THE INCORPORATION OF THOUGHT IN VICTOR HUGO'S "LE SATYRE"

Hugo's poetry draws on the ideas of contemporaries such as Saint-Simon, Leroux, Reynaud, and Ballanche,[1] but its interest derives from the specific ways in which he reinvents those ideas in verse form. As Helen Vendler points out, "poets writing what we call 'philosophical' verse are well aware of the degree to which, once domesticated in the topologically flexible bed of poetry, 'ideas' are bent into peculiar shapes" (12). This article will reconsider one of Hugo's best-known philosophical poems, "Le Satyre", by showing how it presents the idea of progress in resolutely material terms. Philosophical poetry is of course never purely abstract. As Susanne Langer indicates, it relies on the evocation of immediate physical experience just as much as other genres, for even when poetry appears to be a statement of opinions it creates "the semblance of events lived and felt", organizing them to "constitute a purely and completely experienced reality" (212). "Le Satyre" is a particularly striking example of a poem in which ideas are conveyed through a vivid evocation of sense experience. Unlike some of Hugo's more abstract poems about progress, such as *Le Verso de la page* (*Œuvres complètes, Poésie* IV: 1085-1109), "Le Satyre" is not uttered by an impersonal voice but represents the actions and performance of the eponymous satyr, a rebellious and energetic persona who climbs up Mount Olympus to challenge the Greek gods, and reveals their shortcomings by singing of humanity's potential for self-transformation in an almost theatrical context. Hugo presents the satyr as a thinker firmly situated in the material environment, who reacts physically to his own ideas, and articulates concepts in highly concrete metaphors.

My study of this close connection between sense experience and thought in "Le Satyre" is informed by the assumptions of recent cognitive theory, that reason and emotion, perception and cognition are inextricably linked. While my reading of this poem is in no sense a systematic application of cognitive science, it has been shaped in two distinct ways by

the assumption that "the mind is inherently embodied" (Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh* 3). Firstly, it is a study of how Hugo depicts the faun's mind as located in a body moving in space. The satyr has strong physical responses to his surroundings, which echo Hugo's own intense interactions with landscapes on the Channel Islands during his exile.[2] The satyr's gestures also convey his thoughts and feelings, and his energy enacts a revolt which is simultaneously emotional, spiritual, and socio-political. At one level Hugo creates a vivid impression of a fictional mind engaging with the world, but at another level the faun's physical presence is lent a symbolic value and thus serves to communicate a vision of progress. This reading draws on a variety of critics who have explored how literature represents the contact between the mind and the physical world, such as Gaston Bachelard, Michel Collot, and Guilemette Bolens. Secondly, it is a study of metaphors for the idea of progress, and cognitive approaches usefully highlight the extent to which metaphor is rooted in direct experience of the world. Much has been written about Hugo's use of metaphor, but existing criticism tends to rely on the traditional view of metaphor as a linguistic ornament based on a resemblance between two entities.[3] In contrast, cognitive theorists emphasize how metaphors simulate actions and map conceptual structures from one domain of experience onto another. For example, Lakoff and Johnson argue that most of our fundamental concepts are organized in terms of spatialization metaphors (1980: 17). Terence Cave demonstrates how literary metaphor is illuminated by theories of embodiment, which view language as always situational and connected to motor response. If, Cave suggests, we accept the view that "our intuitive […] sensorimotor knowledge of material things acts as a tight constraint on our uses of language", it explains why the most striking literary metaphors are those that have sensory coherence, that are physically viable rather than just being rationally possible (102).[4] In "Le Satyre" Hugo relies heavily on direct experience of the world to explore the otherwise abstract notion of progress. Although he is often thought of as a highly visual poet, this study

will show the extent to which his metaphors depend on other sorts of physical experience, notably movement.

"Le Satyre" is central to the first series of *La Légende des siècles*, published in 1859, in which it represents the Renaissance. Although the satyr initially appears to be an emblem of the classical culture revived in that period, he turns out to be a Romantic hero who rejects classical hierarchies. The poem's use of classical myth has been widely studied and will not be the primary concern of this article.[5] Rather, the study has two interconnected aims. The first is to show the variety of ways in which thought is embodied in the course of "Le Satyre". The prologue situates the faun in a landscape, and part I, "Le Bleu", portrays his climb to Olympus as a symbolic challenge to the divine order. The rest of the poem consists of his performance to the gods, in which he evokes the future of humankind in metaphorical terms. In part II, "Le Noir", he says that in the natural world lofty foliage would not exist without its monstruous roots, and in part III, "Le Sombre", he says that History is a catalogue of destruction but that humanity might free itself through technology. In part IV, "L'Étoilé", he celebrates a future in which the authority of the classical gods is rejected and liberty triumphs. In the famous climax to the poem, he enacts the totality of his vision by physically expanding to the size of a mountain, and proclaiming himself to be Pan. Although the poem appears to follow the structure of many of Hugo's representations of progress, which move from regressive brutality towards a harmonious ideal, it is far from being purely linear. Rather than charting a transcendence of matter, it shows that progress is always rooted in material activity, and functions more as a series of variations on the theme of the connection between the conceptual and the material.

The second aim of the article is to consider how the very specific ways in which "Le Satyre" articulates ideas through physical experience might be said to shape its political sense. In the wake of Paul Berret's insight that "Le Satyre" was about the nineteenth century

far more than the Renaissance (563-64), recent critics have emphasized how it filled the gap left when Hugo set aside the poems about the Revolution originally intended for *La Légende des siècles*. Such readings typically borrow Hugo's own notions of the grotesque and the sublime to suggest that the faun's challenge to the gods symbolises the revolutionary overturning of hierarchies, but there is still debate about the extent to which the poem evokes political revolution.[6] Claude Millet argues that "Le Satyre dit la solidarité des révolutions industrielle, politique, religieuse et poétique" (121). David Charles contends that the grotesque persona of the satyr, "fait de fange et d'azur", reflects the double face of both the sixteenth century, torn between the past of the church and the future of philosophy, and of Mirabeau, caught between the past and the present in the Revolution (62-63). On the other hand, Pierre Laforgue's genetic study of the first series of *La Légende des siècles* views "Le Satyre" as the culmination of Hugo's struggle to avoid presenting the Revolution as the turning point of humanity, and argues that he uses vegetal imagery and a celebration of technology to create an alternative model of progress in which violence is eschewed (285-86). By examining how Hugo roots his vision of progress in the faun's experiences of matter, this article will open up another way of considering the poem's indirect account of revolution.

The satyr's body

The faun is often seen as symbolising the grotesque in revolt against the sublime, but his physical presence is also closely tied to his thought process. Laforgue rightly attributes the success of "Le Satyre" as a poem of ideas to the fact that it has a well-defined first person and uses the lyric structure of a quest for identity to explore cosmic questions (284-89).[7] In addition, this meditation is rooted in his physicality. "Le Satyre" begins by characterising the faun as a vigorous creature of flesh and blood, and, later, when he declaims his own view of

the relationship between matter and spirit, his language is full of references to physical actions.

In the prologue, he is described as "ce songeur velu, fait de fange et d'azur" (*Poésie* II: 736), and this portrait of a bestial dreamer makes clear that thought is an activity rooted in a body.[8] The satyr is closely associated with the forest where he lives ("De la forêt profonde il était l'amant fauve" (736)) and his yearning for knowledge is manifested in his vigorous movement and lascivious pursuit of nymphs; his arm is "toujours tendu vers quelque blonde tresse" (736). His energy is emphasized by an array of verbs denoting bodily movement towards these nymphs, and the yoking of verbs of contemplation and action – as in "chassant, rêvant" (735) – underlines that erotic curiosity is part of a quest to understand the cosmos, and increasingly the two activities are conflated. Although the prologue establishes an opposition between the wood in which the earthbound satyr lives and the heights of Mount Olympus, the dichotomy is challenged implicitly from the start by his double nature and then concretely in his ascent to the home of the gods: "Ce faune débraillait la forêt de l'Olympe" (736). The verb "débrailler" links an erotic undressing to an initiation into the divine.

"Le Bleu" describes the satyr's arrival in the home of the gods and his reactions are evoked in physical terms:

> On eût dit qu'il tremblait, tant c'était ravissant!
> Et que, rictus ouvert au vent, tête éblouie
> A la fois par les yeux, l'odorat et l'ouïe,
> Faune ayant de la terre encore à ses sabots,
> Il frissonnait devant les cieux sereins et beaux (737).

Just as his curiosity had been expressed through his body, his astonishment is felt as a sensation: his body shakes, the wind is blowing into his face, all his senses are overwhelmed. Often read as a sign of the satyr's animal nature, this description also shows what it feels like

to experience awe. Hugo is creating a vivid impression of a subject responding to the world, and the emphasis on his movement in turn has a powerful effect on the reader. As Guilemette de Bolens shows in her study of kinetic effects in literary narrative, representations of postures, gestures, and facial expressions make the reader experience a kind of motor resonance (1-3). Such effects play as important a part in "Le Satyre" as the more often analysed direct speech and pictorial imagery. Hugo evokes the faun's struggle to walk through clouds, in a series of variations on the contrast between the weight of the faun and the airiness of the heavens:

> Le bon faune crevait l'azur à chaque pas;
>
> Il boitait, tout gêné de sa fange première;
>
> Son pied fourchu faisait des trous dans la lumière (738).

The puncturing of insubstantial matter and the physical challenge of advancing through terrain which offers no resistance are both recognizable experiences, and Hugo is relying on our familiarity with gravity to evoke the abstract notion of the divine. When the faun enters the home of the gods, a blinding light causes him to double up: "Soudain il se courba sous un flot de clarté" (738). The gods are revealed to be static and languid: Cypris "reposait mollement" and Jupiter decides on the fates of mortals in a passive state of reverie, moving only his thumb and index finger to manipulate fate's scissors (738). The contrast between these idle tyrants and the energetic interloper is conveyed largely through the differences in their posture. All this emphasis on movement, sensation and gesture serves to insinuate the political message that there is a gulf between the faun and the gods.

However, the faun's dynamism also has echoes in the setting, notably in the elaborate depiction of dawn, which foregrounds the energy of Apollo and the horses pulling his chariot. As Berret points out (II: 579), this passage reworks Leconte de Lisle's "Le Réveil d'Hélios" (135) and brings mythology closer to the tangible spectacle of nature. Furthermore, Hugo

amplifies the horses' whinnying into a cosmic struggle: "Ces hauteurs, ces splendeurs, ces chevaux de l'aurore | Dont le hennissement provoque l'infini" (737).[9] Being directed by implication against the sky rather than just towards it, the noise becomes part of a dynamic conflict. "Infini" suggests a modern view of transcendence as limitlessness and prefigures the deist evocations of God as external to creation found later in the poem.[10] The animal energy of the horses is an early eruption of the grotesque within the celestial zone itself.

The satyr's performance mesmerizes the gods and is described in highly physical terms. The transition from his playing the flute to the lyre in "Le Noir" is often said to underline a progression from the physical to the spiritual, but singing is presented throughout as a highly physical act. The faun gets irritated by the flute and is described as moving feverishly before throwing it on the ground (744). He streams with sweat (745), and at the start of "L'Étoilé" is panting, "Comme un homme levant son front hors d'un torrent" (749). As Langer says of Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality", the poem does not so much debate an idea as evoke "the experience of having so great an idea" (219). Thinking about the progress of humanity is a bodily experience. Imagery of wind repeatedly links the physical landscape to the musical performance – the wind blows in the faun's face (737), he plays a flute (741), the invention of the steam engine represents humanity "prenant aux mains du vent la grande bride obscure" (749) and at the end hurricanes play the strings of the lyre (751). Poetry links physical performance with abstract thought, and the faun's gestures often inflect the meaning of his words. For instance, he breaks off from describing spirit emerging from matter to make a hand gesture, "Comme quelqu'un qui compte en même temps qu'il sème" (745), which yokes mathematics and agriculture, abstract reasoning and physical labour.

This emphasis on the faun's physical expression of his ideas culminates in his final expansion to the size of a mountain, which both enacts his affinity with the natural world and

amplifies his bodily energy. This final landscape echoes earlier descriptions of his body. For instance, “Fleuves, lacs, ruisselaient de ses hanches profondes” (751) recalls “La sueur ruisselait sur le front du satyre” (745). Although the prologue and “Le Bleu” present the faun’s physicality symbolically as being at odds with the divine, the rest of the poem goes on to show how this gulf may be bridged, notably in the use of music and in the faun’s final expansion. The satyr’s body is not only a challenge to the divine but also itself actively involved in thinking about the relationship between matter and spirit.

Tree metaphors

When the faun starts to sing, not only is his performance physically vigorous, but the metaphors he chooses to set out his vision are highly concrete: the dominant image of “Le Noir” is that of trees, and in particular the links between monstrous roots and lofty branches. This part of the poem not only plays on the commonplace association of height with spiritual elevation, but also evokes a dynamic process of organic growth which connects the underground to the heavens. Hugo routinely uses vivid metaphors to embody elusive ideas, and “Le Satyre” presents physical experience not just as the superficial manifestation of some greater truth, but as the very root of spiritual growth. The satyr is sometimes described as narrating two successive histories, of the natural world in “Le Noir” and of humanity in “Le Sombre”, but both of these sections are metaphorical descriptions rather than coherent narratives.[11] Although “Le Noir” at first appears to be a history, beginning with the undifferentiated chaos out of which the earth originated, it quickly turns into a description of the form of a tree, a conventional symbol of brute instinct.[12] A tree implies a certain temporality, having associations of durability, but this passage is more concerned with the biological processes of growth operating at any given moment: “Prends, sapin ! – La forêt surgit; l’arbre superbe | Fouille le globe avec une hydre sous ses pieds” (743). The description

of the roots' shape turns into an evocation of natural processes, for the verbs used to evoke form are verbs of motion – "surgit", "fouille" – which animate the roots and underline the dynamic nature of growth.[13] Terms like "hydre", and later "becs béants", compare this growth to an animalistic devouring. Laforgue argues that Hugo uses vegetal metaphors of progress to suggest that it is natural and thus to avoid the reality of revolutionary violence (280-81 and 284-86), but the organic metaphors are also part of a whole array of concrete descriptions which emphasize movement and sensory experience, as well as sound and texture.

It is into this visceral description that Hugo introduces the key term of progress. The preface to this series of *La Légende des siècles* describes the book as being unified by progress, "le grand fil mystérieux du labyrinthe humain" (2, 566), but "Le Satyre" is the first poem in the series to use the word. It is uncapitalized and simply denotes forward motion:

> À toute heure, on entend le craquement confus
> Des choses sous la dent des plantes; on voit paître
> Au loin, de toutes parts, l'immensité champêtre;
> L'arbre transforme tout dans son puissant progrès;
> Il faut du sable, il faut de l'argile et du grès;
> Il en faut au lentisque, il en faut à l'yeuse,
> Il en faut à la ronce, et la terre joyeuse
> Regarde la forêt formidable manger" (743).

The word "progrès" is firmly embedded in a description of vegetal growth, with its alliterative echo of words associated with vegetation ("plantes", "paître", "champêtre"), and rhyming with "grès", one of very few rich rhymes for "progrès".[14] As Bachelard notes, Hugo often evokes sandstone "quand il s'agit de soutenir les visions déformantes" (187).[15] Here, the rhyme of "progrès" with a word denoting a solid yet protean substance simultaneously

embeds the abstraction in the material world and emphasizes that it involves flux. In these lines, the tree is not so much an emblem of progress but an agent of a physical process of transformation.

When the satyr looks back up at the branches after dwelling on the roots, he perceives this conventional attribute from a new angle, as elements of the underground are mirrored above:

> Les forêts sont le lieu lugubre; la terreur,
> Noire, y résiste même au matin, ce doreur;
> Les arbres tiennent l'ombre enchaînée à leurs tiges;
> Derrière le réseau ténébreux des vertiges,
> L'aube est pâle, et l'on voit se tordre des serpents
> Des branches sur l'aurore horribles et rampants (743).

Previously, the faun's weight had caused him to sink into clouds, but here ground and sky are brought into a single perspective: the branches look like roots (the comparison with twisting snakes recalling the description of the roots as a hydra) and are silhouetted against the dawn sky. Line 4 telescopes heaven and earth into a single image, since vertigo is associated with height and darkness with the ground. The word "réseau" blurs the distinction between abstract and concrete, and "terreur" is given physical weight by the adjective "noire". "Terreur", "l'ombre enchaînée", and "résiste" all have political overtones, and these lines build up a paradigm of terms which bridge the realms of nature and history, a paradigm in which the word "progrès" belongs. Dawn is another such term, which was depicted as a dazzling cyclical event in "Le Bleu" but is here implicated in a scene of conflict. At the very point when the poem has begun to connect roots to branches, it also begins to connect nature to history.

When the faun situates the tree in the wider landscape, rocks are personified as trying to fathom the mystery of which they are a part: “Les blocs [...] | Guettent le grand secret, muets, le cou tendu” (743). This evokes what it feels like for a person to crane their neck in order to see, thus telescoping metaphysical speculation, muscular effort, and the incommensurable materiality of the world. It is this conjunction which will permit a more profound grasp of the cosmos. In tracing a development from roots devouring to rocks looking and thinking, “Le Noir” implies that these activities are part of a continuum. Just as the faun’s contemplation of the cosmos is an extension of his appetite for nymphs, so the landscape’s watching is an extension of the trees’ devouring. Thought here is again closely bound up with physical experience, and Hugo does not just affirm this connection but shows it in action. The lines which most explicitly connect material growth to divine presence, “O nature terrible! O lien formidable | Du bois qui pousse avec l’idéal contemplé! ” (744), lead into an account of the viewer’s frustration at not being able to see the wood for the trees. The unexpected apostrophe of “lien” draws attention to a word which, like “réseau” and “progrès”, bridges concrete and abstract.

The part of “Le Noir” which most resembles narrative is a description of the emergence of humanity from brute matter, but even this is a series of variations on the poem’s central theme of the connections between spirit and matter.[16] As Helen Vendler shows in the case of Pope, man’s internal antitheses are depicted variously as coexisting, alternating, adding to each other, and conflicting, all to suggest “a mind thinking how it might frame a particular question” (32-33). Similarly, the faun describes first how the human spirit emerged from the wild woods: “Sous l’arbre qui bruit, près du monstre qui brame, | Quelqu’un parle. C’est l’âme. Elle sort du chaos” (745), and then how this initially wise humanity descended into madness: “L’homme? qu’est-ce que c’est que ce sphinx? Il commence | En sagesse, ô mystère! Et finit en démence” (745). “Le Sombre” further

emphasizes this decline in the line "L'homme ébauché ne sort qu'à demi du chaos" (748), suggesting that man's spirit is sinking back into the tangled thicket from which it had previously been escaping. These assertions are all just different ways of formulating the same binary condition. Hugo's account of the origin of humankind is really a description of how the spiritual is inherently rooted in the chaos of physical experience. This is underlined by the figure of the faun; when the gods start to take him seriously in "Le Sombre", he is viewed as "cette espèce d'esprit qui sortait d'une bête" (748). "Le Noir" is not a history of nature, but a description of the form of trees which veers into an evocation of growth, itself an analogy for the workings of human history, as "Le Sombre" then makes explicit. It is not the history of the earth which serves as a metaphor for progress but rather the ongoing invisible biological processes. Hugo builds on the Romantic commonplace of nature as a dynamic, creative force by evoking the specificity of the tree in strictly material terms.

Weight and Tyranny

"Le Sombre" is a catalogue of the ills of humanity, from war to slavery, but although it superficially looks like a history, it is another series of metaphors. Hugo uses the guiding metaphor of weight to connect physical limitations to political oppression. The notion of weight builds on the earlier description of the faun struggling to walk through the clouds. "Le Sombre" identifies the start of history as the Fall, which might seem inconsistent with the vision of humanity's ascent from base matter outlined in "Le Noir",[17] but the Fall here functions not as a theological notion but as a physical description of descent, underlined by the verb "retombé" (746). History is presented as a series of experiences weighing humanity down: humanity is "ployé sous l'entassement", erupts as lava because a mountain is piled on its soul, is ground down by war, and retreats into underground boltholes (747). Socio-political tyranny is explicitly associated with humankind's enslavement to the elements: "La peste

aide le glaive, et l'élément complète | Le despote, et la nuit s'ajoute au conquérant" (748) and the equivalence consolidated by further allusions to weight, such as "Le sol l'alourdit" and "La Matière, hélas! devient Fatalité" (748). This parallel between the weight of matter and the weight of oppression allows Hugo to bridge the spheres of nature and history. The parallels between these two realms are underlined by a complex set of echoes between "Le Noir" and "Le Sombre".[18] Both evoke the necessity of destruction; tree roots devour the elements in the former and war devours people in the latter. "Le Noir" alludes to human destruction in phrases like "plantes assassines" (743), and "Le Sombre" describes history in material terms, but it is the parallel between the weight of matter and the weight of oppression which cements the analogy. The metaphor of weight is a commonplace one for the moral forces dragging us down from spiritual elevation, but the satyr also predicts that spiritual advance will arise from practical efforts made to overcome the effects of gravity, first with the steam train and finally through flight, the ultimate liberation from weight. The faun describes the watershed between past and future using a personification which recalls his own trembling at the threshold to Olympus:

> Dans l'ombre, une heure est là qui s'approche, et frissonne,
> Qui sera la terrible et qui sera la bonne,
> Qui viendra te sauver, homme, car tu l'attends (748).

This turning point is in one sense the scientific revolution, because the future, like the natural world and history before it, is envisaged in purely material terms. However, the apocalyptic depiction of a break with the past, and its association with terror, inevitably brings to mind the Revolution. Laforgue insists that it is a mistake to view these lines as a cue to read the satyr's Saint-Simonian hymn to technology as a prophecy of political revolution (285).[19] However, it is striking that here, for the first time, the satyr addresses humankind in the second person rather than referring to it in the third, and from this point he alternates between

addressing the people and the gods. The poem thus changes direction dramatically, becoming an exhortation to humanity to progress. Furthermore, from here on, the poem increasingly evokes what it might feel like to be aware that the future could be radically different from the past.

At this stage, the satyr describes historical change in terms of moving physical weight:

> Oui, l'heure énorme vient, qui fera tout renaître,
> Vaincra tout, changera le granit en aimant,
> Fera pencher l'épaule au morne escarpement,
> Et rendra l'impossible aux hommes praticable. (748)

Time is personified as the agent of change, and its actions are described in terms of muscular effort, inviting the audience to experience motor resonance and thus identify with the implied political upheaval. A vision of total rebirth is merged with an evocation of ordinary manual labour, so the metaphor combines divine and human attributes. The lines which follow suggest that this is not just an analogy but that progress is quite literally driven by humanity physically harnessing the laws of nature: "Avec ce qui l'opprime, avec ce qui l'accable, | Le genre humain se va forger son point d'appui" (748). Science does not just involve looking at nature but also acting on it. Bachelard argues that the resistance of matter is a provocation which spurs man on to energetic and imaginative enterprise (62), and also that seeing and acting are part of a continuum: "pour Hugo, voir c'est déjà agir" (199). From this perspective, Hugo is not merely using humanity's struggle with nature as a metaphor for moral progress, but by foregrounding the sensation of effort he gives the metaphor that kind of sensory coherence whose force Cave underlines.

The optimistic view of the connection between scientific and spiritual progress set out in "Le Satyre" is often read in the light of the "Vingtième siècle" section of *La Légende des*

siècles. The first poem in that section, “Pleine mer” (805) is said to dramatize the industrial age’s betrayal of the satyr’s dream, by describing a shipwrecked steamer as representing the failure of the nineteenth-century project of valuing technical advances at the expense of moral progress.[20] However, “Le Satyre” itself does not depict the connection between technological mastery and spiritual ideals as a straightforward one, particularly in the sequence describing the invention of the steam engine. This passage at first presents the relationship between humanity and nature as antagonistic and imagines how humans might “terrasser l’élément” and “dompter tout ce qui l’a jadis persécuté” (748). The terms alluding to torture capture the Renaissance suspicion that the scientific revolution was an aggressive disruption of the natural order, and the engine is described as fuelled by a diabolical fire, “la croupe en feu des souffles de l’enfer” which passes “dans la lueur ainsi que les démons” (749).[21] However, the passage goes on to suggest that this fire has a heavenly source, that humanity is “Beau, tenant une torche aux astres allumée, | Sur une hydre d’airain, de foudre et de fumée!” (749). It culminates in a euphoric description of physical flight, which is explicitly associated with political and spiritual liberation. This ending anticipates “Plein ciel”, the second poem from “Le vingtième siècle” (810), in which a hot air balloon journey stands for the idea of progress. In “Le Satyre”, the account of technological progress, as gradually developing from a conflict with nature to a new transcendence, emphasises that liberation through technology is difficult to achieve, to the point that it questions the very equation between spiritual and technical advance which it appears to affirm.

In the context of “Le Satyre”, the faun’s hymn to flight is in one sense an imaginative compensation for his earlier physical frustration at sinking into the clouds. It also reveals a fantasy that the human mind might escape entirely from the body:

> Qui sait si, quelque jour, brisant l’antique affront,
> Il ne lui dira pas: « Envole-toi, matière ! »

S’il ne franchira point la tonnante frontière,
S’il n’arrachera pas de son corps brusquement
La pesanteur, peau vile, immonde vêtement
Que la fange hideuse à la pensée inflige (749).

Although the rest of the poem emphasizes that thought is rooted in a body, the faun momentarily aspires to escape that embodiment absolutely. However, it quickly transpires that flight too has its physical limits, because stars have orbits which are another kind of chain: “Homme, un orbite d’astre est un anneau de chaîne,| Mais cette chaîne-là, c’est la chaîne du ciel” (749). The orbit of a star is a revolution in the astronomical sense, and it is telling that Hugo recalls this cyclical natural phenomenon at the very point when he is beginning to emphasize progress as an irreversible linear advance, with imperatives like “franchis ce degré” and “monte au jour” (749). As Reinhard Koselleck points out, although the term revolution was “first derived from the natural movement of the stars and thus introduced into the natural rhythm of history as a cyclical metaphor”, after the French Revolution it “attained an irreversible direction” which “appears to unchain a yearned-for future” (23). “Le Satyre” dramatizes the shift between an emphasis on natural cycles, particularly evident in the description of dawn as a diurnal event in “Le Bleu”, and rectilinear progress, represented here by humanity’s heroic ascent into the heavens.

Repetition and Renewal

We have already seen how the faun translates physical experiences into lyrical visions. In addition, “Le Satyre” is constantly rewriting its own metaphors. As Vendler suggests, rather than paraphrasing the conceptual content of philosophical poems, it is vital to examine the specific forms of language that they use and to track their inner momentum (4). The way “Le Noir” gradually reworks its central tree image, transforming organic growth into a

rudimentary symbol of progress, is already striking in this regard, but such reworking is even more pronounced in the description of steam power, which recombines in a new way the key metaphors of the tree and dawn, two staples in Hugo's depictions of progress. The faun reprises the acorn image of "Le Noir" – "Je regarde le gland qu'on appelle Aujourd'hui, | J'y vois le chêne" (748) – and then elements of the description of Apollo's chariot from the set-piece description of dawn in "Le Bleu". That earlier passage already contains the seeds of modernity, in the grotesque "hennissement" discussed above, but also because it draws attention to the metaphorical possibilities latent in the notion of dawn, by building up a rich poetic pattern around the image of a door, another commonplace emblem for a new beginning:

> Le ciel, tout frémissant du glorieux réveil,
> Ouvrait les deux battants de sa porte sonore (737)

Michel Collot, in his study of the horizon as a conjunction of the material and spiritual, has shown how Hugo often foregrounds the word "aurore" by clustering other terms associated with beginnings and which also phonetically echo it, notably "porte" (130). In "Le Bleu", the same sound is further echoed in "glorieux", "formidable", "orbe", "or", and "encor". It is striking that in "Le Satyre", new beginnings are often associated with sound. Here the sense of "sonore" is echoed in "battants" – which denotes the two parts of a double door but also brings to mind its second sense of "clapper" – and then later in "éclatait", which can mean both "dazzle" and "explode". This poetic density is underlined by the fact that the second of the two quoted lines reads like a description of an alexandrine: a binary structure with a musical effect, and by the fact that Apollo is the god of poetry as well as the sun. The significance of this strangely overdetermined passage only emerges retrospectively when we read the description of the steam train in "Le Sombre", which recombines elements of Apollo's chariot with elements of dawn, and in the process not only creates a new vehicle but

also conveys a new conception of what a beginning is. In “Le Bleu”, the luminous chariot is driven by a deity:

> Derrière eux, comme un orbe effrayant, couvert d’yeux,
> Éclatait la rondeur du grand char radieux ;
> On distinguait les bras du dieu qui les dirige;
> Aquilon achevait d’atteler le quadrige.

In contrast, the steam train of “Le Sombre” is driven by humans harnessing natural forces. Addressing humanity directly, the faun asks:

> Qui sait si quelque jour on ne te verra pas,
> Fier, suprême, atteler les forces de l’abîme,
> Et, dérobant l’éclair à l’Inconnu sublime
> Lier ce char d’un autre à des chevaux à toi? (748)

The satyr combines the dawn metaphor of horse and chariot with the Promethean image of stolen fire, to produce an entirely manmade machine, a “bête terrible” made of metal. This engine combines fire with water, harnessing elements of the natural processes evoked in “Le Noir” and emphasizing that the invention is an extension of forces inherent in nature.[22] The description of the train brings out both the aggression inherent in the human ambition to master nature – people are said to be “Criant à toute chose: “Obéis, germe, nais!’” (749) – but also the value of gradual observation: the harness is “Fait de tous les secrets que l’étude procure” (749). As already suggested above, there is ambivalence in the account of mastering nature as a means to freedom, and this extends to the description of a man-made dawn. Humanity is described thus:

> Beau, tenant une torche aux astres allumée,
> Sur une hydre d’airain, de foudre et de fumée!
> On l’entendra courir dans l’ombre avec le bruit

De l’aurore enfonçant les portes de la nuit! (749)

Dawn is no longer a diurnal event but a figurative new beginning for humankind, implicitly alluding to the turning point of the Revolution as the opening up of a new and unknown future. The sky opening recalls “les deux battants de sa porte sonore” in “Le Bleu”, but where that earlier door opened voluntarily, here “enfonçant” suggests humanity uses force to break it down. Whereas the classical dawn was merely sonorous, this man-made dawn makes a less musical “bruit”, and enjambement separates “bruit” from “de l’aurore” so the noise is on the rhyme and the hopeful “aurore” buried at the start of the next line. The sense that crossing thresholds entails noise is echoed in the later passage about flight, when humanity is described as crossing “la tonnante frontière”, and the word “frontière”, on the rhyme, sounds like a reference to the line break itself (749). The final description of the faun’s expansion recycles the dawn motif once again — “Sur son front blêmissait un étrange orient” — as well as that of the tree: “Sa chevelure était une forêt” (751). By repeating and reworking key metaphors, “Le Satyre” creates a texture of ongoing transformation which is as important to the poem’s effect as its well-known pantheistic conclusion. The very texture of the writing thus enacts the theme of renaissance, and natural rebirths are increasingly reworked into metaphors for historical change.

Matter and Thought

Part IV, “L’Étoilé”, brings the different strands of the poem together. The physical expansion of the faun’s own body into a landscape is a visible illustration of the argument set out in “Le Noir”, which demonstrates that spiritual ideals are grounded in the natural environment rather than transcending it. Furthermore, this expansion develops the imagery of revolution from “Le Sombre” and links it to the idea of progress. For instance, the dramatic growth is

compared to the way a distant object appears to become larger as a viewer draws nearer, echoing the commonplace metaphor of progress as a journey towards a goal:[23]

> L'espace immense entra dans cette forme noire;
>
> Et comme le marin voit croître un promontoire,
>
> Les dieux dressés voyaient grandir l'être effrayant (751).

There is a reversal at work here: the gods do not represent the divine goal towards which the people is moving, but are the audience looking at the spectacle of the faun expanding. This passage implicitly alludes to the horizon, seen by Collot as a meeting point between the material and the spiritual, and by Koselleck as the most appropriate metaphor for the future: "that line behind which a new space of experience will open, but which cannot yet be seen" (260-61). The faun explains the significance of his spatial expansion by associating it with a temporal one: "L'avenir, tel que les cieux le font, | C'est l'élargissement dans l'infini sans fond" (751). Like his bodily transformation, the future can be understood as a rapid and limitless expansion. The faun's growth could thus be seen as a strikingly concrete way of representing how the Revolution changed the way the future was conceptualized. Koselleck identifies the Enlightenment interest in progress as opening up "a future that transcended the hitherto predictable, natural space of time and experience, and thence—propelled by its own dynamic—provoked new, transnatural, long-term prognoses" (22). The first three parts of "Le Satyre" depict progress in terms of a tree growing and of scientific discoveries, but the faun's expansion embodies the new understanding that the future could bring vast and unpredictable changes. The vision of absolute historical change, which is so hard to conceptualize, is experienced as an extraordinary bodily transformation. As Laforgue says, organic imagery can be a way of avoiding the reality of revolutionary violence. Describing the faun as a pastoral landscape certainly defuses the shock of his radical metamorphosis, and the passage even alludes to a more reassuring and familiar set of temporal rhythms; referring

to dawn, “avrils” and “décembres” (751). The satyr’s expansion in effect reconciles the necessity of absolute rupture with the ideal of more organic change, offering a more positive view of Revolution than was possible in Hugo’s more philosophical poems on this subject, such as *Le Verso de la page*, which struggled to reconcile violence with an ideal of gradual progress. “Le Satyre” might avoid addressing the reality of conflict by relying on images of organic growth and using the scientific revolution as a metaphor for a political one. However, both these strategies are part of a wider poetic project of exploring how ideas are connected to physical experience.

The poem as a whole dramatizes the faun’s mental and physical interaction with his environment, but the emphasis on his body is lent a symbolic value. At the beginning of the poem he is a muddy intruder struggling to walk through the clouds to the old home of the gods, whereas at the end he is himself expanding to a cosmic scale, offering a vivid image of a phenomenon which is difficult to represent in abstract terms: how the Revolution changed the way the future was perceived. Where “Le Bleu” and “L’Étoilé” above all give symbolic value to the faun’s body, “Le Noir” and “Le Sombre” show him actively expressing the abstract notion of progress in metaphors drawn from material processes, most concretely in the passage connecting underground roots to the branches of the tree. It is through his vigorous performance and his use of such concrete images that ideas about change and about the relationship between spirit and matter are articulated. Of course, the description of his physical experience and his own lyrical performance are deeply intertwined. Both his vision of the future in “Le Sombre” and his final expansion are a reaction against his initial physical frustration of stumbling through the clouds, so “Le Satyre” performs the very thing that it describes, by showing the development of thought out of physical actions. The faun also reacts to his own vision of progress both emotionally and physically, and finally in “L’Étoilé” he lives out as a bodily experience the ideal which he has been celebrating. The final line

emphasizes that Pan is at once a particular body and a totality which can contain all possible contradictions and multitudes: “Place à tout! Je suis Pan; Jupiter! à genoux!” (751). The poem does not just expound a theory of change but stages an evolution in the very manner in which ideas are incorporated. It connects thought, feeling, perception, and sensation in a multitude of ways and demonstrates the sheer variety of means by which ideas can be incorporated into poetry.

Katherine Lunn-Rockliffe

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NOTES

[1] As shown by Viatte, Roos, and Albouy.

[2] Barrère emphasizes the effect of the new environment on Hugo’s imagination (*La Fantaisie* 19).

[3] A key study of Hugo’s metaphors is Riffaterre’s, which has a valuable emphasis on metaphors as movement and transformation but still tends to privilege the visual aspect.

[4] Cave’s book is a valuable summary of the implications of cognitive theory for literary study. In discusssing metaphor, he draws in particular on Carston and Glenberg (101).

[5] The earliest critics were concerned with the mythical and religious dimensions of the poem. Charles Renouvier saw it as charting the shift from paganism to pantheism, “le passage de la mythologie spontanée et fragmentaire à la mythologie généralisée et synthétisée par la réflexion” (58). Barrère has explored how the poem blends pagan and Christian values throughout (“Hugo et le chèvre-pied”).

[6] Hugo’s famous opposition was originally set out in *Préface de Cromwell* (*Œuvres complètes*, *Critique*: 9-17).

[7] This is part of his argument that Hugo is above all a lyric poet whose historical poems are most successful when they have a clear first person voice.

[8] All quotations from "Le Satyre" are taken from the *Poésie* II volume of *Œuvres complètes*, so future references to this poem will simply include the page number.

[9] In Leconte de Lisle's poem, Apollo's stallions "Hennissent vers les cieux, de leurs naseaux splendides".

[10] In lines like "L'Énigme sacrée, au loin, sans vêtement, | Montrant sa forme blanche au fond de l'insondable" (744) and "Quelqu'un est. | Mais celui-la, jamais l'homme ne le connaît" (750). As critics since Berret have observed, "Le Satyre" blends deism and pantheism.

[11] As Léon Cellier and Judith Wulf have both indicated. For Cellier, the satyr defines not past, present, and future, but matter, man, and becoming (312). For Wulf, the satyr proposes the idea of progress rather than narrating the development of humanity over time (132).

[12] See Bachelard (66).

[13] For Lakoff and Johnson, many metaphors describe form "in terms of the motion tracing the form" (*More than Cool Reason* 142).

[14] See Heugel (256).

[15] Hugo celebrates the protean quality of sandstone in *Alpes et Pyrénées* (*Œuvres complètes*, *Voyages*: 806-807).

[16] See Laforgue's analysis of this passage (281-82).

[17] Louis Aguettant notes that the reference to original sin is odd in the context of a cosmogony which is broadly "evolutionniste" (63).

[18] See Laforgue (279-83).

[19] Laforgue specifically rejects Pierre Albouy's allegorical reading of Olympus as representing the Louvre and the Tuileries during the Second Empire. See Albouy (239).

[20] David Charles views it as criticising the Second Empire for having accelerated the industrial revolution whilst rejecting the values of the French Revolution (17 and 65-67).

[21] This suspicion is apparent in the different interpretations of Bacon, as discussed by Peter Pesic.

[22] "Comment filtre la source et flambe le cratère" (743).

[23] For example, "La Caravane", *Châtiments, Œuvres complètes, Poésie* II, p.181.

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