in simple but evocative terms, using words like 'pouvoir', 'libre', 'meilleur', 'destin', 'vie parfaite'. In few words, and in short octosyllabic lines, Eluard communicates fluently his reason for writing. Only one line links him with the printers and yet we gain from the rest of the poem a strong impression of the importance of their task of education and enlightenment.

In writing "A la mémoire de Paul Vaillant-Couturier", Eluard would have in mind the readers of Les amis de la rue vous parlent, for which it was written,<sup>29</sup> and so chose

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29. It was also published in L'Almanach ouvrier-paysan, (autumn, 1946, 1947, p.111).

an accessible, prosaic form to convey his message of comradeship. The audiences for which he wrote his various Hommages must also be borne in mind. "12<sup>e</sup> Congrès" was written for a congress of the French Communist Party in April 1950, and reads like a welcome speech, interspersed with slogans: 'Où est on (?) entre camarades': 'le Viet-Nam vient nous saluer.' Again it is very straightforward, very prosaic:

Thorez nous parle de justice  
La France est pays de justice  
Il parle pour ceux qui travaillent.

There is only one image, and that is one which is commonly used in everyday speech; he speaks of those who hold in their hands the strength to assure the future and be fraternal. It is virtually unpunctuated prose.

The poem written for the centenary of the death of the Hungarian poet Petöfi Sándor traces his life in many expressions of banality, for example: 'Son père était charcutier et sa mère était domestique'; but the repetition of 'je veux chanter ici' justifies this extreme banality; it is a ballad with a moral in the last verse. There are a few rich images too:

Elle (l'aurore) a construit des ponts entre vivre et  
survivre  
L'eau des sources la mène à des prairies nouvelles.

The imagery is not so happy in "Dit des trieuses"; throughout nine lines he uses imagery of the hand, and again one feels it is overdone. Injustice, he says, has hands of gold; and nails and joints of gold; and its palms full of gold. The sorters, however, have useful hands and they will be the victors. It is a simple poem dedicated to people who use their hands, but it does not rise above the

level of the mediocre.

Anaphora is much used throughout Eluard's work. It is an aspect of his verse which held much attraction for Poulenc,<sup>30</sup> who set several of his poems to music; it lends unity<sup>31</sup> to many a poem and yet provides a great variety of effects at different times.<sup>32</sup> During the war and post-war periods it becomes a more and more common technique; "Liberté", "Couvre-feu" and "Pour vivre ici" are perhaps the most well-known poems in which repetition creates an incantatory effect, but apart from producing a song-like or dirge-like tone it can add a variety of emphases to the meaning of a poem. "Courage", for instance, provides an outstanding example of the effect of urgency which results from repetition: 'Paris a froid Paris a faim...' In "Le poème hostile", in Au rendez-vous allemand, repetition of 'dévoré par la haine' adds vigour to the anger of the poem; and reiteration of 'un lundi soir', and the words of the title, in "En plein mois d'août", impresses upon us the memorable nature of the mood of fraternity by fixing it in time.<sup>33</sup> Sometimes repetition reaches the level of rhetoric, as in "Athéna": 'Peuple grec peuple roi peuple désespéré', or in "Gabriel Péri", where 'Un homme est mort'

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30. Cf. Décaudin, 'Le travail du peintre', p.105.

31. Cf. C.H. Wake on 'L'Extase' in The Art of Criticism (ed. P.H. Nurse) p.296.

32. C.G. Whiting (Verlainian reflections in Eluard's poetry' p.183) lists the different effects created by repetition in the very early verse. Apart from the Verlainian influence shown by Whiting, we note that Whitman was also an early influence in this respect, and that he includes in his Première anthologie vivante de la poésie du passé poems from Du Bellay's Regrets in which repetition is used with great success.

33. The poem was inspired by the Parisian Liberation Committee's order to man the barricades on Monday, August 24th, 1944.

is repeated.<sup>34</sup>

Repetition of numbers, however, is often overworked. As we have said the counting of brethren often in their thousands and millions makes us aware in the simplest way of the immensity of men's solidarity, but it is done too often. In "Un compte à régler" (Hommages), it is monotonous in the extreme;

Dix amis sont morts à la guerre  
Dix femmes sont mortes à la guerre  
Dix enfants sont morts à la guerre.

and so he continues for four more lines. In view of the title of this poem Eluard would no doubt put didactic before poetic considerations. In "Joseph Staline" 'mille et mille frères' appears only twice, but anyone familiar with Eluard's work must have become uncomfortably accustomed to the procedure by 1950. The same effect of universal solidarity is conveyed much more successfully by the use of the generic terms 'tous' or 'monde':

J'entends vibrer ta voix dans tous les bruits du monde.  
Au jour qui donne à l'homme d'être tous les hommes. (35)

Eluard's Hommages, although presumably voluntarily written, have an air of 'poésie de commande'. which he himself insists must not be confused with poetry of circumstance, as it is unlikely to coincide with the poet's inner sensibility.<sup>36</sup> The exterior circumstance must

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34. R. Jean, (Paul Eluard par lui-même, p.129) and Renéville ('Le surréalisme en 1938' p.305) express the view that rhetoric is foreign to Eluard, and it is true that on the whole his language is far from oratorical. However, on occasions, anaphora is certainly used in the committed poetry for rhetorical effect. (Vernier, op.cit., p.127, examines the rhetorical effects in 'Dimanche après-midi', from Poésie et vérité 1942).

35. O.C.I, p.167 and O.C.II, p.224. Poulet, in his enlightening article entitled 'Eluard et la multiplication de l'être', says that 'l'oeuvre d'Eluard s'affirme comme un inlassable exercice de l'imagination sur le thème du nombre'. (p.50), and that numbering people is an extension of the multiplication of the images of the loved one through mirrors.

36. La poésie de circonstance. O.C.II, p.942.

coincide exactly with the interior, he claims. In spite of his deep communist convictions, the Hommages are his least successful poems; one can only conclude that he conceives of his new, wider readership as needing greater clarity, few images and a repetition of the themes of solidarity, the class struggle and the hope for a better world in the future, and that keeping these goals constantly in mind inhibits the spontaneity of his internal circumstances. Where the internal and external circumstances are truly in tune, his poetry is very effective. Writing "Liberté" he responded both to an internal necessity and to the war situation; writing Le temps déborde, his dreadful grief was the internal response to Nusch's death; and "Poésie ininterrompue" in the catalogue of his internal response to various situations.

It is likely that much of the war poetry will be of interest after the post-war militant poetry is forgotten. The eulogy of Stalin is of no interest now; indeed, Stalin is discredited to such a degree that it appears ridiculous. Similarly, Grèce ma rose de raison has little universal application years after the civil war. The war poetry is much less precisely poetry of circumstance; it treats the universal questions of death, suffering, hope and love. Although Eluard may believe that Stalin and the Greek partisans are of universal appeal as poetic subjects, to a non-communist they are merely of academic interest.

### Part (iii): Some Key Images

At this point it seems profitable to examine some of the imagery which is common throughout Eluard's poetry, but with a view to establishing whether or not there is a change of emphasis, whether or not it takes on a new significance in the war and post-war periods. Spatial imagery, images of bread, blood and fire are all worth analysing from this point of view.

#### Spatial imagery

Eluard is intensely conscious of space, and his work abounds in images involving the sky, the earth and landscapes as general terms, specific open spaces such as plains and squares, and the domestic spatial images of houses, rooms, walls, streets, towns and villages. Consciousness of space, however, does not always mean that it is well defined; Carrouges<sup>37</sup> gives examples to show how Eluard's poetry has an intoxicated, weightless quality devoid of distinct contours. Certainly the use of spatial images in the surrealist poetry conveys this impression. Often they are linked with words implying movement, hence creating an insubstantial scene, always on the move:

L'arbre, ton ombre, montre sa chair nue: le ciel.  
Il a la voix du sable et les gestes du vent  
Et tout ce que tu dis bouge derrière toi. (38)

In this as in other spheres he creates an indistinct picture by using generic terms; the word 'espace' itself

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37. Carrouges, Eluard et Claudel, p.41.

38. O.C. I, p.173.



is quite common, and 'terre' is in fact the most common word in Eluard's work<sup>39</sup> and the simplest spatial manifestation of dynamic life:

Terre terre espoir et terre 40  
Pour porter tous les enfants

A rather more unusual generic term conveys the link between woman and landscape already mentioned in Chapter III:

La géographie légendaire de tes regards de tes caresses<sup>41</sup>  
Often, too, in the early period he creates a hazy scene by the startling juxtaposition of natural details with man-made objects or abstract nouns:

Les arbres sont coiffés d'un paysage en amande  
Berceau de tous les paysages les clés les dés  
Les plaines de soucis les montagnes d'albâtre (42)

This precious landscape gives little impression of the visual relationship of the trees, plains or mountains within it, and in the following example, the surrealist technique produces a deliberate geographical confusion:

C'est la lune qui est au centre de la terre  
C'est la verdure qui couvre le ciel. (43)

It is our intention however, to show that in the later period, when Eluard has acknowledged the real limits of man's possibilities, and when, rather than conceiving of the earth as bending to men's desires he sees himself as well and truly on the earth, the spatial background to his

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39. The computerised list of frequencies presented by M-R. Guyard, Le vocabulaire politique de Paul Eluard pp.130-131, shows 164 appearances of the word. We note that it appears 31 times in Une leçon de morale, which in many ways is characteristic of the later period.

40. O.C. I, p.1220.

41. O.C. I, p.382.

42. O.C. I, p.256.

43. O.C. I, p.188.

poetry becomes much more solid.

One of Eluard's favourite manifestations of space is the large, open space; as Vernier<sup>44</sup> says, vast spaces are 'un des symboles les plus constants de ses aspirations vers le bonheur et la liberté.' Such an image may signify the freedom of love: 'Le coeur a tant d'espace qu'il défie les astres';<sup>45</sup> in Capitale de la douleur there was the same identification of space with joy:

L'espace sous vos pieds est de plus en plus vaste,  
Merveilles, vous dansez sur les sources du ciel.

Vernier has commented adequately on the plain as a happy image of wide space, and it is necessary only to add that nudity, commonly a symbol of purity in Eluard's work, is sometimes attributed to plains:

Tu vois la plaine nue aux flancs du ciel traînard  
Pour qu'elle soit comme une plaine  
Nue et visible de partout. (46)

In the first example, from Chanson complète, the plain is influenced by the moving sky, but the later example is a clear comparison, containing a straightforward definition of a plain.

The related image of the urban open space, the square, is well analysed by Raymond Jean,<sup>47</sup> and he makes the particularly interesting point that although the square represents emptiness, the emptiness is frequently denied as soon as it is stated. With the presence of people, 'elle a retrouvé sa vraie vocation'; in fact, during the

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44. op.cit., p.68.

45. O.C. II, p.342.

46. O.C. I, p.865 and O.C. I, p.28.

47. R. Jean, op.cit., p.60.

later phase of Eluard's poetry "place" loses its equivalence with solitude, and becomes the meeting place of the crowd:

Sur la place les paysannes  
Riaient sans savoir pourquoi 48

Le jour coule dans la rue  
Et les femmes se colorent  
Et les hommes s'accentuent  
Longues places de mes hommes  
Perspectives de mes femmes (49)

The crowds add substance to the square here, whereas in the following, early example, squares have the substance of a soap bubble: 'Les places, comme des bulles de savon, ont été soumises au gonflement de mes joues.'<sup>50</sup>

"Liberté" contains a metaphor based on the square:

Sur les places qui débordent  
J'écris ton nom;

appropriately enough for this poem, the squares are overflowing, and this again is a favourite spatial notion of Eluard in the war and post-war periods.

Confiantes nos mains s'unissent  
Les moissons de la jeunesse  
Débordent dans l'éternel (51)

he says in Le lit la table, whilst in Le livre ouvert I the verb suggests dynamic frustration:

Attention les plumes débordent  
Tu trembles de ne pas voler. (52)

It is also, of course, the term used on Nusch's death in relation to time in the cry 'Voici le jour/En trop: le temps déborde.'

Vernier has more than competently dealt with the

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48. O.C. I, p.1208.

49. O.C. I, p.1219.

50. O.C. I, p.377.

51. O.C. I, p.1211.

52. O.C. I, p.1031.

"domestic" spaces: walls, rooms and houses.<sup>53</sup> Walls, as he points out, are generally on the negative side of the open/closed dialectic; they imply incarceration, and as such are hostile unless they are the walls of a house, which is always a symbol of shelter and comfort. The house is not part of the open/closed dialectic, since it is enclosed and yet beneficial. Negative images involving houses imply desertion and suffering:

Maison déserte  
                   abominables  
 Maisons  
                   pauvres  
 Maisons  
 Comme des livres vides.<sup>54</sup>

The normal, prevalent notion of the house is the one notably expressed in "Les Excellents moments":

La maison accueillante  
 Quatre murs pleins de grâce et gravés à l'aiguille  
 ...Sous la mousse du ciel notre toit nous accorde. <sup>55</sup>

Surprisingly, since they owe their existence to houses, rooms, like walls, appear more often in the context of incarceration than that of domestic happiness; they have strong associations with solitude and boredom. A room "en échec" forms the subject of the poem "Le Mal", in La vie immédiate. It is empty, has broken windows, and in it reigns 'l'ennui sans sujet'. Elsewhere he conveys the claustrophobia of a room by use of the verb 'rétrécir':

Je cisaillerai les ténèbres  
 De ma chambre qui rétrécit. <sup>56</sup>

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53. Vernier, op.cit., pp.58-67. He makes two particularly interesting points; firstly, that images of incarceration are relatively rare in militant poetry such as Au rendez-vous allemand and Poésie et vérité 1942, and secondly, that images involving the house as a symbol of domestic well-being are lacking in the poetry which laments Nusch's death.

54. O.C. I, p.391.

55. O.C. I, p.1081.

56. O.C. I, p.1050. Tunnel and underground imagery also represents incarceration throughout Eluard's poetry. Cf. La vie immédiate (O.C.I, p.401): 'Je règne à tout jamais dans un tunnel' and Pouvoir tout dire (O.C.II, p.365): 'les souterrains des nains et des déments.'

Our concern here is to decide whether the spatial images convey greater substance in the post-surrealist phase. As far as walls, houses and rooms are concerned, there is no change, for the terms in themselves suggest solidity. Only rarely do walls become ethereal by their juxtaposition with a term conveying weightlessness or, more often, light:

Une vigne s'accroche au vent  
Les murs sont chargés d'espace  
De solitude transparente (57)

This sort of image is as common in the later period, but then the light is often the light of the "regard", and the wall's solid quality is negated by identification with a face:

La clarté perce les murs  
La clarté perce tes yeux.

Le mur de ce visage morne est perforé  
D'un regard innocent qui trouble la lumière<sup>58</sup>

Certainly we never have a precise picture of Eluard's rooms or houses. The scene in "Le mal" is as detailed as any:

Il y eut la porte comme une scie  
Il y eut les puissances des murs...  
le plancher complaisant;

for in "Les excellent moments", the apparent detail in the naming of materials serves only to convey a general impression of sweetness, just as the above imagery in "Le mal" conveys an overall hostility:

De velours et d'orange la maison sensée  
D'argent détruit de cuir de planches  
La maison accueillante.

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57. La rose publique, O.C. I, p.419.

58. O.C. I, p.1119 and O.C. II, p.187.

Villages and towns are equally indistinctly drawn and universalised. The most precise details in "En avril 1944: Paris respirait encore", show Paris full of flowers, birds, mothers and children, thus portraying a city of light and gentleness. Like the house, the town or village is a refuge; in 1944 as in 1926, the town is pure and innocent in its banality:

Ville de transparence, ville innocente

Je vous connais couleur des arbres et des villes  
Entre nous est la transparence de coutume. (59)

The village, too, is a place of happiness and is portrayed as having the mellowness of age: 'Ce village au coeur mûr aux racines de miel.'<sup>60</sup>

In the earlier period, however, the town can be an image of discontent, for instance when he contemplates Gala's personality:

Sur ses seins sur ses yeux on avait bâti  
La ville lourde et laide (61)

The human element of the actual town seems limited within such a surrealist image, but a few lines later the following lines link the discordant woman with another such image:

Sa chevelure toute une foule dispersée  
Par l'horreur des rues inutiles

and it becomes evident that streets empty of people are correlated with the ugly town. Even where the town is part of a wider landscape, as in "L'absence", where there is a panorama of countryside, towns and plains, the poet

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59. "En avril 1944: Paris respirait encore", O.C. I, p.1298, and Capitale de la douleur, O.C. I, p.176.

60. O.C. II, p.118.

61. O.C. I, p.420.

gives human significance to the towns:

Villes drapées dans nos désirs  
Villes précoces et tardives  
Villes fortes villes intimes

For as a spatial concept, "ville" was of course for Eluard a realistic manifestation of people living in close proximity. He was a man of the town, born in St. Denis, and with a profound attachment to Paris. The first poem of Le devoir, published in 1916, shows boys separating at la Bastille; Mondal, in La Rose publique, is his first Parisian anti-hero; and "Courage" and "En avril 1944..." are his great poems of comfort to a besieged Paris.

"Rue", like "ville", is a constant in Eluard's poetry but it also becomes a term of greater realism after 1940. In the surrealist period it is the street of Aragon's Le paysan de Paris or Breton's Nadja:

Rues fatales on n'y ferme les yeux  
Que pour mieux savoir ce que l'on va voir<sup>62</sup>

of Chirico:

Tu passes dans la rue  
Dans un ouragan de soleil<sup>63</sup>

or of Delvaux:

Leurs seins libres mêlant la rue à l'éternel<sup>64</sup>

Later on, however, the street becomes important as one of the useful, fighting images, the "image reconquise" of Poésie ininterrompue. In Voir he says:

Il fallait conserver les images utiles  
Aux rues se lisait l'homme et sa soif et sa faim.

and in Une leçon de morale, there is a startling confusion

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62. O.C. I, p.806.

63. O.C. I, p.381.

64. O.C. I, p.807.

of streets and sheets, showing the effective fusion of the couple's love with their love for mankind:

Dans les plis de nos draps nous nous croyions utiles  
Et dans les plis des rues nous n'étions pas en vain.

Again, in Poèmes politiques, streets are full of purpose:

Ils savent que leurs rues ne sont pas des impasses.

It is significant that in "La poésie doit avoir pour but la vérité pratique" the street image is the primary stumbling block for his former surrealist allies. The images which would please them are basically composed of natural things, but are rendered unnatural by their startling juxtaposition. Eluard proposes a straightforward notion of solidarity which he knows they will reject:

Mais si je chante sans détours ma rue entière  
Et mon pays entier comme une rue sans fin  
Vous ne me croyez plus vous allez au désert.

For Eluard, from the war onwards, streets are the streets of Paris, the streets of 'mon beau quartier', those occupied by "Les amis de la rue".

### Bread

'Le pain est plus utile que la poésie', says Eluard in L'Evidence poétique. Again, his preoccupation with usefulness bestows extra importance upon the word, and the phrase is wholly in keeping with the opening lines of a work which proclaims the duty of poets to realise their involvement with other men and their communal life. Bread is the basic human necessity, and Eluard's natural sense of simplicity singles out this word again and again as a symbol not only of survival, but also of the good things in life:



Que faut-il à l'homme? du pain  
Et la conscience de son bien (65)

Bread is never the diet of penury, taken with water, but  
figures amongst sensory delights:

La mousse et l'odeur de la fleur du bois  
Le miel l'odeur du pain chaud. (66)

After Nusch's death it is a part of the poet's nostalgia,  
a thing as necessary and intimate as love itself:

Le pain était un signe de félicité  
Le bon pain qui nous rend plus chaud notre baiser<sup>67</sup>

Throughout all his work, bread represents well-being, and  
often it is fresh and infects the words around it with the  
quality of freshness:

Violette rêvait de bains de lait  
De belles robes de pain frais

Ce pot plein d'eau et le pain du repos  
...Au fil du pain fait pour la main friande  
De l'eau fraîche et du pain chaud (68)

These two examples, from La rose publique and Poésie  
ininterrompue I have the same lightness of touch and sense  
of calm plenitude.

In the committed phase, however, the word "bread"  
takes on extra connotations. In La victoire de Guernica  
it is the first in a list of elemental payments wrenched  
from their victims by the Nazis:

Ils vous ont fait payer le pain  
Le ciel la terre l'eau le sommeil  
Et la misère  
De votre vie.

whilst during the war, 'ce petit monde meurtrier', portrayed  
as systematically depriving the innocent of his basic

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65. O.C. II, p.551.

66. O.C. I, p.1198.

67. O.C. II, p.215

68. O.C. I, p.448 and O.C. II, p.25.

necessities, takes bread from his mouth first of all.<sup>69</sup>  
 After the war it is an even more frequent word, again  
 often appearing amongst other manifestations of freedom  
 such as earth or sky:

Il y a les maquis couleur du ciel de Grèce  
 Le pain le sang le ciel et le droit à l'espoir<sup>70</sup>

The Bolshevik slogan "Peace, Bread, Liberty" is implicitly  
 echoed in some of the communist poetry; for instance,  
 in "Strasbourg XI<sup>e</sup> Congrès":

Quand il s'agit de tant de visages vivants  
 Et mêlés comme grains pour le pain nourrissant  
 Pour le grain qui jaillit de la terre amoureuse

or in "Athéna":

Les désirs naturels la liberté le pain  
 ...Le pain pareil aux dieux le pain qui joint les  
 hommes.

It is certainly the communist message of fraternity which  
 is behind the notion of unity brought about by sharing  
 bread, and which is often repeated; the sharing of bread  
 is one of the triumphant gestures which accompanies freedom  
 and commitment at the end of Poésie ininterrompue. It  
 is tempting to draw parallels with Christianity, particularly  
 as he speaks elsewhere of 'le pain béni de la beauté'<sup>71</sup>,  
 and in "Liberté" of 'le pain blanc des journées', inviting  
 a comparison with the Lord's Prayer; but Eluard says in  
Poésie ininterrompue 'Il n'y a pas de dieu'; bread, the  
 staple food, is a symbol as central to Revolution as to  
 Christianity, and these two examples may be seen as

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69. "La dernière nuit", O.C. I, p.1099.

70. O.C. II, p.223.

71. Donner à voir, O.C. I, p.1000.

spontaneous images offering themselves to the mind of a poet conversant with the symbolism of Christianity.

Furthermore, in the first example, by Eluard's process of identification of two words by joining them with "de", it is beauty which is blessed rather than the bread.

There is another such example:

Je vis encore et je partage  
Le blé le pain de la beauté. 72

There is no overt political reference here, but bread/beauty is again shared, and mention of the raw material takes us one stage further in the elemental nature of bread; the same idea is put forward even more successfully in the following lines, showing how the fields and furrows where men suffer will bring forth fruit in the future:

Dans les sillons du champ commun où nous souffrons  
Grande lueur des blés nuée du pain futur  
Qui nous soumet et nous prolonge et nous unit. 73

Throughout Eluard's poetry, then, bread symbolises purity and simple beauty, but in the later phase it represents a revolutionary right and an essential, unifying force.

### Blood

The word "sang" is extremely common, and if bread is the basic human necessity, blood is the fundamental human life-force. It appears as such in the early period, but not so commonly as in the war and post-war phases, when survival is urged and life constantly upheld in dynamic terms. In Une leçon de morale, where the words "vie",

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72. O.C. II, p.105.

73. O.C. I, p.1283.

"vivant" and "vivre" appear 53 times altogether, "sang" makes 15 appearances, and in a text written in 1952 to accompany drawings by Picasso, he explains the significance of the common image of artists painting with their own blood:

Ce sang c'est avant tout la foi dans la vie, dans sa continuité, c'est la perpétuité de la chaleur humaine, c'est la pensée profonde et l'imagination qui luttent contre la mort, c'est la volonté aussi bien raisonnable que capricieuse...

Frequently the word is accompanied by the word "fresh"

Les premières chaleurs florales  
Alliées à la fraîcheur du sang (74)

but by the dialectic process, when it is linked with destruction rather than life, it may be dried:

J'ai voulu nier...la cécité, la destruction, le sang séché, les tombes,

or watered down:

La pluie a parcouru tous les chemins de sang  
Effacé le dessin qui menait les vivants,

or aged and linked with malevolent terms:

...des murs que je couvrirai d'injures et de menaces,  
des murs qui sont à jamais couleur de sang vieilli,  
de sang versé. (75)

Like bread, it may form part of an image of universal unity. "Coeur à pic", otherwise very surrealist in its imagery, ends with the lines:

Trésors noués par des désastres  
Sang commun sur toute la terre,

and later, "Le langage des couleurs" includes a similar sentiment:

Et toujours la raison qui nous recrée sublimes  
Le battement du sang par les chemins du monde.

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74. O.C. I, p.800.

75. O.C. II, p.304, O.C. I, p.1023, O.C. I, p.308.

Sometimes the macabre connotations of the verb "to bleed" are used to good effect: in this portrayal of a hostile room for instance:

Le mur de la fenêtre saigne  
La nuit ne quitte plus ma chambre,<sup>76</sup>

or this angry condemnation of idiocy:

L'insulte saigne menace ruines  
Les caprices n'ont plus leur couronne les fous  
Vivent patiemment dans les pays de tous. (77)

Frequently, too, the deep red colour of blood suggests a link in the poet's mind with some other crimson thing, as it does in the following line, where "blood" and "strawberry" are linked, as are "nightingale" and "sing", and all are juxtaposed in the highly concentrated manner of his most surrealist poetry:

La fraise rossignol chante son sang qui fume.<sup>78</sup>

"Rose" is a word which may appear with "sang"; obviously the poet sees a colour link between them, and both portray strength and courage. In "La victoire de Guernica" we read:

Les femmes les enfants ont les mêmes roses rouges  
Dans les yeux  
Chacun montre son sang.

and in Donner à voir:

La chevelure humide  
Des roses fortes dans le sang.

It is interesting that "sang" often appears in the context of "ressemblance". Often reflection or resemblance is personified, provided with blood and the ability to bleed:

Montre ton sang mère des miroirs  
Ressemblance montre ton sang. (79)

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76. O.C. I, p.1033.

77. O.C. I, p.243.

78. O.C. I, p.262.

79. O.C. I, p.246.

Here the poet begs for a return of purity to life, a resurgence of blood; the action of bleeding, on the other hand, implies despair and the malfunction of "ressemblance", as it does in "Ne plus partager": 'Ô reflets sur moi-même! Ô mes reflets sanglants': In the later phase the link between blood and resemblance is more overtly humanitarian:

Mon âge m'accordait toujours  
De nouvelles raisons de vivre par autrui<sup>80</sup>  
Et d'avoir en mon coeur le sang d'un autre coeur.

The word most often linked with "sang" is "feu".

There is the colour bond, but also, as Onimus emphasises, the vital elementary importance of each:

Le sang répond à un très ancien mythe (encore en vigueur chez les Sémites) selon lequel il est la vie même dans ce qu'elle a d'essentiel, l'âme vitale: 'les chemins tendres que trace ton sang clair/Le sang a la couleur du feu': aussi les deux images voisinent-elles souvent. (81)

There is complete identification of the two in Poésie ininterrompue, in a passage where the poet craves for eternal youth:

Toujours être au coeur blanc une goutte de sang  
Une goutte de feu toujours renouvelée.

and the same quintessential vitality is attributed to Stalin:<sup>82</sup>

Brûlant d'un feu sanguin dans la vigne des hommes.

### Fire

Onimus has stressed that fire is never of erotic significance in Eluard's poetry, but is always worthy of its Greek etymology, 'symbole de l'absolue pureté, dans la transcendance de l'amour', whilst Carrouges, Emmanuel and

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80. O.C. I, p.1013.

81. J. Onimus, "Une poésie faite d'images", p.29.

82. O.C. II, p.352.

Claire Bourguignon<sup>83</sup> have all emphasised the effect of strength and purity conveyed by the word. Hence discussion here will be restricted to a comparison of two poems, to clarify various attributes of fire, and a brief analysis of any change in its use in the later phase.

"Pour vivre ici", in Le livre ouvert I, and "Chant du feu vainqueur du feu", in Au rendez-vous allemand, are both poems <sup>published</sup> during the war period, <sup>(though the former dates back to the previous war)</sup> and although neither is a poem of circumstance in the narrow sense they each convey a mellow sense of optimism and of purity, calculated to encourage the spirits of the reader. "Pour vivre ici" begins with the act of making the fire: 'Je fis un feu', and as Emmanuel points out: 'le Je est un acte: c'est l'acte pur, inséparable de la flamme qu'il allume.' In the later poem, the same strength is conferred on the "Je" by the fire:

Il me faisait avancer  
Et je brûlais le désert.

Again and again in Eluard's work there is a dynamic interplay between the self, and the fire: 'Nous inventions le feu', 'nous avons pénétré le feu.'<sup>84</sup> Man creates or acts upon the fire, (in "Pour vivre ici" he gives it 'ce que le jour m'avait donné) but is simultaneously affected by its strength and purity. In both poems the link between the self and the fire is one of great intimacy: 'Je fis...un feu pour être son ami'; 'Et je caressais ce

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83. J. Onimus, "Les images de Paul Eluard", p.138. M. Carrouges, Eluard et Claudel, p.53. P. Emmanuel, "Le Je universel dans l'oeuvre d'Eluard". C. Bourguignon, "Eluard et le feu".

84. O.C. I, p.872 and O.C. II, p.314.

feu...caresse perpétuelle.' In "Chant du feu..." the effect of intimacy is strengthened by the bond between the fire and parts of the body:

Ce feu prenait dans les mains  
Dans le regard dans la voix.

Light is of course an important attribute of fire, but in these two poems it takes on a moral dimension; night is the time of solitude, and in "Pour vivre ici", the fire is created 'pour m'introduire dans la nuit d'hiver', whilst in "Chant du feu..." it shines 'contre les terreurs de la nuit.' The moral purpose of the fire is simply expressed in the first poem in the phrase 'pour vivre mieux', and more precisely in the second:

Amour espoir de nature  
Connaissance par l'espoir.

In the simple, joyful, earlier poem, flowers are given to the fire with other natural gifts, whereas in the more militant, dialectic "Chant du feu..." the fire, pure and life-giving, attacks withered flowers, death, chains, walls, locks, gags and so on. The line 'un feu qui réparait les désastres du feu' epitomises the dialectic process; creative, pure fire repairs the ravages of destructive fire, acts 'contre les terreurs de la cendre'.

The word "feu" keeps the same significance throughout Eluard's poetic career, right from the early longings for warmth in Le devoir et l'inquiétude. However, it is much more in evidence from the war onwards. It appears in Une leçon de morale as many times as "sang", and the word "flamme" is used seven times. These two examples from the work show its close links with blood:



Nous étions deux à nous chauffer au même feu  
 Feu qui brûla le sang des forêts tropicales.

Mais la rose de feu de leur sang survivait.

This last line shows the stamina and courage of brethren who are hungry and in pain; this and the strength of his love for Nusch form the two themes of the collection.

Other, later works figure the word "feu" in humanitarian and militant contexts. In Grèce ma rose de raison we read:

L'homme en grandeur au coeur d'un monde impérissable  
 Inscrit son ombre au ciel et son feu sur la terre

and

Et le feu fou, le feu dansant des souvenirs  
 A fait flamber la haine sainte.

Yet again Eluard, in the later phase, has developed an habitual image, leaving its essential significance intact but adding to it the strong connotations of man in his most militant state. In the two poems which have been compared above, the link between the "Je" and fire was strong, and Emmanuel's insistence on the 'Je universel' is apt; but often in the post-war period he makes the universal nature of the link even more clear by referring to man in general, or to the mass of men:

Une foule bientôt  
 Répètera la claire flamme à voix très douce.<sup>85</sup>

#### Part (iv): A Poetry of Popular Appeal.

Many of the examples in the above section show the new rôle of the image, described towards the end of Poésie

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85. O.C. I, p.1216.

ininterrompue: the new consciousness of the image's usefulness in militant terms. Although Eluard always, even at the time of his greatest involvement with Surrealism, wished to communicate, now, in the later phase, he has an urgent need to transmit a message of solidarity, struggle and hope for the future, and to convey it to a wide audience, and not a readership of initiates. Although Aragon is right to say that there are clear poems before 1942 as well as after, and that the same applies to obscure poems,<sup>86</sup> and although Pantanella is surely overstating the simplicity of the later work when he says that from Poésie et vérité 1942 onwards there is not another line which is not comprehensible to all;<sup>87</sup> yet, approximately after this date, Eluard's verse becomes undeniably simpler and clearer, and it is the simplification of imagery which generally makes the difference. Two lines in Poésie ininterrompue itself serve as excellent examples:

L'hiver est une fourrure  
L'été une boisson fraîche.

Here there is no shock juxtaposition of distant terms, but the simple identification of each season with one of the most obvious human needs it produces.

It is particularly the notion of solidarity which invokes simple imagery, imagery which is taken from the basic experiences of anyone: pregnancy and parenthood, for instance:

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86. Aragon, L'Homme communiste, vol.II, p.141.

87. Pantanella, op.cit., p.144.

Vous voici...

Comme devant un ventre gros de joie.

Notre vie changera comme change un enfant<sup>88</sup>

or the most common natural phenomena:

Comme si nous étions les feuilles d'un même arbre  
Nous sommes rassemblés

La main allant aux mains comme source à la mer<sup>89</sup>

Every one of these images suggests the inevitability of human or natural progress, and therefore of the gathering or social change identified with it; each image is clear to all who may read it; and each contains the word "comme". Now that Eluard prefers to use simple comparisons so often, the word becomes very frequent.

Metaphors which make a concept clearer by bringing it within a human, even domesticated frame of reference, are common in the more personal, as well as militant, poetry. In the following example the semantic gap between snow and a table-cloth is small, and the two are linked to the look exchanged by the lovers by the sparkle of the sun:

Lorsque nous nous regardons  
Des nappes de neige étincellent  
Sous le soleil qui se rapproche. <sup>90</sup>

In the lines below inevitability is again conveyed, this time by the marriage of sun and moon, the synthesis at the end of a dialectic progression in which the night eventually loses its terrors:

Soleil et lune  
Sont homme et femme mariés  
Je vois soleil et je vois noir  
Je vis seul je suis libre de voir. <sup>91</sup>

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88. O.C. II, pp.224-225.

89. O.C. II, p.232 and II, p.281.

90. O.C. I, p.1073.

91. O.C. II, p.334.

Desanti<sup>92</sup> tells a remarkable story of the real appeal of Eluard's poetry to ordinary people:

Je me rappelle une scène atroce de modération entre deux amis d'enfance, dont l'un avait séduit la femme de l'autre pendant sa captivité. Le prisonnier est cliché, le séducteur horloger; ils ne sont ni l'un ni l'autre empoisonnés de littérature. Et dans cette discussion étrange, soudain, l'horloger dit (si simplement qu'au début personne peut-être ne reconnut les vers): 'Que voulez-vous la porte était gardée. Que voulez-vous, nous étions enfermés...Que voulez-vous, nous nous sommes aimés.'

The immense popularity of "Liberté", too, proves to what extent the poet has succeeded in his desire to communicate. Much of his poetry must have been recited to others by people who read little, and indeed it is notable that much of it has the marks of the oral tradition. His homage to Petöfi Sandor has the *Chanson de Geste*'s invitation to listen to a song, and it is the song of a folk hero, 'le vainqueur des tyrans.' "Si la Grèce était délivrée" has the same theme:

Et je chante Karayorgis  
Je chante l'amour triomphant.

The medieval influence in some of the later poems is evident; as Aragon says,<sup>93</sup> the rhythm of the later poetry is often that of Villon or other medieval or sixteenth century poets; the languorous note of the "Dit à une morte" has the poignancy of Rutebeuf; the second "Dit de la force de l'amour" ('Entre tous mes tourments...') has been compared to Conon de Béthune's "Pour elle m'en vais soupirant en Syrie"<sup>94</sup> and "Ailleurs ici partout" is modelled

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92. Desanti: Nous avons choisi la paix, p.89. The lines quoted are from "Couvre-feu" in Poésie et vérité 1942.

93. Aragon, L'Homme Communiste II, p.159.

94. J. Dubois: "La leçon de Paul Eluard".

on "Fortunes et adversité" by Jehan R gnier<sup>95</sup>. Aragon, single-minded as ever, points to the 'reprise de l'h ritage culturel par la classe ouvri re', and certainly this simple, poignant style is well suited to appeal to unsophisticated people. We must also note once more Eluard's belief that poetry may be culled from any source, and that it is as much a part of the heritage of the French workers as the street chants of children.

Despite the introduction of a great deal of clearer imagery, and the growing importance of key, militant words, however, the change of tone in Eluard's work rarely seems radical.<sup>96</sup> There is no significant influx of new vocabulary. Une le on de morale, which L-G. Gros considers to be in the same vein as Capitale de la douleur<sup>97</sup>, shares a great deal of vocabulary with the earlier work. Appendix (ii) shows the number of occurrences of certain of the key words in these two works, and it will be noted that the majority of these particularly frequent elements in Eluard's vocabulary were already established in the Premiers po mes.<sup>98</sup> Eluard's use of key words remains constant, but the "rose-windows" referred to by Rolland Pierre,<sup>99</sup> in which they cluster, change their patterns in the later period. The words "jour" and "nuit", "lum  re" and "ombre" change their connotations, as we have seen, when night becomes stabilised as a hostile term rather than the time of escapist dreams. "Amour" and "coeur" now frequently appear

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95. R. Gibson, "Paul Eluard and Surrealism", p.296.

96. For comments on the consistency of his form, cf. Chapter II, pp.55-58.

97. L.-G. Gros, 'La Nu e du Brasier', p.308.

98. Cf. Chapter I, pp.2-3.

99. R. Pierre, 'Le vocabulaire de Paul Eluard', p.165, (quoted in Chapter III, p.91 ).

in a political context:

Le coeur des peuples bat plus fort  
 Le coeur des peuples bat la terre  
 Et la moisson sera parfaite  
 ...Nous nous levons comme les blés  
 Et nous ensemençons l'amour, (100)

and even in lyric poems love for woman indicates love for humanity:

T'aimer me rend à tous les hommes.<sup>101</sup>

In fact the essential characteristic of the post-surrealist phase is this inclination to relate the key vocabulary to "l'homme" or "les hommes"<sup>102</sup> (or "nous", "le peuple" or "frères"). In Une leçon de morale, "terre", "monde", "temps" and "durée" all connect to the central word "l'homme":

Voici demain qui règne aujourd'hui sur la terre  
 Au jour de la durée l'homme est indispensable  
 Et voici que le monde est un objet utile  
 Objet voluptueux indestructible et roi  
 Que la vie a comblé en même temps que l'homme.<sup>103</sup>

Like other spatial expressions discussed earlier in this chapter, "terre" and "monde" become fixed and solid in the committed period. In Capitale de la douleur we read 'le monde se détache de mon univers' or 'les flammes de la terre s'évadent par les seins',<sup>104</sup> whereas in Une leçon de morale, growth, movement and existence are set firmly 'sur (la) terre' and images of fertility are common in this context.

Another characteristic of the post-1939 period is the development of a dialectical use of the key words. As

100. Une leçon de morale, O.C. II, p.314.

101. Ibid., O.C. II, p.328.

102. Cf. Marie-Renée Guyard, op.cit. Chapter V is entitled: 'Le mot "homme", pivot de l'énoncé politique d'Eluard.'

103. O.C. II, p.343.

104. O.C. I, p.175 and p.181.

Onimus says,<sup>105</sup> the dichotomies of Une leçon de morale are always present, and Eluard thinks in terms of all or nothing, all good or all evil. The positive and negative sides of images of light, weight, space and so on are in evidence throughout his work, but the committed period brings a systematic use of the dialectic progression, with a final unification of opposites, a synthesis of contradictions into a moral solution. The constant, ongoing nature of the Marxist theory of the Dialectic was bound to appeal to Eluard, whose poetry, as we shall see in Chapter VII, is a poetry of perpetual movement and constant renewal. Poésie ininterrompue I is his most perfect example of the technique,<sup>106</sup> with its slow, unerring progress through opposing tendencies in himself towards a final crescendo, the victory of the committed, "useful" idiom. Une leçon de morale exploits the same technique. He carefully separates the lingering pain and sense of solitude caused by Nusch's death from the hope and sense of purpose which remains in spite of it, dedicating the first "au mal" and the second "au bien"; in a final verse, often in a single line, he concludes with a message of personal achievement or hope for mankind.

Anna Balakian, in an article on Eluard's "post-Surrealism",<sup>107</sup> lists as one of the qualities remaining from Surrealism his 'tendency to disregard the arbitrary divisions between the concrete and abstract worlds.' This

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105. J. Onimus: 'Une poésie faite d'images: Paul Eluard', p.30.

106. Cf. M. Beaujour. Europe Nov-Dec. 1962, pp.74-87.

107. A. Balakian: "The post-surrealism of Aragon and Eluard", p.99.

tendency certainly accounts for the surrealist tone of much of the later verse:

Je porte un panier de mauvais réveil.

Sur un pont tremblant le sommeil  
Fripe la chemise du temps.

Les tapis les propos roulés dans leur poussière.<sup>108</sup>

The technique of apposition is retained, as is the juxtaposition of two nouns with the joining word "de":

'Les étoiles de tes mains'; 'du sillon de ta bouche aux moissons de tes mains';<sup>109</sup> such examples show a continuation of his desire for a concentrated, immediate form of language, and of his belief, totally compatible with the notion of the dialectic, in the unity of all things.

(Very frequently, in the later phase, the term in such an image is a part of the face or body of the loved one; his love is constant, and so the expressions remain constant). Another technique which remains, continues the concentration of language of the surrealist period. In the following lines, the quality of possessing wings is transferred from the bird in the first line to the sun in the second:

Un petit oiseau marche dans d'immenses régions  
Où le soleil a des ailes.

It is difficult to judge whether the continuing use of such images hinders the accessibility which he wishes for in the committed period. Certainly they are more demanding of the reader's imagination than the sparse and simpler imagery of the more political poetry, but they are often more rewarding. Eluard is honest in his self-

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108. O.C. I, p.1125, O.C. I, p.1050 and O.C. I, p.1071.

109. O.C. II, p.328 and O.C. II, p.337.



appraisal, and Poésie ininterrompue I and "La poésie doit avoir pour but la vérité pratique" both contain criticism of the self-deception implicit in the over-use of surrealist imagery. But he is also capable, on most occasions, of striking the balance between communication and the use of surprising metaphor. Some instances have been quoted in which the desire to simplify his political poetry for the widest possible audience render it mediocre; on the other hand, the cult of the image manifested in the most surrealist works put them out of bounds to the ordinary reader. By no stretch of the imagination is La rose publique suitable reading for those who have not had the opportunity to acquire the literary competence to verify Aragon's notion that the surrealists wrote nothing incomprehensible.

In the most effective poetry of the later period, for instance in Poésie ininterrompue or Une leçon de morale Eluard manages a combination of two equally valid kinds of image, the straightforward comparison or directly accessible metaphor as well as the more startling, condensed type. For in this as in other spheres he strives for the unification of differing tendencies, and the qualities which he expects from the image are best summed up in these lines from Poésie ininterrompue II:

Et que l'image transparente se reflète  
En un point confluent coeur du panorama  
Coeur du sang et du sens et de la conscience.

The important thing is that senses and consciousness should be equally involved, and although he has stated that poetry

must serve the revolutionary good, yet he still retains a belief in the imagination as the "reine des facultés"<sup>110</sup>, and would still uphold Shelley's pronouncement, quoted in Donner à voir, that 'Le grand instrument du bien moral est l'imagination'. No matter how socially just his words, they must keep their spontaneity, their purity of interaction:

Mes mots sont fraternels mais je les veux mêlés  
Aux éléments à l'origine au souffle pur.

The surrealist enthusiasm for the "Verbe" as an instrument to change the world is still there, but Eluard now has a proper, precise idea of the simplified image as an arm in a social struggle.

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110. Quoted from Baudelaire in Les sentiers et les routes de la poésie, O.C. II, p.545.

## CHAPTER VII

THE FINAL YEARS: 'TOUT DIRE'.

Je rends compte du réel  
 Je prends garde à mes paroles  
 Je ne veux pas me tromper  
 Je veux savoir d'où je pars.

Poésie ininterrompue I, O.C. I, p.30.

The key works of the last two years of Eluard's life, Pouvoir tout dire, Le phénix, Les sentiers et les routes de la poésie, and the posthumously published Poésie ininterrompue II continue, for the most part, themes which are already well established. Certain of these themes, however, are given particular emphasis and reach their maturity during these last years. The late works are strongly affected by Eluard's still growing political consciousness and by his experience of overcoming personal grief. For this reason it is necessary to keep in mind the events of the few years of life which remained to him after the war.

After his war-time Resistance activities, Eluard travelled extensively, attending conferences and speaking at public meetings. Between the beginning of the war and his death on November 18th 1952 he visited Italy, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania, Rumania, Greece, Poland, Mexico, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and the U.S.S.R. The Hommages and La Poésie de circonstance are amongst the works composed for such visits. His personal life between the war and his death saw great suffering, then acceptance and a sort of renaissance; Nusch died at the end of 1946 and

before he met Dominique in Mexico in September 1949, he experienced the despair which is poignantly portrayed in Le temps déborde and parts of Une leçon de morale, and then the erotic solace provided by Jacqueline Trutat and celebrated in Corps mémorable. Le phénix, inspired by Dominique, witnesses the rebirth of love as the pure emotion which he felt for Nusch: a love which brings genuine liberation from solitude and an awareness of the needs of one's fellow men.

These public and private experiences form the background to a phase in which certain pre-occupations have become urgent and dominate the four works under discussion; the mature poet now takes stock of himself and more particularly, in his eagerness to express all that he sees and now understands, he subjects his use of language to rigorous criticism; then, his own advancing years, the feeling of rejuvenation brought about by his love for Dominique and his belief in a bright political future, all contribute towards the predominance of the theme of time in the late poetry. Together with the language of self-criticism and expressions of time, terms conveying movement will be discussed here; the importance of movement does not become greater in the last phase, but certain aspects of it shed light on the theme of time, and its nature changes slightly.

Part (i): Self-appraisal through  
Criticism of the Word.

From Poésie ininterrompue onwards, the dialectic approach to self-criticism becomes a regular feature of

Eluard's poetry; it is to be found in Poèmes politiques, Une leçon de morale, and Pouvoir tout dire; it is a strong theme in the second Poésie ininterrompue, but is of lesser importance in Le phénix, which is a celebration of Dominique, and where the poet appears as part of the harmonious couple. It even forms part of the more impersonal Les sentiers et les routes de la poésie, which opens with three voices which follow the progression of his other self-critical works; the first is a frightened, innocent voice, and what it describes may be interpreted as the traumas of birth; the second outlines the attractions of an easy introspection but expresses dissatisfaction with it in a way which is parallel to the self-reproach in Poésie ininterrompue I:

Je vois la vie en rose, je suis esthète et fainéant,  
j'ai la parole facile...Et dans ma tour d'ivoire,  
je m'encense, je rêve...Mais d'où vient mon  
chagrin? De la vie des autres? Où du néant?;

and the third voice represents the evolved Eluard, Aragon's "homme communiste": 'Je suis un homme en proie aux autres... je suis un homme sur la terre.'

The preoccupation with self-appraisal in these works raises the question of the extent to which they are examples of the personal poetry of which he claims to disapprove.<sup>1</sup> The personal nature of much of his poetry is not to be underestimated; indeed, the Je is more prevalent than ever in the final phase; but it is still, ultimately, the "Je universel" of which Emmanuel speaks.<sup>2</sup>

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1. O.C. II, p.1133. 'Hélas non, la poésie personnelle n'a pas encore fait son temps.'

2. See Chapter 6, note 24.

Le phénix is perhaps Eluard's most personal work.

There are explicit references to his meeting with Dominique:

Le premier jour je t'embrasse  
Le lendemain tu me tutoies (3)

and her name appears several times. The references to their meeting are natural enough, since the *leitmotiv* of the collection is the renewal it has brought about in him. This feeling of renewal, however, is not meant to be confined to Paul Eluard; the poems "Dominique aujourd'hui présente" and "La petite enfance de Dominique", although they have personalised titles, convey the universalised message of the freedom from solitude and renewed hope brought about by love. The familiar notion is clearly expressed in "Ecrire dessiner inscrire", a title which itself conveys in condensed form the notion of "donner à voir":

Je voudrais associer notre amour solitaire  
Aux lieux les plus peuplés du monde.

In Pouvoir tout dire Eluard analyses his own efficacy as a poet, but, as a committed poet, he assumes his conclusions to be of universal importance. This work includes "Bonne justice", of all his poems one of the most universal in implications and appeal:

C'est la chaude loi des hommes  
Du raisin ils font du vin  
Du charbon ils font du feu  
Des baisers ils font des hommes.

In Poésie ininterrompue II, too, self is inseparable from language, as Rolland Pierre notes in his study of Eluard's vocabulary:<sup>4</sup>

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3. O.C. II, p.426.

4. R. Pierre: "Le vocabulaire de Paul Eluard", p.173.

Dans Poésie ininterrompue II Eluard retrace en effet sa propre histoire, c'est-à-dire celle de son langage, celle du langage de son temps.

It is in the latter work that he provides us with a succinct explanation of his predilection for the dialectic technique in his poems of self-interrogation:

Douter est une comédie  
Que l'on se joue pour mieux sauter.<sup>5</sup>

This is not to say that doubt is artificially contrived. This couplet appears in an optimistic passage after the cleansing process of confessions of inadequacy, so that the play-acting image is used to belittle doubt. Otherwise the sentence is a perfect description of the constant upward movement in Poésie ininterrompue I, which is halted by self-deceit or pessimism but then continued with ever-increasing force.

For Eluard, then, to judge himself is to judge his own use of language, for words are his "raison d'être", his means of access to others, his ammunition in a moral struggle. Therefore every fault which Eluard finds in himself, whether it be complacency, lack of a sense of realism, or even fatigue,<sup>6</sup> has a bearing upon his effectiveness as a poet. In this late phase the 'grand souci de tout dire'<sup>7</sup>, the desire to see all and express all that he sees and feels, becomes almost an obsession.<sup>8</sup>

The word "tout" is exceptionally common throughout Eluard's work; it appears in many titles, of which "Tout

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5. O.C. II, p.667.

6. Cf. p.243.

7. Cf. Quelques-uns des mots qui jusqu'ici m'étaient interdits.

8. Cf. Jean Tortel, "Paul Eluard dans son grand souci de tout dire", p.211. Tortel says that the phrases 'donner à voir' and 'tout dire' together form Eluard's "art poétique".

séduit" (Les nécessités de la vie), "Une pour toutes", (used as a title both in La vie immédiate and Cours naturel), "Toutes pour une" (Cours naturel) and "Tout se marie" (Une leçon de morale) are but a few. It occurs in many first lines, establishing an idea of entirety from the very beginning of the poem. It is also the prime vehicle for the notion of "ressemblance".

The most striking examples of this last characteristic may be found in La vie immédiate, a work in which it preoccupies him particularly. In "Belle et Ressemblante", the loved one's face is:

Tout soleil caché  
Toute source des sources au fond de l'eau  
Tout miroir des miroirs brisé  
...Un visage semblable à tous les visages oubliés.

"A perte de vue" begins:

Tous les arbres toutes leurs branches toutes  
leurs feuilles.

and these are placed in the context of 'la ressemblance des regards.' "Une pour toutes (1)", as the title suggests, conveys the idea that the one woman is representative of all, and the intention of "Toutes pour une" is the same:

Mène-moi par la main  
Vers d'autres femmes que moi  
Vers des naissances plus banales  
Au vif de la ressemblance.

By 1938, however, when this was published, this representation has taken on extra significance:

Mène-moi vers la vie  
Au-delà de la grille basse  
Qui me sépare de moi-même.

Earlier the loved one brought to mind all idealised, dream women, but latterly she symbolises all real women.





The same difference in emphasis may be discerned by comparing two other expressions of entirety, one from La rose publique and one from the end of Poésie ininterrompue I. In the early poem the woman is entire:

Ce que je porte de certain  
Toi tout entière  
Tout ce que tu regardes  
Tout...  
Tout existe tout est visible...  
Je vis dans une lumière exclusive la tienne.<sup>10</sup>

The final sentence betrays the limitations of his vision. In Poésie ininterrompue I, however, in the final, confident synthesis of his self-appraisal, the implications are very different:

Et les yeux immortels  
Ont la forme de tout.

As Beaujour<sup>11</sup> points out, the limitations of the individual's sight are finally overcome.

Eluard's continuing desire to communicate, even at the time of his greatest surrealist activity, has been stressed throughout this study. His 'grand souci de tout dire',<sup>12</sup> is imprinted upon the whole of Pouvoir tout dire, of 1951, and particularly upon its key poem "Tout dire". The notion is present in La rose publique; in a poem in which he is critical of Gala, but which is one of the first to show the poet's consciousness of other people's needs, the refreshing presence of Nusch gives rise to these lines:

Nous sommes face à face et rien ne nous est invisible  
Délire perpétuel nous nous sommes tout dit  
Et nous avons tout à nous dire. (13)

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10. "Telle femme". O.C. I, pp.440-441.

11. M. Beaujour, 'Analyse de "Poésie ininterrompue"', p.86.

12. The close identification of sight and poetic expression is once more underlined by his use of this same phrase in the context of the visual arts. In the preface to his Anthologie des écrits sur l'art he says that artists 'ont le souci de tout dire.'

13. "Une personnalité", O.C. I, p.418.

Like sight, speech begins as a reciprocal activity of the couple and develops into a committed principle. In Les sentiers et les routes de la poésie Eluard puts its value as high as this:

Tout dire est notre loi morale, tout dire est  
la condition même de la vie, de l'espoir que  
nous avons en elle.

An examination of "Tout dire" will serve to elucidate this principle still further; in this poem he analyses his ability to achieve such an elevated aim. It begins with a statement of his limitations with regard to language:

Le tout est de tout dire et je manque de mots  
Et je manque de temps et je manque d'audace.

Vocabulary, time and will are found wanting; the regular, short phrases provide an abrupt opening and the repetition of "je manque" underlines the seriousness of the poet's fault. The moral note is clear: 'J'ai mal vécu et mal appris à parler clair', and given that 'le tout est de tout dire', the latter is a serious failure. The reason for failure is clear too: 'Je rêve et je dévide au hasard mes images.' It is ironic that an accusation of lack of clarity should be expressed in such plain language, but since the poem ends on a positive note it is understood that now that Eluard has assessed his errors his language comes much closer to being the clear and all-embracing idiom after which he strives.

The four stanzas which follow list some of the things which are encompassed by the desire to tell all. In verse two there is a balanced mixture of the man-made and the natural, and the underlying notion of the unity of things:

Le froid et la chaleur composant un seul fruit.

It should be noted that here again Eluard depicts the unity of opposites which nevertheless form a natural logical link; he no longer seeks an arbitrary juxtaposition which has no function other than the ornamental. In verse three he states his wish to portray men in their masses and in individual detail, together with the abstracts which preoccupy them. This is expressed simply and without imagery, whilst the following verse elucidates the moral and political implications of this in imagery: firstly he wishes to show men divided:

La foule cloisonnée comme en un cimetière.

and then he will show:

...la foule plus forte que son ombre impure  
Ayant rompu ses murs ayant vaincu ses maîtres.

These images, although simple, render more vivid the most important aspect of humanity which he wishes to portray: the dialectic of man enslaved and then freed. The fifth verse lists more of what must be stated; the river and dew, symbols of fertility are specified together with two abstract nouns, justice and happiness, and the link is illuminated with an image: 'le bonheur bien planté'. Nature and man are similarly unified in this identification in the first line:

La famille des mains la famille des feuilles.

The abstract terms echo those in verse three, and the balanced mixture of the human and the natural here, as in verse two, underlines Eluard's desire for a global view and an adequate language to express it.

These five stanzas form the opening statement. We are given some examples of the most important sights and

notions which Eluard believes must be expressed, but he has doubts about his ability to do them justice. Verse six opens a second section which continues the theme of self-doubt. This is largely conveyed by eight different interrogative phrases containing the first person pronoun and a verb expressing either communication or deduction: 'Saurai-je mettre au clair', 'Aurai-je assez de mots' and so on. He wonders if he will be brave enough to tell of man's happiness, if he will be able to clarify love and its daily but eternal quality:

Sa tragédie de plomb sa comédie de paille.

This accessible but striking image restates the opposing realities of man's life as they were introduced in verse three: 'son espoir...et sa peine', and Eluard's strict observation of the caesura within the alexandrine skilfully conveys the balance of the two forces.

The eighth stanza is rich in moral and political significance:

Et pourrai-je jamais enchaîner la récolte  
A l'engrais comme on fait du bien à la beauté  
Pourrai-je comparer le besoin au désir  
Et l'ordre mécanique à l'ordre du plaisir.

The need to make the link in the reader's mind between harvest and fertilizer must surely be taken figuratively, the poet must provide a vision of the end result of the struggle he asks them to undertake. Then by identifying the relationship between beauty and good with the harvest/fertilizer link, he implies that beauty is a consequence of good. In the earlier work there is no particular idea of this; indeed, in the preface to the Dada-influenced

Les animaux et leurs hommes he denounces as vain and unnecessary the partisan judgements on beauty or ugliness to be found in established literature. Södergård counts 36 appearances of the word "beau" in Capitale de la douleur<sup>14</sup>, but it is generally used there, with no special moral significance, as a descriptive term with the same powers as the generic nouns he favours: oiseau, bouquet, couleur<sup>15</sup>; like them it gives the reader a certain impression but allows his imagination to supply the details, in this case to define beauty for himself. The poet invites the reader to decorate for himself the 'grandes marges blanches' to be found in every poem.<sup>16</sup>

Sometimes in Capitale de la douleur beauty is defined more clearly, by addition of further adjectives or adjectival phrases: 'la belle étoile de feuilles blanches'<sup>17</sup>; or its extent may be defined by use of a superlative: 'J'ai vu les plus beaux yeux du monde.'<sup>18</sup> It is morally neutral, however, except when it is linked to Gala, who troubles and depresses him at this time. In "Absences", beauty is malevolent:

Elle est plus belle que les figures des gradins  
 Elle est plus dure  
 Elle est en bas avec les pierres et les ombres,<sup>19</sup>

and it is associated with introspection, a fact which would certainly make it attributable 'au mal' in the later phase:

Une femme est plus belle que le monde où je vis  
 Et je ferme les yeux  
 ...Et des ombres m'attendent.

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14. Södergård, op.cit., p.112.  
 15. Cf. Chapter III, p.88  
 16. Cf. Chapter II, p. 38  
 17. O.C. I, p.194.  
 18. O.C. I, p.187.  
 19. O.C. I, p.176.

In the didactic poetry of the later years beauty is one of the many words to be claimed as a force for good. It appears in an aphorism in Le visage de la paix in 1951:

Que le visage humain connaisse  
L'utilité de la beauté  
Sous l'aile de la réflexion.

We are reminded of the 'visage inutile' which was transformed by love in Poèmes pour la paix; now that the concept of usefulness is transferred to the human face in general rather than the face of the individual lover, beauty, like poetry, like the image, must serve 'la vérité pratique'.

The third line of stanza eight questions the poet's ability to express the discrepancy between need and desire in sufficiently convincing language; in view of Eluard's convictions the implication must be that until everyone's needs are fulfilled, selfish desire must be of small importance. The last line, in the context of the commitment of the previous three, may be attributed to the Marxist theory of alienation; the poet would wish adequately to explore the discrepancy between mechanical work and personal pleasure. Again in this verse the measured, conventional metre is highly effective as a vehicle for the balanced dialectic of the content.

In verse nine Eluard asks:

Aurai-je assez de mots pour liquider la haine  
Par la haine sous l'aile énorme des colères.

Again he feels frustrated by the limitations of his vocabulary, and speaks in terms of quantity; in Avenir de la poésie he has asserted that: 'Il nous faut peu de mots pour exprimer l'essentiel; il nous faut tous les mots pour

le rendre réel.'<sup>20</sup> This does not contradict the declaration in Le phénix that: 'il faut tout dire en peu de mots',<sup>21</sup> for although Eluard's vocabulary is fairly extensive, we have seen that a relatively small core of key words occurs again and again<sup>22</sup>, expressing the essential, serving the poet's attempts to convey all his experiences in a limited number of elementary terms. The possession of all words, and the desire to make the essential experiences totally vivid, is an ideal which evidently escapes him. It is an ideal which gives rise to his attempts to widen his vocabulary in "Quelques-uns des mots qui jusqu'ici m'étaient interdits," and in "Blason des fleurs et des fruits" and "Blason des arbres." Vernier has shown how, at least in the first of these experimental poems and in the first "Blason", Eluard can be seen to have failed to have achieved his ideal, for the arbitrary juxtaposition of words which are foreign to him in the former, and the rich vocabulary of the latter, do not fit his moral purpose. Vernier also notes, however, that Eluard does not abandon his verbal research, and that the "Blason des arbres" is more successful because enumeration is tempered with familiar terms which integrate the new ones into his didactic scheme.<sup>23</sup>

In verse ten there is a lull in his questioning. The fluid effect of the assonance at the beginning of the first line leads into a statement of assurance:

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20. O.C. I, p.526.

21. O.C. II, p.446.

22. Cf. Chapter III, p.87.

23. Vernier, op.cit., p.136.



L'or libre de l'aurore en des yeux sûrs d'eux-mêmes. Indeed, total confidence is expressed in more terms of entirety: 'Rien n'est semblable tout est neuf tout est précieux;' in this context, lack of resemblance is salutary, indicating the stimulation of diversity. Eluard has lacked confidence in himself, but never in the powers of language. Now, he regains confidence in the efficacy of his own simple words:

J'entends de petits mots devenir des adages  
L'intelligence est simple au-delà des souffrances.

This gentle confidence is soon shattered by the violent tone of verse eleven, which begins startlingly with the preposition "contre"; the dialectic process is continued as self-criticism takes a new direction with an attack on solitude:

Contre saurai-je dire à quel point je suis contre  
Les absurdes manies que noue la solitude.

As in Poésie ininterrompue I, this process must keep on until the poet has confessed his doubts and declared any reasons for optimism, and thereby gained enough evidence to take a balanced view of his poetics. After solitude, he attacks other destructive impulses: he lists complacency and indifference with two general evils: "pourriture" and "déchéance", as well as two man-made evils: war and crime.

Verse thirteen is a communist "confession"; he feels unworthy before his comrades because:

Je m'affirmais sans rien comprendre à leur combat,  
and reproaches himself for his lack of vision of the future. His shortcomings in this respect: 'je n'avais aucune idée

du lendemain', are contrasted with the strength of those militants for whom the future is an ideological arm:

Ceux qui dressaient notre avenir contre la mort.<sup>24</sup>  
 Their strength is further underlined by the repetition of the word "vérifiant": 'vérifiant leurs outils/et vérifiant leur coeur'; this conveys the impression that physically and emotionally they are tried and tested.

Stanza sixteen opens a third section; Eluard now begins to conclude his argument: 'Pourrai-je dire enfin...'. The whole section has a mellow air of assurance and is appropriately opened with an image of viniculture. The cellar opens, and the sun which was stored in the wine is ready to re-emerge. It is interesting that Eluard adds the phrase: 'En employant les mots du vigneron lui-même'; in this way it is made clear that he has taken an analogy from the worker who produces the wine, once more illustrating that 'La poésie doit être faite par tous.' Also it is an image of biblical simplicity, accessible to the mass of readers. The following two verses convey a scene of comfortable banality: passing birds, a dog searching for an old bone, women with a variety of qualities: 'tendres ou trop entières, dures ou légères',<sup>25</sup> and the old man and his songs. Then in the nineteenth verse Eluard contemplates his own advancing age. Can he, with furrowed cheek, exclaim that only youth is of use? In fact this is only true if youth is interpreted as a continuing process of regeneration:

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24. This notion is discussed later in the present chapter with the other aspects of time.

25. Once again the fine balance within the phrase, underlined by assonance, is notable.

Rien ne vaut que la suite infinie des reflets  
A partir de l'élan des graines et des fleurs.

In verse twenty he actually uses the word confidence. It is evoked 'à partir d'un mot franc et des choses réelles.' The real world, the concrete objects of so much of Eluard's poetry, together with a truthful interpretation of them: these are the essentials of effective poetic language. The simplicity of the expression 'un mot franc' is striking, given that with this small elementary tool he aims to "tell all". There follow two lines which proclaim that communication is the prime consideration, and that a response to one's own words is what gives confidence in the first place:

Je veux que l'on réponde avant que l'on questionne  
Et nul ne parlera une langue étrangère.

Stanza twenty-one brings the solution to the problem of finding the words to express the truths he has described. Possibly he will not have possession of all words, but he will have those which are necessary for his purpose:

Car j'aurai tous les mots qui servent à construire.  
The dialectic is resolved with a note of joy and of absolute assurance:

Plus rien ne nous fera douter de ce poème  
Que j'écris aujourd'hui pour effacer hier.

One other poem of self-criticism from the last years deserves study at this point; "Ailleurs ici partout" reiterates and elucidates some of the themes from "Tout dire" and from the previous "Poésie ininterrompue". In it the poet's access to all people through the loved one is stated more clearly than ever in the admission:

Je ne vois clair et je ne suis intelligible  
Que si l'amour m'apporte le pollen d'autrui.<sup>26</sup>

The use of the word "intelligible" is an important clue to his belief in his own need to communicate, and the pollen image conveys fecundity. But the idea expressed here was never before conveyed in so concentrated a form as it is a few lines further on:

Entre en moi toi ma multitude.

The question of time is again explored, as is the rôle of the imagination in a militant context. The latter theme has a bearing on the one with which we are concerned here; the rôle of the word. Eluard's exploration of this takes two forms. Firstly, he contemplates his own capacity for adequate poetic expression, as in "Tout dire"; then in the second half of the poem he subjects many of his most commonly used words to the dialectic interpretations of evil and good.

Eluard's view of his own ability to express his experiences is far more positive here than in "Tout dire". He takes an affirmative, not an interrogative approach; he is assertive in his references to his own language, sure of his message and his medium:

Je parle d'un temps délivré  
Des fossoyeurs de la raison  
Je parle de la liberté.

His function as a poet is stated in the astonishingly simple couplet:

Je suis créé je crée c'est le seul équilibre  
C'est la seule justice.

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26. O.C. II, p.664.

and in this first part of the poem he has the assurance of a creator:

J'ai le sublime instinct de la pluie et du feu  
J'ensemence la terre et rends à la lumière  
Le lait de ses années fertiles en miracles  
Et je dévore et je nourris l'éclat du ciel.

The words "sublime" and "miracles" underline his godlike rôle, the word "fertile" links time with the earth he has sown with seeds, and he has control of the elements. The ability to perform such miracles is to be attributed to the power of his voice:

Prise d'en haut d'en bas dans ma voix fléchissante  
La forêt s'agglutine ou se met en vacances.

La fleur est le ferment de ma langue bavarde.

Surely he now feels that his vocabulary is adequate for his purpose. The following stanza confirms that at the moment of writing he feels he is achieving communication with others, coming to terms with time and space and their rôle in the Hegelian paradox of the disparity and unity of all things, and succeeding in conveying this paradox:

Je parle et l'on me parle et je connais l'espace  
Et le temps qui sépare et qui joint toutes choses  
Et je confonds les yeux et je confonds les roses  
Je vois d'un seul tenant ce qui dure ou s'efface.

He has attained the objective stated earlier:

Je voudrais m'assurer du concret dans le temps  
Partir d'ici et de partout pour tout ailleurs.

The poet, god-like, has once more abolished the unfortunate limitations of individual sight; time and space are now subjected to the global view; and the image, vehicle for these notions and many others, projects the reader's sight out towards the macrocosmic view:

Et que l'image transparente se reflète  
En un point confluent coeur du panorama.

It is important to note that, whilst Eluard is playing the rôle of creator it is language that gives him the power to do so. At the end of this first section he makes it clear that he speaks simply as a man amongst other men,<sup>27</sup> and is himself surprised that his words ring true:

Je me répète à la mesure où je suis homme  
Et je m'étonne que personne  
N'ait pu valablement  
Me démentir...  
Et sans le vouloir j'ai raison  
Sans le vouloir je suis de tous les temps.

This mature, albeit humble, self-assurance is countered, however, by criticism of the poet's use of language and of his imagination. After the first four stanzas of confidence and optimism there is the first change of mood:

Je cherche à me créer une épreuve plus dure  
Qu'imaginer ce monde tel qu'il pourrait être.

As Gaucheron points out,<sup>28</sup> by 1952 the future looked a great deal less attractive than it did when the first Poésie ininterrompue was written, soon after the Liberation. Accordingly, the four initial verses are the object of criticism throughout the poem, and the evil connotations of their vocabulary are explored in the second part of the poem. Elsewhere the sadness and suffering of real life are portrayed; in a semi-autobiographical passage his childhood and the Great War are the subject of sad reflection, and towards the end of the poem the limitations of the

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27. Vernier notes Eluard's tendency to an "orphyic" interpretation of the word, whereby the word creates the world, but stresses the fact that behind this there is a human, not a supernatural message. op.cit. pp.140-141.

28. J. Gaucheron, 'Poésie et imagination. Etude sur "Ailleurs ici partout"', p.25.

world, in the present at least, are seen in terms of fatigue and hardship.

In the initial passage of reaction against the idealism of the first stanzas, the poet declares:

Il faut reprendre le langage en son milieu  
Equilibrer l'écho la question la réponse.

He knows that the influence of reality is often destructive, but wishes to avoid exercising his imagination in useless, if brilliant, image-making. In an attempt to find the equilibrium of which he speaks he subjects his habitual vocabulary to a dialectical interrogation; initially he defines the key words as originating in evil, and then as words which have been reclaimed for good, thus following the philosophy of Une leçon de morale.<sup>29</sup>

The question of forbidden and permitted words is once more raised. The words examined here are, in Eluard's own words, 'les mots qui me sont permis'; there is no impression of automatism here as there is in the "forbidden" terms of "Quelques-uns des mots...", for here he is concerned with those key words which he uses again and again, the concrete words which convey so many visual impressions. They all have their sinister side; indeed it is not simply that good and evil are the two sides of the coin, but that initially all is evil:

En moi si tout est mis au bien  
Tout vient du mal et du malheur.

The suggestion that evil is inherited underlines the idea

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29. Une leçon de morale was influenced by Lautréamont's Poésies. Cf. Oeuvres complètes, p.403. Lautréamont claims that "Pour employer au bien un mot qui appartient au mal, il faut en avoir le droit." One is tempted to opine that Eluard has earned this right through continual scrutiny of his language, and through experience of evil in suffering. Cf. also Chapter VI, p.170.

that it comes first:

Ce n'est pas pour rien qu'on hérite...  
Des cauchemars du désespoir  
Et de la traine et de l'angoisse.

Evil is the thesis, and the poet must constantly supply the antithesis, redressing the balance for good.

The opposing implications of certain of the key words have already been examined. We limit ourselves here to a few examples from this poem which serve to emphasise their dual moral importance. Of the spatial images, a window may be obliterated or open wide:

Le mot fenêtre un mur le bouche  
Notre fenêtre s'ecarquille  
Jusqu'à refléter l'avenir; (30)

a room is abject or open and fertile:

Le mot chambre bolide à jamais dans la boue.

Chambre de l'ancien temps noyau d'un fruit géant  
J'ouvre la porte qui en sort les fous les sages;

and "panorama", a less common word whose resonance must surely have appealed to Eluard and which he has used so effectively earlier in the poem to convey the range of influence of the image, is portrayed now as either shrinking or spanning a vast height and depth:

Panorama tout se ramène au plus petit.

Panorama j'absorbe au fond d'un puits profond  
Le ciel plein, jusqu'aux bords de reflets et d'étoiles.

Other common words which undergo this dual interpretation are: sang, mains, yeux, eau and feu. Blood is described firstly as a sign of man's impotence in death, and then as a powerful and continuing thing:

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30. It is to be noted that time is once more linked with space here, so that infinite space conveys infinite duration.



Le sang d'un homme répond non  
A toute question quand il meurt

Le sang d'un homme est un fuseau  
Si serré qu'il n'en finit pas.

Hands are "esclaves", then liberated by light movement and music:

Nos mains sont menées à la danse  
Par l'aile et le chant des oiseaux.

The terms used to describe eyes, which are amongst the cornerstones of Eluard's highly visual poetry, are particularly harsh in the "au mal" phase; they are 'dans leur rouille crasse' before being returned to their typical state as 'nos yeux qui se répandent.' Water in its negative state is 'l'eau bouclier crevé d'avance', and fire is extinguished, whereas after the turning point in his exposé ('Je renverse le mal j'échafaude l'espoir'), we read of "feux fertiles", and water, with air, is also depicted in imagery of fertility:

L'air et l'eau coulent dans nos mains  
Comme verdure en notre coeur.

In the later works, the words "parler" and "mots" themselves are subjected to dialectical analysis. In "Ailleurs ici partout" language is eternal:

Voir clair et parler clair régner dans l'éternel,  
as it is in Les sentiers...: 'Les mots nous éternisent'.  
In the latter text, too, words are vividly attributed with omnipotence:

Les mots disent le monde et les mots disent  
l'homme, ce que l'homme voit et ressent, ce qui  
existe, ce qui a existé, l'antiquité du temps et  
le passé et le futur de l'âge et du moment,  
la volonté, l'involontaire, la crainte et le désir.<sup>31</sup>

He has such faith in the power of poetic language, however, that it is only during the despair which follows the death of Nusch that its negative side is considered. In Le temps déborde he speaks of 'la poussière des paroles',<sup>32</sup> and asserts that 'ma voix n'a pas d'écho j'ai honte de parler.'<sup>33</sup> Lack of communication is confirmed in the nostalgic passages of Une leçon de morale:

Mon discours est obscur parce que je suis seul.

Et les mots ont le poids des loques sur les plaies  
Et les images sont avares et butées. (34)

These last two lines, from the poem "Nusch" occur in the same stanza as another image of physical pain, the cold bath of solitude, and where time is killed and absence sharply felt. The orphic process is hence only possible when love is present:

Je n'ai jamais écrit de poème sans toi.<sup>35</sup>

The word "parler" is found wanting in "Aujourd'hui", in Poèmes politiques. An urban scene is described in negative terms: 'Rue grise boulangerie dédorée cafés froids', "rue grise" is repeated, and the negative side of the street image is developed: 'Brouillard de rue idée de rue idée de rien.' Squalor and accidental death are placed in this setting. Then the poet says with bitterness:

Le soleil je ne risque rien je n'ai fait qu'en parler  
Parler est peu de chose l'eau le gaz et l'électricité  
Et manger à sa faim seraient plus lumineux.

This statement of the priority of social matters over poetry \

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32. O.C. II, p.112.

33. O.C. II, p.114.

34. O.C. II, p.317 and 308.

35. Also O.C. II, p.308.

harks back to the crucial early poem: "Critique de la poésie." ('c'est entendu je hais le règne des bourgeois'). By 1948, however, there is no real conflict between the two preoccupations; in "Aujourd'hui" as in Poésie ininterrompue I he resists the urge to take refuge in a poetry which turns away from reality:

Où donc est la muraille poétique du bien-être  
Que nous la renversions,

and once more the synthesis at the end of the poem is optimistic.

Silence itself has two sides and is not to be taken simply as the negative aspect of "parler". Certainly it may be understood in the sense in which it was quoted in Chapter VI<sup>36</sup>, as being synonymous with loneliness, but as a positive force it is one of the marks of his love poetry. It is common, for instance, in Le dur désir de durer, and it implies the absolute peace and calm of love, the lack of necessity to speak at certain times:

En silence ta bouche a promis d'être heureuse.

Notre silence fera taire la tempête.<sup>37</sup>

In his efforts to say all that there is to be said, Eluard reiterates his view that poetry may derive from any source whatsoever. In the radio broadcasts entitled Les sentiers et les routes de la poésie he again explores the realms of "involuntary" poetry, and quotes those poets of the past whom he feels have something to contribute to contemporary listeners. He is intensely conscious of his

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36. Cf. note 17.

37. O.C. II, p.70.

poetic heritage, as his anthologies prove. In the preface to his Première anthologie vivante de la poésie du passé he says:

Nous sommes nés les uns des autres, nous maintenons notre nom, notre ambition, notre espoir. Les lumières lointaines qui nous atteignent ont la même force que celles que nous voulons projeter sur l'avenir. (38)

With the well-known poets, those who have been thought great over the years, Eluard deems popular culture to be equally important; it too has a valid part to play in forming the cultural climate of the future. The riddles, nonsense rhymes, songs and proverbs of the second broadcast, "Invraisemblances et hyperboles", are prefaced by this comment from the author:

Nous ne pouvons pas regretter que des hommes, bergers conteurs, amoureux éperdus, gentils farceurs, n'aient pas connu ce que nous avons appris, car c'est grâce à eux, obstinés et naïfs, qu'à tous sera donné un jour le sens vital de la poésie, qui ne peut pas être plus que l'utile dans l'agréable.

Once more the two notions of Lautréamont, retained from Eluard's surrealist days, are echoed: poetry should be made by everyone, and should have practical truth as its aim.

In practice, Eluard continues the sort of verbal experiment discussed in Chapter II. Inspired by his feeling for the sound of words, he often indulges in word-play in the post-surrealist period; now, however, his word-play has not the levity of some of the earlier examples, and its automatism is limited by his desire to convey

certain meanings. The following 'coupling' is far from flippant:

Toi ma patiente ma patience ma parente<sup>39</sup>

It is the opening line of a short Resistance poem which urges preparation for vengeance. In Une leçon de morale there is a similar example:

Le miroir du génie coquet coquin cocasse  
Reflète dans sa lave une arme ridicule. (40)

In both cases, although the initial sound may have automatically brought to mind other words containing the same sound, Eluard has obviously contrived to find three words which are as close to each other in sound as they are in meaning.

The categorising of proverbs in the second broadcast betrays a continuing interest in the genre. In practice, in his poetry, Eluard still writes many lines which may be taken as proverbs. These are not, however, the punning, nonsensical "proverbs" of the early 1920's, but are close to the popular, traditional adages founded in common sense. Several single-line verses in Le visage de la paix of 1951, for instance, convey the same air of wisdom and sense of stating a common truth:

L'homme en proie à la paix se couronne d'espoir.

Vaincre s'appuie sur la fraternité.

Grandir est sans limites.<sup>41</sup>

These lines use the proverb form as a medium for Eluard's humanitarian ideas, whereas other examples make more

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39. "Patience", O.C. I, p.1062.

40. O.C. II, p.341.

41. O.C. II, p.406.

general points about love, life and death, and by using rhyme draw even closer to the traditional type:

Qui ne veut mourir s'affole  
Qui se voit mort se console

Un coeur seul pas de coeur  
Un seul coeur tous les coeurs

Années valent moins que jours  
Et la vie moins que l'amour. (42)

By such means Eluard reflects the popular heritage and communicates to his readers in a readily recognisable form.

Such word-play fits Eluard's new objectives, whereas the outrageous or obscure experiments of the 1920's would not do so. Nevertheless, he is by no means renouncing nonsense or illogicality, which are the very stuff of poetry.<sup>43</sup> In "Ailleurs ici partout" he reaffirms the power of the imagination<sup>44</sup>; significantly, too Les sentiers... repeats the section from Donner à voir which states that: 'le dérèglement de la logique jusqu'à l'absurde, l'usage de l'absurde jusqu'à l'indomptable raison' are amongst the elements which form a harmonious poem. In these broadcasts Eluard, citing all sorts of word-play and nonsense from popular rhymes or other poets, guides the listener towards the discovery of poetry in every form of utterance. In his own poetry, however, in the later years of his life, gratuitous experimentation with sound is no longer appropriate. Vocabulary and imagery must now fit

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42. Le livre ouvert I, O.C. I, p.1021; Poésie ininterrompue I, O.C. II, p.29; Le livre ouvert II, O.C. I, p.1075.

43. Baudouin, commenting on Lautréamont's reconstruction of maxims by Vauvenargues and La Rochefoucauld, says 'il s'agit non pas de briser les cadres linguistiques, mais de les réaffecter au non-sens de la poésie.' op.cit., p.300.

44. O.C. II, p.678.

his didactic aim. Once more in Les sentiers... the usefulness of poetry is stressed:

La poésie n'est pas un objet d'art mais un objet  
utilitaire. (45)

There is little need for comment on Eluard's use of imagery in the last years, for it continues the tendency towards clarity discussed in the last chapter. Just as "ressemblance" itself is now confined to elements which have something in common, so the ground of the image<sup>46</sup> becomes more limited in scope and therefore more easily understood. There is less direct identification, more use of the simile. At its most extreme, his imagery is now as simple as that of the identical couplets which open "Pétrification d'un poète" and "Exaltation d'un poète":<sup>47</sup>

Il était doux comme laine  
Et précieux comme soie.

Even the more startling identifications are easier to assimilate than those of the pre-war years; in the following two examples, the initial image is elucidated further in a second line:

L'eau de mes jours n'a pas toujours été changée  
Je n'ai pas toujours pu me soustraire à la vase.  
Tu tends ton front comme une route  
Où rien ne me fait trebucher. (48)

Hence he remains faithful to the ideal of the "image reconquise" of Poésie ininterrompue I.

45. O.C. II, p.532.

46. The term coined by I.A. Richards. Cf. The Philosophy of Rhetoric, pp.96ff.

47. O.C. II, pp 373 and 374.

48. O.C. II, p.704 and O.C. II, p.699.

### Part (ii): Expressions of Time

References to time are of prime significance amongst the key words of the last few years. There is no evidence that Eluard had any presentiment of death, but he is distinctly conscious of his advancing years and his approaching death. In the manuscript of Poésie ininterrompue II, the "Épitaphes" are accompanied by these words:

'Sachant que je mourrai, pourquoi ne parlerai-je pas, volontairement au-delà du tombeau, dans l'avenir.'<sup>49</sup> His thoughts on time are vital amongst the elements of his poetry which are subjected to dialectic criticism from 1946 onwards; expressions of past and future, and the words temps, durée, jeunesse, vieillesse, enfance, naissance and perpétuer are all common, and are especially important in Le phénix and the two collections of Poésie ininterrompue.

Beaujour, Vernier and Poulet have comprehensively analysed this aspect of Poésie ininterrompue I<sup>50</sup>. However, a brief résumé of the dialectic approach to the theme of time in this poem will reveal the pattern of Eluard's attitude towards it and shed light upon temporal references in other works. The waking woman at the beginning of the poem lives in the present: 'Aujourd'hui lumière unique... sans passé sans lendemain.' Her introverted state of calm is shattered by the anxieties of man, or the poet, who is haunted by the past:

L'homme en butte au passé  
Et qui toujours regrette.

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49. O.C. II, p.1210.

50. Beaujour, op.cit., Vernier, op.cit., and Georges Poulet: "Le point de départ" Etudes sur le temps humain III, Paris, Plon 1964, pp.128-160.



These two reactions, neither of which is to be accepted by the end of the poem, are synthesised into stoicism:

Savoir vieillir savoir passer le temps.

The waking poet, initially, longs for eternal youth:

Il ouvrit les miroirs légers de sa jeunesse  
Etre un enfant être une plume à sa naissance  
Etre la source invariable et transparente.

His nostalgic thoughts of the past are as immobile as the woman's present: 'Rien n'a changé candeur rien n'a changé désir.' His brief optimism also embraces the future, of which, ironically, he has absolutely no conception:

Et je suis prêt à tout pour l'avenir de tous  
Et je ne connais rien de rien à l'avenir.

Quickly his mood changes, and reality sweeps away nostalgia:

Et ce fut le départ et la fin du passé  
La conscience amère qu'il avait vécu.

"Le départ" is the beginning of the dialectic process proper, the point of waking when the struggle towards complete realism begins. Still his thoughts swing back to the past: 'Hier c'est la jeunesse hier c'est la promesse.'

Later in the poem<sup>51</sup>, as reality gains ground even though it is still interrupted by dream, idealism and "l'amour fou", Eluard begins a new ascent after a distracting interlude by providing a simple statement of his desire to depict man in his various aspects and set him within the ordered framework of the inexorable passing of time:

Et j'écris pour marquer les années et les jours  
Les heures et les hommes leur durée  
Et les parties d'un corps commun  
Qui a son matin  
Et son midi et son minuit  
Et de nouveau son matin  
Inévitable et paré  
De force et de faiblesse  
De beauté et de laideur.

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51. O.C. II, p.32.

This is a considerable step towards consciousness of reality, a declaration that time's inevitability is a major force in the banality of our lives<sup>52</sup>. In the final passage of deserved optimism, time and space have become part of the poet's "liberté conquise":

Faisant fleurir charnel  
Et le temps et l'espace.

In Beaujour's words, he achieves 'la conquête du temps productif, et sa victoire sur l'éternité truquée.'<sup>53</sup>

As early as 1934 there is implied criticism of Eluard's own tendency towards nostalgia for his youth when he writes of using various representations of dreams 'pour compliquer, illuminer et mêler à mon sommeil mes dernières illusions de jeunesse et mes aspirations sentimentales.'<sup>54</sup> There is a note of irony in the latter part of this long title. The rejection of this nostalgia is more decisively expressed in the later phase in a spatial image in Une leçon de morale: 'le lieu de ma jeunesse m'est inaccessible.'<sup>55</sup> However, it must be emphasised that if Eluard is occasionally tempted by thoughts of the facility of his life before his commitment, he never craves a return to youth, nor to any phase of his past life, for its own sake. For as Poulet points out:

De tous les poètes Eluard est celui qui se  
montre le plus complètement le plus spontanément,  
la faculté d'oubli . (56)

Long before he begins to make use of the highly mobile dialectic technique, Eluard's poetry depends for its light,

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52. We note once more that banality is far from perjorative for Eluard.

53. Beaujour, op.cit., p.74.

54. La rose publique, O.C. I, p.425.

55. O.C. II, p.324.

56. Poulet, op.cit., p.145.

innocent effect upon the constant renewal of objects, ideas and emotions. In the final works he rejects the past in the clearest possible terms, writing in Pouvoir tout dire:

Je ne me souviens pas  
Du passé désolant. (57)

and in "Le château des pauvres":

Ne comptons jamais sur hier  
Tout l'ancien temps n'est que chimères.

This last "proverbial" statement is, however, qualified by a note of self-criticism from the ageing poet; occasionally fatigue demolishes his habitual barrier against the destructive past:

Il y a des moments où je renonce à tout  
Sans raisons simplement parce que la fatigue  
M'entraîne jusqu'au fond des brumes du passé.

To dwell on the past is to deny the youthfulness and childlike quality created by constant readaption to each present moment, and Eluard retains these qualities in spite of suffering:

Les dangers et les deuils l'obscurité latente  
N'ont jamais pu fausser mon désir enfantin. (58)

Birth and childhood are the dominant themes of Le phénix, for Dominique has given special significance to the necessity for constant rebirth after the death of Nusch. The word "enfant" appears 29 times. Usually it refers to Dominique herself, but by the familiar Eluardian process of reciprocity, her love confers on him this same state of childhood:

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57. O.C. II, p.373.

58. O.C. II, p.664. These lines bring to mind the theory of Bachelard that the sensibility produced by the dialectic of suffering and joy help retrieve innocent childhood values. Paul Ginestier explains this in his summary of Bachelard's philosophy of being and also shows how the child's self goes out in search of the universe. This is highly relevant to Eluard's work. Cf. Ginestier, Pour connaître la pensée de Bachelard, pp.170-171.

L'enfant-reflet anime un amour réciproque.

Tu m'accordes le temps d'être  
Avec toi comme un enfant. (59)

The poem "La petite enfance de Dominique" in particular illustrates the power of the child/loved one as a moral force upholding life, and conquering death and the destructive element in the passing of time:

Et sa bouche enfantine abolit l'ignorance  
Et dans les mains de l'été la mort met ses frissons  
Mais l'enfant nouveau-né nie le cours des saisons. (60)

It insists that childhood is not to be thought of simply as the ephemeral early years of life, but as a continuous concept:

Toujours le même enfant immortel éternel  
Jeunesse ne vient pas au monde elle est constamment  
de ce monde.

The theme of renewal, like love, is of universal significance. Eluard notes the continual renaissance which is to be seen in nature:

La nature toujours s'en va vers sa naissance. 61

and he is conscious of the importance of constant renewal in art. With reference to Picasso he says:

Tout est sans cesse à réinventer, à revoir...Tu es,  
dans ce monde monotone, comme un enfant qui  
grandit, qui perd, chaque jour, son coeur d'hier. (62)

In "Marc Chagall" he says: 'notre naissance est perpétuelle.' 63  
Dada and Surrealism fitted Eluard's natural tendencies from this point of view; the spontaneity of their activities, their continual exploration of new forms of visual and written art and their constant Apollinairian sense of wonder

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59. O.C. II, p.436 and p.428.  
60. O.C. II, p.434 and p.436.  
61. O.C. II, p.337.  
62. O.C. II, p.170.  
63. O.C. II, p.118.

were in tune with his own poetic approach. Herbert Read, describing surrealist art, could equally well have been describing Eluard's poetry: 'it is a dialectical activity, an act of renewal.'<sup>64</sup> The last works, some of which literally employ a dialectic technique and which are explicitly concerned with the poet's personal renewal, illustrate this in clearer terms than the surrealist works.

Eluard's feeling for the constant replacement of moment by moment has caused his work to be judged as a poetry in which the moment is rendered eternal, or surreal.<sup>65</sup> Vernier is right to find this interpretation dangerous.<sup>66</sup> As he points out, Eluard criticises the surrealists for their ignorance of the future and preoccupation with the present moment, and "Tout dire" contains the same criticism directed at himself:

Je croyais prendre au présent plus qu'il ne possède  
Mais je n'avais aucune idée du lendemain.

It is from Bachelard that we must borrow a description of the creative urge which is highly appropriate to Eluard:

La parole est une prophétie. L'imagination  
est bien ainsi un au-delà psychologique: (67)

For the post-surrealist Eluard, the present instant is charged with the future.

As Eluard himself has suggested, he had no consciousness of the future in the early poetry, but from 1939 onwards

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64. Herbert Read, The Philosophy of Modern Art, p.141.

65. This idea forms the basis of M-J. Rustan's article: "Le temps poétique de Paul Eluard", and Marcel Raymond writes: 'Chez Eluard la durée ne compte pas. Toute entière au présent, elle aspire à instaurer dans l'instant l'éternité.' De Baudelaire au Surréalisme, p.308.

66. op.cit., p.105.

67. Bachelard: L'air et les songes: essai sur l'imagination des forces, p.13.

it is of growing significance; it is the natural tense of the Marxist,<sup>68</sup> the temporal setting for a more just society. The following lines of 1939 express in moral terms the dialectic of future versus past and present:

Nous de l'avenir  
 Pour un petit moment pensons au passé  
 Vertu pense au malheur  
 Mon passé mon présent  
 Nous n'en avons plus peur,<sup>69</sup>

Just as the present constantly erases the past, ("Tout dire" being 'ce poème/que j'écris aujourd'hui pour effacer hier',) so the future erases the present; the latter is not a positively destructive force as the past so often is, but is an ephemeral temptation which has not achieved the permanently egalitarian society which is to exist in the future. In the second "Critique de la poésie", the past is the time in which Garcia Lorca, St.-Pol-Roux and Decour have been murdered, and the child, symbol of the future, is inert in the present: 'Sans larmes/Dans ses prunelles d'eau perdue.' However, the future gradually disperses gloom:

La lumière de l'avenir  
 Goutte à goutte elle comble l'homme  
 Jusqu'aux paupières transparentes. (70)

The poet's own mortality is denied not by any supernatural belief, nor even by the conviction that his poetry will continue to be read, but by the knowledge that as a militant he is participating in the building of the future. His last work, Poésie ininterrompue II, is particularly rich in expressions of perpetuation and immortality.

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68. Vernier says that after Poèmes politiques (1948) and Une leçon de morale (1949) Eluard uses an increasing number of verbs in the future tense. op.cit., p.105.

69. Chanson complète, O.C. I, p.872.

70. O.C. I, p.1221.

In "Ailleurs ici partout" he says:

Demain je ne périrai pas  
Demain je suis mon enchanteur  
Demain le feu baise mes pas.

and this personal sense of immortality is paralleled by more general expressions of the same notion:

Il ne faut promettre et donner  
La vie que pour la perpétuer.

Elsewhere he conveys the hope evoked by simple reproduction; society benefits from the progress made by successive generations:

(Les hommes)...ont des enfants sans feu ni lieu  
Qui réinventeront les hommes  
Et la nature et leur patrie. (71)

The phrase 'la femme nous reproduit'<sup>72</sup> may be interpreted on this simplest level, but when in Les yeux fertiles Eluard writes: 'C'est par la femme que l'homme dure', he elucidates the spiritual implications of woman's power over time in the poem which follows:<sup>73</sup>

Tes mains tes yeux et tes cheveux  
S'ouvrent aux croissances nouvelles  
Perpétuelles;

perpetuity is one more quality which love renders reciprocal.

On one occasion the glorious future is depicted as having become present. "Tout est sauvé", the poem which ends Une leçon de morale follows the dialectic pattern of the majority of the work, beginning with the description of a situation which invokes pessimism and a sense of desolation; then the second part of the poem explodes into optimism:

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71. Le phénix, O.C. II, p.442.

72. "Le château des pauvres," O.C. II, p.701.

73. "Un soir courbé", O.C. I, p.506 and "Intimes", O.C. I, p.507.

Rien n'est détruit tout est sauvé nous le voulons  
 Nous sommes au futur nous sommes la promesse  
 Voici demain qui règne aujourd'hui sur la terre.

Has Utopia then been achieved? In the first part of the poem Eluard makes use of a photographic image to describe the evil side of his personal view of morality: 'Né en hiver je peux tout voir en négatif'. The second part should therefore be seen as the idealised positive side of this morality, simply an image of the future but a highly optimistic ending to the collection. It is not a realistic reflection of things as they are, like the lines in one of his last poems, "Le château des pauvres":

Et malgré moi malgré colères et refus  
 Je représente un monde accablant corrompu.<sup>74</sup>

"Tout est sauvé", however, by describing the wellbeing of the ideal state in the present tense, and the efforts of the miners, peasants and prisoners who have achieved it in the past tense, is destined to give encouragement to those who are in reality working towards this end. The expression of will quoted above, 'nous le voulons', is linked with attainment of the future in a later verse:

Je parle de ce temps que nous avons atteint  
 Nous le voulons rien ne nous en fait déborder  
 and this too is calculated to encourage militancy.<sup>75</sup>

The poet's rejection of the past in favour of the future is a personal preference which does not apply to art. As we have seen, he embraces the folk poetry of the past in Les sentiers et les routes de la poésie, and in Poésie

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74. O.C. II, p.704.

75. Vernier notes that "la durée" in Eluard's work is an active force involving determination, as exemplified by the title Le Dur désir de durer. op.cit., p.104.



ininterrompue II he states, 'sans le vouloir je suis de tous les temps.'<sup>76</sup> As a poet he assimilates his poetic heritage, just as he aspires to be assimilated into the future. In Pouvoir tout dire he exhorts those who are working towards the ideal future to remember the sacrifices made by their comrades of the past:

Hommes de l'avenir il vous faut voir hier  
Je vous parle des morts qui sont morts sans printemps;  
even though:

Demain reste le centre de la vie totale.<sup>77</sup>

The balance of Eluard's time schema, like his confidence in the power of his language, was destroyed by the death of Nusch. The future is negated:

Et l'avenir mon seul espoir c'est mon tombeau<sup>78</sup>  
and time now for Eluard represents not rebirth with every moment, but an infinitely long and superfluous burden.<sup>79</sup>  
The clock has stopped at the time of her death:

Il est midi tout seul à jamais sur la terre  
...Reproduisant chaque seconde  
Dans un temps qui ne passe pas  
...Midi et nous entrons dans la carrière de l'infini.<sup>80</sup>

Certain poems in La vie immédiate, the 'jours de lenteur d'heures toutes semblables' of Capitale de la douleur, or 'la sueur du temps' in "Fresque"<sup>81</sup> reflect the monotony and the sense of the slow passing of time of Eluard's rare moments of spleen; but Nusch's death brings a systematic negation of time. He is slow to regain his equilibrium; during his spiritual convalescence with Jacqueline he lives

76. "Ailleurs ici partout", O.C. II, p.668.

77. O.C. II, pp.367-8.

78. O.C. II, p.110.

79. Poulet notes expressions of superfluity pertaining to Nusch's death, op.cit., p.158.

80. "Dit à une morte", Poèmes politiques, O.C. II, p.208.

81. "Leurs yeux toujours purs", O.C. I, p.186; for comments on the mood of "Fresque", see Chapter VI, p.164.

from day to day:

Tu m'as ouvert un jour de plus

Dans le noir redoutable, tu l'immobilises:  
Il vit sans avenir. (82)

Later, in Le phénix, he intimates that it has taken three years for him to re-establish a philosophy of renewal:

J'ai su passer trois ans et des milliers d'années  
A vivre comme vivent les soleils couchés. (83)

Vernier holds that Eluard fails in 'son projet d'intégrer le temps dans sa révélation de l'ordre du monde.'<sup>84</sup> He makes much of the conditional tense of 'je voudrais m'assurer du concret dans le temps', and claims the line 'je ne dispose pas du temps il est entier' as an admission that Eluard does not feel that separation of the present and future from the rejected past is feasible in the end. However, Eluard's view of time, as we have seen, is consistent and in the last works it is clear and confident. Furthermore, there is a couplet in Une leçon de morale which contradicts Vernier's interpretation:

Il y avait un grand désordre dans le monde  
Mais moi j'étais en ordre je soudais le temps.

This, together with the recurring expressions of the power of will in this context, suggests that Eluard feels that he is in control of his own response to time, even though he may have no control over time itself. The same conclusion may be drawn from the statement quoted above from Poésie ininterrompue I of his will to impose order

82. Corps mémorable, O.C. II, p.121 and p.126.

83. O.C. II, p.427.

84. op.cit., pp.105-6

on time in his own work: 'j'écris pour marquer les années et les jours', and from Beaujour's impression that he has taken as his theme 'la conquête du temps productif'. The will to conquer time is clearly illustrated in negative form in his feelings on Nusch's death, when time conquers him:

Il se sentit victime, bêtement victime du temps  
révolu et du temps à venir. (85)

but he regains a firm control over his response to time and his final work ends with these words:

Et le matin bonjour dîmes-nous à la vie  
A notre vie ancienne et future et commune  
A tout ce que le temps nous infuse de force.<sup>86</sup>

### Part (iii): Expressions of Movement.

The continual metamorphosis of the instant in Eluard's poetry leads inevitably to its frequent expression in terms of movement. In Poésie ininterrompue II the ethos of constant mobility in life is described with typical clarity:

Je vis d'un élan constant  
Arriver est un départ.

and he speaks of the present in these vivid terms: 'fleuve et cascade du présent.'<sup>87</sup> Often during the last years his confidence in his own approach to time is conveyed in verbs of advance, so that space and time mirror each other in movement.

85. O.C. II, p.205.

86. Poésie ininterrompue II, O.C. II, p.706.

87. O.C. II, p.668 and p.702.

J'avancais je gagnais de l'espace et du temps

Il suffit d'avancer pour vivre  
 ...Devant soi la route est légère  
 Et s'ouvre sur tous les rivages  
 Derrière il n'y a que des chaînes. 88

In space, as in time, there is no going back, for we must  
 '(faire) corps avec l'univers en mouvement, en devenir.'<sup>89</sup>

Upward movement also evokes optimism; in "Le château des  
 pauvres" as in "Poésie ininterrompue I" and "Crier",  
 climbing signifies moral and philosophical advance.<sup>90</sup>

The all-embracing vision to which Eluard aspires, the  
 vocabulary of which is discussed in the first part of this  
 chapter, is far from static. The following verse from  
Le phénix illustrates admirably both the extent of his  
 personal panorama and its mobility:

Les flots de la rivière  
 La croissance du ciel  
 Le vent la feuille et l'aile  
 Le regard la parole  
 Et le fait que je t'aime  
 Tout est en mouvement. (91)

Not only does the last phrase give a clear statement of  
 universal mobility, but the nouns "les flots", "la croissance",  
 "le vent" and "l'aile", all convey movement, and "le regard"  
 and "la parole" involve the action of exchange between the  
 couple. By the same token, just as in this verse movement  
 is the quality which unifies its various elements, so,  
 elsewhere, the dialectical movement which produces  
 "ressemblance" leads to a universe without bounds: in  
 "Notre mouvement" opposing elements unite:

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88. O.C. II, p.441 and p.435.

89. Donner à voir, O.C. I, p.943.

90. "Tout mont e rien ne se retire" says Eluard in "Le  
 château des pauvres". For references to the other two  
 poems, see Chapter V, p.154.

91. O.C. II, p.425.

Les rendez-vous donnés par la face au profil  
Par la souffrance à la santé... (92)

so that 'Nous naissons de partout nous sommes sans limites.'

In the matter of movement, Picasso's work once more serves as an example of the principles which should apply to art:

Il n'y a qu'une manière de dessiner, c'est le mouvement, mouvement de l'esprit et de la main<sup>93</sup>

Surrealist painters, ('qui sont des poètes') 'savent que les rapports entre les choses, à peine établis, s'effacent pour en laisser intervenir d'autres, aussi fugitifs.'<sup>94</sup>

This definition of movement in art leads us back to the theme of time, but it also points to the mobile nature of the Eluardian object; within the passing instant, the concrete is continually metamorphosed.

Perpetual movement, as Mary Ann Caws says,<sup>95</sup> is at the centre of all surrealist activity. Breton's poetry is characterised by change and movement, and Eluard shares with him certain modes of expression which convey mobility such as verbs of change, verbs of flowing, flight and radiation, and the dynamism of fire and blood; but the most important characteristic which they share is the ellipsis demanded by the surrealist image, whereby there is an extreme concentration of nouns; adjectives are of secondary importance, terms of comparison are usually omitted, and verbs are used sparingly. Rolland Pierre<sup>96</sup> notes with

92. Le dur désir de durer, O.C. II, p.83. We note also that "ressemblance" embraces time as well as space. In Donner à voir the poet declares 'Tout est comparable à tout, tout trouve son écho, sa raison, sa ressemblance, son opposition, son devenir partout.' O.C. I, p.971.

93. Picasso, dessins, O.C. II, p.449.

94. L'évidence poétique, O.C. I, p.516.

95. Cf. Mary Ann Caws: "Motion and Motion arrested: the language of the surrealist adventure."

96. 'Le vocabulaire de Paul Eluard', p.171.

surprise that as much as 20% of Eluard's vocabulary is made up of verbs, concluding that they seem more rare because they are so closely linked to nouns and adjectives. On the other hand he notes how 'les spectacles du jour nourrissent de mots concrets l'imagination d'Eluard et ces données sont emportées dans un mouvement tourbillonnant.'<sup>97</sup> Indeed the effect of movement in Eluard's poetry is largely created by two devices involving nouns; it is conveyed either by enumeration, which guides the reader's attention rapidly from one object to another, or else by the use of nouns which imply mobility. These three images from L'Amour la poésie illustrate the latter technique:

L'écume des tourments aériens

Le lourd naufrage du soleil

Le coup d'ailes de la surprise.<sup>98</sup>

The verse quoted above from Le phénix provides examples of nouns implying action from the later period, and indeed nouns continue to be a major source of the effect of mobility. The surrealist period, however, certainly contains a greater concentration of expression and therefore more apparent mobility in the concrete sphere; the closer identification of unrelated nouns accelerates the rate of vision.

It would be dangerous to attempt any detailed conclusions on the amount of movement conveyed by Eluard's poetry before and after the break with Surrealism, and the

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97. ibid., p.164. See also J-P. Richard, Onze études sur la poésie moderne, pp.119-120. Richard says that sight provokes life in an object and must then immediately move on to another object.

98. O.C. I, p.256, p.262, p.264.

comparative means by which it is expressed, without a complete statistical analysis. Such deliberations are outside the scope of this thesis and merit their own exclusive study. We limit ourselves here to the observation that on the whole, as Eluard's language becomes clearer and less concentrated, verbs have an increasing importance. Certain poems, such as "Liberté" or the experimental "Blason des fleurs et des fruits" and "Blason des arbres", however, still rely on the rapid succession of nouns for an impression of mobility.

Amongst the last works Le phénix, appropriately, contains a great many verbs in the first and second person singular, and in Poésie ininterrompue II there is an abundance of verbs; the personal dialectic of "Ailleurs ici partout" is expressed through verbs in the first person singular, many of them highly dynamic:

Je m'élance dans l'espace  
 ...Là je reviens au monde entier  
 Pour rebondir vers chaque chose.

whilst in "Le château des pauvres" the dialectic of the poor enslaved and freed is made vivid largely by a liberal use of verbs. Where Eluard is concerned with self-appraisal verbs in the first person are the most appropriate vehicle for his movement towards self-acceptance.

Suzanne Bernard, writing on Eluard's prose poetry<sup>99</sup>, feels that, whilst it is full of brilliant constellations of imagery, it is immobile. There is no evidence that the prose poems are any less mobile than the rest of his poetry,

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99. Suzanne Bernard, Le poème en prose de Baudelaire jusqu'à nos jours. p.681.

and it is impossible to agree that his work as a whole is lacking in movement. Examples from the prose poetry prove considerable mobility; in Capitale de la douleur, for instance, the poem "André Masson" contains verbs of knotting and unknotting, opening and escaping, the participles "engourdi" and "tourbillonnant", and "ailes" and "vent", nouns which commonly evoke movement; in the poem "Dans la brume où des verres d'eau s'entrechoquent" there are verbs of movement as well as several nouns which convey mobility, such as "promenades", "démarche", "recherche" and "chemins"; and "Grandes conspiratrices", which consists of two sentences, the first of which is extremely long and accumulates nouns and adjectival phrases before the single verb appears towards the end, expresses considerable movement through the use of such images as 'rayons de la roue des voyages', and 'routes de brises et d'orages.'

Like all the themes of Eluard's work, movement is occasionally negated, and immediately after Nusch's death he declares: 'Dans mon chagrin rien n'est en mouvement.'<sup>100</sup> Without love, universal movement changes to total lack of movement. Advance is impossible, and roads, which are a common symbol of forward movement, are negated:

Mes pieds se sont séparés de tes pieds  
Ils n'avanceront plus il n'y a plus de routes<sup>101</sup>

War also gives rise to negative expressions of movement; the following question from the war period implies absence of mobility:

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100. O.C. II, p.109.

101. O.C. II, p.110.



Où est le mouvement constant  
La roue du soleil et des sèves

This last image echoes the 'rayons de la roue des voyages' of the much earlier poem quoted above, illustrating how the wheel, one of the basic images of movement, is linked with light in the poet's mind. Indeed the luminosity and mobility of Eluard's work are complementary.<sup>102</sup> The sun is always dynamic:

Vous me montrez les mouvements du soleil

Un soleil tournoyant ruisselle sous l'écorce.<sup>103</sup>  
and the stars are also constantly moving.<sup>104</sup> Dawn is of particular dynamic importance in the later period, when it has been transformed from the malevolent end of agreeable night into the welcome beginning of day, the time of waking up to light and life. Light is often linked with the flight of birds: 'leur vol d'étoile et de lumière', we read, or 'un oiseau s'envole...Il n'a jamais craint la lumière.'<sup>105</sup> Blood is mobile, and it too may be linked with light: 'Le sang des astres coule en toi.'

Le monde entier dépend de tes yeux purs  
Et tout mon sang coule dans leurs regards <sup>106</sup>

Naturally the eyes, as the organs of ever-roving sight, are mobile, and the action of exchange between lovers involves glances, heart and hands. Other elements which frequently convey movement are boats and laughter, whose effect has been studied by Raymond Jean;<sup>107</sup> in addition to the boat's evocation of gliding, the verb "glisser" is also extremely

102. Cf. Carrouges, Eluard et Claudel, p.54.

103. O.C. I, p.182 and p.179.

104. In "Nuits" (Grèce ma rose de raison) for instance, stars occur in three highly mobile images.

105. O.C. I, p.187 and O.C. I, p.192.

106. O.C. I, p.188 and p.196.

107. Eluard par lui-même, pp.64-5 and 74-6.

common. Throughout Eluard's verse much of the movement evoked is a gentle, gliding through air or water, emphasising weightlessness. An early poem from Les animaux et leurs hommes... illustrates this particularly well:

Les poissons, les nageurs, les bateaux  
Transforment l'eau.  
L'eau est douce et ne bouge  
Que pour ce qui la touche  
Le poisson avance  
Comme un doigt dans un gant.<sup>108</sup>

The poet himself is often the subject of light and aery movement:

Je glisse sur le toit des vents  
Je glisse sur le toit des mers. (109)

and in Poésie ininterrompue II the impression created by alliteration and assonance is almost evanescent:

Je suis pour un printemps le battement de l'aile  
Je glisse et passe sur l'air lisse. (110)

Although effects of the light and weightlessness often give rise to expressions of gentle flowing, flying and gliding, however, Eluard's poetry is not lacking in more virile manifestations of mobility. Immediately after the lines quoted above we read the equally alliterative couplet:

Je suis rompu par le fer rouge  
De l'aurore et du crépuscule.

Fire is always dynamic and verbs such as brûler, rompre, abattre, combattre, crever, diffuser, dispenser, and renverser convey violent movement at times. Such verbs often express anger or may be dedicated "au mal". The following verse from Une leçon de morale illustrates the

108. "Poisson", O.C. I, p.41.

109. O.C. I, p.106.

110. O.C. II, p.687.

virulence which may arise in the poet's exorcism of the darker side of his language:

L'orage avorte la pluie pèle  
Et le soleil sonne le creux  
Soufflez goretts, râlez corbeaux,  
Jeunesse bave dans les caves. (111)

On the positive side, the common appearance of the word "vivre" in the post-war poetry lends great energy to it, and the philosophy of the final years, the need to strive towards a better future, to construct, to speak, to ascend, to animate and be animated, gives rise to the abundance of dynamic verbs of which we have spoken.

The mature poet, then, is preoccupied with the problem of the most efficacious use of poetic language; recognising the imperfections of the real world he strives to effect change through the commitment of poetry to 'la vérité pratique.' The constant attempt to 'tell all' demands constant reappraisal of his use of language, constant interrogation of the words "mots", "parler", "parole", "images", "langage". Eluard's didacticism during the war was, on the whole, directed against the Nazis, but in the final years it is centred on the desire for a more just society and the best means by which he, as a poet, may help to build it. The dialectic technique which is prevalent during these last few years ensures efficacy; there is no room for complacency, no pause in which he may say 'j'ai tout dit'; the 'critique de la poésie' is ongoing, and

based always upon the precept: 'je dirai tout.' The future tense predominates, the present continually becomes future, and effects of movement are always closely linked to the constant renewal which is the mark of Eluard's poetry.

## CONCLUSION

It is not ultimately difficult to see why two different impressions of Eluard's poetic language may be gained from a chronological reading of his work, why critics have tended to lay emphasis either on its continuity or on the divergent character of his inspiration before and after 1938. Both impressions have a strong element of truth; a great many facets of his style established in the early years are retained throughout his life, and yet his use of language was altered by a growing political commitment which became fully realised in the war and post-war periods. A brief summary of the development of the poet's use of language will help to put into perspective its constant aspects, and those which were subject to change.

The earliest poems are characterised by a desire for purity, a purity which may be defined in terms of rejection of aestheticism and concern for communication. In practice this desire for purity produces a language of great simplicity, in which the influence of "unanimisme" is evident; banality is sought and family relationships are often referred to; a core of recurring words is already adopted - predominantly concrete nouns conveying the everyday perceptions and experiences of us all. Much of the experimental work of the 1920's is in strong contrast to the simplicity of this early poetry. Dhainaut interprets it thus:

Du reste, avant de donner libre cours à l'inspiration qui désormais le caractérise, il ne put faire autrement que de passer par une série d'exercices ou plutôt, compte tenu de la qualité précieuse de leurs résultats, par une série d'épreuves, comme s'il avait fallu d'abord, avant de pouvoir

tout dire, tout savoir de la misère des mots, de leurs qualités davantage et de leurs possibilités créatrices. Il est caractéristique évidemment que ces épreuves coïncident à peu près avec la crise Dada.<sup>1</sup>

Emerging from the Great War, Eluard, like the other adherents of Dada and Surrealism, subjects language to various forms of trial with some violence. The limited application of automatic writing in Eluard's poetry has been delineated, but all the same the experiments with automatic techniques do influence the highly elliptical style of the poetry of this time; the exploration of dreams, the simulation of madness, the surrealist games involving "jeux de mots", all manifest the dislocation of reason, the bizarre juxtaposition of apparently unrelated elements which is cultivated in the surrealist image, and it is this which is Surrealism's great contribution to Eluard's style. He retains and develops the key vocabulary of the early period, but it is now systematically incorporated in startling metaphors.

During the 1920's and early 1930's the real world plays little part in Eluard's poetry and his characteristic vocabulary is dedicated to the portrayal of the idealised woman, the self-absorbed couple, the poet's own solitude, the fascination of night and dreams and mistrust of the harsh light of day, and to what is later to be seen as indulgence in brilliant image-making for its own sake. Gradually, however, as we have seen, the poet feels forced to respond to events in the external world. Growing love for Nusch coincides with this feeling, and his language

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1. P. D'Hainaut, 'Les exemples d'Eluard', p.28.

increasingly betrays both a consciousness of political reality and a redefinition of love in terms of its relevance to a wider humanism. The poet is considerably more anxious to communicate; the notion of 'donner à voir', developed under Surrealism, is still a strong desire, but it is accompanied in the later phase by the passionate aspiration: "pouvoir tout dire".

Eluard lived in an exceptionally turbulent and stimulating age, in a country whose political and artistic life was profoundly affected by two world wars, as well as the disturbing inter-war period. Angry reaction to the first war made him ripe for Dada and Surrealism, whilst events in Spain and Germany in the late 1930's demanded either a definite political alignment or, the course which Eluard rejected, retreat into an ivory tower. Yet he retained a highly individual style throughout the 1920's even whilst partaking of surrealist experiments with enthusiasm; indeed it was his devotion to poetry which made him a suspect surrealist. In the later period, poetic exigencies are only occasionally fully subordinate to the need to create slogans. The essence of Eluard's earliest language is present in his last poems; there is the notion of purity, the desire to communicate, the perception of the banal, the recourse to the proverb form, the delight in naming objects and yet the imprecision of descriptive detail which allows the reader full scope for the play of his own imagination, and that impersonal quality which renders universal his own impressions. Certain aspects of these constants do alter with time, however. Communication becomes more important for the proselytizing Eluard; the

significance of words becomes highly important if poetry is to be universally accessible, and whereas in the surrealist phase he prefers 'la poésie-activité d'esprit' to 'la poésie moyen d'expression' (to use Tzara's terms),<sup>2</sup> in 1945 Henri Peyre quotes him as saying, 'The new feature of poetry today is that it has begun to signify. The experimenting period of Surrealism is over.'<sup>3</sup> It is for the sake of increased communication that the use of repetition is extended in the war and post-war years; it lends emphasis to points of particular importance in an anti-Nazi or socialist message. Expressions of banality, although present in his surrealist verse, are much more in evidence in the humanitarian verse of the later period and the poetry of the First World War. The use of the proverb form does not change in essence; it contains within it elements both of common sense and of nonsense, so that it exists alongside the startling juxtapositions of the surrealist phase as well as the banality of the very early verse and much of the late verse.

The most significant differences between the two periods under discussion occur in the fields of vocabulary and imagery. The language of the later period betrays a restructuring of the relationships between the key words and a simplification of imagery.

Baudelaire quotes Sainte-Beuve as saying, 'Pour deviner l'âme d'un poète, ou du moins sa principale préoccupation, cherchons dans ses oeuvres quel est le mot ou quels sont

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2. T. Tzara, 'Essai sur la situation de la poésie.'

3. H. Peyre, 'The Resistance and Literary Revival in France', p.86.



les mots qui s'y représentent avec le plus de fréquence. Le mot traduira l'obsession.'<sup>4</sup> Eluard, more than most poets, provides clues to his salient preoccupations by offering a network of key words, established, for the most part, early in his career and maintained and developed throughout his life. His is a particularly visual language, and relies heavily on concrete nouns; of the 700 of these in his vocabulary, 250-300 are especially frequent.<sup>5</sup> The word 'oeil' itself is of prime significance, and the related words regard, voir, couleur and expressions of light and shade are all extremely common. Parts of the body, and particularly of the face, are highly frequent and their connotations are much more visual than tactile. Vegetation, fire, water, birds, wings and the sky are all further manifestations of a visual obsession. The advantages of familiarity in vocabulary and imagery are underlined by C. Day Lewis; he calls 'consecrated images' those which 'through constant use in emotional contexts have created a permanent right-of-way through our hearts.'<sup>6</sup> Eluard has created his own elaborate system of consecrated images from the words he especially favours.

The image has the same privileged place in Eluard's verse throughout his poetic career. 'Les images pensent

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4. Baudelaire, Oeuvres complètes, p.735.

5. Cf. R. Pierre, 'Le vocabulaire de Paul Eluard', p.166. His word-count points to a steady acquisition of new concrete nouns during the period from 1930-42, but a diminishing tendency to adopt new words after 1942. He aptly concludes that from 1936 the poet is familiarising himself with more and more realities, whilst during his Resistance and post-war activities Eluard already possesses an adequate vocabulary for his committed message.

6. C. Day Lewis, The Poetic Image, p.45.

pour moi,'<sup>7</sup> he says in 1928, and the same is true in the later period.<sup>8</sup> Of course, as Gibson remarks, images 'no more constitute a poem than a handful of scattered pearls is a necklace';<sup>9</sup> on the whole, however, Eluard avoids the surrealist tendency to treasure a single image and looks to the unity of the whole poem. He is quite capable of doing without metaphor if he deems it unnecessary.<sup>10</sup>

The startling appositions developed under Surrealism do not disappear completely in the committed phase but they are used sparingly and are often all the more effective because they stand out amongst the clearer metaphors, (just as occasional banality offers relief in the heavily surrealist verse). The vast semantic gap of the surrealist image narrows as Eluard determines to make his poetry accessible to a wider audience. The key words are more and more frequently juxtaposed with l'homme and words of the same semantic field; spatial terms, the elements, blood, bread and fire all take on a heightened humanitarian significance; monde and terre assume a new importance as Eluard wishes to express universal fraternity. Certainly terms conveying human relationships occur throughout Eluard's work, but during the 1920's and early 1930's they are confined largely to the couple. In the later work the characteristic vocabulary and the image are committed to representation of, and communication to, the mass of men. It is in the interests of humanity and socialism that Eluard aspires to 'tout dire'.

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7. O.C. I, p.222.

8. This is indeed the main reason for Vernier's judgement, discussed further on, that Eluard's argument in 'Poésie ininterrompue' is deficient.

9. R. Gibson, Modern French Poets on Poetry, p.179.

10. Cf. G. Mounin, 'La dame de carreau.'

Vernier<sup>11</sup> concludes that in 'Poésie ininterrompue' Eluard does not succeed in achieving 'total language' because he fails to blend concrete and abstract; haunted by abstractions, he creates his network of visual imagery to counteract his feeling, in "Ailleurs ici partout", of being 'submergé...(par)...ce flot d'abstractions/Toujours le même.' In arguing thus Vernier is defining 'tout dire' as complete integration of concrete imagery and abstract thought, of the poetic and the discursive; on this basis, the 'manque de contours nets de la phrase', and 'les propositions privées de toute coordination ou subordination logique' do indeed hamper the impact of the dialectic argument. According to this definition, there is no doubt that Eluard's attempt to serve the demands of 'la vérité pratique' in the later period is usually inadequate, and that the adoption of the dialectic technique is not entirely effective. However, the poem studied by Vernier is entitled 'Poésie ininterrompue', and a poem which strictly and logically followed a dialectic argument would not merit that name. It is questionable whether philosophical argument may ever be expressed in poetic terms without considerable harm to one or the other, and one is forced to conclude that here, as elsewhere, Eluard is first and foremost a poet.

We would prefer to classify 'tout dire' as an aspiration rather than as a proposition whose success or failure may be coldly assessed. Eluard retained from his surrealist period a Rimbaudian desire to fathom the depths of the Word.

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11. op.cit., p.174.

This is why the dialectic method for him is much more a poetic than a discursive procedure; he always recognised the dualities of language, and in the later verse systematic interrogation of the evil and benign connotations of the key words goes far towards a complete understanding of their value. The second phase is one of optimism, and aspiration towards total language is ongoing, a part of the continual renewal and striving towards the future which characterises it. The conscious adoption of new vocabulary in the Blasons, although not altogether successful, is proof of a continuing will to say all.

Eluard was not a profound political thinker, but was not, in the long term, unduly disturbed by any 'flot d'abstractions.' Through the use of concrete imagery juxtaposed with the recurring, fundamental abstracts such as amour, vie, mort, mal, espoir and justice, he conveys the affective quality of his commitment, and it may be argued that 'Poésie ininterrompue' is more politically persuasive than rhetoric.

His language does betray certain personal conflicts in the surrealist period, but in the final phase he achieves a harmony of moral and poetic aims which justifies the impression of Poulet that:

Eluard me paraît, par essence, l'être du non-conflit, l'être qui est concilié à lui-même...En tout cas, s'il y a conflit chez Eluard, il y a conflit surmonté, le conflit aboutit en somme aisément à une harmonie. (12)

Appendix (i)

The main works referred to in each chapter:

	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date of publication</u>
<u>Chapter I</u>	<u>Premiers poèmes. Written 1913-18</u>	(1948)
	<u>Le devoir</u>	1916
	<u>Le devoir et l'inquiétude</u>	1917
	<u>Proverbe</u> (review, edited by Eluard)	1920
	<u>Les animaux et leurs hommes, les hommes et leurs animaux.</u>	1920
	<u>Les nécessités de la vie et les conséquences des rêves and Exemples.</u>	1921
<u>Chapter II</u>	<u>Les malheurs des immortels</u>	1922
	<u>152 proverbes</u>	1925
	<u>Notes sur la poésie</u>	1936
	<u>Les dessous d'une vie</u>	1926
	<u>L'Immaculée conception</u>	1930
<u>Chapter III</u>	<u>Mourir de ne pas mourir</u>	1924
	<u>Capitale de la douleur</u>	1926
	<u>L'amour la poésie</u>	1929
	<u>L'évidence poétique</u>	1936
	<u>Donner à voir.</u>	1939
<u>Chapter IV</u>	<u>Capitale de la douleur</u>	1926
	<u>Les dessous d'une vie</u>	1926
	<u>L'amour la poésie</u>	1929
	<u>A toute épreuve</u>	1930
	<u>La vie immédiate</u>	1932
	<u>La rose publique</u>	1934
	<u>Les yeux fertiles</u>	1936
	<u>L'évidence poétique</u>	1936
<u>Chapter V</u>	<u>Cours naturel</u>	1938
	<u>Chanson complète</u>	1939
	<u>Donner à voir</u>	1939
	<u>Poésie ininterrompue I</u>	1946
<u>Chapter VI</u>	<u>Le livre ouvert I 1938-1940</u>	1940
	<u>Le livre ouvert II 1939-1941</u>	1942
	(These two, with <u>Chanson complète</u> and <u>Le lit la table</u> , were republished in 1947 as <u>Le livre ouvert 1938-1944</u> ).	
	<u>Poésie involontaire et poésie intentionnelle.</u>	1942
	<u>Les sept poèmes d'amour en guerre.</u>	1943
	<u>Au rendez-vous allemand (4 editions).</u>	1944, 45, 45, 46.
	<u>Grâce ma rose de raison</u>	1949
	<u>Une leçon de morale</u>	1950
	<u>Hommages</u>	1950

	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date of publication</u>
<u>Chapter VII</u>	<u>Pouvoir tout dire</u>	1951
	<u>Le phénix</u>	1951
	<u>Les sentiers et les routes</u>	1952
	<u>de la poésie.</u>	
	<u>Poésie ininterrompue II</u>	1953
	(published posthumously)	

Appendix (ii)Table of frequency of selected key words from "Capitale de la douleur" (1926) and "Une leçon de morale" (1950).

The following table is not intended to invite comparison of the vocabulary of the two works; even if the number of words and number of poems involved were taken into account such a comparison would be of dubious literary value without a stringent study of context. The table is supplied merely to indicate the consistency of Eluard's use of key words in the two periods discussed.

	<u>Capitale de la douleur*</u>	<u>Une leçon de morale</u>
amour	34	30
bouche	16	7
ciel	39	8
coeur	30	32
couleur	19	11
eau	17	5
femme	25	13
fleur	19	6
homme	28	32
jour	32	39
lumière	25	11
main	38	20
mer	23	3
monde	26	18
nuît	30	30
ombre	32	18
oiseau	32	6
pierre	19	5
rire	20	10
soleil	34	22
temps	15	17
terre	21	31
tête	23	3
vent	19	2
voir	24	9
visage	22	6

\*The figures for Capitale de la douleur are taken from O. Södergard, 'Etude sur "Capitale de la douleur" de Paul Eluard.'

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