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Lyrical Techniques in the Symbolist and Expressionist Theatre of Fernand Crommelynck

by

Bonnie Elgin Todd

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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I would like to thank Dr. Maurice Lecuyer, professor at Rice University, who directed this thesis and first introduced me to the works of Crommelynck. His continuous encouragement and advice were invaluable to me. I would also like to thank my husband and my mother for their enduring patience.
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ABSTRACT

Lyrical Techniques in the Symbolist and Expressionist Theatre of Fernand Crommelynck

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The lyricism in the theatre of Fernand Crommelynck evolves on two levels. There is a certain lyricism in the dialogue which can be ascribed to the characters themselves; monologues in which characters speak of past or future happiness in love, project an image of nature as a refuge from the events of the play, and speculate on approaching death reflect the lyrical penchant of the speakers. In each chapter a different play is discussed in relation to the lyrical techniques and subject matter of the various characters. The lyricism of the playwright himself evolves on another level. It is evident most obviously in Crommelynck's treatment of the themes of love and death. In all of his plays except Une Femme qui a le Coeur trop petit, a major character dies and love ends in disillusionment.

Crommelynck treats his subject lyrically not only by his use of character and situation but also by his use of the dialogue of minor characters whose anecdotes serve as "récits en abîme" reflecting the situation of the major characters. According to Ralph Freedman in The Lyrical Novel, this device is properly lyrical in that images evolve in each play predicting its outcome and thus substituting for the dramatic climax a culmination.
of images, a device of lyrical poetry. The situations of various characters frequently reflect that of other characters in a similarly lyrical elaboration of imagery. The setting itself becomes "scenic imagery" as the action of the plays often acquiesces to the stylization of carnival, masquerade, or other nocturnal festivities. As characters move into this realm, the events of the play merge with the ritual, which stylizes the action and promotes it from the personal to the universal level.

In his first two plays, Le Sculpteur de Masques (1911) and Les Amants puérils (1913), Crommelynck's technique reflects the influence of the symbolist movement. In his later plays, Le Cocu magnifique (1920), Tripes d'Or (1925), Carine ou la jeune fille folle de son âme (1929), Une Femme qu'a le Coeur trop petit (1934), and Chaud et Froid ou l'idée de monsieur Dom (1934), the playwright's lyricism finds an outlet in expressionistic methods. By rendering literal, or, in the case of the theatre, scenic, the interior life of the protagonist, Crommelynck divulges the "soul in writhing anguish." As the personalities of characters frequently complement and supplement one another, the playwright manages to maintain the simplistic characters of farce while revealing the complex and ambiguous personality of the individual.

It is the purpose of this paper to divulge and characterize these elements of Crommelynck's lyrical symbolism and expressionism and to suggest that this relatively unknown playwright is unjustifiably neglected.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Maurice Lecuyer, professor at Rice University, who directed this thesis and first introduced me to the works of Crommelynck. His continuous encouragement and advice were invaluable to me. I would also like to thank my husband and my mother for their enduring patience.
INTRODUCTION

While the modern lyricist has laid aside the lyre, he has found in poetry and poetic prose instruments responding to inner rhythms, heard also by his ancient counterpart. Since its origins in Greece, lyricism has passed through a variety of forms while its subject matter has remained relatively stable. The recurrent themes of love, death, the destiny of man and his place in the world, of nature, and of God may vary in their treatment, but such subjects apparently preoccupy both modern and primitive man. Today lyricism is generally thought of as any poetry expressing with fervor and emotion either collective feelings or the interior life of the soul. ¹

It is not the purpose of this paper to trace the history of lyre players and their descendants but rather to focus on a fairly recent dramatist, who, while making a place for himself in one of the world's oldest literary traditions by incorporating familiar faces of lyricism into his drama, expands the lyrical elastic to encompass the mood of his own era. While retaining the old themes of lyricism, Fernand Crommelynck expresses himself both as a symbolist and as an expressionist, meanwhile investing his drama with his uniquely personal touch.

Writing between 1906 and 1934, Crommelynck reflects in his first plays, Le Sculpteur de Masques (written and first presented in 1911) and Les Amants Puerils
(written in 1913 and first presented in 1921) his Symbolist origins and thus frequently elicits a comparison to his Belgian compatriot Maurice Maeterlinck, an unjustified comparison according to the critic E. E. Wyndham Lewis, who sums up, "To compare Crommelynck with Maeterlinck seems to me like comparing a carillon played by Jef Denijin with a melodious tinkling silver handbell." If a comparison is to be made, it must certainly be on the basis of Crommelynck's early plays, in which details of the natural world and actions of the characters symbolically suggest a less apparent reality.

Both as a Symbolist and as an Expressionist, Crommelynck relies heavily on image and metaphor, rendered in his dramatic art not by imagistic language but through characterization, setting, dialogue, and events. Ralph Freedman offers guidelines for the study of such a method in The Lyrical Novel, an analysis of the works of Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf, in which he defines the function of lyricism in prose.

Lyrical fiction, according to Freedman, submerges narrative in imagery and portraiture, and the ranges of metaphoric suggestiveness not possible in straight narration recreate the world apparently portrayed. As the lyrical novel absorbs action and refashions it, patterns or "clusters" of imagery emerge. Whereas novels usually tell a story, he continues, lyrical poetry suggests the expression of feelings or themes in musical or pictorial patterns. Lyrical fiction approaches in this way the
function of a poem. He explains that as narrative follows its own sequence of events, a poem moving from image to image creates its own progression, varies and expands themes, changes rhythm, and elaborates images in order to reach a point of greatest intensity.³

Freedman’s analysis of prose in the lyrical novel is equally applicable to the prose in the drama of Crommelynck. Like the lyrical novelist, the lyrical dramatist uses whatever events, characters, scenes, even actions that will render his view. As these elements elaborate and counterpoint one another, they extend the theme in the same manner that images do in poetry. The point of greatest intensity reached through imagery in lyric poetry corresponds to the climax of traditional drama. In the theatre of Crommelynck, the accumulation of scenes elaborating the same theme replaces the "rising action" of the "well-made play," and the point of greatest intensity of the imagery thus created replaces the traditional climax.

In addition to the playwright’s lyrical structure, many of his characters proffer lyrical statements of their own. While some divulge their subjective selves in lyrical elans on the subjects of love or death, others incorporate actual poems in the prose of their dialogue. Frequently they create imagery which could pass for simple descriptions, but in their literal images they describe the world, not necessarily as it is, but rather as they see it, and their selective perception plays a part in the network
of images whose point of greatest intensity serves as the climax of the play.

With Le Cocu magnifique (written and first presented in 1920), Crommelynck veers off the flight plan filed by Symbolism and orients his drama toward the alternate course prepared by the German expressionists. Such a switch seems perhaps more perverse than it, in fact, is. According to Ulrich Weisstein,

Symbolism, which, in nearly every way, rejects what Expressionism stands for, (...) is a stage through which many Expressionists had to pass in order to reach their artistic destinations.4

Primarily, symbolism passed on to its stepchild expressionism the subjective genes which dominate the lyrical mode.

The dream-like quality of Le Sculpteur de Masques and Les Amants puerils takes on the proportions of nightmare in Crommelynck's later plays. His exaggeration and use of the grotesque, the violence inherent in some of his characters, the extreme moods prevailing in his drama all stem from expressionist roots. But, as in his earlier plays, the true movement of the later ones seems to be on a plane more remote than the apparent setting. To cite once again Ulrich Weisstein, "It is precisely the soul...... especially the soul in writhing anguish which the Expressionists desired to project."5

As expressionism demands caricature and the grotesque, distortion naturally evolves, and we find in
Crommelynck's plays only the bare essentials reminiscent of "real life." His settings "look" real: all of his plays are set in a commonplace interior—usually a living room of a rather ordinary house. The inhabitants seem normal enough at first, but they soon reveal that not only are they not "normal," but that they could hardly be classified as "real" people. Characters often function in relation to each other just as various facets of the personality complement and supplement one another. The grotesque, or often the merely mundane, wars with the sublime in the spiritual unrest that is the true subject of his drama.

In 1922, in his production of Le Cocu magnifique, the innovative Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold recognized Crommelynck's setting as the bizarre world of the subconscious. In his scenic design, he interpreted the setting expressionistically and made of it a reflection of a soul state rather than a literal representation of a bourgeois household.6

The Expressionists, rebelling against the tendencies of the classicists, the Realists, and the Naturalists to treat their subjects more or less objectively, opted for the subjective, as did their lyrical forefathers, the Romantics and the Symbolists, to mention only the most recent. György M. Vajda explains,

The principle of spontaneity ruled their visions, dreams, and outbursts of emotion; it also explains the lack of motivations in their dramas and novels. The inner world of the works, issuing from the caprice of the subject, the contents of his consciousness,
and freedom of spontaneity, was not subject to the laws of causality. 7

This subjectivity belongs inalienably to the lyrical mode, which by its very nature is the expression of subjective emotions and experiences. Subjective drama, as H. F. Garten notes, may seem a contradiction in terms since drama presupposes a clash of opposing forces, 8 but the drama of Crommelynck, like that of other expressionists, represents the inner battlefield, where forces clash in a sort of civil war of the self. The setting is not necessarily the playwright's own psyche but rather a collective psyche, where we recognize, in some characters, personifications of various aspects of another character's personality and in events variations on the central theme of the play.

It is because of this interior setting that Crommelynck's drama lends itself so well to psychoanalytic criticism, as Gisèle Féral aptly demonstrates in her thesis Le Théâtre de Crommelynck: érotisme et spiritualité. It is in the measure of lyrical symbolist and expressionist that Crommelynck lacks a thorough analysis. The purpose of this paper is to delve into his particular lyricism and to show how he treats his conventional and recurrent lyrical themes--love and death--unconventionally and yet lyrically. Much consideration will be given to the complementary roles of the characters, as it seems that Crommelynck's most essential lyricism derives from their relationship to one another, often as subjective expressions of the same
personality. Other lyrical themes, such as man's rapport with nature and his desire for evasion, demand less attention but still must figure in an analysis of the lyricism in Crommelynck's theatre.

Although he does not go into detail, Paul Werrie has already summed up Crommelynck's lyricism:

(…) Ce ne sont point les vers, ni même le langage image, mais avant tout, cette anecdote refoulée, ces dates, ces états-civils, ces âges estompés, avant tout ces raccourcis qui font que tout le destin d'un être se rassemble sous nos yeux comme les lignes d'un paysage nous entrent dans l'œil au bout d'une perspective; étant bien entendu que la poésie est le spirituel ramène à la surface, la vie interne découverte, rendue visible, enveloppant les personnages et non point ceux-ci la recouvrant, comme dans la vie.9

To label Crommelynck's technique as lyrical demands an expansion of the definition of lyricism. Certainly fervor and emotion are reflected in characters' monologues and dialogues in which they reveal in verse and poetic prose their inner lives, particularly their attitudes and experiences regarding love and death. But it is primarily Crommelynck's structure that is of interest here in that he further reveals the inner worlds of his characters through scenic images in which the setting metaphorically reflects mood and often predicts the outcome of the play and through repetition of anecdotes and events which serve imagistically as "récits en abîme" of the protagonists' plight. The play resulting from this rigorous construction
appears as a series of images elaborating and counterpointing his central themes, love, death, and the place of man in the universe. It is particularly this structure that characterizes Crommelynck as a lyrical expressionist, lyrical through his use of poetic dialogue, metaphoric setting, and imagistic events and expressionistic through his rendering literal and scenic the inner lives of his characters.

Three of Crommelynck's early plays, Nous n'irons plus au bois (1906), Le Marchand de Regrets (1913), and the first version of Le Sculpteur de Masques (1908), have been omitted from this study because they are out of print. His comedy Le Chevalier de la Lune ou Sir John Falstaff will not be included here because it is primarily a work of criticism and, dramatically, very little more than a translation of Falstaff's scenes in the two parts of Shakespeare's Henry IV.

In addition to the plays already mentioned, Le Sculpteur de Masques (second version), Les Amants muerils, and Le Cocu magnifique, this study will include an analysis of the lyricism in Tripes d'Or (1925), Carine ou la jeune fille folle de son âme (1929), Une Femme qu'a le coeur trop petit (1934), and Chaud et Froid ou l'idée de monsieur Dom (1934). This study deals with the plays as presented in the Gallimard edition, taken in their chronological order.
REFERENCES


5 "Expressionism: Style or 'Weltanschauung'?" in Expressionism as an International Literary Phenomenon, p. 41.


7 "Outline of the Philosophic Backgrounds of Expressionism," in Expressionism as an International Literary Phenomenon, p. 47.

8 "Foreign Influences on German Expressionist Drama," in Expressionism as an International Literary Phenomenon, p. 59.

9 Théâtre de la Fuite (Brussels-Paris, 1943), p. 25.
LE SCULPTEUR DE MASQUES,
Love and Death in Image and Action

Since Crommelynck was born in 1888, just after the birth of the Symbolist movement, it is appropriate that his first plays reflect the movement's influence. It is perhaps his Symbolist origins that account for "un lyrisme débordant et une magie verbale qui désamarre l'action du plan quotidien". In Le Sculpteur de Masques, as in most of his plays, a bourgeois household is the setting for the action of the play, which revolves around a rather ordinary domestic problem. But, in the words of Emile Verhaeren, this play of inauspicious circumstances is "tragiquement peinte, admirablement sculptée." In a letter which was published along with the original verse play, Verhaeren wrote,

La soudaineté des moyens d'action,
le chevauchement des sentiments sourds
et profonds se mêlant entre eux comme
des chaînes dans un souterrain, l'électricité qui se dégageait de certains
adjectifs, la nouveauté et la splen-
deur de telle ou telle image m'en-
thousiasmèrent. (I, 235)

Critics of Crommelynck frequently repeat the words "image" and "lyricism." Since imagistic allusions to the dominant and lyrical themes of love and death replace, for the most part, overt demonstrations, it is necessary to delve into the more technical aspects of the play, especially the imagery, while discussing the themes. Images of love are so closely allied with those of nature
that they have formed an inseparable bond and must be grouped together for study. As the characters elaborate their respective images, dialogue adopts certain rhythmic patterns which encourage immediate attention. The theme of death and of man's fate appears last in both the play and in this study, but it is, nonetheless, probably the most significant part of Le Sculpteur de Mascues.

When Andre Berger said, "L'amour est le thème obsédant de toutes les oeuvres de Crommelynck," he was thinking in particular of this play, as it is the theme of love which gives rise to the theme of death. When the play begins, Magdeleine is leaving the home of her sister and her husband because she feels that Pascal, her brother-in-law, does not like her. It soon becomes evident that, on the contrary, his passion for her is destroying his marriage and will cause the death of his wife, Louison.

As in Le Cocu magnifique, Crommelynck's point of departure is the innocent happiness of a married couple; so innocent are they, in fact, that the main characters, Magdeleine, Louison, and Pascal, like the characters in Le Cocu magnifique, are often portrayed as naive children. At the first of the play, Louison calls Magdeleine's desire to leave "des enfantillages!" (I, 239), and Magdeleine repeats Pascal's words to her: "Petite fille, quand j'irai à la foire je te rapporterai une belle poupée; poupée toi-même, tu lui feras des robes!" (I, 242). Louison tenderly calls Pascal "Enfant!...Enfant...!" (I, 251), and she and
Magdeleine report the day's events like two children speaking fast and simultaneously. When Pascal tells Magdeleine the story of Amadéi, he remarks, "Tu t'amuses de ces choses comme un enfant!" (I, 256), and in Act Three, Magdeleine says, "Tu es faible comme un enfant, Pascal" (I, 300). Pascal ominously remarks in Act One that man is unhappy because of his loss of innocence: "Les hommes sont malheureux parce qu'ils ne s'étonnent plus." (I, 250). He imagines himself writing legends into his masks and the men who wear them asking, "Et alors?...Et alors?" (I, 250), like children eager to hear the outcome of a story. It is precisely their loss of innocence that brings unhappiness to the main characters. Even when Pascal kisses Magdeleine, he calls his gesture a game and evokes images of children:

Mais quoi? Je suis heureux! Je joue à la prendre dans mes bras et voici qu'elle s'enfuit en pleurant comme si j'allais lui couper les cheveux! (I, 260-261).

Soon thereafter his evocation of a child metamorphoses into a vision of a sensual young girl:

A quinze ans, tu avais la bouche trop rouge et les yeux trop bleus. Je te vois, je t'assure que je te vois, tu étais déjà tout entière comme une gerbe de blé, avec ses pavots et ses bleuets! Magdeleine. (I, 262)

When Louison faints, Pascal repeatedly calls her a child:

Mon enfant, ma petite fille, je suis là...Répends-moi, je t'en supplie...Tes mains sont glacées... Parle-moi...Pourquoi es-tu malade? ...ma petite fille, mon enfant... oh! réveille-toi... (I, 265).
As their idyllic existence is spoiled, Louison, who lies slowly dying, evokes her childhood with Magdeleine:

Quand tu étais petite, je te tendais les bras en appelant: "Viens vite, Magda, viens vite!..." Et tu me répondais: "Macher sais bien, courir, sais pas." (I, 280)

She comforts her younger sister and calls her "Enfant!... Enfant!..." (I, 280). Just before Louison's death in Act Three, Sister Marie-Joseph reports that she has reverted entirely to her childhood: "Elle rit, elle devient comme une petite fille...Elle demande une poupée...elle voit des moutons qui tournent..." (I, 309). Unsuccoured by the nun's solutions to her torment, Louison loses hope in religion and seeks the refuge of childhood. Only alluded to in the first two acts, such refuge becomes reality in Act Three; the allusions form a leitmotif which reaches its point of greatest intensity when Louison actually slips back mentally into infancy. Brief sentences which form a leitmotif prefiguring the conclusion: function as lyrical images, re-enforced by their repetition. According to Ralph Freedman, such narrative progression belongs properly to the domain of lyricism, and, in this particular case, it belongs to lyricism by its "fond" as well as by its "forme." The "âge d'or" of many lyric poets is childhood; so much so, in fact, that a desire to return to the uncluttered innocence of youth is recognized as a characteristic of lyricism.

Cador functions in this respect. As he has no
steady profession, he symbolizes the free, childlike spirit that Pascal would like to be. During their long winter captivity, Pascal imagines himself aimless and carefree and even frequently says he wishes he were like Cador. He first expresses his fondness for his old friend in Act One:
"Cador est parti. C'est dommage, j'aurais voulu le voir—le voir pour le voir!" (I, 250). Shortly thereafter, Pascal says, "Je voudrais ressembler à Cador; avoir une plume de coq au bonnet!" (I, 251). In Act Two, Pascal tells Louison, "J'ai voulu ressembler à Cador, je me suis battu comme lui." (I, 287).

Unhampered by marriage or love, Cador spends his time with the friends of his choosing and never feels the responsibility and guilt that weigh on Pascal. Cador has remained the innocent, unfettered child that the protagonists once were, and Pascal's desire to be like him represents his desire to return to the refuge of childhood. Perhaps the Carpenter's dislike for him results from the fact that Cador, by his perpetual youth, appears to elude this craftsman as a future customer for a coffin. It is the "vagabond" Cador who, in Act Two, defends Pascal, his home, and family from the assaults of this carpenter, whom Pascal believes will kill him, and it is Magdeleine, who feels responsible for her sister's misfortune, that sends away this perennial youth. Only near the end of the play, when Louison reverts to her childhood, does Cador reappear, and Pascal tells Magdeleine that he has seen Louison, now dead, leave with
him. The character of Cador thus merges with the images and allusions to youth and childhood, the refuge from the tragedy that befalls the protagonists.

As love goes quickly awry, the only evidence we have of its existence is to be found in the verbal images projected by various characters. Magdeleine reports the words of Léonie on the subject of Louison and Pascal's love:

Et votre soeur? Et votre soeur?... Votre soeur est toujours heureuse! oui... Tant mieux, n'est-ce pas? On ne lui souhaite pas le mal... Ah! j'oubliais!... J'ai vu votre soeur et l'artiste près du rempart. Ils passaient dans l'ombre des arbres, et ils s'embrassaient, ils s'embrassaient;--Jésus Maria!-- comme s'ils n'étaient pas mariés!

(I, 244)

Ralph Freedman suggests that in the lyrical novel, experience is fashioned as imagery. As characters recount what has happened to them, they create verbal images, which elaborate and often counterpoint one another. In Le Sculpteur de Masques, descriptions of real events function as literal imagery relating to the lyrical theme of love; such descriptive dialogue frequently replaces overt demonstration.

Louison herself creates a similar verbal picture when she recounts for Magdeleine the scene of her first day with Pascal:

Te souviens-tu du jour que j'y suis allée avec Pascal pour la première fois? C'est un beau jour dans ma vie... Te souviens-tu comme il avait plu?... Et vers le soir le ciel s'est déchiré au milieu et nous avons vu des nuages de toutes les couleurs tomber
derrière la ville. Tu te souviens?
Et le ciel est devenu bleu, bleu,
oh! bleu!... (I, 243).

The play is punctuated with such imagery. Louison persists in describing the evening that she and Pascal sat on the bank of "l'eau d'amour," and later she describes the first time Pascal took her in his arms. Images from nature dominate her verbal pictures, which begin with panoramic views and focus more and more precisely on the lovers themselves:

C'était au crépuscule, sous la porte Sainte-Croix. La ville était bleue, devant nous—toute la ville, avec ses tours et ses arbres dans l'ouverture de la porte.
J'avais respiré l'odeur des foins chauffés, dans la campagne. J'étais couverte de poussière rouge après des chemins et des chemins.
(...)
Nous ne parlions plus depuis longtemps... La ville était bleue...
(...)
Il m'a prise dans ses bras!
... C'est tout! (I, 249-250)

In Act Two, as Louison continues to reminisce about her former happiness in love, she evokes scenes in which the setting plays a larger role than do the participants. Her only joy now seems to be in the evocations of past happiness in a warmer season. Whereas Pascal is irritated by the silence imposed by the snow, Louison interprets this silence as "peace":

Ça me rappelle ce soir d'été dans la campagne, les hommes passaient avec leurs fauves sur l'épaule derrière les chars pleins de gerbes; et ils nous criaient: Bonsoir les amoureux (...).
Et puis, les hommes disparaissaient dans l'ombre du côté des petites lumières. On entendait leurs voix, très loin, qui hâtaient les chevaux.
Et la mer, --te souviens-tu?—
pendant la grande marée...--0 quand
j'y pense, moi...
L'eau sautait sur la digue comme
pour nous prendre. Les éclairs nous
rendaient livides, et je riais... et
j'avais peur... et tu me regardais...
(I, 288-289)

Like an impressionist painter, Louison sketches
the scene, daubs it with a predominaing color, and only
outlines the gesture of a couple, as if their presence
were incidental to the landscape, season, and time of day.
Gaston Bachelard says of such mental pictures:

Le souvenir n'a pas de date. Il a
une saison qui est la marque fondamen-
tale des souvenirs. (...) Alors les
souvenirs deviennent de grandes images,
des images agrandies, agrandissantes.
Ils sont associées à l'univers d'une
saison, d'une saison qui ne trompe pas
et qu'on peut bien appeler la saison
totale reposant dans l'immobilité de
la perfection. (...) Avec une image
particulière on en possède l'essence..
(...) Ce ne sont pas seulement des
spectacles par la vue. Ce sont des
valeurs d'âme, des valeurs psychologiques
directes, immobiles, indestructibles...
--toujours bienfaisantes. 5

In this play, the season plays a particularly significant
role in the images projected by the main characters of
their past as well as of their future. As the play pro-
gresses, such recurring allusions to the seasons form an
integral leitmotif in the lyrical structure and unite the
themes of love and nature. As Bachelard points out, "...memories recounted thus are not merely "spectacles de la
vue." They communicate a subjective value judgment.

Louison evokes not only scenes of the past but
also of the future. When she invites Magdeleine to the
Lake, she projects images full of movement and sound, and, as in her evocations of scenes of love, she paints a picture of nature:

Nous serions seules sur le pont, toutes seules--avec notre ombre dans le soleil. Ce matin le petit vent doit faire chanter les peupliers et danser les feuilles mortes sur le rempart. (I, 242)

Other characters create images by recounting their experiences, telling stories varying on the theme of love or death, and by chanting lyrics which allude to the action of the play. Cador, returning from an outing in the country, reminds us of the major role that nature plays: "Quelle lumière sur les champs!...C'est une bonne journée, l'air est léger, léger, ah!" (I, 245). He adds, "Nous avons dansé dans le canal, Capetius et moi,—toujours au soleil..." (I, 245). When he says, "C'est le mois de l'amour" (I, 245), he announces one central theme of the play and, at the same time, alludes to the proximity of the theme of nature, in particular of the season, to the theme of love. Like Louison, Cador continually envisions himself in nature, subject to the seasons. When Magdeleine tells him he will be cold in the winter, he paints a verbal picture of himself, and as in Louison's images, the representation of a figure gives way to the creation of a larger scene. He, too, gives a panoramic view:

Je pousserai la cloche dans le clocher, pour me donner chaud. Vous êtes montée dans la tour de Saint-Sauveur?...Non?...C'est un grenier --et un grenier sur l'autre,--et encore
un grenier,—avec des mâts, des cordes et des échelles qui plient —et toute la ville par les trous du plancher! (I, 246)

Upon his arrival, Pascal immediately reviews the scene he has just witnessed: "Ce matin le vent revient de Hollande par les canaux. Je suis certain qu'on aperçoit la mer du haut du Beffroi." (I, 250). He continues, "La ville est en or comme une proue de navire." (I, 250). As Pascal extends his imagery of external nature, he appeals to the sense of smell:

Je voudrais être chasseur pour courir comme un fou dans les buissons et faire craquer les branches! J'ai pensé à cela tout à coup!...Il doit y avoir une odeur d'huile de lin dans les bois--les fènes tombent--une odeur de résine et de feuilles brûlées!... qui... (I, 251)

Although he continues to find his metaphors in nature, his literal imagery gives way to figurative when he talks to the Doctor:

Nous sommes comme l'herbe entre les pavés de la Place; de la pluie, du vent et du soleil;—pas de jardiner!—ga pousse tout de même sous le pied des chevaux, la mauvaise herbe... (I, 252)

He returns to literal images when he says, "Les marronniers du quai refleurissent comme en avril" (I, 254), as does Louison in her exclamation, "Quelle lumière! C'est comme au bord de la mer" (I, 254).

By telling Magdeleine the story of Amadéi, who lured young girls into the forest, Pascal introduces a sensual note into the recurring evocations of nature. The
story serves, as does Cador's statement about the month of love, to integrate the themes of nature and of love. Pascal has just said that the sun has made him crazy when he pulls Magdeleine to him and kisses her.

Louison's joy in love quickly dissipates as she discovers Pascal speaking intimately with Magdeleine. Her disappointment manifests itself in physical illness, and the need for the doctor that Pascal laughingly sent away earlier symbolizes the drastic and sudden change of events. The Doctor serves thus as a literal image signifying the deterioration of love and predicting Louison's death. The bird that was supposed to symbolize good luck escapes at the same moment that their joy eludes them and thus functions to the contrary, as a symbol of the characters' misfortune. As in the precision of a lyric poem, no element is extraneous in Crommelynck's theatre; the dialogue of each character, sometimes seemingly incidental, pertains to either the theme of love or that of death, and every object and event plays a role. The flowers in the window, for example, silently reiterate the theme of nature, and they disappear with the coming of the characters' "winter of discontent." The Carpenter, who says of Pascal, "Lui, il fait des masques, et moi je fais des cercueils...Nous sommes voisins" (I, 249) and later paraphrases, "Je travaille pour la douleur et vous travaillez pour la joie, oui...Mais nous sommes voisins..."(I, 258) is not idly commenting on their respective jobs. His allusion to the
proximity of joy and sorrow summarizes the first act. The
other characters shun and ignore this carpenter, who would
lead us to believe that he builds nothing but caskets,
whereas the popularity of his proclaimed counterpart, Pas-
cal, is attested to by the steady stream of visitors who,
according to Magdeleine, "s'arrêtent l'un après l'autre
devant la porte comme des marionnettes dans un petit
théâtre." (I, 253).

In addition to the Carpenter, many secondary
characters are nameless, indicated only by their occupation.
This technique, to be exploited by expressionist drama,
allows the townspeople to function lyrically, as a chorus,
rather than as individuals. Each of these characters plays
a stylized role relevant only in its relation to the main
themes. Exterior to Pascal's house and shop, the town is
peopled with the Merchant, the Blacksmith, the Carpenter,
the Doctor, and the Raconteur. The relevancy of the Car-
penter's maxim "L'homme a deux femmes, une pour dormir et
l'autre pour coucher" (I, 259) perturbs Pascal, as it serves
as a leitmotif, frequently repeated, on the central theme
of the play. Similarly, Cador's chant can be heard apropos:

Mais pour mon baiser, l'étrangère,
Donne aujourd'hui deux pater, trois credos,
Ohi ohi ohi! -- ohi ohi ohi!--
(I, 263).

Such crystallizations of the main theme serve as lyrical
elaboration; rather than dramatically advancing the action,
they reiterate, before and after the fact, the actions of
the protagonists.
Just as the open window and the flowers visibly reflect the images described by the characters in Act One, the snow visible through the closed window in Act Two manifests nature’s bonds with the main characters. In her article "La Fuite devant l’Amour chez les Personnages de Crommelynck," Gisèle Féal says, "L’hiver qui endort est une représentation de l’influence de Louison. La froideur de l’un équivaut à la douceur de l’autre." She cites the following quotation in which Pascal clearly substitutes his wife’s meekness for the cold weather:

De l’air! que toute la tempête entre dans la chambre et m’ensevelisse. Ce n’est pas l’hiver qui nous enveloppe, qui nous entoure, qui nous emprisonne. Ce n’est pas l’hiver! C’est sa confiance persistante... La honte nous étouffera déjà. (I, 292)

The setting, therefore, functions as a lyrical image, elaborated in the dialogue. Pascal’s only escape from the prison of winter is through his imagination, his evocation of spring, repeated, the season of hope and joy:

Bah! le printemps reviendra!... Alors les fenêtres s’ouvriront, et nous serons libres dans la lumière!... Moi j’irai à pied jusqu’à la mer, en faisant tourner mon bâton!... C’est un beau projet... Il y a une route droite... Les petits arbres font des ombres rondes dans le soleil... On voit de longues herbes dans le fond du canal, à travers l’eau verte... Oui, c’est un beau projet. (I, 270)

In Act Three, when spring finally comes, Pascal does not find the season as he envisioned it: "C’est l’odeur du printemps qui me poursuit. Il ne faut plus laisser les
fenêtres ouvertes, la nuit" (I, 299). Just as Louison discovers the present is not as favorable to images of love as the past is, Pascal finds the future does not correspond to his lyrical conception of it.

Although both Louison and Pascal find joy in evocations of a warmer season, Louison usually looks to the past while Pascal envisions the future; moreover, Pascal sees himself alone and free. He plans for the spring a sort of renaissance after the "burial" that winter has been for him. Since Pascal identifies winter with Louison, Féal interprets his desire to "touner [son] bâton" as an anticipation of renewed sexual activity, now dormant like the season. In the third act, with the arrival of spring, Pascal describes the town, overtly alluding to the sensuous aspect of the season:

Les arbres du Béguinage sont en fleur; l'odeur des feuilles fraîches a rempli la chambre...Les gens danseront toute la nuit...
Ils danseront, oui—ou bien ils iront dans la campagne,—les filles avec les garçons...Ils se perdront, deux à deux, entre les branches!... ah! ah! oui...Et on entendra rire dans l'ombre et sous les étoiles. (I, 298)

Images of nature and of love once again are projected in Pascal's descriptions of winter as a time of death and spring as a time of rebirth. At the end of the play such imagery crystallizes in the spring carnival, which substitutes for the climax a point of greatest intensity of the imagery.

The descriptions of both Louison and Pascal give
witness to a spontaneity associated with lyricism. Like Louison's, Pascal's verbal pictures are interspersed with points of suspension, which mark his transition and indicate that he recounts the various aspects of the scene as they appear spontaneously in his mind. As their images, like those of Cador, are generally concrete rather than figurative, or, in the words of René Wellek and Austin Warren, "descriptive" rather than "metaphoric," they are devoid of calculated effects, and they appeal purely as an image rather than as an association. In the preceding citation, Pascal appeals not only to our visual sense, but also to our senses of smell and sound. His imagery is not static, like Louison's, whose principals seem caught by a click of the camera, but kinetic: his boys and girls danse and run off into the woods together, whereas Louison's lovers sit quietly looking at each other. It is especially by their verbal pictures that Crommelynck demonstrates the incompatibility of Louison and Pascal. Verbal images, a device of poetry, pre-empt dramatic action.

Although most of the images in the play are projected by Louison and Pascal, in Act Two Magdeleine tells her sister,

Tes paroles sont dans le silence
comme des pas dans la neige!...Et puis,
le silence retombe sur le silence comme
la neige sur la neige, et il ne reste
rien de tes paroles! (I, 282).

In this rather complex comparison, Magdeleine's image first appeals to our auditory sense. Louison's words are compared:
to footsteps in the snow; but this image acquiesces to a comparison of silence and snow. Instead of an auditory image, a visual image remains, the image of snow, which represents the lack of sound. The snow serves as a poetic as well as a literal image of their isolation and inability to communicate.

In Act Two, as Cador weaves his basket, he too envisions spring. In a characteristically expanding image, Cador, Louison, and Pascal create a panoramic view, in which Cador situates himself:

Louison: Je dis: Cador voit des pommes dans la corbeille.
Cador: Oui, les pommes d'abord...
Louison: Et puis, les pommiers.
Cador: Oui.
Pascal: Et puis tout le verger.
Cador: Oui, et moi dans les arbres.
(I, 270)

In Act Three, near the end of the play, Cador returns after a long absence. His first words describe the festivities he has just witnessed:

...Quelle belle fête dans la ville.
Je reviens du lac. Il y a des barques pavoiées sur l'eau--des feux verts, rouges, bleus; des feux jaunes...Il fait noir ici. (I, 316)

The colorful and luminous atmosphere he describes contrasts with Pascal's dark room. His words are open to the interpretation that the darkness of Pascal's house reflects the the mood of the main characters, whereas the town celebrates the arrival of spring. His dialogue is thus lyrical both by its descriptive image and by its metaphoric implications.

In Act Two, Cador intermittently evokes the
theme of love with his song about the stranger’s kiss and his story about his friend Capétius. The conversation of the other characters and Cador’s own musings interrupt his evocations in such a way that his song and story act on the dialogue as a counterpoint, a rhythmic device of lyricism. The following excerpt is slight in comparison to the extended examples which are too long to cite.

Louison: Pascal?
Cador: Pour un baiser de l’étrangère...
J’avais donné deux bouquets de roseau
Oh! oh! oh!—Oh! oh! oh!

Un dessous...trois dessus...un dessous,
trois dessus...

Un collier bleu, des cailloux du ruisseau...
Et dix chansons sur mes pipeaux!...

Oh! oh! quel silence!...

Mais pour mon baiser, l’étrangère...

Trois dessous, un dessus...trois dessous...

Louison: Pascal?
(I, 267-268).

Crommelynck repeats this rhythmic formula when Cador relates the love story of Capétius and the daughter of the ironsmith. As Cador tells the anecdote, no one listens, and the intervening dialogue permits only an intermittent revelation of his story, which counterpoints, both by this form and by its theme, the subject of the play. When he begins the anecdote, the other characters dominate the conversation, but as Cador nears the conclusion, although the others still seem preoccupied, he is allowed more and more
time to speak. Pascal wants to go outside to see who is breaking the windows:

Pascal: Je longerai le quai, je ferai le tour de la place, le tour de la ville, s'il faut, --mais je les trouverai! Habille-toi!
Cador: Moi, je ne pourrais plus. Je pensais à Capetius qui court dans les bois avec la fille du forgeron.
Pascal: Mais sois sans inquiétude. Je leur ferai peur, voilà tout.
Pascal: Viens Cador!
Louison: Pascal, je t'en prie...
Cador: Moi, je lui réponds: "Achète-lui plutôt un châle, puisqu'elle a froid,"
--Non, elle sera plus heureuse d'un collier.
Louison: Pascal!... (I, 279).

Just as Louison remembers her love affair with Pascal set in a scene of nature, Cador evokes images of a couple living in the woods, subject to the season. Like Pascal's desire for Magdeleine, it is an illicit love, and like his story of Amadēi, it serves as a "récit en abîme," which according to Ralph Freedman, is a property of lyricism in that a story which evokes the work that contains it predicts the outcome and thus diminishes the importance of the climax. The main interest, therefore, is not in the plot, but in the recurring images alluding to the action. As in a lyric poem, events are contained in one another, and consecutive action acquiesces to simultaneous...

Practically excommunicated from the village by
the snow and the villagers' hostility, the main characters lose the ability to communicate with one another. Just as no one listens to Cador's ramblings, Louison's words to Sister Marie-Joseph go unheeded as do the nun's replies.

Louison: ...Ma soeur, je vous assure, ma soeur, je n'ai rien fait pour souffrir tant.

Sœur Marie-Joseph: Oui, il faut prendre patience... Si votre peine est imputée, elle rachètera la faute de ceux qui ne savent pas souffrir...

Louison: Quand j'étais enfant, --ma soeur, --j'ai bien pleuré--oui... mais pas comme ça, --j'ai du courage, --ma soeur, --je vous assure--mais pas comme ça... J'ai mal... J'ai mal jusqu'aux étoiles.

Sœur Marie-Joseph: Ayez mal jusqu'à Dieu!...

Louison: Et Pascal qui ne revient pas!

Sœur Marie-Joseph: Songez au Christ qui donna tout le sang de sa vie pour nous et pour vous-même.

Louison: C'est comme si j'avais une bête dans la poitrine!...

Sœur Marie-Joseph: Le Christ a dit: "Afin qu'il ne paraîsse pas aux hommes que tu jeunes..."

Louison: Une bête avec des ongles et des dents!...

Sœur Marie-Joseph: "Mais seulement à ton père qui est dans le secret..."

Louison: Maintenant, ça saigne et c'est plein d'eau... ma soeur!...

Sœur Marie-Joseph: "Et ton père qui te voit dans le secret te récompensera publiquement..."

Louison: Et Pascal, Pascal qui ne revient pas. (I, 283-284)

At the beginning of their conversation, there is a vague communication between the two women. Sister Marie-Joseph repeats the words "souffrir" and "mal" from Louison's dialogue. As Louison's condition intensifies, however, the apparently irrelevant replies of the nun sound more and more discordant; yet they obey their own rhythm as well as
logic. Each woman repeats her own words instead of echoing the other; Louison, for example, insists on "bête" whereas Marie-Joseph repeats "père." Crommelynck orchestrates this scene like a fugue in which the dialogues of the two women counterpoint each other. Louison's statement "Et Pascal qui ne revient pas!" divides the fugue into two equal portions and serves as a refrain at the end of her crisis.

Near the end of the play, when Cador returns to see Pascal after a long absence, their conversation adheres to a similar pattern; as Cador talks about his new interests in other friends, Pascal's questions go unheeded:

   Cador: Je ne puis plus venir. La fille du forgeron a eu trois enfants le même jour; trois diabls l'un derrière l'autre. Je les fais danser...
   Pascal: Tu ne t'en vas pas, Cador?
   Cador: Il y en a un qui tète, oh!
   D'abord ça n'allait pas; la fille avait du chagrin et son lait faisait pleurer l'enfant...
   Pascal: Tu ne t'en vas pas?
   Cador: Celui qui tête, c'est Walter.
   Celui-là sera bon comme le lait de sa mère. (I, 317)

Pascal's words form a refrain as in a ballad; they relate to the subject, but do not actually play a part in the narrative. This device demonstrates the characters' inability to communicate through a lyrical creation of contrapuntal dialogue.

Perhaps even more than the theme of love, the theme of death, occasional topic of lyricism, recurs in the play. Magdeleine first alludes to the theme, although obliquely, when she reports the words of Pascal: "Ni triste,
ni gai; c'est la jeunesse qui s'en va, une jambe derrière l'autre." (I, 241). As Louison and Magdeleine converse, Cador appears and, as usual, recounts an episode he has just witnessed: a fight between two men at the end of which the lockman's wife cried, "Ah! Ah!...Venez vite! Le bon petit sujet est mort, Dieu de Dieu!..." (I, 244). As Louison and Magdeleine ignore his remarks, Cador covertly announces the theme of death, a preoccupation with which gradually all the main characters become obsessed. The sisters equally ignore Cador's story about a cat that he and his friends burned alive. When the Carpenter appears, the other characters ignore him and refuse to greet him or to answer his questions; he acknowledges, "Vous n'aimez pas à me voir? (...) on le dit, oui..." (I, 258). Just before leaving, he gives a clue to his unpopularity: he makes coffins. His repetition of "Miserere," his allusions to the sins of the birdman's daughter, and his disparagement of the ingenuous and unemployed Cador depict him as a man of austere religion. His sudden appearance just after Pascal has kissed Magdeleine predicts the fatal results of their embrace, and the Carpenter ominously reminds Pascal, "...Ceux qui viennent chez vous viendront aussi chez moi." (I, 258). When he leaves, Pascal vent his malice by calling the Carpenter: "Gredin!" and "Canaille." (I, 260). The Carpenter's presence, like that of the Doctor, implies that all is not always well, as Pascal would like to believe when he sends the Doctor with "Ici, c'est le carnaval"
Pascal frequently punctuates the play with lyrical outbursts that become steadily angrier and centered on death. In Act One, as he sends away the doctor, he calls after him:

Adieu! Dites à vos malades que je les guérirai! Je leur montrerai des choses qu'ils n'ont jamais vues...le tambour du garde champêtre et l'esca-beau de la servante!...Adieu!...Je leur montrerai des choses inventées par des hommes qui étaient des hommes, --et la vie leur reviendra! Adieu...

(I, 253)

As he quickly loses patience with the Carpenter whose maxim is only too relevant, his exclamations assume venom:

Tailleur pour morts et pour vivants! Ah! ceux que vous habiliez sont bien vêtus!..."Une pour dormir et l'autre pour coucher!" On les voit venir de loin! on fait de la croix quand ils passent, morts ou vivants! "C'est bien trouvé."

(I, 260)

In Act Two, his outbursts turn into threats of murder:

Moi, quand j'en tiendrai un, je l'égorgera comme un porc!...Ah! ville de malheur!...Un jour j'en tuerai un à coups de pierre, c'est certain, je le sais!...Je lui écrasera la tête sur le pavé, et il en sortira de la boue, je le sais! (I, 278)

Later in the act, his virulence is directed against Louison:

Mais dis une parole de vérité, une seule! Je ne peux plus vivre ainsi! Il y a des amants qui se battent comme des bêtes, et qui vivent ensemble, et qui s'aiment jusqu'à la mort!...La jalousie et ses mensonges, le rut et ses démences, la rancune et ses dissimulations, et la joie âpre, et l'espérance fou, et la douleur incomparable, tout cela, tout cela c'est la pâture de l'amour!
Il s'en nourrit!...
Si quelqu'un t'a dit que l'amour
est joli et souriant comme une poupée,
il a menti.
Mais dis une parole! Je finirai
par t'arracher le cœur, comprends-tu!
Je veux entendre ton cri, ton cri, au
moins une fois!... (I, 289).

These outbursts in which he evokes death, especially murder, climax late in the second act when he envisions his own death, a sort of suicide:

Je deviendrai fou!... Le mensonge
est dans mes veines, dans mon cerveau, dans mes moelles!... Mon sang
m'empoisonne. Ha! (I, 292).

Just as the Carpenter and the Doctor portend unhappiness, the innocent "Hou, hou!" of the children in Act One foreshadows the menacing tone they adopt in Act Two. Magdeleine's repetition of "Je suis lasse!" physically manifests her interior languor. When Louison faints, voices asking "Elle est morte?" (I, 264) predict her death, and the passing remarks about the Burgomaster's wife who fainted imply a similar fate for Louison: "Maintenant, la femme du bourgmestre est comme une enfant..." (I, 264).

In Act Two, Sister Marie-Joseph's remark that she has seen a dead bird in the street goes unheeded, but serves for the spectator as another image of death, and Louison's repetition of "...dormir...dormir...dormir" (I, 290) foreshadows her death. The theme of death becomes more violent as Cador announces that he and Pascal will fight the Carpenter, who is assaulting their house with damaging projectiles. Pascal describes the assailants,
"...ils étaient là une dizaine de bandits conduits par le menuisier" (I, 293). At the end of Act Two, voices scream, "Houl! A mort!...À mort!..." (I, 295). Pascal has previously recognized the townspeople as a truly deadly menace when he says,

...Le menuisier pensera à nous en clouant les planches! Et les bruits de la ville seront autour de la maison comme des insultes mortelles! (I, 293)

Expressionistically, Pascal’s adversaries can be interpreted as manifestations of his inner conflict. The spectator never sees these elusive foes, and only Pascal seems genuinely threatened by their assaults. Similarly, Pascal’s express wish to murder Louison literally comes true, against his will. In Act Two, he says:

Oh! parfois, je la hais! J’ai envie de la détruire, d’être sur elle, à guetter sa mort, avec mes deux mains à son cou! (I, 293).

In Act Three, as the carnival participants wind through the town, the Raconteur chants a poem in which he personifies both life and death; although the lyrics apply in particular to Louison, they are spoken to the town at large and apply to the human condition. Up to this point, the theme of death has been centered in an individual, but the Raconteur promotes it to a more general level:

Voici la mort! la mort
Qui s’en allait en voyage
Avec armes et bagages....
Et passeport!
Elle avait un cercueil grand ouvert pour manteau!
Elle a mangé tous mes frères
Et les digère
Dans son estomac de terre! (I, 304)
Within the poem itself both the subject and the form are lyrical, and as the words relate to the action of the play, they serve as yet another verbal image of one of Crommelynck's major themes. The Raconteur re-enforces the poem's relevancy to Pascal in the last stanza; as he lists seventeen capital sins, the noise of the carnival drowns him out just after he mentions "la convoitise." In this act, the action of the play, slight in the first place, acquiesces to the stylization provided by the carnival. As the Jewels, dressed in masks and robes, recite mass in Pascal's shop, Crommelynck substitutes for the presentation of Louison's death an hallucinatory representation. In his ritualized suggestion of her death, the playwright identifies with Symbolist tradition. "Suggerer voilà le rêve," said Mallarme, and the critic Gisèle Marie explains, "C'est pourquoi le théâtre symboliste—théâtre d'idées,—revêt le plus souvent la forme d'une poésie incantatoire." 10 She cites Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, who said, 11

Toute libre intelligence ayant le sens du sublime, sait que le Genie pur est essentiellement silencieux, et que sa révélation rayonne plutôt dans ce qu'il sous-entend que dans ce qu'il exprime. 11

The carnival at the end of the play also provides a technical function. The first act begins with a reference to another carnival when Louison announces:

Ne dirait-on pas que demain est dimanche et que les servantes ont lavé les trottoirs—Magdeleine?—et que le cortège va sortir:
Though an entirely different carnival atmosphere dominates the last act, the play has gone full circle, like a neatly constructed lyrical poem, alluding to its opening verse. In the autumn of Act One, Pascal remarks, "Les marronniers du quai refleurissent comme en avril" (I, 254). As the play ends with the arrival of the following spring, nature, too, has gone a complete, though freakish, cycle. The hubbub of Act One disappears in Act Two, of which Paul Surer says, "(...) Crommelynck utilise habilement le silence comme moyen dramatique."12 In Act Three, the silence of winter is replaced by a noisy din, this time of a hostile nature. The town, like nature, follows a cycle, reflected in each act of the play.

As Louison's death approaches, Crommelynck turns more and more to lyrical patterns of expression; a large part of the third act is comprised of chants. As if her death were too significant an event for the banal lives of the characters, a recourse to lyricism elevates and expands the theme. When Magdeleine announces Louison's death, Pascal calmly replies with a characteristically dynamic image:

Tu dis ça, toi...mais je sais bien qu'elle est partie danser...
(II rit.) Elle est partie avec
Cador; je viens de la voir partir
...Elle dansera toute la nuit...
Je l'ai vue, je te dis, moi...Il
ne faut pas rire... (I, 320)

Crommelynck refuses to allow Louison's death to be the
climax of the play, as it would be in traditional theatre;
Pascal, like the spectator, does not acknowledge it as the
"turning point of the action." Instead of a climax, Crom-
melynck creates what Ralph Freedman calls a synthesis of
images; images of death throughout the play reach their
point of greatest intensity with the carnavalesque mass,
which the participants themselves characterize as "Quelle
farce!" (I, 320). The Raconteur's elaboration on the
themes of love and death replaces the usual denouement by
commenting not only on the events of the play but on man's
fate. The ever-present masks take on new significance and
become a symbol in retrospect; they too serve as images,
tangible, visible images worn by the townspeople as they
play out their stylized "comédie humaine" in the guise of
carnival. Pascal, we find, has even sculpted Louison's
death mask, which the spectator sees in place of her corpse.

The carnival expands the theme of death from the
particular to the general. Louison's death is merely the
case at hand, but it gives rise to an assessment of the
human condition. Pierre Page analyzes the intention of the
Symbolist poet when he writes, "(....) dans le tableau lui-
même il n'y a pas une personne ou un lac; on n'y trouve que
l'image d'une personne ou d'un lac, inscrite sur une surface
coloree." Louison's death assumes, in this way, universal
proportions, as the Raconteur's lyrics imply:

Voici la vie  
Suivie  
De la folie!  
La Vie avait une grappe de gens  
Pendus à ses mamelles.  
Et poussait, portait devant elle  
Son ventre rempli d'enfants!  
La folie  
Avait pour ventre un tonneau,  
Avait pour coeur un grelot,  
Et sous sa mitre de carton  
Avait pour tête une vessie  
Toute remplie  
De hennetons! (I, 304+)

As the Raconteur describes the cavalcade that he saw "au bout du monde," the townspeople animate his story, thus rendering his image live. Art and reality blend; the "real" people of the play slip into the realm of the poem, and at this point, they completely lose their identity as townspeople. They become part of the imagery.

As the carnival precludes a traditional climax, the world of the play becomes more stylized and ritualized, reflecting the playwright's penchant for the lyrical and symbolic. Cador's anecdotes and songs as well as the Carpenter's maxim, though not lyrical in themselves, serve lyrically as elaborations on the main themes. The escaped bird of Act One and the dead bird of Act Two, the snow, the flowers in the window, and the masks function symbolically as they reflect the events of the play or the mood of the characters, and they, therefore, play a role in Crommelynck's lyricism. The themes of love and death and in particular death from disappointment in love reflect the playwright's preoccupation with lyrical themes. In
addition to Crommelynck’s lyricism, Louison and Pascal reveal their own lyrical inclinations as they nostalgically evoke images of happier seasons. All elements therefore lend themselves to the pervasive scenic poetry characteristic of Crommelynck’s theatre.
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4 Freedman, p. 2.


7 Féal, p. 317.

8 Theory of Literature, 3rd ed. (New York, 1956), p. 188.

9 Freedman, p. 168.


11 Marie, p. 73.


13 Freedman, p. 7.

LES AMANTS PUEBLS,
Love's Labor Lost

Suzanne Lilar wrote that Les Amants puerils has
great poetical charm,1 and Jacques Lemarchand called its
lyricism "...tres grand."2 In addition to the playwright's
lyrical themes--evasive love and unavoidable death,
Crommelynck's use of characters, anecdotes, events, and
staging tilts the scales in favor of poetry thus contribut-
ing to these critics' impressions. The "poetry of situa-
tion," in the words of Virginia Woolf,3 derives from the
interrelation of three love affairs which complement one
another: the love between the children, Marie-Henriette
and Walter, the past love between Cazou and Elisabeth,
and the present love between the Stranger and Elisabeth.
All three aspects resemble the love ordinarily glorified
by lyric poets: like Ronsard, the aged Cazou recalls
the beauty of past love; like Romeo and Juliet, Marie-
Henriette and Walter die young in the name of their
forbidden love. Crommelynck juxtaposes scenes of Marie-
Henriette and Walter with scenes in which Cazou speaks of
the princess and with scenes in which the Stranger speaks
to Elisabeth in order to accentuate the complementary
quality of their love affairs.

In this chapter, the theme of love will be
discussed as it relates to these three interwoven and
complementary relationships. Similarly, as the minor
characters reiterate the situation of the major characters, a study of the lyrical function of their dialogue will precede an analysis of the lyrical penchant of the protagonists and of the theme of flight and of the more dominant themes of nature and death. A discussion of the various images and leitmotifs relevant to these themes as well as of the symbolic significance of sleep and shadows follows.

Marie-Henriette divulges her love for Walter as she gently reproaches him for failing to visit her and accuses him of kissing Julia. Like Pascal, Louison, and Magdeleine, Marie-Henriette and Walter are portrayed as youthful, too childlike to suffer the terrible consequences of their love. Although they are apparently old enough to love each other, everyone in the play points out their youthfulness. Madame Mercenier commands her daughter, "Marie-Henriette, ma chérie, ne reste pas ici, va jouer." (I, 127). When Marie-Henriette meets Elisabeth, the older woman asks her how old she is and if she still plays with dolls. Marie-Henriette does indeed still play children's games; at the beginning of Act Two, she enters saying she has just returned from the dunes, "jouant à la boiteuse" (I, 153). Even her meetings with Walter, secret rendezvous between lovers, take on the allure of a child's game; she tells him, "Vite, attends-moi derrière l'estacade! Nous allons courir dans les dunes, tu me poursuivras! (...) Je ferai la morte, tu m'embrasseras pour me ressusciter" (I, 139). Whereas Walter wants her to commit suicide with
him, Marie-Henriette wants to "play dead." When he persistently asks her why she does not want to die with him, Marie-Henriette's replies are characteristically ingenuous: "Si j'étais morte, il pleurait sur moi. (...) J'aurai peut-être le courage demain." (I, 178). She suggests, "Demande à Julia, si elle veut mourir avec toi." (I, 179).

Walter exposes his own youthfulness when he says of Julia, "J'ai couru après elle et je lui ai jeté du sable dans les cheveux." (I, 129). We learn that he is not too old to be spanked by the servant for disobeying the order not to see Marie-Henriette.

It is because of her youthfulness that Marie-Henriette relies on the advice of the older people around her. As Walter awaits her at the basin for their suicide, Marie-Henriette hesitates to join him, but the adults conspire unwittingly against her. Fideline encourages her to meet Walter as planned; Elisabeth, who herself constantly flees the Stranger, repeatedly prods Marie-Henriette: "Alors, va vite le retrouver. Il ne faut pas qu'il attende." (I, 206). Later she asks, "Eh bien, mon enfant, tu ne sors pas? Walter t'attend. Il est là-bas, perdu, il a froid d'impatience..." (I, 208). "Va retrouver ton ami, qui te consolera." (I, 209). She even suggests, "Viens, je te conduirai par la main jusqu'à la porte. Viens..." (I, 210). The Stranger, too, encourages her, "Cours, Marie-Henriette, cours!" (I, 211). Even her mother, who prohibits their rendezvous, becomes angry and tells her daughter to go.
By their repetition, these commands which send Marie-Henriette to her death create a leitmotif whose dramatic power derives from the spectator's knowledge and the characters' ignorance of their true significance. Whether tragic irony or not, a repeated leitmotif is essentially a quality of lyricism by its implication that the outcome is inevitable, by the spectator's impression that he is witness to what the playwright knows already. In a drama without this lyric quality, a character would seem to have a choice, but in the lyrical mode, events are manifestly inevitable, just as in a lyric poem, in which the poet verbalizes what already is; nothing new happens in the course of his revelation.

We know from the first that love is doomed because of the parallel between Marie-Henriette and Elisabeth, a parallel which emerges right after their first meeting when the young girl says, "Je demanderai à Walter de m'appeler Elisabeth" (I, 143). In the second act, the Stranger notices their similarity when he says to Elisabeth, "La petite Marie-Henriette vous ressemble... Cui, la petite vous ressemble vraiment. Etes-vous ainsi à quinze ans?" (I, 154). Marie-Henriette notices the similarity of their appearance: "Vos cheveux sont blonds, comme les miens." (I, 173). Fideline is perhaps thinking of Elisabeth when she encourages Marie-Henriette:

Aimez-le tout de même, et vite, je vous le conseille; ça ne durera
Elisabeth sees in this young girl the child she might have had: "Si j'avais eu à moi une petite fille comme tu es, je serais peut-être moins désolée... Elle aurait gardé ma jeunesse, la mienne..." (I, 171). Just before Marie-Henriette joins Walter in suicide, Elisabeth says of her, "Elle a déjà toutes les ruses de la faiblesse; elle me ressemble." (I, 209). As Elisabeth regrets her age, she offers Marie-Henriette the rings that will no longer fit her fingers. This legacy from the older woman symbolically confirms their bond. Seen expressionistically as a parallel of Elisabeth, Marie-Henriette presents a literal image of the older woman, similarly disillusioned in love. As Crommelynck reviews love from diverse angles, he shows it always as unhappy, a subjective rendering of his lyrical theme.

Parallel to the love story of Marie-Henriette and Walter and interwoven with it, the past experience of Cazou and Elisabeth is recreated for the spectator by the Stranger, who, as a child, witnessed the two lovers. In the Stranger's memory and in his imagination, love appears idyllic. He recounts to Cazou his childhood impression:

On m'a montré la trace de vos pas sur le flanc des montagnes de neige au-dessus des nuages et sur la grève, au long des quatre mers. "La Princesse et Cazou!" et, une fois, votre chiffre creuse dans l'écorce, au coeur
d'une forêt presque inconnue: si bien que toutes les ombres sur la terre étaient pour moi comme l'ombre de votre amour!... (I, 221)

Elisabeth notices his proclivity for images when she tells him, "Je ne suis qu'une image entre toutes, enfant qui jouez avec des images!" (I, 184). He envisions the future as well as the past:

Nous descendrons sur la plage, dans la poudre de coquillages. Nous y laisserons la trace de nos pas, et ceux qui viendront après diront: "Ils marchaient l'un contre l'autre serrés, ici ils se sont arrêtés, là ils ont couru comme des enfants!" (I, 155)

Like a lyric poet, the Stranger projects himself into the future and looks nostalgically at the present as if it were the past. The events of the play, however, show that the future, like the present, is not as hospitable to love as the lyricist's images imply. The Stranger's vision of what "will be" contrasts sharply with what he finds the future to "be." Since love appears happy only in the images evoked by the Stranger, and since he is subsequently disillusioned by reality, Crommelynck's lyrical interpretation of love can only be perceived as pessimistic.

Cazou's experience reiterates this theme; he, too, sees himself in the past: "Il a été aimé, le baron Cazou! Eh! ehl! Elisabeth, la princesse de Grolingen, la princesse l'aimait, quand il était vivant!" (I, 135). When importuned by Fideline, he cannot even remember clearly who Elisabeth is, and when Elisabeth wants
reassurance of his identity, he must rely on an official document: "Ah, oui, oui, oui, oui, oui, Cazou. J'ai des papiers d'identité" (I, 171). Just as Cazou is about to be carried off by the police, he recognizes Elisabeth, only to be rejected by her. Similarly, the Stranger foregoes his pursuit of her when he learns her identity. Even the love of Marie-Henriette and Walter is not permitted to endure until the end of their short lives: "Ils se sont battus, dans le fond, écorchés, mordus au moment de mourir. Ils ne s'aimaient déjà plus..." (I, 228).

In the three cases, love not only fails; it ends in repulsion.

As Crommelynck interweaves these three aspects of the same theme, he elaborates on love, repeating and unifying its examples through an implied correspondence of the three couples. His method is more nearly lyric than dramatic in that there is little sequence of events; the love affairs do not lead consecutively one to another but reflect the instantaneous action of the lyric. As the characters' experiences mirror one another, the theme repeats itself with varying modulations. The very coincidence of these particular people all being at the same place at the same time and at a time when events culminate reflects the circumscribed, stylized world of the artful, of a world prearranged, with the prerogative of the lyricist, in patterns designed to demonstrate his subjective perception.
The play's lyricism derives not only from the playwright's arrangement but from the characters' inclinations for suggestive statements and mystical monologues. Like the Stranger, Elisabeth looks to the past:

"Quand j'étais petite, toute petite, j'étais souvent mélancolique. Rien pourtant ne me manquait de ce qu'on peut donner ou recevoir, rien. J'attendais quelque chose de très doux, qui n'est pas venu...quoi?

Je l'attendais du soleil, des arbres et de l'ombre et des oiseaux, de ce qu'on aime. Je croyais le monde inachevé. Plus il faisait beau, plus c'était fête et plus je soupirais. Il ne venait rien de meilleur, hélas!

Ensuite je me désolais parce que tout est justement trop fini sur la terre... Depuis, mes bonheurs sont toujours mêlés de regrets sans souvenirs...

(I, 206-207)

Such monologues recreate inner speech, lyrical in its imaginative and emotional qualities. When Elisabeth describes a scene from nature, we not only see the scene, but we smell the rain in the dust and hear the dry leaf rolling:

"Il y avait des pluies tièdes dans la poussière, des rues noires couvertes de ciel, et des lanternes toutes seules, et une rose sur le gazon, qui éclairait...Je me rappelle. L'ombre des branches à terre, une feuille sèche qui roulait...Je me rappelle...et des petits nuages, l'un après l'autre, qui s'en allaient lentement, avec mon coeur.

(I, 173-174)

Like a refrain, "Je me rappelle" intersperses her evocation of the past, and her elliptical phrases, short on verbs, create a vivid picture of a literal scene, in which, Elisabeth, like a lyric poet, metaphorically
connects it to her own situation. Even when her memory focuses more precisely, her literal imagery evokes a melancholic mood: "Un jour un mendiant m'a offert des fleurs qu'il avait achetées pour moi!...Une fois, je me suis baignée nue dans la mer!" (I, 208). Such memories figure as imagery by the spontaneity with which Elisabeth recounts them as well as by their mute implications.

Marie-Henriette similarly infuses the play with her own mystical lyricism. She recites,

"Les arbres sans racine se nourrissaient de ciel, et portés dans l'air par leurs fruits légers, ils allaient de royaume en royaume, inventer des paysages..." (...) "Les rivières, afin de connaître toutes les choses, changeaient chaque jour de chemin..." (...) "et comme leurs eaux avaient de la mémoire, rien qu'à les regarder couler dans le gazon..." (...) "on apprenait toutes les merveilles du monde..." (I, 200)

Perhaps the most overtly lyrical passages in the play, however, belong to the Stranger. He frequently speaks to Elisabeth in mature, lyrical prose, which in its form as well as in its subject matter resembles poetry. In addition to the imagery that he evokes, his repetition of certain phrases displays a lyrical tendency: "Depuis une heure, depuis cette promesse, le monde où je t'aime est plein d'enchantement!" (I, 182). Crommelynck even permits him to use alliteration: "Tantôt ton image m'a poursuivi jusqu'ici, légèrement, dans l'air et sur l'eau." (I, 182). In the following quotation, the "voyelles
graves" and especially the nasal sounds reflect the languid state of the Stranger: "...entre les nuages dont l'ombre lente caresse le dos de la mer et sous les feuilles des jeunes peupliers qui tremblaient, comme tu trembles contre moi..." (I, 182).

Although most of the Stranger's imagery appeals to the visual sense, he also evokes images of taste and smell: "Il vient de toi un parfum plus brûlant que le goût des amandes amères!" (I, 156). "...Tes bras ont l'odeur et la douceur d'une fourrure!" (I, 160). "Tes cheveux ont une senteur pénétrante d'écorce et de résine..." (I, 218). His metaphors take other forms: "...Le souvenir de vous me prend comme un lasso..." (I, 159). "Tu rôdes dans mon sommeil comme une danseuse impudique " (I, 161). "Ce désir est en moi comme les os dans ma chair " (I, 161).

In addition to the lyricism inherent in these three main characters and in Crommelynck's arrangement of parallel relationships between sets of lovers, minor characters function lyrically as their dialogue counterparts the theme of love. Like the protagonists, the servants Fideline and Zulma seem totally obsessed with love, or, in their case, sexuality. As their conversation mirrors that of the major characters, it elaborates the theme of love, and the servants, losing their identity as individuals, become a tool of the playwright's lyrical technique. The boisterous and often bawdy scenes of the
servants fall fast upon poignant conversations between lovers, making grotesque caricatures of what has preceded. Fideline's concept of the Stranger's erotic desires is that he intends to have sexual intercourse with Zulma; the ensuing humor is a far cry from the poetic visions the Stranger has in mind. Fideline gives her interpretation of his words:

Il inventait des mots impossibles, 
et ci et là, pour expliquer qu'il veut 
bêtement coucher avec elle! Comme 
s'ils allaient faire un enfant plus 
haut que la ceinture! (I, 164)

The Stranger's lyrical elans of love are replaced by the servants' humorous references to prostitution: "Si elle a caché quelque chose sous sa jupe, tous les garçons du voisinage sauront qu'elle est voleuse!" (I, 165). As soon as Elisabeth and the Stranger leave the room, various neighbor women enter to discuss their love affair. Their gossip reflects a much more earthy attitude towards love. For them there is no mystery about love as there is for the protagonists; for them it is simply a question of sexual intercourse, which they regard as a rather humorous act.

In the third act, Fideline goes to live with Cazou so he will remember her in his will. Once again the subject is akin to love, but it is not the kind celebrated by the Stranger or other lyricists; it is a practical arrangement, even a fearful one because of the viciousness Fideline has already demonstrated as she torments Cazou.
about his cane:

Fideline: Vous l'aurez aujourd'hui,
tout de suite même, si vous me dites
qui est cette femme!

Cazou: Ah! tout de suite? ...

Quelle femme?

Fideline: Elisabeth! Elisabeth!

Vous savez bien?

Cazou: Non, non, je ne sais pas.
(...) J'ai tout oublié, voilà...J'ai
été malade, n'est-ce pas? (....)
Fideline: (...) Elisabeth, Elisa-
beth? E-li-sa, souvenez-vous: la prin-
cesse, vous disiez?

Cazou: Ah! oui, oui, oui, oui, oui,
la princesse...On en parlait...

Fideline: Où? Quand?

Cazou: Où? Quand?...Je ne sais plus
rien, plus rien...(...).

Fideline: Vous avez été son amant,
dites? (....)

Cazou: Rendez-moi...

Fideline: Son amant, n'est-ce pas,
son amant? (....)

Cazou: Je vous prie, Fideline (...).

(I, 168)

In her relentless tyranny, Fideline announces the grotesque
exaggeration of expressionism. Even her name, reminiscent
of "feline," characterizes her as a predatory animal. As
she demonstrates yet another aspect of the male-female
relationship, she functions lyrically as a variation on
the theme of love. Her repeated pronouncements on the
subject reflect a preoccupation as obsessive as that of
the protagonists; she tells Zulma, "Et vous bonne, c'est
certain! bonne: les jambes ouvertes comme les bras du
bon Dieu!" (I, 196). Even her anecdotes about other
people verbalize an aspect of the theme of love. Her story
about Christine and the sailor is but an echo of the other
love affairs in the play; the sailor, returning too late,
was no longer the man Christine loved. Zulma, too, recounts an incident varying on this theme; having gone to look for Marie-Henriette, she returns full of excitement about the "trois diables [qui] me bousculaient pour m'entraîner à côté du clair de lune." (I, 218).

Whereas the servants and the townswomen usually talk in terms of sex, the main characters speak of love. Crommelynck employs thus Molière's device by which the conversations of the servants echo those of their masters, but on another scale. Their subject matter is similar, but their attitude towards it and their anecdotes on the subject are more commonplace, sometimes even vulgar. Ralph Freedman calls such a device lyrical in that the minor characters exemplify a symbolic reciprocity with their prototypes, the major characters. Their dialogue, in particular their anecdotes, serves as "récits en abîme," mirroring the predicament of the protagonists. By reiterating the main theme in this way, Crommelynck foregoes dramatic action, which he replaces with a network of images, elaborating and counterpointing the main theme.

Closely allied to the theme of love is the theme of flight. The setting itself, a seaside home for vacationing paying guests, suits the transitory nature of this period of the characters' lives. Elisabeth frequently refers to leaving and when saying good-bye to Marie-Henriette, she says, "Hélas il me faut fuir encore. Fuir quoi?" (I, 175). Throughout the play, the Stranger
remains "l'Etranger" for her, as well as for all the other characters, and Elisabeth herself is frequently referred to as "l'Etrangère." She has so successfully eluded his pursuit that he has never seen her hands without gloves nor her face unveiled. As he follows her from city to city, their flight takes on the air of a mythological voyage:

L'Etrangère: Pendant trois mois, sans répit, vous m'avez chassée, de Salerne où je m'endormais, de Rome où j'étais si tranquille....
L'Etranger: Oui.
L'Etrangère: de Genève, de Vienne, sans répit.
L'Etranger: Oui.
L'Etrangère: d'Ostende, où j'avais peur déjà....
L'Etranger: Oui, oui!
L'Etrangère: Chassée et poursuivie!
(I, 158)

The future promises more of the same, as he evidently intends to follow her to the grave. She says,

Demain? Oh! Oui, demain je partirai! J'irai, j'irai...des départs, des signaux,...en vain, pas d'arrêt, nulle part! j'irai comme si je ne pouvais trouver ma tombe étroite sur la vaste terre! (I, 187)

He replies, "Moi je serai ton seul tombeau." (I, 187).

Although Elisabeth searches peace and tranquility, it is Marie-Henriette, her counterpart, who finds it in death, the final resort for those who wish to evade. On another level, other characters mirror this lyrical theme; Cazou is forced to leave the house, and in the last act, Fideline departs, screaming, "Crevez tous!" (I, 199).
At the end of the play; all of the major characters are set free: Marie-Henriette and Walter are dead, Cazou goes away to be tended by Fideline, and both Elisabeth and the Stranger are liberated from their flight when he discovers her identity.

These various characters function lyrically, not only by their allusions to flight, but also by the reciprocity of their roles. At the play's end, all of the major characters vacate the premises. The reiteration of the theme is a lyrical quality in itself.

Because of the continual evocation of the sea where Marie-Henriette and Walter will drown, the themes of nature and of death blend. As the curtain rises on each act, the bay window overlooking the sea becomes the focal point in front of which the characters act out the play. References to the view from the window recur with rhythmic frequency, and the season and time of day evident through this window correspond to the events of the play. As Act One begins, the window reveals a glaring gulf of cold air; the season as well as the slipcovers on the furniture reflect a long period of dormancy that is coming to an end as Fideline furiously uncovers the furnishings, and the room, according to stage instructions, "s'anime et s'éclaire" (I, 122). Marie-Henriette measures the day according to the tides visible from the window as is evident in her reproach to Walter, "Je t'attends dans cette chambre depuis ce matin...Tu avais promis...'Je serai là
avant la marée montante' " (I, 128). In Act Two, the window opens onto a sunny, blue sky; it is the height of the season, and the parallel love affairs of Elisabeth and Marie-Henriette enliven the house. The window looks out into the night in Act Three, which witnesses the deaths of Marie-Henriette and Walter and the dissolution of love for the Stranger and Elisabeth.

Initially, it is Fideline and Zulma who broach the subject of death. As the play begins, Fideline is describing the burial of Maria-la-Sotte: "Chaque fois que les porteurs faisaient sauter le corps dans sa boîte, il criait comme une femme en couches: 'Hai ne lui faites pas mal!' " (I, 119-120). Just as she interprets the theme of love in terms of erotic sexuality, Fideline describes burial rather than death: "Et il a arraché lui-même les racines de la fosse, parce que les racines mangent tout " (I, 120). Though literal, her description evokes nonetheless an image of death, which if not lyrical by the peripient's attitude, possesses a lyrical quality in that it serves as a motif of the central theme, a motif reiterated by both servants.

Disgusted with the old servant Quasiment, Zulma and Fideline soon take up the subject of another death: "Magda, qui avait quinze ans, Magda, qui était si belle. Magda est morte et celle-là vivra éternellement!" (I, 122). Since Magda died at Marie-Henriette's age, the mention of her death acts as a leitmotif which culminates
in Marie-Henriette's suicide. In the theatre of Crommelynck, characters repeatedly report experiences and anecdotes which reflect the action of the play and predict its outcome. Such "récits en abîme" are a form of imagery, which varies and expands the theme, reaching a point of greatest intensity as the event thus predicted manifests itself.

The servants' regret that Magda is dead whereas the old Quasiment still lives could even prefigure a similar regret at the death of Marie-Henriette and the survival of the aging Elisabeth and Cazou. The baron inadvertently suggests a comparison of Elisabeth to Quasiment who "vivra éternellement" when he tells the Stranger his former lover could not be dead: "C'était une femme immortelle!" (I, 223). Similarly, a comparison of Cazou and Quasiment is inevitable. In the first place, their names sound alike, and, on a much more indicative level, they resemble each other in that their faculties are failing and in that they are despised because of their age. Fideline confirms their similarity when she says of Cazou, "On l'enfermera dans un hospice, il paraît. Dans une île, oui, dans une île, avec madame Quasiment." (I, 126).

Such similarity among the characters can be interpreted lyrically, according to Ralph Freedman, who, in his analysis of Les Faux-Monnateurs, states that the use of each important character as a prototype for the minor characters is a lyrical device: as the characters
exemplify a symbolic reciprocity of types, they function as images, and, compounded, they form a "cluster of images" perceived, in the case of a play, by the spectator. As a figure or type of Cazou, Quasiment's only function is lyrical; she serves no dramatic purpose, plays no part in the development of the action.

Her dialogue does, however, evoke images of death and even of drowning. As she reminisces about Venice, she says, "L'eau fait mourir d'amour, et quand le vent passe, la ville chante, on m'a dit..." (I, 121). Her statement, "J'irai tout de suite me jeter dans le canal," evokes an image which will reach the point of greatest intensity in the joint suicide by drowning of Marie-Henriette and Walter.

Marie-Henriette herself contributes to the intensifying images of her death as she foresees the discovery of her body:

Mon Dieu! mon Dieu, quel malheur!
Comment la sortir de l'eau?
Avec ce crochet vous la déchirez!
Mais on ne saigne plus...Est-elle mouillée!
...et si gonflée qu'elle a l'air de rire.
Quelqu'un la reconnaît?
Oui, oui, la petite pierre de sa bague!
Elle a beaucoup changé!
(I, 201-202).

References to nature throughout the play also evoke impending death. Madame Mercenier alerts us to the dangerous weather: "Zulma, ma fille, allez au port..." (Les
pêcheurs ne sont pas partis cette nuit, vous le savez, à cause de l'orage. Quel temps!..." (I, 126). Her words are reiterated in varying forms by other characters who feel endangered by the weather. In the second act, Cazou complains of the wind, "Ah! oui, oui, oui, oui, oui... tombé... C'est le vent, sur la digue, qui m'a renversé... Il est fort aujourd'hui, le vent!" (I, 167-168). In another part of the play, he refers to the storm of the previous night:

Je suis resté assis sur mon lit, sans dormir, toute la nuit... Il y avait du tonnerre et du vent et de la pluie, derrière les fenêtres. (I, 132-133)

He associates the storm with death when he says,

Personne dans la maison n'aurait entendu appeler au secours, n'est-il pas vrai? Et je pensais: "Fideline va venir m'assassiner et prendre mon argent." (I, 133).

Elisabeth, too, notices nature's portents:

"L'air est chargé d'orage. Je suis suffoquée, parfois, simplement... Vous ne sentez pas l'odeur acre du vent?" (I, 156-157). Although the weather frightens her, Elisabeth fears nature in a more general sense: "Je crains la lumière, et le vent, et la pluie qui gâteraient mon fard!" (I, 173). Her words are but a euphemistic metaphor by which she avoids stating her real fear: aging and dying.

Like the others, the Stranger evokes images of the worrisome sea:

Depuis un mois, j'entends chaque
nuit la mer qui monte et qui descend sur le sable. Le bruit de toutes les vagues emplit ma chambre, chaque nuit. Je n'ai plus de sommeil...(I, 157).

At the beginning of Act Two, Marie-Henriette notices that nature is tense: "L'air est serré comme du sable" (I, 153), and she ironically adds later, "Mais je me ferai mourir de chagrin." (I, 154). When Walter calls her away from Elisabeth, she remarks, "Oh comme la mer est haute, derrière toil" (I, 175). Walter, who has been sitting near the water looking for a siren, describes his experience: "Oui, la mer était plus haute que moi, gonflée...Et celle que j'ai vue approchait, approchait!" (I, 176-177). His remark that he has heard a siren—"ou c'est le vent"—which called him to the water indicates nature's conspiracy in his death.

Allusions crystallize in Act Three as voices calling through the open window invite Marie-Henriette to the nocturnal ocean. "Jusqu'au fanal!...Ohé, je descends sur le sable! Le bord de la mer est en feu!" (I, 193). "Allons dans les vagues!" (I, 191). As Marie-Henriette muses and Fideline announces her departure, the voices continue like a refrain: "À la mer! À la mer! Dans les dunes!" (I, 195). They intersperse Fideline and Zulma's conversation: "Ho! ho! Ici!...La mer monte!" (I, 196). While Marie-Henriette toys with Walter's proposal, the voices bear more and more directly on her suicide; they command, "Viens! viens ici!" (I, 199). As she protests,
they continue, "Au bassin! au bassin!" (I, 200). These invitations and commands function both lyrically and dramatically. Dramatically, they appeal directly to Marie-Henriette, who becomes compelled to obey the imperatives, notably in the singular. Lyrically, they recur like a leitmotif reiterated by an anonymous chorus, and, in addition, they are exterior manifestations of a voice within her, similar to Walter's "siren."

Although it is Marie-Henriette who dies, the Stranger projects images of Elisabeth's death:

J'enfermerai si bien ton image,
demain que je serai la robe de ta jeunesse nue. Morte, tu ne seras pas morte. Et si je vais au cimetière, j'irai par un matin de mai. Gai comme un meunier, la tête haute, le cou nu et les mains aux poches, je sifflerai desairs entre mes dents et les gens diront que je n'ai pas de coeur! (....)
Mais je grimperai comme un gamin dans un pommier en fleur. J'arracherai une branche souple, j'en fouetterai l'air en marchant et là-bas je te l'offrirai.
Et je dirai: "je suis son écharpe, ses bagues, ses sandales, son rire et les rêves de son long sommeil." (I, 188)

Once again the Stranger, like a lyric poet, projects himself into the future and looks around nostalgically. Other characters create images of death by describing one another and by reporting what they actually see. Although the Stranger, Elisabeth, and Marie-Henriette express themselves more lyrically, the word pictures of the minor characters figure nonetheless among the poetic motifs of the play. Fideline, for example, predicts for Cazou, "Ils
te laisseront tout nu dans le froid, sur ton lit, comme
l'enfant de Charlotte qui est mort du choléra, entends-
tu?" (I, 134). She says of him, "Malgré ma méchanceté,
il attendra le dernier jour pour mourir!" (I, 199).
Cazou even envisions his own death: "Hai! il tombera, un
jour. Hai! il tombera! (...) Sa tête cassera comme un œuf,
sur la dernière marche de l'escalier!" (I, 130). Later
when the police try to take him away, he screams, "Il veut
mourir en prison." (I, 146). His continual references to
himself in the third person create the illusion that he is
already dead. Marie-Henriette, also, envisions her own
death:

Mais je pense que je pourrais...
Parfois la mer ressemble à un marbre
froid: je pourrais alors, si j'étais
pieds nus. Sinon, l'eau entrerait dans
mes souliers et me tirerait!" (I, 194)

Just as references to death and water portend
the drowning of Marie-Henriette and Walter, references to
fatigue and sleep recur with greater and greater frequency
as the play progresses. Such references act as a leitmotif,
elaborating on the theme of death. The Stranger calls
Elisabeth's death "son long sommeil!" (I, 188), and when
Walter invites Marie-Henriette to join him at the basin,
she calls, "Non! J'ai sommeil, mais pas jusqu'à mourir...
Je préfère dormir dans ma chambre aujourd'hui." (I, 200).
The monotonous tone of voice with which she repeats Wal-
ter's plea, "Mourir avec moi, tu dois!" (I, 200) lulls
her into a near hypnotic state. As she recalls his words,
she intersperses references to sleep: "Dors-tu? (...) Dors, dors, dors bien. (...) Oh! tu n'es pas endormi, méchant garçon." (I, 200-201). She recognizes that if she can only avoid Walter this night, she will be safe, as if they could not die during the day: "Demain il y aura du soleil et il ne sera plus triste! Il m'aimera..." (I, 210).

In the last act, Elisabeth repeatedly mentions her fatigue: "Oh! que je suis fatiguée, mon Dieu! (I, 207). "J'ai besoin de repos;" "je suis surmenée..." (I, 216). "J'ai besoin de sommeil" (I, 214). At the Stranger's request that she let down her hair, Elisabeth replies, "Soit raisonnable, je suis sans force aucune..." (I, 216), and, as she leaves him, she bids him close his eyes and says, "Dors, dors bien!" (I, 218). The Stranger notices that the baron, too, is tired: "Vous êtes fatigué," he says, and the baron answers, "Oh! oui, terriblement!" (I, 220). The major characters' reiteration of their desire for sleep is a leitmotif of increasing intensity that reaches its culmination in the death of Marie-Henriette and Walter. As symbols of impending death, sleep and fatigue function as lyrical themes.

As references to sleep find realization in the action of the drama, repeated allusions to shadows create a leitmotif often reflected in the appearance of the scene itself. Cazou initiates this verbal imagery when he says of himself, "Il n'a plus rien, plus rien à lui, que son ombre à terre... Ici, ici, ombre de moi, chien fidèle! A
droite, à gauche, tourne, saute, cours, va, noir Médor..." (I, 172). The Stranger speaks of "les dunes sans ombre" (I, 182) and mentions Quasiment whom they have forgotten "dans l'ombre." (I, 186). In Act Three, Elisabeth recognizes Cazou by his shadow, and he continues to address his shadow as if it were a familiar dog. Zulma says of Elisabeth, "Elle s'est envelopée comme une ombre" (I, 218), and she says of Marie-Henriette, "Elle est avec Walter dans un creux d'ombre." (I, 215). When Elisabeth leaves the Stranger, she says, "Je n'oublierai rien de ce jour, aucun reflet, nulle ombre, pas un soupir" (I, 218), and the Stranger tells Cazou, "...Toutes les ombres sur la terre étaient pour moi comme l'ombre de votre amour!" (I, 221). It is in the dialogue of Marie-Henriette that this imagery crystallizes:

Walter, comme ton ombre est noire...
et longue, oh! longue! jusqu'à la dernière maison...On dirait qu'elle t'attache à la fenêtre en or, là-bas...Oui, oui, si tu veux t'esancer dans l'eau elle te retiendra! (I, 194)

Whereas nearly all of the characters refer uncommonly often to shadows, both Marie-Henriette and Cazou consider them as a means of survival, as if their souls were contained in these insubstantial reflections of themselves. Such a view of life demonstrates a lyrical concern with the intangible, mysterious nature of existence.

These casual references to shadows begun in Act Two reach a crescendo in the third act as day falls and the
room, with its contrasting luminous and dark corners, produces a chiaroscuro effect in a visualization of the characters' verbal images. The concentration of light on a central figure or on certain segments of the stage is part of the essential structure of expressionist drama; the theatricality of such scenes reflects the expressionist's desire to realize in scene the vision of the poet. With this non-verbal device, Crommelynck denies the mundan reality of the setting and creates a scene reflecting the symbolic and spiritual content of the drama. Although the technique is expressionistic, the dark mood of inescapable fate thus created belongs to the domain of symbolism.

Throughout the play, silent characters witness scenes from behind doors or within corners which fall increasingly into shadows as the play progresses. In the first act, Marie-Henriette and Walter first observe Cazou and later watch Zulma and Fideline. Elisabeth subsequently witnesses the fracas between Cazou and the police. In Act Two, Fideline, who is behind the door, listens as the Stranger expresses his love for Elisabeth and shortly thereafter reviews the scene both for the spectator and for the neighbor women, a means by which Crommelynck emphasises the characters' role as observers of events which remain in comprehensible and mysterious for them.

In this same act, Marie-Henriette enters the room and silently observes the confrontation of Cazou and Elisabeth, and Quasiment is present during the meetings of
both Marie-Henriette and Walter and Elisabeth and the Stranger. We learn that Fideline has observed from the kitchen the scene in which Elisabeth confides in Marie-Henriette, and later she demands that the young girl divulge the subject of their conversation. In Act Three, Marie-Henriette observes a scene in which the Stranger and Elisabeth talk, and after her departure, Elisabeth notices that Cazou is wandering about nearby. Quasiment's last words indicate that she has been aware of the presence of various women in the room when she says, "Mais quand même j'ai su que vous étiez là parce que le vent a bougé." (I, 230). In the play's last lines, Quasiment refers to the characters' continual and mutual observation of one another. Her implicit comparison of dialogue to the movement of wind sums up the playwright's scenic images in which characters peer incomprehensibly at one another from the shadows, which indicate their role as observers unable to change or control events. As Crommelynck unites scenic with verbal imagery, he exploits the prerogative of the lyrical dramatist: he uses whatever scene, characterization, event, or dialogue that will render his personal perception of the world. The creation of a brooding mood supplants dramatic action and reflects his lyrical subjectivity.

The lyricism of the play evolves on two planes: Marie-Henriette, Elisabeth, and the Stranger, in their gift for imagery, in their evocation of the theme of
evasion, and in their preoccupation with love, demonstrate a lyrical penchant of their own. On another plane, the play emits a lyricism that can be ascribed to the playwright himself: Crommelynck's structure in which the situations of the main characters reflect one another, in which the characters themselves, in particular Marie-Henriette and Elisabeth, mirror each other, his arrangement of dialogue in which characters create leitmotifs relevant to the central themes, and his use of the dialogue of minor characters as a counterpoint to the dialogue of the protagonists are lyrical devices. Crommelynck's symbolic use of nature, sleep, and shadows provides a verbal as well as a scenic lyricism, characteristic of both the symbolist and the expressionist theatre. Finally, as the playwright integrates all these elements, he creates a world far removed from the mundane setting apparent at the play's beginning; he externalizes the characters' inner world, the traditional domain of the lyric poet.
REFERENCES


4 Freedman, p. 168.

5 Freedman, pp. 168-180.

LE COCU MAGNIFIQUE,
Dreams Come True.

André Berger writes of Crommelynck,

Avec Le Cuc, l’auteur renonce au symbolism obscour et à l’impressionisme reticent pour adopter une nouvelle maniere qui restera sienne désormais, inimitable, mais qu’il raffermira à chacune de ses creations.¹

Crommelynck’s "new manner" owes a debt to expressionism, as the critics Paul Hadermann and Jean Weisgerber point out. They elaborate,

Crommelynck’s plays reach the pathetic or the delirious by means of the disproportionate enhancement of the banal or ridiculous and by means of the confrontation of an impossible desire for purity with the worst of vulgarities.²

One of Crommelynck’s characters calls their world "le monde à l’envers;" it is a fitting epithet for the theme of love in Le Cuc magnifique. "What Expressionist art seeks to render visible (...) are soul states and the violent emotions welling up from the innermost recesses of the subconscious."³ The "inside out" world of the play is a staging of Bruno’s soul state. Whereas both poetry and ordinary language make frequent use of expressions such as "fou d’amour," "aimer jusqu’à la folie," "épris" and "pris par l’amour," in Le Cuc magnifique, Crommelynck interprets these figures of speech literally. Bruno’s extreme and unfounded jealousy of his wife prods him to force her to have sexual intercourse with quite literally every man in

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town; his logic being, "Pour ne plus douter de ta fidélité, que je sois certain de ton infidélité" (I, 70). Erotic and even sadistic overtones turn the theme of love into an example of lyricism "à l'envers;" yet lyrical passages in celebration of love fill the play.

It is the purpose of this study to focus on the lyrical themes of love and death and to show how they are presented "à l'envers." A brief look at the lyrical themes of nature and the past will precede an analysis of Crommelynck's lyrical techniques.

As the play begins, Stella and Bruno, husband and wife, are very much in love with each other. The obsession with sexuality, which will replace lyrical love as the main theme, appears discreetly when Stella says, "J'ai dormi seule." (I, l4). These words evolve into a leitmotif re-iterated in varying forms by several other characters. Upon his arrival, the Cowherd immediately asks Stella, "Tu as couché seule?" (I, 13), a question repeated soon after by the Count, who says, "Tu as dormi seule, pour la première fois?" (I, 23). In the second act, Bruno asks his wife, "Où es-tu allée, cette nuit?", and she replies, "J'ai dormi contre vous, mon ami." (I, 56). Crommelynck insists in this manner on the physical aspect of Stella's relationship with Bruno.

Whereas Stella makes such comments with naïveté, the male characters demonstrate an erotic interest in her. Her childlike innocence contrasts sharply with the designs
of the men around her. The omnipresent nurse accentuates the youthful, even infantile, quality of Stella: she comforts and cuddles her, and near the end of the play, she invites Stella to sleep in her room as she did when she was a little girl. Stella calls her "Mémé," just as she did as a child, and when the Cowherd attempts to kidnap Stella, the Nurse comforts her in the way one would talk to a little girl: "C'est ma faute, ma propre faute. Je t'ai abandonnée, ma tourterelle!" (I, 21). Stella, too, thinks of herself as a child; in Act Two, she reports her dream in which she saw herself "en petite culotte" (I, 56). When the Burgomaster calls Bruno and Pétrus "gamins," he reveals the general attitude toward the entire ménage, and even Bruno recognizes that they generally act like children when he finally admonishes, "Stella, parlons en grandes personnes" (I, 69).

The constant references to their common childhood and the childlike code in which Bruno and Stella often communicate re-enforces this aspect. When he returns home, Bruno calls, "Stellou--oum," and Stella answers, "Oh!...le no--oo à m'am'--l" (I, 25). It sounds as if they still use the babytalk of their infancy. When Cornélie says she has seen Bruno, Stella bombards her with questions like a young girl excited about her first love: "Et tu l'as vu? (Bonjour Cornélie.) Et tu l'as vu, là, debout! Etait-il gai? T'a-t-il parlé de moi?" (I, 15). Crommelynck characterizes Stella as a young girl, a child even, and it
is partially because we see her as such that the sexual desires for her appear more concupiscent than they would if she were portrayed as a mature woman.

Because of this repeated imagery of Stella, when Bruno insists that Pétrus have sexual intercourse with her, we see him as a child forcing his companions to play his game, which is repugnant to them. Bruno continues to set the scene in this manner. At the beginning of the third act, the men from the village are lined up along the wall like children, and Bruno's first words are "Enfantillages! Enfantillages!" (I, 83). He admonishes them to be patient: "Chacun aura son tour!" (I, 34), as if it were a question of a children's game, and the men echo with childish glee, "Toi et moi! Moi et toi! Chacun aura son tour! Tous l'auront! Ceux qui ne sont pas mules!" (I, 84). As they persist in this attitude, their fornication becomes a game: "Adieu...Moi, je joue mon tour au bouchon!...Oui, oui, sur le parvis...Adieu! Aux dés, à pile ou face!... Ah! Ah! aux boules!" (I, 85). Bruno himself says, "Tout ce manège de Stella (...) n'est qu'un jeu (...)." (I, 85).

Even when the enraged townswomen threaten Stella's life, her nurse talks to her as if it were a question of a schoolgirl's quarrel: "Oh! mignonne, sont-elles endiableées? On ne peut donc faire tranquillement son bonheur. N'aie pas peur, petite fée, je te protégerai..." (I, 91-92).

Throughout the play, Crommelynck portrays Stella as a child victimized by other children. The lyrical love
expressed by both Stella and Bruno at the first of the play gives way to the inverse aspect of love: sadistic eroticism, perversity, and rape.

The Cowherd is the first character to set the libidinous tone, which becomes more intense as the play progresses. If he had known Stella was alone the previous night, he would have taken her with him to his hillside. "J'y ai passé la nuit, avec mes bêtes" (I, 18). The reference to spending the night with his animals evokes an erotic image, which, though totally lost on Stella, remains in the spectator's mind. Since the Cowherd persists in alternating references to sleeping with Stella with images of living with his animals, sexual imagery dominates the love he says he feels for Stella. He soon compares her to a pregnant sheep and wants to lift her: "Pèses-tu bien le poids d'une brebis pleine? Je veux essayer" (I, 20). When she objects, the Cowherd says that he and Bruno will fight for her like two rams: "Nous nous battrons comme des boucs lui et moi. Le plus mauvais te gardera" (I, 20). Crommelynck's persistent use of such verbal pictures provokes images more closely akin to sodomy than to lovemaking.

As soon as the Cowherd leaves, the Count appears, and once again the only subject of discussion is love; Stella talks of Bruno as the Count tries to seduce her. Parallel to the scene with the Cowherd, this scene, by its mechanical repetition, functions as a lyrical device. Dramatic progression from scene to scene is replaced by
repetition and intensification of scenic images elaborating the same theme. Such images culminate as Bruno hands over Stella to the males of the village; his act does not represent a logical conclusion to previous action but rather the point of greatest intensity of the erotic imagery.

Just as with the Cowherd, Stella replies to the Count's advances naively as if she does not understand his implications, but she is forced to awareness when he insists on describing her breast. His interest in her appears all the more concupiscent when he describes the manner in which she sleeps: "Si souple es-tu, Stella, que tu mords chaque matin, comme un enfant, le pouce de ton pied" (I, 24). The Count, too, sees her as a child, but, far from wanting to protect her as does the Nurse, he wants to take advantage of her vulnerability. Like the Cowherd, the Count elicits animalistic imagery. Stella calls him "loup garou" and proceeds to mention his "dents blanches." "Va dans la forêt, vas-y chaque matin, jusqu'à ce que Bruno t'y prenne au piège comme une mauvaise bête ..." she tells him. As he leaves on his horse, Stella shouts after him, "Chacal! Hiboul! Renard!" (I, 24-25).

No sooner is the Count gone than an unidentified man appears at the window. The arrival of a third man in pursuit of Stella lyrically multiplies the erotic imagery of the main theme. Since the spectator does not know that this man is Bruno, the love talk between him and Stella
is not devoid of seemingly illicit allusions. His question "Le mari n'est pas là?" (I, 26) makes him appear as another seductor. When we discover that this man is Stella's husband, we see the action of the scene as a game, which prefigures their games of the last act, when Bruno foregoes suppression and gives over completely to the outrageous demands of his subconscious.

Normal restraints first break down as Bruno tries to draw the Burgomaster's attention to Stella's attributes. Throughout his visit, Bruno turns the conversation to Stella and persists in giving a glorifying description of her body, in particular of her breast. Since the Count has already given a similar description, Crommelynck is preparing us for the scene in which Bruno suddenly bares the breast of Stella for Pétrus's admiration. After showing Pétrus Stella's legs, Bruno insists, "Ton sein, ton petit sein comme une perle gonflée!" (I, 40). Despite the protestations of both Pétrus and Stella, Bruno continues, "Ton sein, ton petit sein sans péché, ton petit sein, si vite ému." (I, 41). In a burst of enthusiasm he uncovers her breast for Pétrus to see, and it is at this moment that his love for Stella takes a violent turn into jealousy as he slaps Pétrus for seeming to show interest. Bruno's lack of restraint, his violence, and his unmotivated and unfounded actions typify the Expressionist protagonist. The action becomes a visual representation of Bruno's inner state, and traditional lyricism adopts a new face;
the revelation of the inner world is sometimes grotesque and frightening.

By forcing his wife to permit the townsmen to fondle her and to sleep with her publicly, Bruno transforms his love into sadistic jealousy, and Stella, by allowing herself to be thus abused in the name of her love for Bruno, displays a masochistic side of her personality. She feels at fault and asks, "Bruno, est-ce parce que j'ai écrasé votre fleur que vous me punissez?" (I, 47). Throughout the play, she tries to redeem herself, innocent in the first place, by complying with Bruno's demands. Like her husband, Stella goes beyond the bounds of ordinary expectations, thereby revealing an aspect of lyrical love "à l'envers."

Throughout the play, references to Stella's body and in particular to her nudity increase the eroticism that partially replaces the more traditional lyrical theme of love. In the second act, Bruno says, "Quand je me l'imagine nue, dénouant sa chevelure, mon coeur perd son écorce!" (I, 52). Later when the Young Man arrives for Bruno to write his love letter, Bruno launches into one of his tirades on the subject of the beauty of Stella's body. When Bruno describes "une peau fine et tiède, un grain de beauté," the Young Man completes his thought, "...au-dessus du genou" (I, 65). In the third act, the townsmen gathering around Stella speak only of her body: "Sa nuque!—Ici Stella!—Choisis!—Son petit sein
est froid (...). Elle n'a rien sous sa robe!" (I, 37). Near the end of the play the Nurse comments on Stella's nudity, and the Cowherd envelopes her naked body in his cloak.

In a long monologue at the beginning of Act Two, Bruno fantasizes about Stella's sexual activities. He imagines her leaving his side in the night, running barefoot to a lover in the fields. As she enters the scene, her appearance confirms his idea of her; she is dressed in a black hooded cape, her face covered by a mask. Bruno repeatedly calls her a prostitute and asks her to open her cloak and lift her skirt. Forced to dress in this fashion, the Stella of Bruno's imagination materializes, and the verbal image becomes scenic. Crommelynck employs the theatrical device of the mask as a means of rendering the world of the play "à l'envers." The spectator sees Stella as Bruno imagines her. In lyrical love poetry, the lover often praises his beloved's body, but in this bizarre, inverted world, Bruno perverts the lyrical pattern. Instead of celebrating his woman's beauty, he displays her body first with maniacal enthusiasm and later with disgust.

Stella and Bruno love in the lyrical tradition up to a certain point. Their first scene together in which they communicate in a love-talk incomprehensible to other ears demonstrates their exclusion of the world around them and their isolation in love. Even in the
second act, during Bruno's brief reprieve, they speak of love to each other. Stella tells Bruno, "Tout ce qui est de toi m'est précieux, ta jalousie, ta dureté, autant que tes plus doux transports!" (I, 59). Bruno, too, has his moments of gentleness: "Oh! merveille!...que tes yeux sont tristes et beaux...Ma colombe, lampe fragile, fleur de neige," (I, 59) words direct from the lyrical tradition. But love becomes jealousy to the point that Bruno is even jealous of Stella's embroidery:

Ne travaille pas à ta broderie; cela me fâche. Je ne sais trop ce que tu vois dans les fleurs que tu brodes, ni ce que tu y mets. C'est une besogne qui laisse jouer l'imagination. (I, 61)

In the third act, just after Stella admits to the Nurse that she no longer loves her husband, Bruno, incognito, serenades her and she falls in love with him again. Ironically, Bruno is disguised as himself as a young man; Stella says, "Vous avez les cheveux de Bruno quand Bruno en avait!" (I, 101), and she adds, "Vous ressemblez à Bruno, du temps qu'il était beau. C'est son regard vif qu'il a perdu, sa bouche avant qu'elle s'éteigne, sa main avant qu'elle fane!" (I, 103). Disguised as his former self, Bruno is able once again to express his love for her, but Stella does not want to make love with this new lover to whom she whispers, "Je vous aime peut-être, je vous aime (...). J'ai besoin de tendresse, d'amitié... Je t'aimerai, mais épargne-moi." (I, 104). In spite of
her protests, Bruno forces Stella into the bedroom in order to become the "cocl magnifique" of the title. Although Stella has had sexual intercourse with many men by this time, her husband does not believe he has found her real lover. Ironically, he himself will be the lover he seeks. Bruno, however, fails to see the significance of this fact; that is, that Stella is destined to love him, even unaware of his identity, she is drawn to him. Stella thus embodies the type of love touted by many lyric poets, but the reign of such love is short-lived in this world "à l'envers," and Stella soon finds herself perversely abandoned by Bruno to the arms of the Cowherd.

Just as love frequently appears "à l'envers," the treatment of death differs from that found in traditional lyric poetry. In Act Two, before Stella knows the full range of Bruno's jealousy, she is willing to die for him to prove her love: "Mais si ma mort peut t'apaiser, que je meure aussitôt..." (I, 56). Her willingness to die for love typifies a traditional lyrical attitude; but later in the play, the possibility of dying for Bruno's folly rather than for love replaces the more lyrical aspect of death, and such possibility becomes frightful. Bruno first suggests Stella's death in Act Two when he screams, "Je te tordrai le cou!" (I, 57). His violence towards her is reflected in the letter he writes for the Young Man from Ooskerke, a letter in which he repeatedly threatens her with death. Stella is nearly murdered by the townswomen,
led by her former friends, Cornélie and Florence, who, dragging her out of the house, scream, "À la rivière! À la rivière!" Bruno encourages them, "Oui, à la rivière! qu'on la couse dans un sac! Promenez-la nue à dos d'âne!" He advises, "Trempez-la bien, la garce qui me trompe." (I, 106).

After forcing Stella and Pétrus into the bedroom together, Bruno reconsiders and gets down his gun. "Je les tuerai, je les occirai, tous les deux! Qu'ils sortent, et les voici morts, et je crache sur leur dépouille." (I, 78). He even threatens Estrugo's life in Act Two. Besides considering murder, Bruno contemplates suicide. In order to convince Stella that she must have sexual intercourse with another man, he threatens, "...je serai cocu ce jour même ou je serai mort. Les cornes ou la corde." (I, 70).

Crommelynck replaces lyricism's more conventional theme of death for love with the similar yet discordant theme of murder for love. The Expressionist, like other lyricists before, does indeed reveal personal emotions on the chosen subjects of love and death, but, unlike his forebears, the Expressionist grotesquely distorts the themes.

Only the themes of reminiscence and of nature escape a brutal rendering. Pétrus more than any other character personifies the lyrical theme of remembrance. His first words compare the village as it is to the way it was when he was a boy: "Il m'a paru plus petit, tassé,
mais familier, humble et gai. Le chemin creux ne m'a pas effrayé comme autrefois " (I, 37). Pétrus's arrival elicits reminiscences from both Bruno and Stella; seeing Stella through the eyes of Pétrus, Bruno says, "...c'est comme si j'allais la retrouver. Elle avait quatorze ans quand tu es parti. Elle était jolie." (I, 37-38). Pétrus continues in this vein, "Nous nous disputions souvent" (I, 38). The changes in the house provoke Pétrus to compare it to its previous state, as Bruno continually turns the subject to Stella, past and present. "Elle te paraîtra embellie, la petite Estelle de nos yeux" (I, 38). Even before Pétrus's arrival, Bruno romanticizes,

Il n'a guère changé: comme autrefois timide et franc. Tu te le rappelles? Il saurait dire dos au cheval fondu et n'osait regarder les filles. Comme autrefois, il n'est brave qu'au milieu des dangers. (I, 28)


When Pétrus kisses her, Stella recalls the games of their childhood: "Nous étions ennemis" (I, 39). The Burgomaster, too, retains the past freshly in his mind. He reproaches, "Bruno, est-ce toi que j'ai vu grandir, brave
et intelligent?" (À douze ans, tu avais ton certificat d'études!) Stella, es-tu toujours Stella, qu'on citait par exemple pour sa modestie?" (I, 90).

Whereas most of the other characters talk of the past, the Nurse still lives in it. For her, as well as for the Burgomaster, Bruno and Stella are still "gamins." She still tends to Stella as she did when Stella was a child, and these two women continue to consider themselves as well as each other in the framework of the past. It is their refuge from the world "à l'envers" of the play. Pétrus, too, in a sense, has never totally emerged from his boyishness. Bruno tells us that Pétrus preferred adventure to girls; as a sea captain, he is able to prolong the adventurous spirit of his youth into his adult life. The continual evocation of the past presents childhood as the "âge d'or" of the protagonists.

Nature, too, presents the characters with a refuge. At the first of the play, Stella speaks to her canary in much the same way that a lyric poet addresses some object in nature. Her words are not restricted to the subject of the bird's daily needs such as food and water, but she expresses her general contentment with her place in the hierarchy of the universe. In Le Style au Microscope, the author Criticus identifies a "doux panthéisme" in her words. He calls the world of the play a "monde poétique où Stella parle à des plantes qui répondent." When Stella leads Pétrus to his room, she
describes the view from his window:

Tu ne connais pas les belles fenêtres
remplies d'images. Dans la tienne,
il y a une prairie, la moitié d'un
toit rouge et une branche de cerisier
sur le ciel.
(...). Ma fenêtre encadre le verger,
plus deux peupliers frileux... (I, 43)

The dialogue at such moments reflects a serenity afforded
nowhere else in the play. After Bruno's disruptive sug-
gestions, Stella reveals that she considers nature a
panacea in a much more literal sense. In an effort to
calm her husband, she says, "Quelles plantes irai-je
cueillir, qui te soulagerait?" (I, 47). Unable to find
the herbs which will cure Bruno, Stella metaphorically
suggests that nature is no longer the refuge it was earlier
in the play: "Ce mal qui te dévore, je l'arracherais
jusqu'à la racine, tellement qu'il ne repoussera pas." (I,
97).

Bruno, too, seeks refuge in nature. In Act Two,
he says, "On ne peut vivre qu'au cimetière; là il y a de
l'ombre et des oiseaux." (I, 50). Much of Bruno's figura-
tive language in reference to Stella is composed of meta-
phors by which he compares her to something in nature.
When his rages subside, he says of her, "Elle a plus de
sveltesse qu'un cygne!" (I, 31), "Elle se plie comme une
liane" (I, 32), "Lorsqu'elle fit la révérence, tout à
l'heure, avez-vous remarqué qu'elle ressemblait à une biche
qui s'agenouille?" (I, 33). He speaks of his love for
her by saying, "C'est en moi comme un enfant dans le sein
de sa mère! Ça pousse, Pétrus! Je le nourris de toute ma substance!" (I, 38). He calls her leg "une corne d'abondance, la poussée d'un lis, la pureté des amphores!" (I, 40). She is for him "Claire comme la rosée! Fraîche comme la lune entre les feuilles!" (I, 40). "Elle se balance comme une bouée sur le flot." "Elle est fidèle comme le ciel est bleu (...) comme la terre tourne..." (I, 43).

Even as his imagination drives him into folly, Bruno evokes images of Stella, such as, "Marche-t-elle sur une vapeur, dans un rayon de lune, a-t-elle des ailes...?" (I, 52).

Such images demonstrate that in the moments Bruno allows himself to express his love for Stella, he identifies her with exterior nature.

In their evocations of nature and of the past, Bruno, Stella, and Pétrus display a lyrical longing for refuge from the present state of affairs. Bruno and Stella further demonstrate their own lyrical inclinations in their expressions of love for each other, but the lyricism inherent in the themes of love and death derives as well from the playwright's treatment. As Crommelynck allows Bruno to give over to the demands of his subconscious, he recreates the world of the play from Bruno's viewpoint. As lyricism traditionally subjectively exposes emotions, Expressionism follows suit, and Crommelynck demonstrates that the revelation of the inner world can produce turmoil as well as beauty. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to Crommelynck's lyrical techniques: his word choice,
his meter, his motifs, and his actual inclusion of poems in the text of the play.

At the first of Act One when Stella speaks to the canary, she repeats certain phrases in such a way as to produce what Criticus calls a "Leitmotiv qui renaît et s'impose comme dans un 'lied' de Schumann." He calls her rhythmic, balanced sentences "couplets," and the following quotation has been typographically arranged to exemplify his remark:

Tu es né pour être en cage, cette plante mise en pot, et moi, bienheureuse, je suis née pour aimer Bruno! (I, 14)

One can easily divide her sentence into two balanced verses, the final words of each forming, if not quite a rhyme, at least assonance. Her approximation of this formula in the next part of her monologue creates the leitmotif of which Criticus is speaking. Swiftly following the sentence cited above, this sentence resumes the poem:

Toi, tu as des fleurs, celui-ci chante, et moi, bienheureuse, j'aime Bruno! (I, 14)

This sentence approximates the former not only in subject matter but also by its parallel divisions into three parts. Within itself, it too can be divided into two verses of equal metric count. Stella continues:

Si tu étais libre dans un jardin
toi sur un arbre,
et moi sans amour,
qui nous conduirait? (I, 14)

Once again her balanced division of the sentence which
refers to the same three subjects—the bird, the plant, and her love—recalls lyric poetry; the repetition of liquid "r's;" the quasi-alliteration of "jardin" and "arbre," the assonance of "toi" and "moi" are the stuff that poetry is made of.

Later in the play when Stella says, "Adieu donc, Bruno. Adieu, adieu; nous nous quittons toujours," Bruno completes her lyric by replying, "Toujours nous nous retrouvons."
(I, 30). The juxtaposition of their contrasting ideas, expressed by the repetition of the same words, forms an antitheses of poetic quality. The increasing sobriety of their thought finds expression as Stella's "voyelles claires" give way to the more weighty "voyelles sombres" which, already present in Stella's sentence, dominate in Bruno's.

When dictating the letter for the Young Man from Oostkerke, Bruno unintentionally exposes his own violent feelings for Stella and excuses himself, calling his extravagance "l'inspiration." He explains, "C'est encore une crise de lyrisme." (I, 65), and certainly even in his ravings one can find elements of lyricism, as the following quotation exemplifies:

"Si tu détaches ton âme de la mienne, si ta pensée cesse d'être le moule fidèle de ma pensée, je te tue! (...)
"...Si j'entends dans ton langage un mot qui étonne mon oreille, je te tue!

"Si tu te regarde trois fois dans le miroir sans rire, si tu changes les plis de ta jupe sans raison..."
Je la tuerai! Je la tuerai pas plus
tard que ce soir si j'ai la moindre
preuve de sa trahison! Mon fusil est
là, chargé jusqu'à la gueule! (I, 64)

Bruno’s repetition of balanced clauses beginning with “si”
imbues his passage with a certain movement that comes
from a lyrical sense of rhythm. The preponderance of
"voyelles aigues" and of "consonnes momentanées" aptly
expresses Bruno’s breathless anger and bitterness.

The dialogues in which Stella and Bruno invent
their own language resemble a Surrealist’s poetic ideal.
Bruno says, "Que tu me l'as donc fait des tristes, mon
Stradivarius!" and Stella replies, "Core, core, des baisies,
des baisies longues, longues, des l’aime et des l’adore!"
(I, 25). Their words are reminiscent of familiar love
talk, but the utter lack of logic implies a concept akin
to the Surrealist’s "écriture automatique." Their dialogue
emits certain images without transmitting any complete
ideas. The following quotation is even more elusive:

O Colombie! trois fois Amérique!
la nouvelle découverte! déborde dans le
cœur de lui, Toute-enchantée, Scavirige!
La Dame-l’Ame dans de l’aurore boréale!
Je boire la fraîche avec des lents
chalumeaux, par l’infini, et dire merci
autant que d’herbes! (I, 25)

Although the sounds remind us of familiar words, the
spectator’s intellect is confused, and he must give over
to imagination. Bruno evokes images of water, of an
ocean voyage, and of the discovery of America by Columbus,
but all he gives is an uncertain, fleeting image. When
he says, "Verse tes ciels plein moisque, la Stoilée," he alludes to Stella's namesake, but his words are pure invention, as is Stella's syntax in her reply: "...et des glaçons à la si, si malade!" and Bruno's syntax when he says, "L'en a, de longs voyages dans l'âme de lui." (I, 26). They neglect sense and sentence structure and opt for imagery. Such dialogues complemented by the characters' allusions to their dreams suggest a certain interest on the part of Crommelynck in Surrealism, and as Le Cocu magnifique was first presented in 1920, it is possible that Crommelynck felt the influence of the Surrealistic movement.

Even when Bruno speaks logically, he uses exaggerated metaphors, as is evident in his description of his short trip into town to meet Pétrus: "Et moi je me suis égaré dans une forêt sauvage, j'ai fait naufrage, au moins, j'ai bien vieilli, depuis le soir d'hier, dis, vieille nourrice?" He continues,

\[
\text{Si tu savais combien j'ai souffert, vraiment! Je n'étais pas éloigné d'une heure qu'il m'a semblé voir une lueur derrière les sapinières. J'ai failli revenir pour te sauver de l'incendie. Je ne ris pas!...Aux étangs noirs, j'ai cru entendre une voix lointaine qui m'appelait. Peut-être avais-tu couru, en robe de chambre et pieds nus, derrière moi. Je me suis assis sur le talus. Et pourtant, je savais qu'elle a peur, la petite fille, des ombres et des bruits de la nuit! Oh! Spoucie-en-rond, y en avait-il des conciliabules dans la campagne, et des rayons et des miroirs volants!} \quad (I, 27)
\]
At the first of his "récit," Bruno recounts in a logical sequence the events, as he sees them, of the trip. Near the end, however, his fantasies push him into hallucinations of "miroirs volants." Though grammatical, his description reflects a total lack of awareness of the ordinary incidents of his trip, which we know is actually rather lackluster since Bruno himself tells us it amounted to "à peu près ce que font chaque jour les maraîchères" (I, 29). His ability to turn his mundane experience into such fantasy reflects his lyrical aptitude, and Crommelynck's choice of such a character indicates that the world of the play is not as banal as it might appear.

Bruno's proclivity for verse becomes all the more apparent as he says,

Le comte de Morten vend ses terres et son château. Il désire annoncer la vente autrement que par des chiffres, des lignes et de petits points. Il m'a commandé une description de son domaine, un véritable paysage. (I, 30)

Estrugo's reply, "En vers?" verbalizes the spectator's query. If, indeed, the count wants a lyrical description of his lands, he has come to the right person. Bruno dictates,

"Le château des comtes de Morten, bâti sur le roc, domine la douce et profonde vallée de la Mieuvre." (I, 29) "Des tours en poivrière qui flanquent le bâtiment, et, jadis, dominaient le duché ennemi de Meng, on découvre la mer, les forêts du Sud et toutes les prairies jusqu'à l'horizon." (I, 32-33)
Before Bruno's love turns to raging jealousy, his hyperbolic description of Stella surpasses that of the count's lands and at least equals that of his trip into town. "N'est-elle pas la plus gracieuse et la plus légère? Elle marcherait sur l'eau sans mouiller ses souliers!" (I, 31). In his description of her to the Burgomaster, his enthusiasm pushes him over the brink of lyricism into a caricature of poetry:

Et c'est une ligne celle-ci, une seule ligne! Et il y en a mille comme elle, cent mille, que dis-je? mille milliards de lignes selon que je tourne autour de ce modèle unique, chacune aussi parfaite, et qui toutes, en faisceaux réunies, festonnées, volutées, onduleuses, droites ou contournées, grasses ou déliées, jaillissantes ou retombantes, vibrantes ou reposées, longues ou ramassées, roulées, ondées, frisées, ondées, distendues, dévidées, fouettantes ou pleuvantes, cinglantes ou pleureuses, ou caressantes, ou tremblées, ou vagues, en spirale, en torsade, l'une après l'autre, ou ensemble, ces lignes-là n'ont qu'une trajectoire, une seule, qui porte l'amour dans mon coeur! (I, 34-35).

Through such dialogue, Crommelynck shows us the inverse aspect of lyricism. Bruno's lack of restraint and his penchant for exaggeration typify Crommelynck's expressionist manner.

When Bruno dictates the letter for the Young Man from Cootkerke, he speaks as a poet, as the Young Man himself acknowledges, but the expressionist's desire to render the ridiculous and delirious manifests itself to the spectator, who knows that Bruno is actually talking
about Stella:

Ingrate, Perfide (Avec deux majuscules! et tendrement aimée... (Avec deux minuscules!) Quand nous allions, les doigts mêlés, l'un contre l'autre pressés au point de n'être plus qu'une lumière et qu'une ombre, les gens nous regardaient aux portes, envieux et colères, se croyant volés de tout notre bonheur. Ah! qu'ils se sentent riches, aujourd'hui! (I, 63).

In the third act, Bruno frequently gives over completely to poetry:

Voici venir le soir fourré
Déjà le saule frénétique
   Au long du pré
Retient la lune élastique
   Entre ses bras!
--Tu la rendras! Tu la rendras!
(I, 94)

The beauty of his lyrics contrasts with the foolishness of his situation, but isolated from the context of the play, this poem holds its own with the best of lyric poetry. He continues,

Tu la rendras! Tu la rendras!
Les grenouilles, au bord des étangs pales
   Allument leurs yeux d'or
   Comme autant d'étoiles
Et célébrent, en chants discordes
Le long temps de leurs corps à corps.
(I, 95)

Bruno tells Estrugo, "C'est une ballade que j'ai composée." (I, 95). He continues his poem later in the act when he climbs to Stella's window:

Faisons comme elles, tout d'ort
Hormis l'amour sans voile.
(I, 101)

Even Bruno's dialogue adopts the meter and rhyme scheme
of the poem with which he serenades Stella. Although this rather long lyric of love is interrupted by conversation, the poem itself is intact and the product of a thoughtful poetic process.

J'ai vu s'éloigner ton mari,
Cassé, fourbu, semblant porter tout l'empyrée
Et poussant droit devant lui
L'ombre de ses cornes, démesurée:
--On les lui fleurira, on les lui fleurira!

Tu éclaires comme une rose du crépuscule
Qu'un dernier rayon colora.
Son ardeur enclose me brûle!
Heureux qui l'effeuillera.

Ta voix se déroule et vole
Ainsi qu'une banderole
Aux lèvres des séraphins,
Sur laquelle tes paroles
Tracent des signes divins.

Tes mains, où servit la clarté
Des solitude muettes.
Dans le silence enchanté
Déploient un vol de mouettes!

Stella, mon âme s'enlève
Avec la douce tranquillité
D'une belle lune d'été
Dans un ciel qui rêve.

Je vous aime! Je vous aime!
Je vous vois si blanche, en ce soir léger,
Que vous avez l'air de neiger
Sur des chrysanthèmes.

Stella! Je sens ton coeur à mon coeur uni
S'emplir de battements d'aile.
Je le veux décrocher comme un nid;
Je dresse l'échelle!

Ta bouche sombre
Comme le fruit sanglant du murier
J'en goûterai dans l'ombre
Le suc meurtrier!

Tes yeux, pareils à des pierres de lune,
--Vienne la mort--
J'en éprouverai le mauvais sort
Ou la bonne fortune! (I, 101-103)
In prose, Bruno tends to become rhetorical, as witnessed by his enumeration of Stella's qualities to the Burgomaster, or fanciful, as witnessed by his description of his trip into town, but under the constraints of formal poetry, Bruno masters his excesses. Hyperbolic praise of his beloved, though sometimes ridiculous in his prose, is quite acceptable in his lyric poetry. Although Bruno appears ludicrous to everyone in the play, we see him here as Stella sees him, mastering but not abandoning his "crise de lyrisme."

His comparison of Stella to a "rose du crépuscule" is appropriate in the context of the poem, but similar statements in prose addressed to the Burgomaster sound as ridiculous to the spectator as they do to the magistrate.

Although some of the images in the poem lack originality, the comparison of a woman to a rose, for example, or of her mouth to a fruit, certain aspects reflect an original contribution to lyricism. The simile, for example, in the verses

Que vous avez l'air de neiger
Sur des chrysanthèmes.

pierces by its provocative image.

The poem progresses in an orderliness that belies Bruno's former lyrical elans and jealous ravings. After three stanzas in which he praises Stella's various attributes, he allows himself an ecstatic, yet restrained,
declaration of love, and terminates on a typically lyrical note, namely his willingness to die of such love and beauty.

It is Bruno's disguise that allows him to present his lyrics in this formal, restrained, and organized fashion. With the help of his mask and costume, Bruno bridles his maverick subconscious and appears as the man Stella used to know. If the mask and the costume are symbols of illusion, then Crommelynck implies that reality as we usually know it is a disguise and that the true self is the chaotic inner life, such as Bruno manifests in the rest of the play. Bruno's orderly, formal poem seems therefore like a fragile surface beneath which course violent emotional currents.

The motif of the mask recurs repeatedly in the play. In the first act, Bruno returns home disguised as an unidentified young man. Although he does not actually wear a mask, neither Crommelynck nor Stella identifies him for the spectator, and his question "Le mari n'est pas là?" (I, 26) indicates that he is not Stella's husband, although, of course, he is. In Act Two, Stella wears a grotesque cardboard mask, and in the third act, Bruno and Extrugo wear masks in order to disguise themselves from Stella. Not only does Bruno disguise himself physically, but also he adopts "une voix de carnaval" (I, 102) and persists in reciting his poem instead of speaking naturally. He climbs a ladder to Stella's room, an unnecessarily
romantic gesture, as Stella conveys when she asks, "Pourquoi êtes-vous monté par cette échelle, la porte était ouverte!" (I, 104). In addition to the literal mask, Bruno alludes to the mask metaphorically when he warns Stella, "Il me plaît de te croire en ce moment. Mais veille, je te démasquera!" (I, 97).

Grommelynck uses such allusions and scenes as images, culminating in the final act, which, instead of producing a climax, reaches a point of greatest intensity of the imagery. The artificiality of the entire scene lends itself to the motif of the mask. The setting for Act Three is a night of festivities in honor of the village saint. The Burgomaster announces, "Mascarades, sérenades et autres folies..." (I, 92). Stella remarks to the Nurse, "Même, tu vois, c'est bientôt la nuit. Les arbres de la place vont s'illuminer. Les gens ont mêlé aux branches des guirlandes de lumignons." (I, 97). Background music, distant voices, and Bruno's serenade contribute to the unreal carnival atmosphere.

Whereas Bruno's mask represents his inability to get a firm grip on his personality, Stella, too, appears in this act as both saint and sinner. Throughout the play, Bruno alternates epithets of "prostituée" with more ethereal sobriquets, such as "la Stoilée," "la Cielée," and "Etoile." On this night of festivities, the towns- women, instead of honoring the village saint, try to drown
Stella, but actually only submerge her in a rite of purification. These scenes from the last act serve thus as scenic images, scenes in which the playwright uses all the dramatic devices at his disposal to achieve an effect charged with thematic significance. There is no climax, no turning point of the action, but instead a synthesis of imagery afforded by the visual, scenic manifestation of Bruno disguised as himself and Stella, innocent as a child in the first place, symbolically repurified. As Crommelynck interlaces motifs throughout the play leading to this culmination of images, he employs the technique of the lyric poet. As he creates a scene of nightmarish horror, he identifies with the expressionist movement.

As Crommelynck refuses to allow characters to develop as individuals and uses them instead as an element of his lyrical design, they naturally appear distorted, and dialogue is only vaguely reminiscent of "normal" speech. The critic Georges Portal condemns Crommelynck for his unrealistic characters and for his metamorphic operations on words:

"Pas un instant nous ne croyons à la réalité de l'action, encore moins à celle des personnages. (...) Je lui demande des actes, de la chair, un mouvement comme sensuel qui ne soit pas, comme ici, sublime dans les mots, jusqu'à vider les mots eux-mêmes de leur substance."

It is of course useless to look for such realistic characters
among Crommelynck's "images grossies," to look for familiar action among his "bouffonneries symboliques," or to search for logical dialogue in his "poésie légendaire." Heinrich Racker suggests a better approach. He calls the play a "descente à ces profondeurs angoissantes et déchirantes de notre vie psychologique, a cette névrose universelle." As Crommelynck takes us along on this descent into the psyche, he outlines his characters with the bold strokes of caricature, creating thus universal types instead of "real" people. His deliberate stylization often looks like a rudimentary form of symbolism, but such archetypal characters are well suited to the expressionist theatre, whose setting is the subconscious.

The characters' names frequently provide the most accessible key to such symbolism. The darkness ("brune") inherent in Bruno's name associates him with legendary evil, and also evokes "la brune," or sunset. His victim, or opponent, is Stella, obviously so named in order to evoke the contrary, the light of the constellations. Bruno extends such imagery in his pet names for her as well as in his metaphoric allusions to her; he calls her "lampe fragile," for example, and remarks, "Elle laisse un sillage lumineux après elle." (I, 39). The symbolism of light goes beyond the references to Stella; in Act Two, when Bruno decides on the antidote to his mental anguish, he opens the house and says, "D'abord, nous ouvrirons les portes et les fenêtres... Et les volets!"
Que celui qui désire vous admirer vous trouve dans tout votre éclat. Le règne de l'ombre est passé, la lumière se fera..." (I, 68). In these lines he clearly associates light both with Stella and with triumph (though temporary) over his unmanageable imagination. The evening of the last act is an expressionistically suitable setting for the re-emergence of the "dark" side of his personality. The setting as well as the characters frequently function thus as symbols, a well-known lyrical device.

Except for Pétrus and Estrugo, the secondary characters are most often referred to according to their station in life. This device, frequently employed by the Expressionist theatre, underlines the intentionally caricatural portrayal of certain characters, such as the Nurse and the Burgomaster. The Nurse is seldom called "Romanie" but rather "Nourrice" even in the vocative, just as the Burgomaster is always addressed and referred to as "Bourgmastre." Nothing distinguishes their personalities from other nurses or burgomasters. The Nurse, for example, never says anything out of the line of duty. Her first words reassure her charge Stella, and when she leaves the room, she always excuses herself by citing some household chore to which she must tend. She must water the vegetable garden, prepare Pétrus's room, set the table, take care of Stella, fetch Bruno's hat, straighten up the kitchen, search for Stella. Only at her last exit, near the end of the play, does she not announce
some task for which she is leaving. When Bruno returns from town, she comments on the dust of the road brought into the house on his feet, and in the midst of Stella's and Bruno's poetic babblings, she contributes, "Et moi, je mettrai un poulet à la broche..." (I, 30-31). Such evidence suggests that the Nurse is not really an individual, but that she is the epitome of a nurse, just as the Burgomaster is the epitome of a magistrate.

The Burgomaster neither does nor says anything outside his function as a magistrate. He first arrives to ask Bruno's services in writing a proclamation. In spite of Bruno's efforts to elicit a comment from him about Stella, the Burgomaster brushes him aside with, "Oh! oh! non!" (I, 31). After Bruno's long and fanciful description of Stella's legs, the Burgomaster manages only a succinct "Non" to Bruno's question, "Vous comprenez?" (I, 34). He reserves his enthusiasm for a response to Bruno's wording of the proclamation. In Act Two, when he discovers that Pétrus and Stella are in the bedroom together, he advises Bruno on his legal recourse and wants only to avoid the scandal of being involved. In Act Three, when Bruno offers Stella to the Burgomaster, he replies, "As-tu dessein de me faire destituer? N'es-tu pas content du gouvernement de la commune? Ne vis-tu pas heureux sous mes lois?—Silence dans les rangs!" (I, 90). He pleads for Bruno's conversion as a matter of communal concern: "Que te sert de t'élever contre les
moeurs du pays? Tu es—et Stella avec toi—tu es la honte d'une contrée loyale. Les gens sages s'indignent de vivre près de ta maison." (I, 90). When Bruno insults him by saying, "Bourgmestre, tu as le cerveau plat et remuant comme un cul de singe...," the Burgomaster replies indignantly, "À un magistrat!" (I, 92-93). He does not resent the insult personally but officially. He has even published a city ordinance forbidding citizens to teach their birds to say, "Bruno est cocu." Although he has known Bruno since childhood, his actions take the form of official business rather than of personal interest. When Bruno refuses to change his attitude, the Burgomaster replies, "Pour moi, je rétablirai l'ordre avant que le gouverneur de la province intervienne." (I, 94). Like the Nurse, the Burgomaster is not "real" but a symbol of reality.

Estrugo's role gives Crommelynck the opportunity for a similar sort of stylization. Throughout the scene with the Burgomaster in Act One, Estrugo's only lines are repetitions of Bruno's dictation. Scenes in which Bruno speaks on the same subject to a noncommittal Estrugo recur with the frequency of a refrain. Near the end of Act One, Bruno addresses Estrugo in a long monologue about Stella's infidelity, but Estrugo never replies. Crommelynck repeats this formula at the beginning of Act Two, which opens with an even longer monologue on the same subject also addressed to Estrugo. Bruno infers
Estrugo's replies, but the scribe never utters a word. Again in Act Two, Bruno addresses Estrugo on this subject, and as usual he makes no reply, and at the beginning of Act Three, Estrugo only gesticulates in answer to Bruno's accusations.

In his article "Considérations psychanalytiques sur Le Cocu magnifique de Fernand Crommelynck," Heinrich Racker interprets Estrugo as Bruno's double. His complicit silence indicates their bond, and, Bruno, in his more lucid moments, blames Estrugo for the present state of affairs. As Racker indicates, however, the role of Estrugo is ambiguous; as Bruno's scapegoat, he is the "saboteur internal," but Estrugo also acts on his own when he alerts the Young Man from Oostkerke that Bruno is setting up a trap for him and Stella. By alerting the Young Man, Estrugo performs a dramatic function, but as Bruno's double, he is a visual manifestation of Bruno's psychic aberration. Interpreted as this expressionist device, Estrugo performs the lyrical service of incorporating, in the true sense of the word, Bruno's inner emotions.

Further stylization results from the mob scenes in the third act. The townsmen at the beginning of the act speak together as a chorus repeating Bruno's very vocabulary and commenting on his permissiveness, and when the townswomen enter the house in search of Stella, they, too, speak together as a chorus whose words are echoed by Bruno's refrain, "À la rivière!" (I, 106). In a more
realistic drama such scenes would horrify, but Crommelynck renders them acceptable by his stylization: these people do not seem like real people but like a chorus conscious of its artificiality.

There is very little plot development in Le Cuc magnifique, no climax, no dénouement. As do elements of a lyric poem, the various characters and events frequently serve to reiterate a motif. After the appearance of the Cowherd, for example, the Count's advances are superfluous as far as progression of the action is concerned, but his reiteration serves a poetic function. The poet is re-working his theme, repeating his refrain. Ralph Freedman explains in The Lyrical Novel that in lyric poetry, as opposed to the narration of the novel, events are contained in one another. Consecutiveness, according to Freedman, is simulated by lyrical language: "its surge towards greater intensity reveals not new events but the significance of existing events." He cites Virginia Woolf's belief that in the lyrical design, characters themselves occasionally function as images; as a symbolic figure, they are themselves a poetic motif.

According to Freedman, just as in a poem certain words or motifs appear and reappear, certain images can occur in prose to the point that their literal significance is incidental to their function as a symbol or as a poetic motif. In Le Cuc magnifique, references to dreams recur in such a fashion. At the first of the play,
Stella asks the canary, "A quoi rêves-tu?" (I, 14), and repeatedly in the play she says that she has forgotten her dream. When Bruno commands, "Raconte-moi une chose défendue que tu aies faite," Stella replies, "J'ai dormi et j'ai oublié mon rêve." (I, 46). She believes that Bruno will tell her his dream, which will resemble her own. Bruno not only fears that Stella will fall in love with Pétrus but that they will dream of each other: "Ah! voilà! dans le sommeil leur rêve peut se composer de menus souvenirs communs, et les réunir au-delà d'eux-mêmes et de moi!" (I, 14). Bruno himself cannot escape the lingering influence of his dreams:


Ne balance pas la tête comme un din- don! Dis-moi, les rêves se réalisent-ils? (I, 52-53)

In Act Two, when Bruno interrogates Stella, he asks her, to recount her dream, and he says that he has had nightmares because of the tisane. As references to dreams become increasingly references to nightmares, Crommelynck evokes "en abîme": his central theme: the revelation of the subconscious in its most frightening aspects.

The playwright similarly imbues the "window" with imagistic properties. Near the first of the play,
Cornélie appears outside the window to tell Stella that she has seen Bruno. While talking to the Count, Stella reminds him that he used to watch her playing from his window in the chateau. Upon his return from town, Bruno romances Stella from the window in a prefiguration of his balcony serenade of Act Three. When Stella escorts Pétrus to his bedroom, she describes for him the view from the windows in both his room and hers. Bruno leaves Stella in the room with the Young Man from Oostkerke and goes to spy on them from the window; he similarly forces Estrugo to spy on Stella and Pétrus through the keyhole.

Freedman believes that characters' observations of one another expose them as images. The repetition of such images creates a network of images. In Le Cucu magnifique, windows repeatedly frame a scene observed not only by the audience of the play but also by other characters. The window thus becomes an "eye" through which the characters see, and the repeated use of such a device creates a lyrical motif. This window imagery reaches its point of greatest intensity in the last act when Bruno enters Stella's bedroom through the window and in so doing cuckold himself.

As a whole, Le Cucu magnifique does not give the effect of a predominantly lyrical play, as do Le Sculpteur de Masques, Les Amants puerils, and Carine. The themes of sexuality and murder pervert their lyrical aspects of love and death. Characters view nature
sympathetically but only accord it a slight place. Their
desire for refuge in the past reflects a lyrical longing
that prevails throughout the play, but the most lyrical
dialogue belongs to Bruno and Stella's love talk, in the
enigmatic images they create, in the lyrical rhythm of
their sentences, and in their excessive preoccupation with
each other. Bruno further demonstrates his lyrical bent
in the last act when he serenades Stella.

In spite of the basically commonplace characters
and menacing tone, Crommelynck manifests his lyrical
pennon in his stylistic presentation of characters
who serve as symbols and in his arrangement of dialogue
which serves as lyrical motifs to reiterate themes.
As he abandons the aestheticism, the cult of beauty, of
Symbolism, he maintains its tendency to transcend surface
reality, its poetic, non-naturalistic language, its pro-
clivity for symbols. Expressionism turned from the
past, from legend and myth, and found its settings in the
contemporary world, but Crommelynck finds room in this
world for masquerades, balcony serenades, and stylized
motifs. As he gives us a glimpse of Bruno's inner strug-
gles, of his "soul state," the playwright renders sub-
jective emotions and experiences, in keeping with the
lyrical tradition.
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19 Garten, pp. 60-61.
TRIPES D'OR,
Elusive Love and Farcical Death

"Peut-on imaginer un Molière en état d'ébriété et qui voudrait se faire aussi énorme que Rabelais? Tel est Crommelynck," according to François Mauriac's review of Tripes d'Or.¹

Perhaps any play about a miser provokes allusions to Molière's archetype, but Molière lurks in the farce Tripes d'Or to such an extent that his presence threatens to overshadow Crommelynck's originality. Pierre-Auguste's ingenuity, however, surpasses the antic efforts of Barpagon to secure his gold. Crommelynck's protagonist swallows his treasure. Just as Pierre-Auguste seems modeled on Molière's miser, the "doctor" Barbulesque inherits his personality from Molière's prototype. Like his predecessor, Barbulesque is more of a charlatan than a doctor; in fact, he is a veterinarian given to recommending purges and amputations. After a brief examination of Muscar, he tells the servant, "Pâle-moi d'avance. Il me faut couper la tête" (II, 21). Occasionally, even Crommelynck's dialogue invites charges of plagiarism, as, for example, when Barbulesque tells the Burgess, "Mon ami, si la nature n'a pas honte, il mourra fort bien sans mon aide" (II, 21). He seems to have taken logic lessons from Molière's doctors and lackeys; Barbulesque tells Muscar, "La pensée est dans le mal et le mal est dans la pensée, sans qu'on

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sache qui a commencé" (II, 20). As Muscar and Froumence intrigue and quarrel, they too find their prototypes in Molière’s servants as well as in the married couples of his early plays. D. B. Wyndham Lewis writes, "The jovial three-act comedy, Tripes d’Or, seems to me somewhat forced in its Molièresque humours, and even here Crommelynck can’t keep poetry out of it."2

Even under the powerful influence of Molière, Crommelynck’s lyricism pervades the play and reclaims it as his own. In spite of its obvious humor, Tripes d’Or is not uniquely a farce and not at all a comedy, in the strict sense, as the main character dies at the end. The theme of death, in fact, unites and dominates the play. It is the purpose of this study to expose various technical elements of the lyricism in this play and then to show how Crommelynck ingeniously kneads the lyrical themes of love and death into the farce.

Unlike Molière, Crommelynck creates a chorus, which comments on the action of the play. Near the beginning, the women of the town announce, "Un mort! un mort! un mort!" (II, 14). As they continue to gossip among themselves, they divulge, like members of a Greek chorus, the preceding events responsible for the present situation. They identify the main characters and establish the farcical tone of the play. As the first act progresses, their language becomes more stylized, and they emerge even more clearly as a chorus. In the following quotation, Crommelynck
selects a chorus leader and even designates the other women as "Choeur":

La femme: Tu es riche, Pierre-Auguste.
Plusieurs femmes: en maniere de moquerie
Tu es riche, Pierre-Auguste!
La femme: Tu es grand, Pierre-Auguste.
Plusieurs femmes: Tu es riche, Pierre-Auguste.

La femme: Tu es beau, Pierre-Auguste.
Plusieurs femmes: Tu es riche!
La femme: Tu es bon, Pierre-Auguste.
Choeur: Tu es riche!
La femme: Tu es juste, Pierre-Auguste.
Choeur: Tu es riche!
La femme: Tu es fier, Pierre-Auguste.
Choeur: Tu es riche!
La femme: Tu es franc, Pierre-Auguste.
Choeur: Tu es riche!
La femme: Tu es noble, Pierre-Auguste.
Choeur: Tu es riche! (II, 44)

In Act Two, Crommelynck exchanges the women for a chorus of young girls: harmoniously repeating, "Nous voulons nous marier." (II, 53-56). Their reiteration echoes throughout the conversation of Froumence and Pierre-Auguste, who at first seem unaware of their words and their presence. Like the Greek chorus, they comment on the situation and only occasionally enter into the action. As long as they remain relatively unnoticed by the other characters, they speak together as a chorus and thus serve a lyrical function, by their very presence as a chorus periodically chanting a refrain and by the subject of their chant, the theme of love, in particular of its derivative marriage. When Pierre-Auguste demands that the most maiden-ly of all step forward, the chorus dissolves into a dis-parate group of jealous young girls, each one intent upon
divulging the unmaidenly conduct of the others. Because of her ugliness, Herminie emerges from this group as the most likely "pucelle." In Act Three, the women re-appear as a cohesive group to applaud Pierre-Auguste's choice of Herminie; as the act progresses, their cries proceed from chants of "Herminie, Herminie" to "Alleluia!" "Hosanna!" (II, 108-112). When Pierre-Auguste, royally dressed, is carried in on his chair, the women proclaim, "Tu es grand Pierre-Auguste" (II, 118), in echo to the chorus leader.

In this act, the significance of the chorus as an integral part of Crommelynck's expressionist art becomes evident as the stage set, too, reflects the protagonist's view of himself. Exteriorization of an interior mood, to render literal or, in the case of the drama, scenic, a subjective interpretation of reality, is one of the primary goals of the expressionist theatre, a goal inherited from the lyrical tradition. Just as the raging sea or the storm frequently functions as metaphors or symbols in the works of Shakespeare and Poe, for example, Crommelynck uses scene and characters as a reflection of the interior state of the protagonist. Crommelynck indicates for the stage:

C'est un décor, en effet. Sur des panneaux de toile peinte appliquée contre les murs, est représentée une colonnade en galerie, de style Louis XIV, dont la perspective est fortement exagérée. À l'avant-plan et sur les trois côtés, une haie de personnages grandeur naturelle: les courtisans rangés pour le passage du Roi-Soleil.
The other characters willfully assist Pierre-Auguste to see himself as the "Roi-Soleil" his costume depicts. They, in fact, call him "Excellence," "Votre majesté," "Sire." Such allusions appear as early as Act One, when the chorus chants, "Tu es riche, Pierre-Auguste!...Tu es tout puissant; Tu es éternel..." (II, 44). Even his name indicates his incipient megalomania. These elements constitute a leit-motif which reaches its point of greatest intensity in Act Three when "the spirit becomes flesh." Such an exaggeration goes beyond Molièresque farce and seeks affinity with expressionism.

In addition to this element that one might call "scenic" lyricism, Crommelynck incorporates actual verse into the dialogue and supplements thereby the "scenic" with a "verbal" lyricism. The first act begins as "le garde champêtre" sings out:

Et le capitaine de la troupe
il les a prises, les trois,
il les a prises en croupe
--Qu'elles l'aimaient, sur son palefroi.

--"Noire et bien cirée est sa moustache."
Dit la première. Et l'autre elle dit:
--"Je la vois blonde comme l'épi."
--"Moi, plus blanche que brebis sans tache."
Et vont, disputant tout le jour.
Les trois en croupe avec l'Amour.
(II, 13-14.)
This poetic preface to the play intimates by its lyrical form as well as by its theme of love a more serious tone underlying the apparent farce. The play's other verses are read from the elder Hormidas's will, which includes a Villonèsque poem, the somber subject of which belies its humor:

Ci-gît un pécheur sans remords  
Qui vécut pour trousser la Vie,  
Or, étant qu'un pendu par un suprême effort  
Se satisfait d'une paillarde envie:  
Il se pendit haut, court et fort  
Et mourut pour trousser la Mort.  
(II, 25)

Certain prose passages as well indicate a lyrical penchant of the characters themselves, in particular of Pierre-Auguste. As he and his cousins discuss the division of his inheritance, the dialogue projects a lyrical view of nature similar to Stella's:

Pierre-Auguste: Certes. Il y a bien dans les clôtures trente mille arbres prisonniers. Et quel silence! Et quelle solitude!...

Prison, désignant une des fenêtres:  
Tout ce que tu découvres par cette croisée,  
le verger rayé d'ombre, vois-tu--la prairie avec le vent dans les plupiers--les labours...

Pierre-Auguste: Tout m'appartient!  
Le bourgmestre, sérieusement: Sauf la route qui est à tout le monde.

Prudent: Et dans celle-ci le bois--là où tournent les corbeaux--le marais--que tu reperes à ses reflets--la maison sous le nuage...

Pierre-Auguste:...m'appartient....  
Le bourgmestre: Pas le cimetière!....  
Pierre-Auguste: (...) Merci! Nous tirerons à quatre la maison et le paysage, avec ses nuages, ses ombres, ses oiseaux, le vent et les reflets. (II, 32)
Instead of detracting from the other characters' lyrical élans, the Burgomaster's comical interjections serve to point them out. Rather than annotating a division of the real estate, Pierre-Auguste lightly passes over his proposal to share the property and emphasizes their partition of nature: each one will possess his own clouds, shadows, birds, wind, and reflections. Even when Pierre-Auguste alludes to the more stable part of his inheritance, the trees, he personifies them as "arbres prisonniers." Near the end of the play, Pierre-Auguste projects another vision of nature, a vision quite different from the "solitude" he formerly noticed:

Ah! je me sens déjà tout gaillard!
...Ainsi Pierre-Auguste Hormidas ne mourra plus!...Il verra autour de lui les chênes sortir de terre, pousser du tronc et des branches, cent fois se donner des feuilles et les rejeter cent fois! que la forêt sera, aussi vifs que des jets d'eaux, une assemblée de jets d'arbres!... (II, 113)

These two views of nature serve as imagery giving insight into Pierre-Auguste's perception of reality. Though somewhat fantastic, the imagery of the second account, like that of the first, is literal rather than figurative; neither account includes any abstract elements. Whereas the static imagery of his first account reflects his calm, the kinetic imagery in his second vision manifests his increasing agitation.

Although his lack of restraint prohibits real poetry, Barbulesque exhibits a tentative lyricism in his
identification with external nature:

Si tu regardes cet arbre, si tes mains le touchent, si ton nez odore la fleur de son écorce, si tes oreilles entendent le chuchotement de son feuillage, si tu goûtes son fruit, si tous tes sens sont d'accord devant son évidence, cet arbre-là, tu le connais. Si tu le connais, tu le comprends, si tu le comprends tu le possèdes, si tu le possèdes tu l'aimes et si tu l'aimes, vraiment tu es cet arbre et cet arbre est toi-même. Ou... !

(II, 61)

Like Barbulesque, Muscar is too loquacious, and his lyrical élans usually transgress into a caricature of lyricism. In Act Two, as he watches over Pierre-Auguste, he elaborates,


Muscar's concrete imagery, his rhythm and balanced phrases, his use of repetition and parallelism are reminiscent of poetry. In the preceding quotation, Muscar blends lyricism and humor, but as he reports to Pierre-Auguste on his meeting with Azelle, his words are worthy of a Verlaine:

J'ai vu son coeur sur un océan de larmes—sans faire mentir les mots!—son coeur comme une barque perdue! (Il est pris d'un véritable accès de désespoir et sanglote!) Et toi, maudit!
Muscar admirably expresses his disdain for Pierre-Auguste's treatment of Azelle by his accumulation of sibilant sounds:

J'ai vu son coeur sur un océan...sans...son...

The sharpness of the "u" in "vu" and "sur" creates a sensation of anger, re-enforced by his "consonnes momentanées":

son coeur comme une barque perdue.

His imagery of a "barque perdue" on an "océan de larmes" gives witness to true lyrical restraint, absent from his imagery in the previous quotation. Although he extends his metaphor by suggesting "...je porterai ton chagrin en lieu sûr," he does not exaggerate it and ends on a typically nineteenth century note as he screams, "Maudit!".

Besides the "verbal" and "scenic" lyricism, there is a certain lyricism inherent in the play's themes and Crommelynck's treatment of them. In Azelle/Herminie the two major themes of the play, death and love, unite. According to Gisèle Féal, Azelle represents death to Pierre-Auguste; she cites his dream: "J'ai rêvé...J'étais à la recherche d'Azelle depuis une semaine. En courant, je suis tombé à la rivière. Je me noyais." (II, 59). Féal interprets the river as a feminine symbol: "Pierre-Auguste endormi a été englouti par Azelle." Other allusions in the play indicate that Azelle/Herminie is indeed a fatal
force. When the protagonist tells Muscar that he intends to marry Azelle, the valet warns, "(...). Elle enterrera Votre Majesté...." (II, 98). Although Pierre-Auguste consents to Herminie's visits, he calls her "la plus dangereuse, la dernière pucelle" and even "la diablesse." (II, 99-100).

Just as Froucence and Herminie will serve as substitutes for Azelle, the gold itself becomes a symbol of her, as Pierre-Auguste indicates when he calls it "mes chères Azelles d'or." (II, 41). In Act One, he tells Muscar:

(...). Vois-tu cette pièce, Muscar?
Regarde attentivement l'effigie. Le sourire qui est un aveu, la chevelure tressée en couronne, le front guerrier, le nez aux ailes biseautées, la lèvre ferme et fendue, le menton hardi: c'est Azelle!... (II, 33)

Pierre-Auguste's inability to distinguish one gold piece from another prefigures his eventual confusion of Azelle with Herminie:

(...). Je ne reconnais plus mes pièces parmi les autres!...Les miennes? où sont les miennes? Voici: Azelle partout, Azelle nulle part!...On bien le vil metal s'est change en or au contact de ma précieuse épargne....Notaire? (...). Ou bien l'or n'a pas d'âme, pas de personnalité, pas de prénom. L'or n'a ni larmes ni sourire (...). C'est l'or, l'or, l'or tout dru!...Ni carolus, ni leuia, ni napoléons, ni azelles!...les pièces sont toutes pareilles. Notaire, comment aimerais-tu l'or, si l'or n'a point de visage?...Comment sais-tu que l'or t'appartient, si tu ne l'as ni pleure ni suée?... (II, 41).

The repetition of certain words and phrases and the balance of his sentences as well as his personification of an
inanimate object transform Pierre-Auguste's prose into a lyrical statement on a par with those addressed to the absent Azelle.

Metaphorically, Muscar is right: it is Azelle, rendered into gold by Pierre-Auguste's alchemy, who kills her lover. This is not the death by love ordinarily envisioned by lyric poets, but it is Crommelynck's expressionistic rendering of the idea. Azelle, who never appears in the play, is an elusive figment of the imagination, but the gold represents her scenically as do Herminie and Froumence, all three being visual manifestations of Pierre-Auguste's confused interpretation of his lover.

Not only Azelle but also Herminie threatens Pierre-Auguste with annihilation. Gisèle Féral points out that her name itself evokes a carnivorous animal. Her desire to absorb Pierre-Auguste and consequently to wipe out his existence is expressed in Act Three, when she says,

Je ne vois plus que par tes yeux. 
Ta bouche est le miroir de mon baiser. 
Regarde-moi, Ne te reconnais-tu pas? 
C'est toi-même que tu serres contre toi!
(...). Dis, bien-aimé, ton amour a-t-il
une force égale au mien? Alors, tu es
Herminie, à ton tour? Ne bouge plus.
Permet aussi que je me contemple.
(...). Que tu es majestueuse, Herminie,
dans tes beaux atours!
(...). Hélas, méchant, tu restes pareil
à toi-même. Ces yeux n'ont pas mon regard,
cette bouche n'a pas mon sourire.
Non, tu n'es pas encore Herminie!
(...). On voudrait bercer son bien-aimé,
l'avoir tout petit contre soi...afin d'en
soulever le poids; en faire une miniature
pour le porter tout entier (...). Et c'est
ainsi que se fait l'enfant. (II, 109-110)
Féal interprets Herminie's desire to reduce Pierre-Auguste to a miniature as her dream of incorporating the phallus in order to transform it into a child. Pierre-Auguste sees this as the annihilation of himself in favor of perpetuity. Whereas lyric poets frequently profess their willingness to die of love, Pierre-Auguste fears women and interprets their love for him as being indeed fatal. Such a literal translation of the spirit of lyricism exemplifies Crommelynck's Expressionist tendency to render inner fears into visual, tangible objects and people.

Nearly all the women in the play unite in the protagonist's mind behind the fearful face of Woman. In Act Two, he shouts at the chorus of young girls,

*Allez, femelles! monstres à deux issues dont l'une toujours contredit l'autre. Que le vent d'ouest, retournant leur jupe, en couvre leur tête impudique! (II, 66)*

Like Herminie and like Azelle, as Pierre-Auguste imagines her, these young girls want only to marry and therefore multiply the threat. By their reiteration of an important theme of the play, these girls function lyrically. Rather than bringing something new to the play, they grossly exaggerate an existing theme in Crommelynck's Expressionist rendering of Pierre-Auguste's soul state.

Unable to confront Azelle, Pierre-Auguste momentarily suspends his belief and speaks to Froumence the words he cannot say to Azelle:

*Pierre-Auguste: Je lui dirais: "Je*
n'ai pas mérite de te voir."
Froumence: Elle répondrait: "L'amour n'est pas une récompense."

Pierre-Auguste: Et je dirais, comme le pitre: "Celui qui accepte les dons de l'amour au-delà de ce qu'il peut rendre commet un vol."
Froumence: Et elle répondrait: "Et s'il me plaît à moi d'être volée?"

Pierre-Auguste: Et moi, "Tu te plains? Je me volais moi-même quand j'étais accroché à ma table, comme une huître à son banc!"
Froumence: Et elle: "Il ne fallait pas. Je ne demandais rien que l'amour qui nourrit l'amour."
(II, 78)

As Pierre-Auguste loses himself in his role, he jumps toward Froumence and takes her in his arms: "Ah! oui, oui, Azelle...Azelle, fraîcheur de ma vie!" (II, 78). The preposterous situation lends itself well to farce; Pierre-Auguste and Froumence as actors are quite humorous, but the play within the play is not farcical. It is a lyrical dialogue between lovers.

On another level this scene serves a lyrical purpose: it prefigures the last scene of the play in which Pierre-Auguste marries Azelle through the proxy Herminie. It is a visual image manifesting Pierre-Auguste's ambiguity, an image that culminates in the marriage scene. Similar to the play within the play, the marriage scene is an artificial arrangement. Herminie wears a gown borrowed from the "Théâtre-Volant." As Azelle's proxy, she is not really a bride, and Pierre-Auguste only pretends to marry her.

In a brief moment of tenderness, he even confuses
their names:

(...) Azimie! toi et moi sommes
unis comme le bois et la corde d'un
arc bien tendu pour mille flèches vers
l'avenir. Hermazelle, rien qu'à pro-
noncer ton nom, je me sens fondre tout
entier autour de mon coeur (...).
(II, 110)

As Herminie serves as a visual manifestation of Azelle, she is an expressionist rendering of Pierre-Auguste's subconscious mental image of his lover. As long as she remains suppressed, Pierre-Auguste can speak of her with affection, but her manifestation elicits fear. By showing these two faces of the male-female relationship, Crommelynck reveals his protagonist's inner stress. As a literal manifestation of a psychic phenomenon, "Azimie" is a creature of expressionism.

Immediately after the marriage ceremony, Pierre-Auguste expels the gold. Convinced by Barbulesque that he should not perpetuate his race, he delivers from his body the gold as a substitute for the semen which would have passed on his "hérité." Such an act further reveals his mental dilemma as it serves as a gross expressionist symbol. References throughout the play to his inability to face Azelle foreshadow this scene and function thus as a leitmotif reaching a point of culmination coincident with the dramatic climax. Just as the lyrical novel, according to Ralph Freedman, absorbs action and refashions it as a pattern of imagery, the lyrical play moves toward a point of greatest intensity at which the poet's vision is realized. The
playwright foreshadows the events of the last scene throughout the play. In Act One, soon after Pierre-Auguste has expressed his intention to meet with Azelle, he says,

Qu'un bonheur ne vienne pas ici...pas aujourd'hui...Quoi, supplie-la de me laisser deux ou trois jours de recueillement, de méditation. (II, 45)

In Act Two, he sends for her again but soon orders Froumence, "Toi, va contremander Azelle!" (II, 75). As his fear of her arrival increases, he adds, "Mais qu'Azelle vienne, et je suis perdu!" (II, 76). Act Two ends as Pierre-Auguste hears Azelle's knock at the door. Crommelynck indicates,


Similarly, Pierre-Auguste tries to avoid Herminie:

Pierre-Auguste: Je me sens pris pour toi d'une tendresse toute particulière. Viens me voir, Herminie, demain ou après, la semaine prochaine.
Herminie: Demain, demain...
Pierre-Auguste: Ou après... (II, 66)

Unable to relegate her to the recesses of his mind, Pierre-Auguste must suffer her demonstrations of affection. In Act Two, she tells him, "J'ai besoin de douces paroles dans toutes les heures de ma vie, comme de pain avec tous mes aliments." (II, 67). Just as Azelle is never present, Herminie wants to be ever-present. Her comparison of "douces paroles" with the bread she eats further reflects
Pierre-Auguste's fear that he will be absorbed and thereby annihilated by her. Although he likes to pretend to hold lyrical dialogues with Azelle, he wants to foreshorten such lyrical éclats when they become reality:

        Herminie: (....) Ah! je te revois; bien-aimé! J'ai langui tout le jour après toi. Comblie de fois ai-je parcouru en esprit l'espace qui nous sépare? Mille fois plutôt que cent?.... Tant que je me sens lasse à mourir! Soutiens-moi, mon cher trésor!
        Pierre-Auguste: Fermons la porte!
        Herminie: Pourquoi? Si j'avais autant de voix que de cheveux, tous les échos de la terre crierait au ciel mon amour! J'irais comme une mendiantе le chanter sur les routes, dans les cours, et les hommes me jeteraient par les fenêtres leur fortune jusqu'au dernier sou!
        Pierre-Auguste: Mais... (II, 108-109)

Since Herminie is actually Azelle's proxy, this dialogue demonstrates Pierre-Auguste's desire to silence his lover. It is a visual and verbal manifestation of his subconscious confrontation with Azelle, and as it reveals his innermost self, it produces a scene of lyrical expressionism.

Pierre-Auguste is not without a lyrical penchant of his own, as the following monologue exemplifies:

        "Ah! ah! ah! Azelle, doux muguet, mon réséda, petite femme de bonne odeur, je dormirai dans un lit large, contre toi!....Exile du sommeil natal!...Depuis trois ans, pas une nuit où dormir 'a sa suffisance!...Qu'on garnisse notre lit de quatre matelas bien fourrés de duvet, de laine, de varech, et de fougères.... Quatre...pas un de moins!....Et par tes feuilles d'ambre, Forêt-tisseuse-de-silence-damasse, par tes algues, Mer-
des-mille-hamac ou berçait mon enfance
ses rêves migrateurs, par la toison de
tes troupeaux harcelés d'insectes.
Prairie-des-deux-rosées, par les plumes
de tes ailes doublées de brises, Ciel-
oiseleur, vous nous composerez un som-
meil spacieux comme un monde ou nous
irons, nous rêvant!...Ah! Ah! Ah! Azelle!
chaque jour nous mangerons, aimerons,
dormirons, pour le jour même et pour la
veille!...Et quand le passe sera rassasié,
ous festoierons pour le jour même et pour le lendemain. (II, 28-29)

As Pierre-Auguste speaks of love, he directs his words to the absent lover, Azelle. In his sensuous vision of their future together, he foresees a fantastic dream-voyage, by which the "exilé du sommeil natal" proposes that he and his lover recuperate the past, "ou berçait (son) enfance."

These elements of a rather romantic lyricism, though expressed in prose, are sustained by Crommelynckian "extended-noun-images" such as "Mer-des-mille-hamac." By both his form and his subject, Pierre-Auguste indulges in a genuine lyricism.

But it is monologue and not dialogue in which the protagonist speaks thus. This is a suitable and even traditional device, according to Jacques Sherer, who says of it, "(...) sa fonction essentielle est de permettre l'expression lyrique du sentiment." N. Ruvet, in fact, explains the difference between monologue and dialogue by the monologue's prerogative to become lyrical and to admit certain poetic forms, and T. S. Eliot lists the poet talking to himself or to nobody and the poet talking to an audience as two of the three voices of poetry. Crommelynck
uses the monologue lyrically but adds another dimension. Since Pierre-Auguste never allows Azelle to appear, he can only speak to her in monologues or by substituting someone else for his absent lover. The monologue thus further reflects his inability to speak overtly to Azelle and serves as yet another example of his mental dilemma, his ambiguous attitude towards love. It functions lyrically in two respects: Pierre-Auguste reveals his personal aptitude for poetic expression, and Crommelynck demonstrates, by the dichotomy between the thoughts expressed in his protagonist’s monologues and his actions revealing the contrary, the inner turmoil of the main character.

Periodically in the play, Pierre-Auguste envisions Azelle, and, although his words are usually directed to another character, they are, in essence, monologues evoking images of his lover. In Act One, he says,

"Je l'ai presque oubliée depuis trois ans que je peine pour elle... Est-elle grave encore devant les miroirs en dénouant sa chevelure? Etire-t-elle les bras et le regard en soupirant à son image? Détourne-t-elle le visage? Baisse-t-elle les paupières? A-t-elle de l'amour douce honte ou douce fierté? (II, 34)

In Act Two, he evokes the past:

"Rappelle-lui, Froïmence, que nous n'avions gardé dans la mémoire de toutes les saisons de jadis, hivers, printemps, étés, que le souvenir d'une seule journée heureuse, immense, immobile et sans fin. Qu'elle bénisse donc nos traverses: la vie serait trop brève s'il n'y avait pas les séparations! (II, 79)"
He frequently projects a scene of the future, of possible experience, a peculiarly lyrical emotion. In Act One, he tells Muscar:

Eh!...Dis-lui que chaque matin on lui portera au lit du thé de fleurs avec du fromage d'un lait d'octobre, au goût de gramineé, trait après la troisième portée. (II, 35-36).

Pierre-Auguste evokes scenes, sometimes detailed, of love with Azelle. Although he seems frequently to long for her, the elusive Azelle never materializes, nor does he want her to be anything more than the remote lover of a nebulous existence. Such evocations allow the protagonist brief moments of lyrical speculation, but the events of the play reveal the hidden turmoil inherent in Crommelynck's perception of love.

As Pierre-Auguste marries Herminie, his proxy Muscar goes off to marry Azelle. By this exchange of roles, Muscar and Pierre-Auguste declare themselves counterparts, Muscar serving as an extension of his master's personality. The servant has already admitted his attraction for Azelle and angrily denounces Pierre-Auguste for avoiding her. As a unit, the two men represent one man divided against himself, wanting love but fearing it. René Leibowitz calls the portrayal of psychological conflicts one of the "données traditionnelles par excellence de l'art lyrique." Muscar, as a symbol, in the flesh, of Pierre-Auguste, is yet another exteriorization of the protagonist's inner conflict and, as such, is an element of expressionism.
Perhaps because of Crommelynck's expressionistic exaggeration of the ludicrous, critics refer to *Tripes d'Or* as a farce, but as the play focuses on the essentially lyric and tragic theme of death, one cannot be content with this definition. As the play begins, the theme of death is announced by the chorus of women, who recount that the old Hormidas has recently died and who believe that his nephew and heir, Pierre-Auguste, has also died. His actual death at the end of the play realizes their previous misconception. By thus framing the play with the deaths of the old Hormidas and his heir, Crommelynck creates a formal orderliness, a unity of construction, which makes the first death appear related to the second. Similarly, the false announcement of Pierre-Auguste's death at the first of the play prefigures his actual death at the end. This unity creates the effect of a lyric poem; instead of the narration of a progressive action, Crommelynck presents a view of a state of being, which, as Barbulesque explains, is perpetual. Rather than beginning at one point, progressing, and ending elsewhere, the action of the play moves in a circle. As Muscar cries out at the end, "Tripes d'Or est mort!"; the crowd cheers, "Vive Tripes d'Or!" (II, 122), thus implying the uninterrupted continuity of a cycle as well as alluding to Pierre-Auguste's royal pretensions.

When Pierre-Auguste insists that the gold inherited from his uncle is his "hérité" and not his "héritage," he confirms his place in the perpetual cycle:
Herédité. Cet argent m'est venu de mes ancêtres avec la coqueluche et la rougeole et les poquettes, la cataracte et le tintouin...la fièvre, la goutte, la boulimie et la pepie, le sel, le sucre, les acides, l'eau et le feu, les vents et les vapeurs... (II, 90)

By swallowing the gold, he actually transforms inheritance into heredity; his body now possesses the gold like a full set of genetic characteristics inherited from his ancestors. As he expels the gold, his cousin, Mélina, claims it, and the smooth course of the cycle begins again. The acts of swallowing and expelling the gold are expressionistic "theatrical" metaphors, visual or scenic images revealing Pierre-Auguste's attitude towards his gold. By their outrageousness, these acts belong to expressionism or to what one might call "farcical expressionism" because they are designed to point out humorously man's folly, and by their technical function as scenic images revealing Pierre-Auguste's inner feelings, these acts belong to lyricism.

Not only is the play framed by death, but references to death recur throughout the three acts. In the first scenes, Hormidas's death and Pierre-Auguste's inert body preoccupy the characters. Dialogue alternates between Barbu's farcical prescriptions and the women's allusions to Pierre-Auguste, who they believe is dying. Speculations about Hormidas's will serve a comic purpose, but at the same time maintain the subject of death in the fore. Even the will itself provides humor, just as does Villon's Testament. Muscar reads,
"Ceci est mon testament: 1° Je lègue à mon neveu Blaise Frison, du village de Boilemme, mon dernier soupir dont il gonflera une grosse vessie de porc et l'accrochera au-dessus de sa porte, au bout d'un bâton, afin que les passants disent "voici le dernier soupir du vieil Hormidas, après lequel Frison languit long-temps et qui, à la fin, lui est échu." (II, 23)

When Méлина hears what she has inherited, her reply similarly treats death humorously:

N'hérite pas qui a porté contre le défunt une accusation calomnieuse.
Dent pour dent. Le défunt me calomnie, je fais un procès au mort. (II, 24).

The Burgomaster, too, amuses as he reacts to Hormidas's will:

Oh! Oh! Oh! Je dégage ma responsabilité. Il demeurera en terre maudite, à côté du cimetière où sont les honnêtes morts. (II, 25).

In Act Three, images of death become less humorous and even somewhat sinister, as Pierre-Auguste tells Froumence,

(....) La vie se nourrit de soi-même. et s'engendre, comme dit Barbulesque. Aujourd'hui, les vers grouillent dans ces carcasses prolifères. Il y a là de quoi engraisser une basse-cour, de quoi dépeupler un étang. (II, 90)

When Pierre-Auguste tells the cousins he has no gold left, they become pale and faint, expressionistically signifying their death:

(....) Eh! tu vas pas t'évanouirl'....
Froumence, vivement, ouvre les portes, les fenêtres (....) Et toi aussi, ma chère, tu te meurs? (....) (Il lui envoie des tapes aux joues, énergiquement comme pour la faire revenir. Elles proteste à peine d'une main lâche.)
Patience, Prudent, je te soignerai dans un instant. (....) Oh! oh! Méлина,
petite cousine!...Reviens à toi (...).
Hélas! à peine lui pousse-t-il une
âme qu'elle semble vouloir la rendre.
(II, 91-92).

The appearance of the cousins in this scene creates a visual image of death, re-enforced by Pierre-Auguste's references to their death-like state. As expressionism turns the inner world out, their death-like appearance shows that they feel dead when they hear the protagonist's bad news. Even allusions to the gold produce in this scene imagery of human burial: "L'argent est enterré vif!" (II, 92).

Later in this act, Pierre-Auguste tries to convince Mélina to poison Prudent and Frison:

Mélina, toi, qui connais les herbes bonnes et mauvaises, compose-leur un bouillon d'onze heures! quelque poudre de succession: Ma fortune à toi, tout entière! (II, 94)

He suggests to Froumence a method for killing Muscar:

Ecoute, Froumence, je ferai de mon cœur une pierre et te donnerai un peu d'argent. Cours au marché tout à l'heure, fais emplette d'une livre de champignons, morilles ou autres, auxquels tu ajouteras ceux que tu iras cueillir au pied des arbres, tout près. (....) Tu me comprends? (II, 95).

When Muscar returns, Pierre-Auguste repeatedly threatens him with a pistol, in a visualization of his verbal allusions to murder. Finally, he appeals to Muscar to kill the cousins:

Pierre-Auguste: Muscar, c'est la guerre entre mes cousins et moi.... Débarrasse-moi de tous ces gueux....
Commence par Mélina! (.....)
Muscari (.....). Elle mourra de mes mains! (.....)
Pierre-Auguste: Monte une échelle à ta chambre, ouvre la fenêtre et cache-toi. Dès qu'elle rentre, tu bondis! Et tu me bascules la mègre par-dessus bord, la tête en bas sur le pêve de la cour. (.....) (II, 101-102)

Pierre-Auguste's suggestions of murder are always accompanied by vivid descriptions of the projected act. As in Le Cuc magnifique, images of murder replace traditional imagery of death as Crommelynck, the expressionist, reveals the violent, usually repressed, emotions of human nature. As these verbal images are re-enforced by visual images on the stage—by the 'cousins' swoon and by Pierre-Auguste's pistol threats—they create a constant view of death, and such images culminate in the final scene of the play with the death of the main character.

In both Acts One and Two, Muscar describes Hor-midas's death, which serves him as a source of amusing speculations. The first time he reviews it, the old man's death plays only a small role in the anecdote. He evokes instead a Molièresque scene in which husband and wife quarrel:

Il y a trois jours, j'étais chez le maréchal-ferrant avec Saida, la jument, qui boitait. Froumence accourt: "Muscar, le vieil homme s'est pendu!" Tu mens, tu veux me ramener à la maison! Non, mon cher trésor, crois-moi, le vieux s'est pendu!—Tais-toi, monstre, avale ta langue double!—La-dessus, je lui enonce le poing dans la bouche pour y tasser les mensonges! (II, 29-30)
In Act Two, he recreates the scene of Hormidas's death for Pierre-Auguste:

Muscar: (...) Pendu l'ancêtre! J'entre dans sa chambre, votre oncle au bout de sa corde. Parfait! une semaine de perdue et un enterrement.

Pierre-Auguste: Oui, oui, je le sais, --tu radotes!

Muscar: Le vieux satyre tout nu au bout de sa corde!

Pierre-Auguste: Tout nu?

Muscar: Tout nu!

Pierre-Auguste: Au bout de sa corde?

Muscar: Ah! Ah! Quelle indécence!

(II, 49)

Even as he amuses, Muscar repeatedly places the image of a dead man before our eyes. At the end of the play, the image becomes "real" as Pierre-Auguste dies on his "chaise-percée" in an undignified position appropriate to the broadest kind of farce; it is a death, in fact, so exaggerated in its ridiculousness that its humor is violent, as is to be expected of the Expressionist theatre. In the words of Suzanne Lilar, "The laughter ends in a death rattle." This dichotomy of farce and seriousness, in the dialogue as well as in the events, results in what André Berger calls the "tournillon lyrico-burlesque de l'action." It is a suitable epithet for Crommelynck's Expressionist style. Although handled humorously, the theme of death belongs traditionally to tragedy and to lyricism. Whereas the characters of farce and comedy encounter all sorts of dangers and problems, seldom do they confront death. Where else in comedy or in farce does the main character die in the course of the play? Only one
character in *Tripes d'Or* reminds us of conventional decorum: "Ne riez pas, s'il y a un mort!" (II, 15).

The fatigue and sleep that periodically overcome Pierre-Auguste prefigure, as does his faint at the first of the play, his death. In Act Two, he says,

Oh! oh! oh! Le sommeil me guette!... Je vais tomber endormi...
Vite, vite, le sommeil m'assaille! (..) Ah! c'est affreux. J'ai la tête légère comme une coque de noix!... Muscar, c'est toi? Au secours, Muscar!... Délivre-moi du sommeil!... Je ne veux pas dormir! (II, 58-59)

His subsequent dream predicts his death, and later in Act Two, just after Pierre-Auguste discusses his will, he once again is irresistibly drawn by sleep: "J'ai sommeil, sommeil, sommeil, toujours." (II, 80). Inasmuch as sleep symbolizes Pierre-Auguste's impending death, it serves a lyrical function. As images of death accumulate, they are surging towards greater intensity, thereby revealing not new events but the significance of existing events. Pierre-Auguste's death reveals the significance of his dreams as well as the significance of the repeated evocations of death; it is the point of greatest intensity of the death imagery.

As Pierre-Auguste contemplates approaching death, he expresses his desire for physical renewal. He addresses Barbulessque:

Veux-tu me greffer des glandes?...
Veux-tu me greffer des glandes? (...). J'étais bien naïf quand je demandais à l'argent, en retour de mes sacrifices,
seulement notre temps perdu, celui d'Azelle et le mien, soit notre double jeunesse!...Ah! dérisoire!...Ce que je revendique, à présent, c'est ma jeunesse d'abord, et la jeunesse des autres, et l'éternelle jeunesse du monde!...Veux-tu me greffer des glandes? (II, 113)

Pierre-Auguste's wish for a gland graft invests his longing with humorous imagery, more appropriate to farce than to lyricism. Nonetheless, certain parts of the passage reflect a truly lyrical temperament: his nostalgic glance at the past and his desire for a personal renaissance lead him to a contemplation of time's victimization of man in general. As Pierre-Auguste enlarges his original concept and expands it to a universal level, he illustrates the notion that "Poetry begins with the self but leads to its depersonalization." He progresses from his personal regret of the passage of time to that of "les autres" and finally to a revindication of "l'éternelle jeunesse du monde."

Barbulesque's parody of Genesis similarly blends humor and lyricism. He explains to Pierre-Auguste:

Le Grand Économé le fit aussitôt venir:
"Il te suffisait de te connaître pour être. Pourquoi as-tu osé la chose inutile? Le superflu m'est contraire. Sache-le. Que le péché désormais te soit nécessaire. Tu devras mourir pour vivre. (...) A l'instant, de ses foudres, il coupa Adam en millions de petits morceaux. Adam, comme un ver qui n'était plus nul. À chaque tronçon, il donna une forme et un visage et il dit: "Ne vous rejoignez plus! Vivez chacun! Croisisez et multipliez!" (...) Et voilà des millions de petits Adam forniquaillant par le monde. Or, la mémoire ayant été hachée mène avec le reste, les parties perdirent le souvenir de l'ensemble. Et pour mieux les séparer
encore, le Père leur envoya deux grandes Lumières qui les éblouirent. Le Temps avec sa faux et la Personnalité avec son masque. Et Dieu conclut: "Chacun aura son nom et son âge!"

(...). De sorte qu'après cela le grand Adam ne pouvait plus se reconnaître, même quand tous les petits hommes assis en rond sur leur derrière se regardaient en même temps.

(...). Il en usa de même avec les bêtes et les plantes à cause du serpent et de l'arbre. Ainsi, de l'éternel procède le perpétuel. C'est fini. (II, 114-115)

His epithet for God—the Grand Economé—immediately cleanses the imagery of emotional associations, just as his simile in which he compares man to a worm cut up into millions of little slices amuses by the mockery of its image. The mental picture evoked of millions of little Adams fornicking around the world prohibits the grandiose view that the Judeo-Christian religion traditionally holds of man's being only a little lower than the angels. In the middle of his explanation, however, Barbulesque forsakes parody and opts for poetry. As his vocabulary becomes more abstract, his imagery loses its burlesque appeal. The humor fades as his metaphor explaining memory's division into different parts replaces his more concrete imagery of man's division into worms. In his personification of Time with its scythe and Personality with its mask, Barbulesque moves completely out of the realm of parody and allows himself a moment of lyrical speculation. During this part of his monologue, he exchanges his pragmatic "Grand Economé" for the more emotional "Père" and "Dieu." When he subsequently refers
to the little men seated on their behinds, he readapts his imagery to the demands of the farce.

Crommelynck frequently camouflages the seriousness of the dialogue with burlesque humor. The apparent naïveté of characters such as Barbulesque, Muscar, and even Pierre-Auguste renders them humorous but at the same time poignant. It is a bitter-sweet life at best, they seem to say, and it is the juxtaposition of the bitter and the sweet that characterizes their lyrical perception of the human condition.

By showing Pierre-Auguste how he fits into the scheme of things, Barbulesque convinces him to choose the perpetual rather than the eternal; instead of procreating and thus passing on the "hérité" ad infinitum, Pierre-Auguste will die. "Tu seras le mort éternel." (II, 115). It is the appeal of Barbulesque's logic that persuades Pierre-Auguste to expel his gold in the "chaise-perçée" and consequently to die. As Crommelynck focuses on the physical act of defecation, broad farce and expressionist exaggeration obscure Pierre-Auguste's emotional dilemma and subsequent resolution to give up his worldly goods. Certainly the theme of man's desire for eternal life and his fear of death does not belong to farce; the theme is lyrical.

The playwright uses all the theatrical devices at his command to lyricize the farce: chorus, symbols, motifs, verse, and scenic images of thematic significance.
As Crommelynck divulges Pierre-Auguste's interior anguish over love and death, he expressionistically recreates the world from the protagonist's viewpoint. Herminie, in her ugliness and overbearing manner, is only too real a manifestation of Womankind, nature's surrogate set on reproducing the species at the expense of Man. Nonetheless, Pierre-Auguste longs for her, longs for Woman, in the amorphous, elusive Azelle. As his counterpart, Muscar reaches out for her while the protagonist holds back. In his Azelle-centered monologues, Pierre-Auguste reveals his lyrical penchant, and, in his speculations on death, he lyrically expands his personal preoccupations into a universal concept.
REFERENCES


5. Féal, p. 325.


14. Freedman, p. 188.
D. B. Wyndham Lewis finds that Carine best expresses the "essential Crommelynck, his autumnal mysticism, his pity and his 'brutality'." It is in this play, according to Lewis, that Crommelynck best masters "poignant, beautiful language."

A large part of this play, the tragedy of a white soul (recalling the Lady in Comus) surrounded by satyrs and wounded to death, is pure poetry; even the mephistophelian Uncle sometimes speaks it, even the masks pursuing each other through their lustful bacchanal. The prose whip-cracks of bitterness and insult exchanged by Carine's unhappy mother and her lover, the Marquis (sic), the grinning cynicism of the Groom and the Housekeeper, the shameless lovemaking of the Uncle and Nancy, the Walpurgis-like rout of the masked ball--Crommelynck has elsewhere exploited the mask very deftly--form a dark background against which the figure of Carine, happy or heartbroken, shines a pure flame.

It is the purpose of this study to illuminate the "pure poetry" of which Lewis writes and, beyond that, to show how apparently non-lyrical dialogues and motifs serve, in fact, a lyrical function. Since the basic lyrical theme of the play is Carine and Frédéric's love, references to their dialogue will precede a quick look at the poetry spoken by the "mephistophelian Uncle." The rest of the study will attempt to show the relation of the motifs of the hunt, the
masquerade, and the pavilion, as well as of the dialogue of certain other scenes, to the main themes of love and death.

The basic outline of the play suggests lyricism: a passionate and perfect love going awry, looking for consolation in death. As love eludes him, Frédéric, like Louison, looks to the past, an image of which he recreates as a refuge from the present:

Tu te souviens,—c'était la dernière promenade avant qu'on nous sépare, sur cette avenue de fête nocturne où notre long et même baiser reliait les arbres aux arbres comme une guirlande. Je me suis agenouillé soudain devant toi au milieu de la foule. Carine! Les gens riaient. Et toi, heureuse et intimidée, tu me suppliais, répétant une expression revenue de ton enfance: "Frédéric, je suis toute rougie!" Ma chérie, ce ne sont pas des regrets: tu es là! (II, 200)

Unable to find consolation in either the past or the present, Frédéric envisions the future as a possible refuge:

Nous partirons ce soir même. Demain, j'arrêterai les passants dans la rue. "Vous ne savez pas qui est cette belle jeune fille? C'est Carine, celle que j'aime. Elle prétend m'aimer aussi—elle le dit, l'écrit, le pleure! et si j'en doute c'est pour avoir à la gagner chaque jour, à la mériter encore." (II, 200)

Carine, too, nostalgically recounts the past as a "paradis perdu":

"Moi,—lorsque tu m'avais quittée, je demeurais longtemps à ma fenêtre, dans la nuit. On nous avait appris en classe comment on lance dans l'espace un triangle pour mesurer l'éloignement des astres..
Renouvelant le jeu des amoureux, je calculais ainsi la grandeur de notre séparation, d'une étoile choisie à ta maison. Aussitôt il n'était plus de distance, --tu étais avec moi, contre moi, en moi. J'inventais une géométrie où la candeur, comme aussi le sentiment, peut entrer. (II, 205)

She feels that nature has recorded their love and is sympathetic.

Aujourd'hui, il faut oublier le bonheur qu'à deux on peut faire d'une belle journée. J'espère qu'un peu de notre âme est dans le paysage, pour le printemps et l'été des autres, et qu'ils trembleront d'un mystérieux émoi en passant dans les lieux où je t'ai tant aimé. (II, 206)

As Lewis notes, the Uncle, too, is capable of lyrical expression. Although insincere, his words nonetheless nostalgically evoke the past when he says to Nency,

Souviens-toi du clair dimanche en dentelles, quand des toits à la rue les pigeons transmettaient tous les messages de l'azur. Et de l'après-midi dédaigneux qui semblait à jamais endormi derrière un immobile masque d'or. (II, 187)

His personification of the day, "dimanche en dentelles," extends from the first part into the second part of his image, in which he alludes to "l'après-midi dédaigneux." Like Louison's word pictures, his evocations concentrate on nature rather than on people, and the colors blue and gold dominate his images. As he continues talking to Nency in this scene, the Uncle speaks the most lyrical passages of the play.

Although the theme of love dominates the play,
the lyrical theme of death prevails at the play's end, and, in the course of the action, certain dialogue and events serve as harbingers of the final scene. In the very first few lines, Christine's attitude contrasts with the festive occasion. As Nency enters, Christine says, "Pardon--je n'embrasse plus: ma bouche est morte." (II, 130). Upset over Carine's marriage, Christine imagines nature similarly morbid:

Le parc est pourri! Tout est ruine, écroulement, décombres--mon coeur aussi.
De la fange sous les feuilles tombées.
Le vent d'aujourd'hui n'a pas de force
pour balayer tout cela,--le soleil est vieux. (II, 130)

When she adds, "La contagion a gagné la noce et la chasse" (II, 131), she prophetically alludes to the disease that will infest Carine's love and consequently kill her. In the first scene between Carine and Frédéric, Carine extends the imagery of disease when she says, "Alors vraiment, ce n'est pas à cause de notre mariage que ta mère est devenue malade tout à coup?" (II, 149).

When Frédéric loses his watch with Carine's portrait in it, he explains to the Uncle,

Vous me trouvez vain de me soucier de la perte d'un portrait dont je possède le modèle? Je suis superstitieux...N'en parlons plus...Et à tout dire j'attache à cet objet la vertu d'une amulette, d'un talisman, d'une relique. de tendresse! Cette montre a marqué "mes heures." (II, 178)

The loss of both his watch, his "heures," and Carine's portrait prefigures his impending loss of her as well as of
his own life. Seen in this perspective, events function lyrically, not only as they relate to a lyrical subject—death—but also in their technical aspect. Both the allusions to disease and the loss of the watch create images of death which culminate in the deaths of the main characters at the end of the play. They are various aspects of a singular motif.

As love and death are united in Carine and Frédéric's experience, the motif of the hunt unites them imagistically. The "satyrs" surrounding Carine relate directly to the main themes; they are not mere background setting Carine in relief. Both the hunt and the masquerade serve as visual metaphors of Carine's situation. As the play begins, Nency, Christine, and the Uncle appear on stage in hunting clothes; the horns of the hunt intersperse their references to Carine's wedding night. Christine seems surprised that Nency wants to see Carine: "Attendre Carine? Tu veux regarder ses yeux tandis qu'ils sont fraîchement blessés?" (II, 130). "Wounded" is a word more appropriately applicable to the hunters' quarry than to Carine. As the girls' conversation alternates between references to Carine and allusions to the hunt, Christine remarks, "Ecoute! Deux jours que leur clameur poursuit la bête. Oh qu'elle meure vite! Qu'elle meure avec ses larmes et les miennes!" (II, 131). The pronoun "Leur" refers to the hunters who will later materialize and literally hound Carine to death; Christine's choice of the feminine noun "bête," instead of
the more specific and masculine name of the hunted animal, invests her sentence with double imagery. It is of Carine that she is thinking as she alludes to the hunt, and it is Carine that dies whereas the hunters' quarry apparently eludes them. As the other characters attribute angelic characteristics to Carine, the Groom speaks of the hunted animal as her diametrical opposite: "Et cette bête, cette maudite bête, qui se fait remplacer toujours. Il y a du diable en elle!" (II, 136). As the hunt has lasted the same amount of time that Frédéric and Carine have spent in their wedding chamber, the parallel extends to another plane. Near the end of the play, as Frédéric tries to reassemble the pieces of Carine's letter, the hunting horns "recommencent leur mélancolique dialogue" (II, 229). Mis-interpreting the evidence before him, Frédéric screams, "qu'elle meure!" (II, 229), as the hunting horns sound in the background.

When Christine says, "Ce n'est plus la bête qu'ils traquent mais leur désir plus rapide" (II, 131), she evokes lovers as well as hunters. Although overtly referring to the hunters, she has just been giving Nency an account of Carine's wedding night, and the word "desire" fits more accurately into her description of the lovers than of the hunters. Her exclamation "À la curée!" (II, 131) can also be applied literally to the quarry as well as figuratively to Carine.

As Christine verbally evokes Carine's victimization,
the Uncle overtly demonstrates the same theme. The hunting horns sound just as he kisses the unwilling Nency, and hunting terminology invades his language when he tries to seduce her; he calls her mouth "le piège de (son) coeur" (II, 187), and later, when she describes the Uncle's pavilion to Carine, she says, "II m'a prise, Il m'a prise au piège." (II, 161). During the bacchanal, a male domino uses the same imagery when he asks a female, "(...) te refereras-tu sur moi comme les ressorts d'un piège?" (II, 182). References to Carine's wedding night punctuate the Uncle's seduction of Nency, who serves, like the "bête," as a "type" of Carine. The parallel between the two girls, oddly enough, results from their contrast; the Uncle implies a comparison to Carine when he tells Nency,

"Ce qui me plaît, c'est que tu n'as aucun halo, pas d'aurore. Ta beauté m'apparaît en son intégrité, évidente, massive." (II, 133–134)

The Uncle makes the comparison more explicit when Nency refers to Carine as "la jeune fille folle de son âme" and he replies, "Et toi, qui n'as pas d'âme (...)" (II, 132). Nency acknowledges her identification with Carine when she agrees with the Uncle that she, indeed, would like to be under the lovers' bed, "à cause, surtout, de la jeune fille folle de son âme." (II, 132). In Nency's description of her affair with Frédéric, she specifies her role as a "type" of Carine: "C'est à toi qu'il pensait, c'est toi seule qu'il voyait à travers moi (...)" (II, 214).
The Uncle extends the "animal" imagery to Nency as he tries to seduce her: "Tu es contente? Rien que des yeux de belle couleur, une bouche nue—et cette forme noblement animale" (II, 134). Nency lives up to the Uncle's expectations; like a hungry animal before food, she licks her lips while visualizing the wedding night of Carine and Frédéric. Frédéric, too, approximates a tracked animal. As Christine mentions his previous rendezvous with Carine, she describes him going over the wall to meet his lover. Like an animal, he must slip away into the forest to avoid detection.

Allusions to the hunt give rise to recurring imagery of blood. The Uncle remarks to Nency, "Deux fois déjà j'ai vu ton sang susceptible rougir ta gorge." He continues, "...Ah! notre sang, quelle engeance!" (II, 133). The Groom introduces a more violent aspect of this imagery when he announces, "Deux cavaliers se sont heurtés en pleine course, sur un obstacle (...). Les chiens sont crevés: il a fallu en saigner trois!" (II, 136). When the Mother appears on stage, Carine touches her shoulder and cries, "Tu saignes!...Tu es blessée?..." (II, 151). When Christine begs Carine's forgiveness, she bites her hand and later says, "Cette seule goutte de ton sang, dont je garde le goût, est comme un miel à mon coeur qui te cherche." (II, 190). In addition to literal blood and wounds, Frédéric evokes figurative: "Je ne sais rien de plus, sinon que cette plaie restera vive, quand Carine
viendrait, chaque matin d'une longue vie, l'emboumer de ses douces mains (II, 183). This imagery of blood, derived from the hunt, is closely related to the main theme: Nency flushes with envy and excitement when she hears of Carine's lovemaking, the Mother is wounded when she vengefully throws her horse on that of her lover, and Christine bites Carine's hand because she is in love with her. Even Frédéric's figurative wound is a result of sorrow in love. The motif of the hunt does not merely provide local color, nor is it simply a vicious Expressionist background putting Carine in relief. The imagery associated with the hunt is an integral part of the main themes of love and death. As the play progresses, Carine's role parallels more and more precisely the role of the tracked animal; it is Carine, instead of the "bête," who falls prey to the hunting party. By reiterating the main themes, the hunt serves a lyrical purpose as well as a dramatic one. The hunt's metaphoric suggestiveness, in the words of Ralph Freedman, expands the main themes just as imagery does in poetry. As for the drama, for the action of the play, the hunt is merely decorative; it is not part of a consecutive action leading logically to a masquerade which leads logically to a death. Instead, the hunt metaphorically illustrates the violence inherent in the main themes.

As day falls, the hunters exchange their hunting costumes for dominoes, and the hunt metamorphoses into a bacchanal, a lyrical elaboration on the same theme. The
Groom recounts to the Housekeeper an anecdote which illustrates the close connection between the violence evoked by the hunt and the lustful pursuit of the dominoes:

Ecoute, une fois, j'ai vu deux hommes, deux vrais assassins, rouler à terre, agrippés, et se battre pour se tuer,—lentement. L'un mordait une oreille, l'autre retournait un œil, et tout cela sans un "hahan", sans un "ouf".

(...)

Les témoinz regardaient,—et moi, avec eux, médusés, les jambes prises dans des lianes. Plus tard, il a presque fallu les massacer pour les arracher l'un à l'autre, comme s'ils étaient soudés par toutes leurs blessures.

(...)

C'est les gens, ce soir, qui m'y font repenser. (II, 219).

As Carine succumbs to the influence of the world around her, she too puts on a domino, an act which signifies not only her participation in the masquerade but also her role as victim of the hunt. As the Housekeeper helps her out of the costume, she says to Carine,

J'enlève le domino. Madame n'aura pas d'air là-dessous,—c'est de la loutre; ce qu'il y a de plus chaud. Les bêtes sont bien heureuses d'être habillées comme ça, tant qu'on ne le leur enlève pas. (II, 215).

Carine, unable to breathe, dressed in animal skins, provides a visual image realizing and epitomizing the imagery of the hunt. As the costume resembles those worn by the other dominoes, the imagery of the hunt blends with that of the masquerade. The animal, hunted by the guests, and Nency, pursued by the Uncle, served as "types," now fulfilled by Carine. The imagery of the bacchanal relates
more closely to the main themes in that the pursuit is no longer of an animal but of sexual gratification. The Groom says of the Uncle’s amorous pursuits, “Monsieur le Baron chasse à sa manière” (II, 140). As the male dominoes pursue the females, they imitate the hunt. Women scream “Goujat! Goujat!” (II, 186) as they rebuke the persistent males. Carine witnesses a scene between a male (noir) and a female (argent) domino:

Noir, poursuivant: Arrête-toi, belle jeune fille! (Il la prend au bras.)
   Argent, haletante: Je voulais que tu m’attrapes!
   Noir, lui baisant la bouche, de force:
   Mon baiser se pose sur le tien!
   Argent, se débat violemment: Voyou!
   Noir, la serrant contre lui: Ta bouche me trouble, équivoque à travers la dentelle!

   Argent: Lâche-moi!
   Noir: ...et tes regards plus fourmillants de pêchés que le guêpier d’aiguillons.
   Argent crie: Au secours!...
   (Puis elle éclate de rire, parce qu’il l’abandonne et elle s’offre à son embrasse-
   ment.)
   C’est une feinte, bats-moi! Insulte-moi! Je me débats pour éprouver ta vio-
   lence!
   (Il veut la baiser à nouveau, elle se dégage d’un bond.)
   Je me défendrai jusqu’au bout! Tu ne m’auras pas vivante. (II, 167).

As the female tells the male that he will not get her alive, she evokes the hunters’ prey at the same time that she ob-
   Mquarely predicts Carine’s death. She marks the parallel between her situation and Carine’s when she adds, “Ecoute, il y a les mots de l’amour... d’autres, vulgaires mais ressemblants” (II, 168). Near the end of the play, Nancy
points out a similar correspondence between love and lust when she corrects Carine's use of the word "amour," for which she substitutes "liaison." (II, 213). In her letter Carine recognizes the similarity between the guests' promiscuity and her love:

Mon bien-aimé, dans la folie de mon âme j'ai eu peur de ressembler aux autres. Les gestes, les mots de notre amour, quoique horriblement déformés par eux, avaient pourtant, avec les leurs, une extérieure et trompeuse parenté. (II, 223).

Early in the play, Carine intimates the affinity between her situation and that of the dominoes when she innocently tells Frédéric, "(...) ce soir je me mêlerai à la mascarade." (II, 149). Later, the Uncle recognizes Frédéric as a kindred spirit, when he tells him, "Appelle-moi mon oncle." (II, 179). Shortly thereafter, the Housekeeper duplicates his command: "Que Monsieur m'appelle Alide, c'est mon nom pour tout le monde." (II, 179-180). As Frédéric integrates the world around them, Carine withdraws; near the end of the play, when she asks the Housekeeper why she no longer calls her by name, the Housekeeper replies, "Ce n'est pas l'étiquette." (II, 215).

At the first of the play, Frédéric and Carine believe their love too highly elevated to be soiled. Frédéric says to her, "Qui nous séparerait? Que peut le sort contre notre amour?" (II, 145). Instead of participating in the Uncle's activities, they remain in the privacy of their bedroom, which they want to keep inviolate. Carine
Ce lit, nous le garderons. Si nous partons en voyage, je fermerai la porte de notre chambre par une triple serrure; que personne jamais n'y entre que toi et moi et la naissance et la mort qui se sont rejointes en nous. (II, 146).

The invasion of their room by the dominoes serves as a visual image of the vulgarization of their love. As Carine learns of Néncy's previous affair with Frédéric, she is forced to devalue her relationship with her husband:

Je croyais que le destin errait dans les lieux où Frédéric et moi nous sommes rencontrés pour la première fois, et qu'il nous avait désignés... (Plus bas.) Je m'étais trompée... (II, 213).

When Néncy complains that the Uncle is corrupt, Carine's reply, "Pas plus que les autres" (II, 213), implies that Frédéric no longer occupies the pedestal she once reserved for him. When Frédéric admits having had sexual relations with Néncy, Carine's idealization of love is completely shaken; when he tells her, "Tu comprendras plus tard," she answers, "Quand j'aurai vu chaque jour dans les autres se ternir ma pureté." (II, 204). In this remark she overtly identifies with the others. Frédéric's descriptive imagery of his affair with Néncy serves dramatically as the final blow to Carine and serves lyrically as the point of greatest intensity of the accumulating images by which Carine sees herself on the level with the others.

In the course of the day's activities, Carine's family and friends gather outside her bedroom door, where
they continuously refer to sexual experiences which elaborate the images of the hunt and the masquerade at the same time that they counterpoint the theme of love. References to Carine’s wedding night alternate with anecdotes about other sexual experiences. Near the first of the play, the Uncle gives Nency an account of the previous night:

Tu n’as pas couché au château cette nuit? Tant pis. Jusqu’au matin, les portes ont crié comme des chattes dans tous les corridors—ouvertes! fermées! ouvertes! fermées! 

(...) La proximité du jeune couple enflamait les imaginations. Pense qu’après cinq ans d’attente, ils sont depuis vingt-quatre heures prisonniers l’un de l’autre, racinés emmêlées, nouées comme des mains de prière. (II, 133)

Later, Evelyne recounts her own experience on the wedding night:

À minuit, quelqu’un entre sans frapper dans ma chambre. 

(...) Quelqu’un, nu comme l’eau, nu dans le noir. 


By presenting these vivid descriptions of erotic experiences taking place on Carine’s wedding night, in her very home, at the invocation of her own name, Crommelynck substitutes for the presentation of Carine’s lovemaking, the representation of more erotic and illicit experiences. The setting is, after all, Carine’s wedding night, but it is the sexual activities of the guests which are illustrated in this
conversation. Solange expands the context by telling of a previous experience:

Une menace est sur moi. Je galopais, suivie de Marc de Wissant, quand au passage de la rivière mon cheval m'a retournée dans les roseaux où je me suis épanouie comme un lys, -- jusqu'au calice! Vite refermée, mais pas assez tôt pour que Wissant, qui me bondit par dessus, n'ait eu le temps de me décocher un regard. Ah! mes petites, si son œil était son cachet, je serais marquée à ses armes et impossible à marier! ... (II, 160)

As various characters report scenes they have witnessed, they expose characters and actions as images. In Ralph Freedman's analysis of lyricism in the novel, he states that such a presentation of perceptions organizes the novel as a network of images perceived by the reader, a form which lends it the quality of a poem. Crommelynck employs a similar device on the stage. A large part of the dialogue consists of characters repeating an experience. Since all of their anecdotes elaborate the theme of love, they serve as images varying on this main theme. The drama has the additional advantage of being able to "display" an image, that is, to produce a scene which illustrates even more graphically than an anecdote a certain theme. The masquerade, the hunt, as well as the Mother's scene with Brissague serve such a purpose.

Both Christine and the Housekeeper report having looked or listened through Carine's keyhole, and nearly all of the characters recount at one time or another some
sexually oriented experience. Even the Groom notices the guests' proclivity for such recitals: "Tu vois bien qu'ils se racontent leur fréduaines. C'est assez dans les habitudes de la compagnie" (II, 225). Nency says of the Uncle, "Arrivée cet après-midi, je ne le connaissais pas. Quelle présentation, ma belle! Tout de suite il m'a fait un tableau vivant des noces de Carine et de la nuit au château." (II, 158).

As the stage fills with masked men and women exchanging kisses, and presenting thus a "theatrical" or "visual" image varying on the main theme, a domino evokes the erotic and literal image of his first encounter with his female companion:

Depuis que je t'ai surprise à la renverse, au milieu des roseaux, j'ai la hantise de tes fines jambes tendues comme une avenue sans fin! (II, 186)

Another describes the scene in the park of the château:

Il faut voir ça! Dans l'ombre, plus mouvante que l'eau, rien que des corps sans tête, rien que des corps aveugles qui se cherchent, et s'approchent avec un instinct plus sur que l'orgueilleux amour. (II, 192)

He continues:

On dirait de grandes étoiles de mer en marche sur leurs rayons, des poulpes blancs qui déroulent leurs tentacules, de géantes méduses relevant leur jupon borde de feu! (II, 193)

As Christine lays bare her feelings for Carine, she evokes an image of the past, a sensuous image in which Carine plays a part:
Carine, je t'ai cherie trop longtemps en silence. Au couvent—souviens-toi—
os lits etaient proches; tu dormais non
loin de moi, confiante comme une enfant;
chaque nuit je t'ai veillée à ton insu,
jalousie de ton oreiller! jalousie de toi-
même, à chacun de tes mouvements! (II,
191).

As Frédéric explains to Carine the effect on him of Evelyne's and Solange's words, he calls their description of Carine a "portrait" that he cannot "effacer." (II, 197). He repeats a story which serves as a "récit en abîme" of their tarnished love:

Comprends-moi, s'il se peut. Lorsque j'étais enfant, une femme fut surprise dans un bois par plusieurs hommes. (Pardonne-moi!) Elle en mourut. Dans mon ignorance, je ne concevais ni la nature ni l'horreur du crime...Mais j'ai vu le tombeau! J'ai vu, dans le cimetière de Laeken, le tombeau de cette innocente élevée par l'époux, et je n'ai pu l'oublier. Son image m'est apparue tout à l'heure comme une explication. Carine, je n'invente rien, on peut voir encore aujourd'hui ce monument du désespoir et de la folie. (Pardonne-moi, de ma folie!) A la face de marbre noir le drame est conte en lettres gravées et sous une promesse de vengeance le malheureux a fait incruster un poignard!

Comprends-tu, Carine... (Il baisse la voix et conclut avec une terrible difficulté;) qu'il l'ait ou non voulu, la pointe est tournée vers la terre! (II, 198).

By choosing to portray Carine as a woman who has been raped and murdered by a group of men, Frédéric evokes sexually-oriented violence, in keeping with the images projected by the other characters. Frédéric's story serves the dramatic purpose of pushing Carine nearer to the brink of death as she recognizes her own situation; the story serves the
lyrical purpose of evoking "en abîme" the action of the play. Carine, too, will die, contaminated by close association with the guests. The violence associated with this lyrical theme is a characteristic of expressionism.

As the Groom, dressed as a domino, tells the Housekeeper stories of his sexual adventures, he creates a series of images similar to those of the guests. He and the Housekeeper amuse themselves:

Le valet: Tu as connu Honorine,—la petite noiraude, maigre, celle qu'on appelait "Prune-et-Noyau" quand elle avait quinze ans? Mais si,—qu'on allait voir se baigner chaque samedi, par la lucarne...

La gouvernante: Ah! oui. (Elle rit.) Nous, on l'appelait "l'escarquillée".

Le valet: Elle était plate, dis—tellement que plus tard, lorsqu'elle a eu son enfure de neuf mois, on aurait cru qu'elle s'était seulement brûlée.

La gouvernante: N'empêche qu'il était bien mignon, son petit.

Le valet: Eh bien, j'ai vu plus plat.

La gouvernante, avertis: Non?

Le valet rit de plus belle: Si! j'en ai laissé une, à sécher sur le gazon—plate—sais-tu à quoi elle ressemblait? ...

...Hii Hii...A une grande paire de ciseaux! (II, 216).

The Housekeeper reminisces similarly:

Menteur!—Rappelle-toi,—la vieille ne l'a gardée que quinze jours. Elle était toujours dépouillée, avec du poil entre les seins, barbe, moustache, aussi rebondie au corsage qu'à la tour-nurel! (II, 217).

On the dramatic level, the Housekeeper and the Groom provide comic relief from Carine's tragic situation. Their dialogue, however, performs the lyrical function of
intensifying the imagery which portrays the world around Carine as totally obsessed with sexuality. As they evoke mental pictures of erotic scenes, their images, like those of the guests, counterpoint the elevated images of love projected by Carine. The multiplication of such images reflects the exaggerated proportions of Expressionism.

From her mother, Carine hears not the promiscuous and bawdy tales of the servants and guests, but the seamy news that her mother's lover, Brissague, is only interested in Carine. As a substitute for Carine with Brissague, the Mother, too, serves as a "type" of Carine. When the Mother and Brissague quarrel in front of Carine and the spectator, they create a visual image, not a verbal picture, of a variation on the main theme: love gone awry. The Mother's request that Carine go to Brissague's bedside to give him hope of a future affair with her provides both a lyrical and a dramatic service:

À moins que tu ne le retiennes dans la maison. Taïs-toi! Entends-moi. Je ne t'incite pas à rien lui promettre. Mais qu'il espère. Viens prendre de ses nouvelles,--sans plus,--l'encourager à la patience,--sans plus. Après cette scène affreuse et nos aveux en ta présence, s'il te voit à son chevet, il te croira déjà conquise et moi chatiéée. Il restera pour cette vengeance escomptée. (Arrêt.) Tu refuses? (II, 211).

As this request contributes to the final break between Carine and Frédéric, the action serves a dramatic purpose; at the end of the play, Frédéric imaginest Carine going to Brissague's bed rather than to his bedside, and that is
essentially the mental picture the Mother hopes to give Brissague. Lyrically, allusions to this event serve as another image, among many, of perverse sexuality. It surpasses the other images in intensity because it includes Carine, because it is projected by her mother, who says, "J'ai dû être comme toi, à vingt ans" (II, 208), and also because it is an image projected twice—once when the Mother suggests it and once at the end of the play when Frédéric alludes to it.

As Nency describes for Carine, Solange, and Evelyne her experiences in the Uncle's pavilion, she projects an erotic verbal image, which serves two purposes. In relation to the action of the play—to the plot, her recital has a demoralizing effect on Carine; and in relation to the lyricism of the drama, her vivid description compounds the sexual imagery which counterpoints the main theme of love.

Just as the significance of the hunt and the masquerade depend on their relevance to Carine's situation, the Uncle's pavilion is a material manifestation of an aspect of the main theme. Most evidently, the pavilion parallels Carine's bedroom; as her bedroom is the sacred chamber of her lovemaking with Frédéric, the pavilion is the Uncle's profane temple of erotic experiences. But there is a more subtle correspondence. The Uncle has created a room of numerous mirrors designed to reflect the naked female body from all angles. As the Uncle never appears for his rendezvous there with the women he has
invited, they are left to observe themselves; and, though angry and humiliated at first, they gradually become fascinated with their own reflections. The Uncle explains to Nency,

Dans la deuxième pièce tu seras comme au centre d'un diamant taillé à facettes. Ce ne sont que miroirs si ingénieusement disposés qu'aucun de tes mouvements ne saurait échapper à tes regards multipliés, les plus secrets, sans haut ni bas!...

(...)

Là, une belle dame m'attendait un jour. Je ne l'y ai pas retrouvée et pourtant "elle n'en était pas sortie", Elle s'était resorbee. C'est un symbole; tu n'as pas besoin de comprendre. Va vite. (II, 139)

Nency visits the pavillon and reports to Evelyne, Solange, and Carine,

Oh! le traître,—il m'a prise, il m'a prise au piège!

(...)

Premièrement, à regarder les images...

(...)

...il m'est venu une chaleur à fondre l'or de mes bagues. Vraiment, mon linge sentait le roussi. Me voici contrainte à me dévêtir.

(...)

Parée de ma seule beauté, je pousse une porte sur l'obscurité. Un pas, un autre, une lumière éblouissante, un vertige et la chute! Patatras!

(...)

Je croyais être tombée,—point du tout. Je me trouve des mains et des genoux sur la cloison de verre--tu sais?--avec dessous, dessus, devant, derrière, tous ces miroirs braqués; et moi, dans cette pose, et moi et moi autour de moi. Mais à quoi sert:

(...)

Ah! mes chères, quoique nue, quel deshabillage! Je me suis vue sur toutes les coutures.

(...)

J'étais au coeur d'un diamant taillé.
à facettes—comme il l'avait promis—
mais aussi au centre de moi-même. En
long, en large, en travers, un rein,
une toison, un oeil—pêle-mêle—une
cuisse, un talon, une bouche, un sein...
(...)
Et moi, mordue d'une infernale curiosi-
sité, je suis partie à la recherche de
moi-même... (II, 161-162).

In the dialogue of the play, various characters often make
references to the reflections of metaphoric mirrors. Carine
tells Frédéric of her joy at having him sleep next to her:

N'est-ce pas, dormir c'est se re-
tirer dans une inconcevable solitude.
On est plus que soi-même en soi-même,
"comme un miroir vers un miroir."
(II, 144-145)

In her interpretation, solitary sleep resembles Nency's
contemplation of herself in the mirrors of the pavilion,
but now that Frédéric sleeps beside her, Carine has ex-
changed the mirror for the lover: "Plus jamais! plus
jamais! Mon chéri, tu m'as donné le sommeil double et
transparent et j'ai dormi dans ton climat!" (II, 145).

Instead of looking into mirrors, "true" lovers
look into each other's eyes, where, according to the cynical
Uncle, they narcissistically look for a reflection of them-
selves. Carine has looked so intently into Frédéric's
eyes that she is forced to say, "Même les yeux ont mal
d'avoir lié tant de regards aux tiens!" (II, 147). Later,
Frédéric laments the change in her attitude towards him,
"Lorsque je l'ai quittée nous étions unis comme les deux
yeux d'un regard " (II, 183). In her absence, she ad-
vises Frédéric, he should look at himself in a mirror, and
as he returns from his mother's house, she imagines herself in everything surrounding him:

Va, maintenant quitte-moi... Non, va; je ne te quitte pas: si un écureuil grignote, c'est moi; un lièvre déboule, c'est moi; une caille fait "ouan", c'est moi. Une grenouille ici, une abeille là, un papillon, une guêpe, moi et moi. (II, 142)

Frédéric admits being trapped by her eyes when he says, "Ferme les yeux, retiens ta voix, ou je demeure prisonnier" (II, 141). Reciprocally, Carine invades Frédéric; he says, "Si je m'endors, je pense si fort ton visage, que je le sens se poser doucement sur le mien par le dedans...(...)...ainsi qu'un masque transparent" (II, 144). He acknowledges being completely possessed by her: "Pas un atome de moi n'est à moi." (II, 143). Carine is similarly possessed by Frédéric: "Il n'y a que toi en moi" (II, 207), she tells him. In her letter to him, she says, "Lorsque je m'endormais j'avais pensé à toi avec une telle constance et si ardemment que j'emportais ton image dans le sommeil le plus profond" (II, 24). Throughout the play, they refer to their similarity as Frédéric does when he says, "Nos lettres qui se croisaient nous apportaient des pensées jumelles. Séparés, notre âme double traversait en même temps les mêmes zones d'espoir ou de tristesse" (II, 175).

As the woman in the Uncle's pavilion is completely surrounded by mirrors, Frédéric feels himself enclosed by Carine's looks; when he returns from a visit to his mother, he tells Carine, "On dirait que pour préparer mon retour tu
as sémé partout tes regards, comme des fleurs sous les pas " (II, 170). Later, he paraphrases, "Carine, je t'ai aimée dans chaque brin d'herbe, dans chaque grain de poussière de la route qui me ramenait ici " (II, 173). When Frédéric loses Carine and therefore can no longer look into her eyes, he says, "Je ferai de moi-même deux parts, l'une qui souffrira, l'autre qui regardera souffrir " (II, 178). At the end of the play as Frédéric tries to reassemble Carine's letter, he misinterprets her words to mean that she has gone to bed with Brissague. As he cannot accept this mental vision, he screams, "Je n'y vois plus. J'ai le sang aux yeux" (II, 229), and later, "Mes yeux!" (II, 230). Carine similarly looks for reflections in the eyes of others; disheartened by the news that Frédéric has had an affair with Nency, Carine reveals her narcissism when she writes of her friend, "Je verrai dans ses yeux le mirage de mon passé détruit " (II, 224).

Christine elaborates this imagery in more circumscribed but more explicit dialogue:

Je cherchais nos ressemblances! Carine, mon pur miroir, il n'est pas vrai, il n'est pas possible, que tu aimes Frédéric! Tu es chaste, tendre, caressante—en quoi ressembles-tu à un homme? à l'inconciliable étranger, à l'éternel ennemi, brutal et maladroit.

Que peux-tu lui donner qu'il puisse te rendre d'une commune mesure? Et comment te reconnaitrais-tu dans un autre, si différent, dont jamais la joie ne refléchira la tienne? (II, 191)

Christine's allusions to mirrors and reflections evoke the
Uncle's pavilion, and her expressed belief that lovers resemble each other establishes the correspondence between the Uncle's idea of love manifest in the pavilion and Carine and Frédéric's idea of love manifest in their need to look into each other's eyes and to see each other every where they look.

The dialogue of the dominoes uses images similar to those of Carine and Frédéric. A male tells a female, "Tu emportais sous ta jupe le ciel et mon regard, prisonnier." (II, 186). He adds, "Viens me rendre mon regard" (II, 186). Their allusions parallel those of Carine and Frédéric but on a lower level. Instead of being held prisoner by her eyes, the male's glance is imprisoned under the female's skirt. The Groom reiterates this motif as he describes the dominoes' lovemaking to the Housekeeper: "Ils en prennent plus avec les yeux qu'avec les mains." (II, 220).

A female domino expresses the view of love held by the people surrounding Carine when she tells the male, "Je ne te demande pas qui tu es, c'est moi que j'aime!" (II, 169). She reiterates the philosophy of the Uncle, who tells Nency near the first of the play, "Notre baiser sera de chair et de chair seulement. Pas de serments entre nous: satisfait notre double désir, chacun retourne à son égoïste attente." (II, 134). The male domino who invites Carine to join in the masquerade tells her,

Il faut voir ça! Dans l'ombre, plus mouvante que l'eau, rien que des corps sans tête, rien que des corps aveugles
His choice of the word "aveugles" contrasts subtly with the predominance of words alluding to vision in the vocabulary of Carine and Frédéric as well as in the speech of Christine. As the masks prevent the "lovers" from seeing each other, the dominoes frankly seek self-gratification. The female domino acknowledges that she looks for a reflection of herself in the eyes of others when she says in a near-parody of the love talk between Carine and Frédéric: "Quand je passe près des garçons de la rue, tu ne sais pas comme ils font mon portrait d'un mot cru! Je crois m'admirer dans leurs yeux ardents" (II, 168-169). She is indeed the Uncle's soulmate. The reflection of one's self in his pavilion is a manifestation of his belief that lovers, in particular Carine and Frédéric, look egotistically for reflections of themselves in each other. Carine annoys the Uncle because she considers her love highly elevated and not self-centered, but the dialogue reveals that she and Frédéric figuratively "se résorbent" in each other, as the woman in the Uncle's pavilion "se résorbe" in the mirrors. Frédéric almost admits as much when he says, "Ce n'est pas le paysage que j'admire, mais le déroulement de ma vie, puisque ce pays étendu ne m'est donné que par tes yeux" (II, 175).

Like the hunt and the masquerade, the pavilion serves lyrically as an image in the network of images which reiterate and counterpoint the main themes of love and
death. As the hunt of the "bête" exposes the violence inherent in the main themes and predicts the final kill, the Uncle's pursuit of Nency as well as the dominoes' pursuit of one another reiterate the central themes and incorporate a hedonistic sexuality in contrast to Carine's interpretation of love. Descriptions of the pavilion, of the events of the wedding night, and of other sexually oriented adventures graphically illustrate a side of love repugnant to Carine. The various motifs expressionistically portray the inverse aspect of the love Carine and Frédéric profess, and by rendering literal and scenic the underlying violence and eroticism of the theme of love, they function lyrically.

Not only the themes and the form of the play but the events reflect Crommelynck's poetic penchant; examples of protagonists actually dying of love are rare in drama. Crommelynck apparently feels no dramatic necessity to have Carine and Frédéric commit suicide, a recourse of tragedy; they simply faint away, a death more common in poetry.

In addition to Crommelynck's own lyricism, certain characters are allowed lyrical expression. Not only Carine and Frédéric, but Christine, the Uncle, and certain dominoes speak lyrical passages in which they nostalgically evoke the past, express love, or comment on man's situation.

The lyrical arrangement of motifs, however, can only be attributed to the playwright himself. The lyrical design by which Crommelynck makes everything in the play a variation on the main themes, which in themselves are lyrical,
proceeds from the author's own lyricism. A sort of lyricism "at large" emerges from the unreality of the events, the minor key of the masquerade, which transforms the mundane world of the hunt into a bacchanal; fancifully costumed figures, wearing masks, engaged in a pursuit that relates directly to the main theme, stylize the debauchery of the world which contrasts with Carine's purity, and by this stylization they render death by disappointment in love believable.

The motifs of the hunt, the masquerade, and the pavilion interrelate and are supplemented by characters' anecdotes and revelations elaborating the same themes. As the play is composed of only one act, the stage must slowly darken as night falls, and the scene itself expressionistically conveys a symbol of impending doom. Such an artificial arrangement of the world creates a highly stylized perception of reality. The world so artfully produced cannot be the "real" world, and "la jeune fille folle de son âme" contrasts too sharply with the people around her to be a "real" person. The drama seems therefore to take place on another plane; the clashing forces of the play are so extreme as to be archetypal, and the conflict is within the human spirit. As Crommelynck exteriorizes the interior world, his lyricism adopts the expressionist mode of his era.
REFERENCES


UNE FEMME QU'A LE COEUR TROP PETIT,
Love Wins Out

Gisèle Féal calls Une Femme qu’a le Coeur trop petit Crommelynck’s "pièce rose". It is his only play which ignores death and ends happily and his only play in which the lyricism expands into a celebration of life.

A contrast of the characters establishes a relationship that reflects Balbine’s subjective view of them, a view which allows an expressionistic interpretation of the play. Isabelle represents Patricia as Balbine sees her while Constant represents what Balbine fears in Olivier. La Faille functions as Balbine’s own counterpart, a manifestation of the sensual self that she tries to dominate. The servants Minna and Xantus similarly serve as constant reminders of the promiscuity that Balbine cannot distinguish from love. Aldo, who exists only in Patricia’s imagination, finds form in Gabriel, who ironically is summoned to the country house by Balbine herself. In her efforts to suppress the physical and emotional, Balbine risks losing happiness for herself as well as for the other characters. As characters function reciprocally, all reiterating varying forms of the central theme of love, elaborating and counterpointing, multiplying the images of love, they serve a lyrical purpose. As facets of the same personality, or of Balbine’s interpretation of the characters’ personality, they render literal the conflict within Balbine in an expressionistic portrayal of her interior anguish.

It is the purpose of this chapter to reveal each
character's interpretation of love, to show how his interpretation relates to that of the other characters, in particular to Balbine's, and to point out how Crommelynck's lyrical expressionism evolves from this relationship. In addition to the playwright's lyricism, Patricia, Gabriel, Olivier, and, to a certain extent, Constant evince a lyrical penchant of their own, which will be discussed and distinguished from the more general lyrical arrangement ascribed to the playwright. The study begins with a look at the least lyrically inclined characters, and, as it progresses, more attention will be given to the lyrical expression of the main characters.

Like Fideline and Zulma, Minna and Xantus expose the theme of love in terms of sexual intercourse rather than with lyrical declarations of love. Their dialogue reflects the preoccupations of the protagonists, and by their reiteration of the same theme, they exist not as individuals but as personifications of an aspect of love. They serve thus as images among others, all elaborating the central lyrical theme. Their sexually-oriented banter begins in the first scene when Minna tells Xantus, "Et moi, je dis que tu n'es même pas bon ça me gratter là où les vers me démangent " (III, 170). When Xantus soon counters, "Non, je ne t'ai pas encore racle la couenne," (III, 171), he is alluding to the absence of a sexual relationship between the two of them, but during the course of the play, they will establish one, just as Balbine evolves towards love.
Xantus initiates his attempt when he tells Minna, "Et que je vois d'ici qu'il fait grand jour sous ta jupe." (III, 173). Later in Act One, when Balbine admonishes Minna for having nothing under her skirt, the servant protests that she has her innocence, the loss of which she announces before the end of the act. With a discretion inherited from classical dramatists, Crommelynck reduces the seduction scene to "words," a report of action "somewhere else". As Minna describes the event to Constant, she presents a verbal image, a motif reiterated in varying forms by other characters:

Je ne suis pas votre fille, et je suis une fille perdue. C'est Xantus qui m'a perdue. Et c'est la faute à Madame! Hou! Hou! A cause de cette jupe trop longue, Xantus a demandé "Montre tes bas", et il a vu les bas. Il a demandé, "Montre les jarretières" et j'ai répondu "Ce n'est pas convenable". Et il a dit "Je te donnerai cinq francs", et il a vu les jarretières. Et il a dit "Tu as de la peau au-dessus" Et il a voulu voir le linge et il l'a vu. Et voilà qu'il m'a culbutée. (III, 217)

Whereas Patricia, Gabriel, and Olivier never mention making love in their lyrical elans, Minna gives a play by play account of her seduction; her graphic language contrasts with the mystical images preferred by the lyrical protagonists, who nonetheless furnish Balbine's world with continuous verbal images of love.

Like Minna, Xantus reports a seduction scene after he has fished Rosalie from the river:

On l'a transportée dans le hangar,—
mouillée qu'elle était. Je me suis enfermée avec elle, parce que les autres se pressaient à l'entour, à lui soutirer l'air. Je l'ai toute déshabillée...--elle était froide, comme la margelle...Err!...Je l'ai bouchonnée, pour attirer le sang à la peau. (III, 245).

Both Minna and Xantus cite only the physical and select their metaphors from the concrete in a conscious effort to render their imagery more vivid and shocking to Balbine. In Act Three, Xantus redoubles his efforts by employing, as does Minna, direct quotes:

C'est vrai, Justine m'a dit: "Je veux bien coucher avec toi, mais tu l'oublieras." Et j'ai oublié. Et Rosalie a dit de même, et Suzon et les trois Marie "Tu l'oublieras! tu l'oublieras." (III, 292).

Just as Balbine over-emphasizes virtue and prudery, both servants have an exaggerated proclivity for describing their sexual activities. Their insistence on bombarding Balbine with graphic descriptions reaches Expressionistic proportions as they seem to be personifications of the sensuality that she detests rather than flesh and blood people. We see them as they appear for Balbine--counter-agents set on sabotaging, as the negative force in her ambivalence in love. Seen from this expressionistic point of view, Minna and Xantus represent the grotesque warring with the sublime, represented by Olivier, Patricia, and Gabriel, in the mind of Balbine.

As Minna and Xantus, as well as La Faille, infuse the dialogue with vivid descriptions of lovemaking abhorrent
to Balbine, they exert a dominating influence on her, whose inclination for the concrete and de-mystified lacks control. Whereas the lyrically oriented characters expand the signs of the physical world into a more elusive spiritual significance, Balbine reduces all to the realistic and pragmatic. Her shallow, indeed non-existent, spirituality is metaphorically rendered by a physical manifestation—her too-small heart. As the expressionist renders soul states literal, Balbine faints each time she confronts a description of intimacy. In her rhyming commandments to the servants, she intends not only to codify their housework but their private lives as well. She even orders them to forget their dreams:

"Tes rêves tu les oublieras
Comme jeu de l'esprit dément...
Ainsi faisant ne garderas
Joie ou peine sans fondement."
(III, 236)

In her denial to allow the human spirit its aspirations, in her failure to exalt mind over matter, and in her lack of highly imaginative ability, Balbine capitulates to the negative forces in her mind, forces represented by the servants and La Faille.

References to dreams, night, and sleep recur frequently in the play and allude to means by which the characters escape the bonds imposed by the tyrannical Balbine, who, asleep, unwittingly frees the members of the household: Patricia dreams of her lover, Olivier spends a night on the town, and the servants allude to sleeping
together. Viewed expressionistically as figments of Balbine's imagination, the characters, like the subconscious, run rampant each time Balbine loses control of her conscious mind, taken over by sleep. Allusions to sleep create by their repetition a motif which takes on significance in the last few scenes. In the very first words of the play, Minna warns Xantus not to wake up Patricia and subsequently comments on Xantus' snoring, which she hears through two closed doors. Xantus insists on his ability to sleep so lightly that he could lie on pigeon eggs without breaking them, and, as soon as Isabelle arrives, Patricia tells her that Olivier and Balbine are sleeping. Isabelle repeatedly remarks that the newly married couple do not sleep together, a statement evoking both the theme of sleep and Balbine's conjugal predilections. In her first scene, Balbine reproaches Olivier for sleeping late, and later in the play, La Faille jokes about the amount of time she has spent in bed just as Constant remarks about the quantity of beds he has "slept" in. Balbine sees night as a time to rest in order to meet the day's demands and rises early to regulate and regain control of the household, thereby harnessing the subconscious. Her appearance and activity in Act Three serve as a scenic image, defined as a scene which achieves an effect charged with thematic significance. This scene is an Expressionistic rendering of her desire to prolong the day as she somnambulistically cleans the house, exerting her will even during the night, the time that belongs to
the subconscious. In the same way, her reference to washing the sheets shows her preoccupation with cleaning and her distaste for the bed: "Les lavandières me rendraient des draps en toile d'araignée. Elles battent le linge comme pour le punir!" (III, 226). Her choice of the word "punir" in reference to the sheets reflects her attitude rather than that of the washerwomen.

Each act of the play takes place on a bright summer morning, a setting which seems preordained by Balbine. It is her time of day, a time to work, a time in which her conscious mind can control events. In her first scene, Balbine exclaims, "(...) Bon et vaillant matin sur une terre courageuse (...)" (III, 185). Her choice of the words "vaillant" and "courageuse" reflects her almost bellicose attitude towards her daily tasks and the members of the household. The setting of the play thus becomes an expressionistic rendering of Balbine's state of mind; the conflict between Balbine and the other characters represents the struggle within her; the campagne weighed by the servants, La Faille, and Isabelle loses ground to the more mystical and spiritual proponents of love.

Balbine herself takes on the attributes of the sun. Patricia characterizes her for Isabelle: "Tu as vu le regard to Balbine, clair, uni, droit comme un rayon " (III, 197). Later she adds, "Balbine, quoi qu'elle dise et fasse, garde un visage sans ombre, azur et or!" (III, 198). Olivier calls her "la claire Balbine" (III, 233). When he
calls her "une flamme bien abritée," Constant expands the metaphor: "—oui!—tes lettres étaient grasses de son huile." (III, 183-134) Olivier calls her "charmante, dévouée, lucide," (III, 195) and recounts his words to her, "Ah! Balbine! ta grande lumière donne à chacun son ombre bien dessinée." (III, 231). Such allusions to light distinguish Balbine as the conscious force, particularly opposed to Patricia, who prefers night and even spends her days dreaming: "Balbine travaille en dormant, moi je rêve en travaillant" (III, 283). Balbine's preference for the clear and de-mystified and her continual efforts to arrange an orderly future similarly contrast with Olivier's passivity and his recurrent glances at the past.

Balbine does not limit her restrictions on the members of the household to those regarding dreams; she also imposes geographic boundaries. In her first scene, she forbids Patricia her trips to the neighboring village, and she announces her plans to prohibit the townspeople's access to their property. She closes the gates and imports watchdogs to serve as sentries, thus exerting, as by her proscription of dreams, a tighter control on the other characters, on her wanton subconscious. Xantus' desire to leave reflects his rebellion as does Olivier's night away from home. In the dialogue of both Xantus and Patricia a "prison" imagery crystallizes; Xantus recites his mother's metaphoric version of life:

Et elle dit: "La vie est mesurée
When Patricia confides to Isabelle that Aldo does not exist, she says of her invention:

Cela m'est venu tout à coup, lorsque Balbine m'a enfermée dans le parc. Elle n'avait pas tort, peut-être. Pourtant, les grilles tirées, je me suis sentie prisonnière intolerablement. À l'instant j'ai trouvé dans un rêve ma libération. Je me suis échappée en moi. (III, 269)

Later when Isabelle asks, "Toi, tu es toujours prisonnière?"

Patricia replies,

Ah! non, folle—je ne suis plus qu'enfermée... Figure-toi, jusqu'à l'aurore, je n'ai pas quitté ma fenêtre, devant la rivière, à regarder tourner le ciel. Pour Balbine ce chemin d'eau est un fosse infranchissable! (III, 278)

Whereas Xantus seeks physical evasion, Patricia finds liberation within herself. As in all of her verbal imagery, nature plays a role, and night is the propitious time of escape.

The ubiquitous ladder, found outside Patricia's window and repeatedly carried across the living room is a material manifestation of Patricia's desire and ability to escape Balbine's domination. In all its pragmatic reality, the ladder is never used; a lover never climbs to Patricia's window—except in her imagination. People do not climb into prisons, but out, and the ladder, like
Patricia's window, is a visual image signifying her escape and her eventual ascendance over Balbine; moreover, it is a complex symbol because of the ladder's association with a lover.

In spite of their apparent differences, Balbine and La Faille are basically quite similar. In Act Two, this town prostitute agrees with Balbine that it is "abominable" for Patricia to have a lover, and later she calls men "des monstres cachés dans un pantalon". (III, 313). She similarly detests nudity: "Est-ce agréable, d'être là, sur l'étal, comme un lapin sans sa peau?" (III, 317). Balbine earlier reflects that when she first saw Olivier "crû," he appeared to her like a cannibal. Balbine's response in which she addresses La Faille as "Balbine" indicates that she recognizes herself in the local prostitute. As they sympathize with each other, La Faille confirms, "Nous sommes pareilles, toutes les deux!" (III, 320).

As do Minna and Xantus, La Faille describes sexual intercourse metaphorically. She recounts a mechanic's criticism of her lovemaking and applies it to that of her hostess: "Balbine, tu montres trop que tu t'ennuies à faire le coussinet." (III, 318). With imagery worthy of the servants, she advises Balbine that Olivier wants to hear her say, "Et baratte, baratte-moi." (III, 319). As Olivier chases away La Faille, he drives out his wife's frigidity, an expressionistic method of rendering literal
Balbine's interior conflict and subsequent mastering of negative forces. Although La Faille, like Minna and Xantus, lacks lyrical expression, she serves, as they do, to counterpoint the lyrical theme of love, and in this way plays a part in the playwright's lyrical arrangement of motifs; in her dialogue she plays the same tune as the more lyrically inclined characters but in a different key. Her only preoccupation is lovemaking just as Patricia's only interest is love. Like an expressionistic painter, Crommelynck outlines her with bold strokes, defining only her most obvious characteristics; she describes her life, "Pour moi, il n'est jamais tard, ni tôt. Pensez! J'ai passé ma vie couchée... Debout, couchée, debout, couchée, mais surtout couchée." (III, 213).

The nubile Isabelle, like La Faille and the servants, demonstrates constant preoccupation with lovemaking. In Act One, she tells Patricia that she has five "amoureux," and her conversation constantly revolves around the subject of love. She, too, gives a graphic account of her experience as Crommelynck cleverly parodies Horace's otherwise lyrical address to his lover by giving his lines of praise to Isabelle:

J'ai les plus beaux yeux du monde, --moi, oui. Je le sais à présent. Seule la licorne de la fable avait le regard d'une douceur comparable. (...) Mon sourire est un oiseau rose, tout petit, mais lance d'un vol si aigu que celui qui veut l'arrêter d'un baiser, il lui traverse le cœur. Mon menton est hardi comme le talon de la
Diane chasseresse. (...) Mon sein gauche est plus pur de forme que celui d'une reine, lequel, pourtant fut moule' en coupe. La point du sein droit est légèrement de travers. (...) J'ai le nombril le plus finement taille qu'on ait vu depuis Adam et Eve qui n'en avaient pas. (...) Mon ventre est un plat de nacre et mes fesses sont si parfaitement jumelles qu'il est superflu de leur donner a chacune un prénom dans l'espoir de les reconnaître. (III, 266-267)

Isabelle's monologue is a near parody of Neoplatonic poetry. Castiglione recognizes the first step in Neoplatonic love as the lover's capture of his beloved through his eyes; he captures in this way her image, and the vision of the beloved plays an important role in poetry adhering to Castiglione's criteria. Crommelynck uses such imagery ironically, for Isabelle sees herself. She never describes Horace; indeed she admits her violation of the Neoplatonic code: "Je crois que je ne l'ai jamais regardé!" (III, 286). By Act Three, however, Isabelle has progressed somewhat; though still enmeshed in the sensual, she has at least looked at her lover and has seen him as a model of perfection:

Lorsqu'il est nu devant moi, son corps que j'aime est si beau qu'on dirait qu'il est en même temps la statue de la beauté et le modèle de la statue. (...) On voit jouer sous sa peau tous les muscles, bien dessinés, et ce jeu est l'attestation de sa perfection écrite en signes. Et des bouquets de poils, ici et là, comme une preuve encore... (III, 285)

Isabelle adds to the disproportionate exaggeration of the
images of carnal love. By continuously reiterating this motif in the same vein as La Faille, Minna, and Xantus, she lacks authenticity as a "real" person and derives significance only from her lyrical and expressionistic functions. Dramatically, Isabelle serves no purpose, but lyrically she contributes to the escalating erotic imagery. Expressionistically, she literally manifests the promiscuity Balbine credits to Patricia.

Just as Isabelle represents Patricia as Balbine sees her, Balbine fears an infiltration of Constant's hedonism into Olivier's sobriety. In his exuberance for life, Constant is a physical manifestation, a literal image, of his brother's past. Olivier tells Patricia, "Souviens-toi: j'étais gai au lever, gai aux repas, gai au coucher, gai d'un bout de l'année à l'autre" (III, 234). Balbine frequently intervenes to protect her husband from Constant's "nefarious" influence.

Like Isabelle, La Faille, Minna, and Xantus, Constant replenishes the dialogue with images of lovemaking. When Balbine tries to marry him to the mother of one of his children, Constant shocks her with his reply, "Premièrement, la jeune fille, Rose, n'est épousable que de la taille aux genoux!" He continues his vivid account, "Lorsque j'escalade le lit d'une belle garce.(...)" (III, 242). By his graphic descriptions, Constant joins the ranks of the subversive characters of Balbine's imagination. His exaggeration matches Isabelle's and Xantus': "Je n'ai pas un enfant:
j'en ai douze!—et de douze femelles!" (III, 243). Crom-
melynck's repeated use of such exaggeration, the characters' insistence on creating verbal images of a sexual nature, divulgès the disproportionate world of the expressionistic theatre.

Constant's dedication to the physical contrasts with Olivier's mystical inclination. To Olivier's lyrical description of his melancholia before Balbine's arrival, Constant replies, "Mystique et sentimental, beh!" (III, 183). When Olivier says, "Peu avant de connaître Balbine, moi aussi j'ai surpris dans la nature d'étranges insinua-
tions. Tous les mouvements autour de moi avaient des dessous secrets," Constant replies, "Parbleu!...les dessous de Balbine!" (III, 183). His profession as a doctor indi-
cates his preference for the physical rather than the metaphysical. Such a preference is expressed not only in the references he makes to his frequent lovemaking, but also in his allusions to nature. As he arrives at the house in Act One, he remarks,

(....) dehors souffle une brise de miel! (....)
Holà!...Holà!...Debout!...Salut!...
--Ton cheval piaffe, tu es couché en rond. Debout! garçon! tu ne retrouveras jamais une matinée pareille, quand toutes les femmes s'y mettraient. (III, 178-179)

He has come to take Olivier outside and proposes that they take a dip in the river. Balbine's protestation indicates her antagonism for nature as well as for the natural man that Constant is. We learn later that for her the river
is a place to wash the sheets; for her, it has neither the mysterious quality that Patricia lends it nor the sensual appeal that Constant relishes.

Like Constant, Olivier enjoys external nature, but more subjective than his brother, Olivier identifies with it. When Balbine wants to chop down their trees for firewood, Olivier replies,

*Oui, j'ai répugnance à faire abattre ici. J'ai vu grandir ces paysages. Lorsque j'étais enfant, je donnais à chaque arbre un nom; tous me sont devenus fraternels.* (III, 188-189).

His very name confirms the fraternity that he feels. For Olivier, nature has a transcendental value. He remarks its "étranges insinuations" and agrees with Gabriel that "Tout est message de Dieu qui ne se résout que dans l'âme." (III, 182). Philosophically, Olivier aligns himself with Patricia and Gabriel, who, like lyric poets, recognize in nature a sympathetic force. Balbine, on the contrary, feels that nature is antagonistic to man. She fears the bushes will be smothered by the caterpillars and the wheat devoured by the crows; the uncultivated "entrave" constantly irritates her. Her desire to domesticate and subdue nature corresponds to her fear of natural inclinations observed in the other characters, or suspected within herself. Olivier spoils her efforts to deprive nature of its untamed inclinations by setting fire to the wheat she has cultivated. His violent action expressionistically represents the resurgence of the lyrically inclined characters, or forces, which will
eventually win the battle for supremacy of Balbine's soul.

Whereas Balbine's pragmatism is emphasized by images of light and references to morning, the mysticalness of Olivier's perception is often linked to night. He tells Constant, "Il me semble aussi que, la nuit, le silence de mon oreille est peuplé de rumeurs, traverse d'appels..." (III, 195). As for Patricia, night is a time of escape for Olivier:


Night's mystery is such that Olivier feels liberated from the confines of time, as in his chase, the spatial merges with the temporal. His penchant for the mysterious and even dangerous contrasts sharply with Balbine's preference for the familiar; "Je n'ai peur que de l'inconnu, du fuyant, de l'insaisissable," she says. (III, 281).

Balbine, in fact, married Olivier in order to seize the familiar. In Act One, she tells him,

Tel je vous regarde, à cet instant, tel vous m'êtes apparu le jour que la chance nous mit en présence. Vêtu selon la mode, d'un pantalon large, d'un veston court, cravate net, chaussé fin, vous étiez un homme semblable aux autres hommes, à mon père, à mes frères, aux maris de mes amies, à mes cousins. (...) Je vous avais donc reconnu avant de vous connaître. (III, 205)

Balbine's preference for the concrete and superficial provides a neutral background setting Olivier's lyrical
explosion in relief: "La preuve de mon amour est dans son absurdité même" (III, 296).

Whereas Isabelle's monologue makes a mockery of Castiglione's description of the Courtier's vision of his beloved, Olivier's dialogue reveals that he is truly a Neoplatonic lover:

Et puis, je pense à la claire
Balbine, et je suis heureux. Je
ne la vois guère, tu le sais. La
charge d'une grande maison l'acca-
blerait si elle n'était pas une
force unie, égale, persistante. Sa
présence est partout requise. Le
soir, elle se retire tôt en sa
chambre, lasse d'une saine lassitude.
Oui, je suis heureux! Lorsqu'on
vit sans cesse côte à côte, la figure
s'efface derrière un fouillis de
gestes et l'âme à travers le ramage
des mots. Balbine absente, j'épuise
le loisir que j'ai d'évoquer sa chère
image et de la parfaire en moi. Ne
suis-je pas heureux? (III, 233)

The flaw in Olivier's Neoplatonism, however, is that he is not happy. Mental imagery does not suffice. It is only at the end of the play, when Balbine unites both physically and spiritually with Olivier, that the impediments to their joy are removed. Olivier explains, "L'amour, pour être l'amour veut savoir qu'il est reçu" (III, 250).

Expressionistically, Olivier, along with Patricia and Gabriel, represents a more spiritual form of love. Though not content uniquely with the spiritual, Olivier emphasizes in his monologues the mystical and subordinates the physical. He approaches very near the Neoplatonic ideal, and the superiority of his vision of love eventually conquers.
Early in the play, Olivier, like a lyric poet, reveals to Constant, his inmost observations on his loveless state before Balbine’s arrival:

Ainsi qu’on voit au crépuscule son ombre s’allonger, je regardais grandir Patricia. Et je pensais: bientôt le soir viendra pour moi. Je serai seul. Et j’ai senti souvenirs, espérances,—se vider de son riche contenu comme par une lente évaporation. J’ai vu les objets se décolorer et, chose singulière, les murs perdre à mes yeux de leur poids et de leur volume, comme si la matière ne tenait sa solidité que de notre consentement.

(...) Un matin, des hauteurs de Bontigneules, je n’ai plus reconnu cette ville où nous sommes nés, la cité de toutes nos heures. Elle me parut, frappée de désertion, vacante, n’être plus qu’une maquette de ville due à un architecte mort depuis longtemps.

(...) Et la voici dans ma maison, que je reconnais à nouveau et qui sera la sienne. Elle dort ici, dans ma maison. Elle y veillera. Oui, Balbine est là, que j’aime! (III, 183)

Just as Isabelle, La Faille, Minna, and Xantus frequently, almost constantly, report an amorous experience of the recent past, Olivier gives a verbal account of a vivid mental image. Unlike the others, Olivier never cites sensual love or lovemaking; nor does he employ direct quotes, which render the images of these other characters anecdotal. Whereas Minna, Xantus, and La Faille choose metaphors such as "culbuter," "boucheronner," and "faire le coussinet," which emphasize the physical aspect of their subject, Olivier’s metaphors and comparisons tend to obscure the concrete. He compares Patricia’s growing up to shadows lengthening at dusk and his loneliness to
evening. His vocabulary is more abstract as is his subject: memories and hopes. Even when he describes concrete objects, he imbues them with mystical qualities; he sees objects fade, walls lose their consistency; his natal village, "la cité de toutes nos heures," exists temporally rather than spatially. His subject is nonetheless love, as his last lines indicate, and his style is lyrical, as the sceptical Constant implies in his response. In the dialogue of Olivier, as well as in that of Patricia and Gabriel, Crommelynck incorporates a more abstract vision of love, closely allied to nature, which reflects on a loftier, almost Neoplatonic plane, the preoccupations of La Faille, Isabelle, Minna, Xantus, and, to a certain extent, Constant.

By his style as well as his orientation, Olivier elicits a comparison to Neoplatonic poets. His emphasis on visual imagery to the exclusion of all other is a characteristically Platonic device. Plato, as well as Castiglione, Ficino, and other Neoplatonists, evokes the higher realm by appealing particularly to the sense of sight. In the lines just quoted, Olivier repeats ten words indicative of vision. There appears a form of "voir" four times: "voit," "vue," "vu," and "voici"; a form of "reconnaître" twice: "reconnu" and "reconnais"; one form of "regarder": "regardais"; one form of "veiller": "veillera"; one form of "paraître": "paru"; and the noun "yeux".

Words evocative of darkness and "néant" similarly
play a part in the Platonist's vocabulary. It is through
the illumination of certain visual phenomena that the
Platonic disciple ascends towards the true reality. In
the words "crépuscule," "ombre," and "soir," Olivier evokes
the contrary to luminous vision. Without love, he sees
only the photographer's negative, which suddenly develops
with the arrival of Balbine. His verbs "abandonner," "se
vider," "se décolorer," and "perdre" indicate, in spite
of his allusions to vision, a lack of focus. The words
"évaporation," "désertion," and "vacant," culminating in
the adjective "mort," evoke the negative pole of the
Platonist's trajectory.

In this lyrical perception of his life without
love, Olivier sees the world much as Plato described it:
insubstantial, transitory, and unfamiliar. As the local
village appears to him as merely a model of the village he
had known, he interprets, as did Plato, the hazy outlines
of the visible world as a tentative reality, significant
only in its resemblance to the ideal. With his newly
found happiness through love, Olivier recognizes his home;
he finds again its true form as if he has ascended to the
higher reality promised by the Platonists.

By juxtaposing such lyrical passages with the
dialogue of La Faille, Isabelle, Minna, Xantus, and even
Constant, Crommelynck creates a lyrical arrangement of
motifs. In their recitals, we see various images of love,
counterpointing and elaborating one another. The superiority
of Olivier's view stems from his lyrical penchant for the emotional, imaginative, and mystical. His love of nature and his confidence in his intuition further distinguish him as a lyrical hero capable of subduing the pragmatism of "l'implacable Allégorie de toutes les Vertus domestiques" (III, 297). His Neoplatonism suggests in itself superiority, as his eventual success substantiates.

Olivier's perception of life is matched by that of Patricia, whose name implies her bond with her father. She confirms their affinity for each other when she tells Isabelle, "Je suis son œil droit, son cœur gauche" (III, 176). Olivier acknowledges their similarity, as well as their lyrical trust in intuition, when Patricia admits her love for Gabriel: "Ah! je te reconnais bien pour ma fille lancée à tous risques" (III, 310). Whereas she resembles Olivier, Patricia contrasts sharply with Balbine. She explains to Isabelle in lyrically balanced phrases:

Balbine est douce et patiente. Moi je suis emportée.
(.....) Balbine est mesurée, moi j'exagère toujours.
(.....) Balbine est franche et indulgente. Moi je suis implacable et menteuse.
(.....) Balbine est juste, je suis injuste. (III, 177-178)

Their differences derive, however, from characteristics more fundamental than those cited by Patricia. In the last act, as she compares herself once again to Balbine, Olivier says of his wife, "Elle ignore la vérité des hommes et des jours. Ses vertus n'ont aucune racine dans l'amour." (III,
308). Olivier proclaims the superiority of the lyrically oriented when he adds, "Elle comprend tout et ne sent rien!" (III, 308).

Whereas the light imagery referring to Balbine indicates her preference for the clearly defined and her desire to keep a firm grip on the members of the household, Patricia finds the essence of things divulged by night. Indeed, it seems that she never sleeps; in Act One, she tells Isabelle, "Je n'ai guère dormi cette nuit (...)" (III, 176). Act Two begins as Patricia is apparently returning home early in the morning from a rendezvous with Aldo, and in Act Three, she tells Minna, "La nuit trop chaude et trop belle, je n'ai pas trouvé un instant de sommeil" (III, 275). She frequently alludes to her musings and visions of the preceding night. For Isabelle, she recounts the arrival of her father and his new bride: "Sous le clair de lune et les ombres, au passage, qui pavoisaient la voiture, c'était comme dans un conte!" (III, 175). When Isabelle asks Patricia when she sees Aldo, she replies, "Le soir...-la nuit" (III, 199). As Isabelle proceeds to interrogate Patricia on her lover, Crommelynck substitutes Isabelle's description of their encounters for Patricia's: "Il vient te voir ici? Dans le parc? (Signe oui.) Ça doit être poétique, sous le clair de lune! Mais vous vous cachez dans l'ombre plutôt?" (III, 199). Like Olivier, Patricia gives no explicit descriptions of lovers' activities; although she continually talks about love, she
remains remote and aloof. Although reticent to give a precise image of her lover, Patricia expends her lyricism in evocations of night:

Dis-moi, est-ce mon âme qui traverse les murs de la chambre ou si la nuit les dissipe? Plus rien de dur ne m'entoure. Mon être est vaste et fluide autant que la nuit d'été; leurs ondes sont confondues. Cet azur sombre, c'est, multipliées à l'infini, mes mains invisibles, trempées d'étoiles jusqu'au bout des ongles! La lune dorée voit d'un même regard le soleil et mon coeur! ...L'air est moi-même et je suis l'air profond et je suis le tapis volant qui m'emporte! (III, 278-279)

In this dialogue with Isabelle, Patricia clearly envisions night as the time "par excellence" for flights of the soul. As she metamorphoses into a flying carpet, she rises above the mundane boundaries imposed by Balbine, who cannot control the events of night nor the freedom afforded by nature. Whereas fluidity is a source of ecstasy for Patricia, Balbine disdainfully remarks about the river, "Il y a des sources proches: l'eau est d'une froideur lunaire!" (III, 195). As Patricia confirms Balbine's suspicions of her lovemaking with Aldo, the stepmother reacts with characteristic distaste for unknown quantities like foreigners and night: "Ces étrangers sont pétries d'un miel qui englue. Dans leur pays, c'est clair de lune du matin au soir " (III, 258).

Just as Patricia prefers the mysteries of night to the realities of day, she believes attraction between lovers to be dependent on the exotic. She invents a
foreign lover for herself and explains that Olivier's love for Balbine derives in a large part from what he does not
know about her:

(...) son amour pour Balbine tient
sans doute de ce qu'elle a encore
d'étranger pour lui.
(...) Après, il l'aimera pour ce
qu'elle a d'aimable et de présent, et
pour leur vie ensemble. Mais elle
gardera toujours le mystère de son en-
fance. Elle aura beau raconter et
raconter, ce passé demeurera pour mon
père comme une légende." (III, 176)

Balbine's idea of love is diametrically opposed to what
Patricia professes; she married Olivier because she saw
in him familiar signs.

In a characteristically lyrical elan, Patricia
tells Isabelle,

Le monde est peuple d'esprits!
Cette nuit, je regardais le reflet
argenté du saule sur la rivière.
L'arbre ignorait le reflet, l'eau
l'ignorait aussi et le reflet
s'ignore. Dis-moi, chère Isabelle,
y aurait-il encore une image dans
le miroir liquide, si nous étions
tous aveugles?
(...) Mirages! Un oeil plein
d'amour nous invente au miroir de
l'univers!... (III, 283)

As Balbine fears the unknown, dislikes foreigners, and
avoids night, she loses ascendancy over Patricia, who
relishes mystery. As Balbine sleeps, Patricia awakens,
and her mysticism places her far from Balbine's reach.
Along with Olivier and Gabriel, Patricia represents the
indomitable lyric and mystic outlook which sees beyond
the limited visions of Isabelle, La Faille, Minna, and
Xantus.
The elusive outlines of the Aldo of Patricia's imagination find form in the lyrical Gabriel, whose name implies his association with the Archangel of the Annunciation; he even obliquely refers to Patricia as "l'Elue" (III, 208). In Act Three, Patricia tells Isabelle,

D'ailleurs Gabriel ressemble à Aldo trait pour trait. Je m'en suis avisée un jour et c'est de ce jour-là que je l'aime. Et sais-tu? Gabriel parle italien comme Aldo. (III, 284)

Like Patricia and Olivier, Gabriel remains close to nature, in which he senses premonitions and insinuations; when he falls in love with Patricia, he says,


As he makes this remark, he hides behind a tree, from where he has observed his beloved "Princesse des feuillages" for the first time. In Act Two, when Patricia asks a favor of him, his answer incorporates images from nature:

Je puis courir comme un lièvre, capter au vol le martin-pêcheur, vaincre la truite à la nage et l'écureuil à l'escalade! (III, 224)

And, in his explanation of love to Balbine, Gabriel, like the agronomist that he is, reviews the reproduction cycle of animals.

In the same lyrical vein as Olivier, Gabriel trusts intuition above reason: "Je ne sais," says he, "(...) mais j'en sens la signification dans mon coeur" (III, 180).
Whereas Balbine's failure to reciprocate Olivier's love denies them happiness, Gabriel believes that love, by its very nature is reciprocal: "Notre Fatal ne saurait être que double, réciproque, symétrique ou compensé" (III, 209). It transcends time; when Balbine asks him if he has loved Patricia for a long time, he replies,

En vérité, je ne sais plus! D'un cercle enfermé dans un cercle on doutera qu'il soit plus petit ou qu'il soit plus éloigné. Depuis quand? Etrange question... Le temps... (III, 211).

Like Patricia, who prefers the exotic, and unlike Balbine, who seeks the familiar, Gabriel says of his newly discovered love for Patricia:

Elle a le nez un peu lourd, la bouche large, les épaules trop hautes, les pieds grands. Et je l'aime!... Preuve que j'aime un être et non pas un miroir. (III, 181)

Although Balbine offers a rational explanation for her attraction to Olivier, Gabriel falls spontaneously in love with Patricia the moment he sees her:

Il y a dix minutes, j'étais libre comme un fou. Miracle! j'ai regardé cette jeune fille et, --miracle!-- je l'ai vue. (III, 180)

Like Olivier, Gabriel is highly imaginative; when Balbine suggests, "Pourtant que la variole demain la défigure..." Gabriel counters, "Ah! ne faites pas de mal à son image!" (III, 263). Gabriel's glorification of the mental image of his beloved and his belief that love alone is clairvoyant places him definitively in the ranks of the lyrical forces.
As Balbine relinquishes her restraints on the attitude represented by Patricia, Olivier, and Gabriel, she sees the beauty of nature witnessed by the lyrical protagonists:

J'ouvre les yeux et je vois la maison soudain émerveillée et la fenêtre éblouie et la campagne envoilée au sillage des oiseaux! (III, 325)

In spite of her predilection for clarity and morning, she says of her previous state:

Jusqu'aujourd'hui, j'ai rêvé sous les ombrages comme la Belle-au-bois-dormant. Dans mon songe innocent, je faisais le monde à mon image. J'ouvre les yeux, tout reprend sa place. (III, 325)

Such an abrupt transformation is dramatically explainable only in the expressionistic theatre. Patricia, Olivier, and Gabriel, viewed as forces within her subconscious, have been at work on Balbine since the first of the play. Through the superiority of their vision, they wrest the power from the baser forces. Recurring images of love reach their point of greatest intensity as Balbine emerges from the bedroom, where Olivier has led her. She reconciles the sensual with the spiritual, as does Olivier, who must no longer seek pleasure in mental visions of his beloved. At the same time, Patricia and Gabriel plan their marriage in a scene which subsumes all the imagery, both sensual and mystical, of the play. The dramatic climax serves thus as a lyrical synthesis of imagery.
Olivier, Patricia, and Gabriel, in their perception and expression, in their confidence in emotion and intuition, and in their mystical view of love and nature, reign in the lyrical world of the play. By their identification with nature, their desire and ability to transcend the visible, and their belief in the supremacy of love, they surpass the mundane aspirations of La Faille, Isabelle, the servants, and the engaging Constant, who concede Balbine to their mystical and lyrical counterparts.

Crommelynck's orchestration in which characters distortedly mirror one another characterizes his penchant for a lyrical technique. Depriving the characters of autonomy, the playwright uses them as methods of elaborating his central theme of love, much as the lyric poet modulates images to vary and expand his idea. By choosing opposing types, whose vocabulary and personality provide contrasts, Crommelynck varies his rhythm and directs the action with the authority of the lyric poet. No character acts independently; each plays his role in relation to the other highly stylized characters.

As each character functions as a facet of Balbine's imagination, Crommelynck demonstrates his expressionistic tendencies. As the sublime wars with the mundane, we recognize the setting as the soul and can in this light only understand the significance of the gross exaggerations and caricatures in the world of the play.

Generally pessimistic, Crommelynck allows us this
unique glimpse of his optimism. Une Femme qu'a le Coeur trop petit is his only play in which the idealistic, lyric, and mystic view is viable.
REFERENCES


CHAUD ET FROID.
OU
L'IDEE DE MONSIEUR DOM,
Love in Retrospect

Ralph Freedman describes the conception of the world in the lyrical mode not as a universe in which men display their actions but as a poet's vision fashioned as a design.¹ In Chaud et Froid, as Crommelynck shapes symbols and psyches into characters, he fashions his own design with what Roy Walker calls "surrealistic savagery,"² and elicits the seemingly incongruous epithets of "farce et poème."³ He does not necessarily invite the spectator inside his own psyche; indeed he remains rather aloof to the protagonists' struggles; but he does engage us in a subjective rendering of reality as he takes us along on a cerebral voyage, a journey through the strata of the mind rather than through the world of action, the domain of less lyrical playwrights.

By exaggerating and stylizing his characters, Crommelynck molds them into shapes which complement and mirror one another and supplants the action with visual and verbal images of the playwright's lyrical and expressionist perception. A complementary reciprocity of function among the characters has already been mentioned in regard to other plays. Gisèle Feal notes that Muscar represents a facet of Pierre-Auguste's personality⁴ and that Estrugo
supplements Bruno's role. In *Les Amants puérils*, the love affair between Marie-Henriette and Walter parallels the one of the older characters, and in *Le Sculpteur de Masques*, Cador frequently implies a correspondence between the illicit love of Pascal and that of Capétius. In *Carine*, the lurid adventures of the heroine's uncle counterpoint her own interpretation of love.

It is the purpose of this present study of *Chaud et Froid* to examine the reciprocal qualities of the characters and to show how the interrelation of their roles serves a lyrical purpose as it reveals an interior world. Constrained by Crommelynck, the characters are not free to develop as individuals but must cast their wills into a common pool from which the playwright draws out that part which suits his purpose. *Chaud et Froid* evolves lyrically as characters coalesce to project themes and serve as complementary symbols of an internal struggle. In addition to the lyricism emerging from Crommelynck's expressionist perception, characters themselves are occasionally allotted poetic dialogue in which they reveal their own lyrical penchant.

Before delving into Crommelynck's essential lyricism, let us take a quick look at some of the more evident lyrical qualities of the play. References to the themes of love and death occur not only in Félie's dialogue where they receive their most lyrical rendering, but even Bellemasse and Odilon seem to want to participate in the
play's lyricism. Bellemasse, unfortunately for the poet in him, degenerates into caricature and pedantry:

J'ai contre ma joue la tièdeur de ton corps, on dirait solaire, et tes formes délicates. De même que le paléontologue, à la vue d'un seul fragment d'os, pour recomposer le squelette entier du plésiosaure et du mammouth, au contact d'un petit coin de ta chair, je puis dessiner en mon esprit ta charmante personne... (II, 249)

Odilon, however, improves on Bellemasse; though lacking in other poetic qualities, his words often project images which, if spoken in another context, to another woman, would pass as quite acceptable lyrics. In Act One, he tells Léona, "Je savais, sans paroles, que je t'avais quittée une heure avant, mais dans un autre monde." (II, 256).

As in all of Crommelynck's plays, in Chaud et Froid it is not only a question of love but also of death, that other preoccupation of lyric poets. An examination of the dialogue reveals that the characters approximate the loss of love with death. In Act One, Ida describes Thierry's appearance after he loses Léona's attentions as "la statue d'un mort" (II, 240). Whereas Dom feels carried by the "waves of love," Bellemasse extends the metaphor to include the possibility of drowning:

Sais-tu, ma chère, depuis trois mois, je suis plongé dans l'amour comme un nageur dans la mer!...La vague qui me soulève peut soudain me submerger. (II, 245)

When Léona surprises Bellemasse kissing Alix, she cries,
"C'est fini: je suis mortel!" (II, 252).

Léona frequently describes Dom asleep, a metaphoric death in the absence of love. In Act Two, she says of him,

Vivait-il? Il se prolongeait là, poste! (...) Qui est mort? Pourquoi serait-il moins vivant que naguère, alors qu'il s'évadait astucieusement de ma présence, laissant à sa place un mannequin!" (II, 293)

On the surface, however, the subject of death escapes the lyrical rendering that it receives in Les Amants puérils, Carine, and even in the farce Tripes d'Or. Instead of regretting Dom's demise, the Burgomaster frets about the lack of undertakers and gravediggers; he is concerned officially with death but not personally as he issues a city ordinance prohibiting visitors at the cemetery. Before Dom dies, Odilon suggests to Léona that they murder him, and even after his death regrets that they did not. Bellemasse reveals the general attitude when he says, "A tout dire, la disparition de monsieur Dom n'est pas une grande perte,—mème pour elle." (II, 269). Alix mechanically repeats the doctor's diagnosis, as do the other characters, periodically uniting as a chorus or reiterating independently of the others set expressions, such as "C'est une maladie sournoise..." (II, 267). Léona reacts with surprise and dutifully admonishes Odilon when he suggests murdering a dying man. Only later does she wax nostalgic. Her description of life after death reflects her inability to imagine anything other than a physical
existence. Only Félie mourns Dom and must seek recourse in lyricism:

Je sens si fort sa présence en moi qu'il me semble que par mes cinq sens ouverts sur le paysage ainsi qu'une immense main invisible il prendra sa part du monde. (II, 331)

As Félie announces her intended suicide, she indicates nature's premonitions of, and preparations for, her decision: "Quelle lumière! Comme l'eau d'un vivier, l'air est traversé de glissements subtils." (II, 332). On this day of her impending death, she alludes not only to nature but also to her memories of childhood and of love:

Voir les couleurs, respirer les parfums, entendre les cris!...Aujourd'hui mon âme élargie peut contenir un monde et le retenir prisonnier! Il y a d'autres rivières, d'autres feuillages, d'autres oiseaux: il n'en est pas de plus vifs! ...Ce matin-ci a la perfection transparent de souvenirs d'enfance ou d'amour! (II, 330-331)

Besides the characters' lyrical references to love and death, there emerges in the play a lyricism deriving from the playwright's creation of characters of a single dimension. There are no soliloquies in the play perhaps because the characters have no inner existence to reveal. We see on the stage the inner self exteriorized, each character representing an aspect of the unified yet ambiguous self.

Léona's very name tells us what to expect even before she appears. Besides implying "destructive" and "all-consuming," the lioness metaphorically represents
fierce sexual desire, usually dangerously lurking in the subconscious. Leona is frequently portrayed as an animal.
At the first of the play, Alix tells Ida that Leona "(...) est dans sa baignoire," and Ida replies, "Ha! Ha!...dans son auge!" (II, 238). Leona prides herself on her qualities: "Suis-je pas forte, souple, alerte, décidee!" (II, 290). She credits herself with the attributes of a lioness. Ida later calls her an impatient sow, whereas Leona characterizes herself as a prowling female animal:

Moi, je sortais. J'allais sous les etoiles ou dans les brouillards, gre-lottante toujours d'une angoisse qui ne me venait ni de la nuit des bois ni de la solitude des champs! Ce que je cher-chais, je ne le savais qu'apres l'avoir trouve...

(...) Un homme! un homme! un homme! (II, 294)

True to her symbolic namesake, Leona expends her fierce energy in sexual pursuits. We learn in the first scene that she has recently dispensed with an old lover, Thierry; Alix tells Ida, "Je veux dire qu'il est trop tard; c'est fini, entre elle et votre Thierry." (II, 239). When Bellemasse enters, we learn that he is—or at least believes himself to be—her new lover; Ida remarks, "Et c'est vous, vous! qui remplacez a present mon mari!..." (II, 240). Bellemasse's incredulity upon learning that Leona rejected Thierry only the previous month implies that her affairs occasionally overlap, a suspicion confirmed by the arrival of Leona's latest lover, Odilon. Immediately after telling
Odilon, "(...) je t'aime trop," she divulges, "Il y aura quatorze jours, ce soir, que nous nous sommes vus pour la première fois, et reconnus!" (II, 255), and later she tells him she has loved him for only two days. The exaggerated speed with which Léona changes lovers and the mechanical repetition of their appearance on the stage characterize the unique dimension of her personality. Her lack of complexity indicates that she is an Expressionistic embodiment of one area of the psyche rather than a "real" person.

A similar use of repetition serves to demonstrate Léona's self-destructive violence. In Act One, she encourages Ida, who comes to beat her regularly, "Tu es venue ici pour me battre, frappe! Je suis pressée..." (II, 263). Later in this act, she encourages Alix in what could be termed a verbal beating; Alix calls Félie Dom's mistress:

Léona: Qui?
Alix: La maîtresse de monsieur Dom.
Léona: Repète.
Alix: La maîtresse, la maîtresse, la maîtresse! (II, 282)

Twice in Act Two Crommelynck employs this formula:

Léona: Qui va descendre, dis-tu?
Alix: Félie.
Léona: Qui, Félie?
Alix: La maîtresse de monsieur Dom.
Léona: Repète!
Alix: La maîtresse de monsieur Dom.
Léona: Encore!
Alix: La maîtresse, la maîtresse, la maîtresse... (II, 315)

Ida has just announced that she now possesses the means with which to beat Léona even harder when she says:

Ida: (...) Je viens de l'apprendre:
La femme qui est venue de la ville n'est pas une parente à Dom,--elle est sa garce!  
Leona: Repète!  
Ida: Elle est sa catin! Et d'une!  

(II, 324–325)

Stylistically, the repetition of similar scenes and actual reproduction of vocabulary create what the scholars Timo Tiisanen and Robert Peacock call "an organic interstructure...of imagery."  

Tiisanen calls such a scene a "scenic image," that is, a scene in which varying means of expression are used to achieve an effect charged with thematic significance.  

Now it is a matter of deciding what significance this scene has in regard to the play as a whole. In view of Leona's metamorphosis at the end of the play, it appears that Leona, the subconscious, is being whipped back into place.

In spite of the vast differences in the personalities of the three principal women in the play, Thierry remarks about his wife in particular and about women in general: "Oh! sotte! bavarde! Elles sont toutes les mêmes, seuls le chapeau change et la jupe!..."  

(II, 268)  
The circumstances of the play lend Thierry's rather commonplace statement a new significance. Whereas Leona devotes herself to the pursuit of men, Alix is a man hater. In Act One, she flirts with Bellemasse, but we soon discover it is a ruse: "Moi, pour ce seul baiser reçu, je voudrais changer de peau"  

(II, 254). She tells Ida, "Je n'en voudrais pas dans mon lit de toutes vos bêtes à gros nez,
à grosse voix et à gros poil." (II, 239). When Odilon warns Alix she will die a virgin, she replies, "Certainement, si je n'en rencontre pas de plus beaux" (II, 288). After having invited Odilon to kiss her in order to seal a secret inside her, she abruptly turns her head and exclaims in disgust, "À ces conditions, ça me dégoûterait moins de parler que de me taire" (II, 297).

Although evidently a contrast to Léona, Alix supplements the role of her mistress in a way Thierry would not dream of in his simplistic statement. At the beginning of the play, Ida envisions Alix substituting for Léona:
"Oui, ma fille, oui, la belle Léona sera battue, la femme de monsieur Dom, oui. Madame Dom, elle-même. Va, ou si tu préfères l'être à sa place?" (II, 238). Alix not only risks being beaten as Léona's substitute, but as the go-between for her mistress and Odilon, she transports kisses as well as messages back and forth. It is probably her inability to make love that prompts Odilon to tell Alix, "Ma pauvre fille, que tu veuilles ou non, tu es bien incapable de transmettre ma réponse" (II, 318).

Alix, however, is not lacking in passion. She has a homosexual attraction for Léona, whose soul she mirrors not only by her role as substitute but also by her savage energy and her unbridled hatred. As Léona's name partially defines the character, the name Alix implies a certain masculinity in the servant. She exposes her jealousy of Léona's lovers when she reproaches her mistress, "Il t'est
plus agréable de changer d'homme. L'un efface l'autre." (II, 254). Alix wants to protect Léona from Ida's blows when she cries out, "Non!...Je ne veux pas qu'elle te touche!...Je la marquerai de mes dents!" (II, 263). Just as Léona encourages Ida to beat her, Alix urges Odilon, "Oui, frappe, frappe, frappe-là!" (II, 347). Léona appears to reciprocate Alix's affection when, in Act Two, she suddenly pulls the servant to her and kisses her brutally on the lips. Although she intends for Alix to transport the kiss to Odilon, we see her kiss Alix, a scenic image in which allusions crystallize. At the end of the play, when Léona foregoes her sexual pursuits, she once again embraces Alix. The similarity between the mistress and servant and Léona's vow to remain faithful to her dead husband indicate rather than a love affair between the two women, a narcissistic interest on the part of Léona in Alix, who by her virginity prefigures Léona's own future abstention.

Whereas Alix supplements Léona's personality, Félie complements it. She is the opposite of Léona in the unique dimension that each portrays, and like Léona's, her name indicates her nature: "Félicite," great happiness, interior contentment.9 Such felicity plays no part in the personality of Léona, who, Ida tells us, inflicts misery; speaking of Thierry, she says,

Il m'a raconté: la veille encore, elle l'avait reçu avec son "Bonjour, toi" et ses toi, toi, toi. Et le

Throughout the play, Félie demonstrates an interior contentment unknown to the angry Léona, but, at the play's end, Félie exchanges etymologies: felicity becomes feline, implying an integral relationship with Léona.

Contrary to Léona who jumps from man to man, Félie, we learn, has loved Dom for ten years. Furthermore, she intends to mourn him for the rest of her life: "Maintenant toute la vie, devant, moi, c'est l'étendu, l'étendue de ton absence!" (II, 284). She even expects their love to endure beyond the grave and decides to commit suicide in order to join her lover.

Both Félie's evocations of the past and Dom's love letters to her provide temporal oases allowing speaker, interlocutor, playwright, and audience a moment of lyrical speculation in an otherwise gruelling climate of frenzy. In Act Two, Félie recalls, "Je n'avais pas trop de son absence pour ranger en moi, aveuglément, tous les dons de sa présence" (II, 317). The careful placement at the end of breath groups of the antithetical as well as rhyming words "absence" and "présence" divides Félie's sentence into rhythmic parts reminiscent of verse. The predominance of the letter "r" accompanied by somber and nasal vowels, which prolong and veil her words, evokes the languishing
mood confirmed by other dialogue. The content, too, is typically lyrical: the speaker expresses in the first person the richness of her past love.

Dom, too, evidently has a lyrical penchant as is divulged in Félie's repetition of his words to her, "Félie, tes yeux sont plus longs que les jours de juin, plus longs que les beaux souvenirs." (II, 320). The balance of his sentence and the repetition of certain words lend his prose a poetic quality. The multiplication of "z," "s," and "j" sounds produces a softness of tone appropriate for intimate words, while the speaker glides from one monosyllabic word to another buoyed by the liquid "l's." Dom's theme, as well, is typically lyric: he addresses his lover on the subject of her beauty. The passage is rendered even more poignant by the fact that it is Félie who speaks the words that were spoken to her ten years before.

The contrasting yet complementary qualities of Félie and Leona are reflected in the images each one recalls of her past experiences with Dom. All of Leona's memories evoke night, and all of her memories of Dom portray him in the house and usually asleep. In Act Two, she recalls,

Il parlait peu, d'une voix sans étoye.
Je l'ai vu, chaque soir de notre vie en-
ssemble, s'asseoir dans le même fauteuil.
À la belle saison, c'est sur son front
que la clarté du ciel s'attardait, plus
longtemps qu'ailleurs. On y lisait les
heures aussi bien que sur le cadran so-
laire: L'hiver, ce front, ce front, ce
front-là absorbait la lumière des lampes
et semblait, ainsi qu'un verre dépoli,
l'épandre autour de nous, égale, rassurante,
confidentielle! (II, 292-293)

Don still affects the "nights" of the present for Léona:

(....) sais-tu ce qui m'a le plus impressionnée, ces dernières nuits? La densité nouvelle du silence, la noirceur de l'obscurité: il y manquait les bruits fâcheux. Les siens, oui. Il en avait de toutes sortes!... Tu ne sais pas, toi; il était bruiteur comme pas un. (...) Ah! c'est qu'il ronfle, le mien, au large, d'une belle cadence. Il berce un sommeil géant! (II, 318)

She continues,

Figure-toi, s'il ne ronfle pas, il pipe. Chaque soir, il s'assied dans le même fauteuil. Il voudrait lire, mais la lecture l'étourdit bientôt. Ses lourdes paupières écrasent entre elles un regard délayé. Bonsoir: il pipe. On dirait que des petites bulles crévent à la surface du silence, précisant le calme et l'intimité. (II, 319-320)

Félie, on the other hand, projects images of the past set in the light of day, outside... She describes her first meeting with Dom:

J'avais gardé de l'enfance le goût de grimper aux arbres; d'imaginer, dans les hautes branches, une maison de feuilles, où je rêvais de longues heures, assise à la dernière fourche. Balancée à la brise, j'y suis Robinson, une sauvagesse, la reine des oiseaux. De mon observatoire, je le découvre, lui, de l'autre côté du mur, très bas sous mes pieds. (II, 319)

She describes one of their afternoons together:

(...) un après-midi, nous courons ensemble sur une prairie; comme je le gagne de vitesse, il me crie: "Tu triches! Tes pieds ne touchent pas terre!... (...) Ensuite, il m'explique: "Plus légère que ta robe, elle te portait dans ses plis." (....) Maintenant, il grimpe aux
arbres avec moi. Au bois de la Croix
Fulmine, dans les cerisiers sauvages,
nous jouons à qui gardera le noyau..
(II, 321).

As Félie recounts the literal images of her days with Dom,
she passes from past to present tense; a tense which, along
with her direct quotations from Dom, renders her imagery
with the immediacy of the present. Like a lyric poet,
Félie distills the essence of her relationship with Dom
by citing only a few occasions spent together. Her clarity,
succinctness, and simplicity rendered with restrained
emotion, according to Herbert Read's criteria, lend her
prose a lyrical expression.

Both nature and light play a role in her images
as well as in Dom's. Léona reads Dom's letter to Félie:

"Le plaisir de l'amour t'éclaira long-
temps de ses rayons inclinés. Puis, peu
à peu, ton visage émerveillé s'éteignit.
Mais tes doux yeux, comme un horizon entre
tes paupières presque fermées, éternisaient
la mélancolie d'un fin crépuscule." (II,
322)

Whereas Félie's images are literal, Dom uses the imagery
of light figuratively to express his love.

As she describes her husband's nightly snoring
and her own forays into the dark in search of "un homme,"
Léona personifies the animalistic side of love that seeks
gratification under the cover of night, while her counter-
part Félie represents another face of love—joyful com-
panionship in the light of day. As night metaphorically
signifies the subconscious, and light, purity and the
spiritual, the memories recounted by the two women take on a symbolic as well as literal significance. Like night and day, Léona and Félie are two opposing sides of the same entity, and yet, as their names indicate and as the final scene bears out, they have their similarities.

As Félie moves into the house with Léona, the two women gradually merge, and Léona, the subconscious is painstakingly repressed. Alix announces near the beginning of Act Two, "La maison fait peau neuve" (II, 289). It is not, however, the house that will have a new skin, but the characters. Already in Act One, the identification of the two women with each other has begun when Léona comforts her husband's mistress and says, "Oui, oui, nous nous souviendrons ensemble" (II, 286). Later Félie alludes to "notre double existence" (II, 316). Odilon notices that Léona has changed when he says, "Tu es là, et je ne sais plus si c'est vraiment cette bouche qui parle et qui rit dont j'ai goûté le creux chaud!" (II, 291). When Bellemasse describes Léona in Act Two, we see that in his eyes the personalities of Félie and Léona have already fused: "...tu es modeste, candide, fidèle aussi" (II, 304). The virtues he ascribes to Léona belong actually to Félie. In Act Three, the transfiguration becomes more evident. Bellemasse remarks,

Ce testament est proprement spirituel!
Voici la preuve par Félicité et Léona—je dirais par A plus B—que l'on pourra concilier bientôt ce qui paraît en ce
moment inconciliable! (II, 343).

The bewildered Odilon watches Léona's metamorphosis before his very eyes:

Odilon: Laisse-les dormir, nous veillerons! Il dort son sommeil d'éléphant!
Léona: Qui?
Odilon: Dom.
Léona: Qui dit cela?
Odilon: Toi-même!
Léona: Ce n'est pas vrai... Et toi, comment dors-tu? Je te l'ai demandé déjà! Sur le dos, la bouche ouverte.
Odilon: Tu disais: "Son sommeil ronfleur bat tous les coins de la maison.
Léona: Non.
Odilon: "Il n'a aucune imagination...."
Léona: "Ton corps de Vénus marine!... Je me sens libre comme un nageur lorsqu'il m'emporte sur ses ondes!"
Odilon: "Pas de force ou de faiblesse à dissimuler."
Léona: "Il s'entraîne a la course sur les gazons!"
Odilon: Tu disais: "Il se prolonge là, posté!"
Léona: Eh bien?
Odilon: Tu as voulu l'assassiner!...
Léona: Tu mens, renard. (II, 352-353)

As Léona denies her former self, she borrows Félie's words. In Act Three, she carries out the threat made in Act Two, "Je le lui déracinerai du coeur, de l'âme, de la mémoire! ...Il est à moi " (II, 296). As Léona expropriates Félie's very memories, she manages to make her newly discovered love for Dom retroactive. At the end of the play, she tells Alix of her love for her husband, and adds,

Sais-tu? Un après-midi, nous courons ensemble dans la prairie; comme je le gagne de vitesse, il me crie: "Léona, tu triches, tes pieds ne touchent pas terre." (....) Il me disait: "Léona,
tes yeux sont plus longs que les jours
de juin, plus longs que les beaux
souvenirs..." (II, 358-359)

She suggests to Odilon an escapade that belongs to Dom
and Félie's past:

Nous irons au bois de la Croix Fulmine.
Afin d'attirer les soupçons du garde
forestier, nous prendrons un chemin qui
ne mène nulle part!...Nous nous arrêterons
soudain pour un baiser sans fin. Le
garde nous suit alors et, près de la mare aux
peupliers, nous nous laisserons surprendre
...(II, 336)

In the same conversation, Léona usurps another of Félie's
memories as she substitutes herself for Félie and Odilon
for Dom: "Oh! oui, tu me suivras, pour le plaisir de me
regarder marcher!" (II, 336).

Even Ida denies Léona's past as she refuses to
acknowledge her affair with Thierry and apologizes for
having beaten her.

Another correspondence between Léona and Félie
results from the characters' references to the grave in
terms of the marriage bed. As Dom spent his mortal life
wedded to Léona, he intends to spend eternity lying next
to Félie, whom he wishes buried beside him. Both Félie
and Léona refer to life after death as if it were a physical
existence; Félie, for instance, wants to join her lover
while she is still as young as he is. Hoping to prevent
Félie from committing suicide and thus being buried next
to Don, Léona says to Odilon, "Mais il faut empêcher Félie
d'aller coucher avec lui ce soir!" (II, 336). Léona tries
to obtain a city ordinance banning Félie from the cemetery: "Il n'en est pas besoin de beaucoup pour comprendre que c'est tolérer l'adultère au domicile conjugal!" (II, 343). Bellemasse calls Dom's desire to have Félie buried next to him the "ultime hospitalité" (II, 343). Léona re-enforces this image when she exhorts Odilon to help her: "Si tu ne l'en empêches pas, ce soir, demain, dans deux jours, au su et au vu de tous, elle y sera couchée avec lui!" (II, 352).

As Odilon follows Léona's orders to seduce Félie, all three seem happy with their new roles. Odilon had hoped all along to supplant Dom, and that is just what he does, though not as he had envisioned, as he takes Félie off to Dom's bedroom to make love. Though devoted, Félie, felicity-feline, is adaptable, and her complicity allows Léona's conversion. As a unit, Léona and Félie serve as two distinct poles of one personality. By juxtaposing these two complementary women, Crommelynck manages to display a complex personality while retaining the simplistic characters of farce. Their obsession with love gives the playwright the opportunity to portray both the sensuous and the spiritual and to reconcile them, the subconscious tucked safely into place, a lion at bay. Not only is the subject lyrical, but also the design. Action is minimized as characters are artificially intertwined so as to reveal Crommelynck's lyrical perception.

Just as Félie and Léona jell into two facets of one personality, Dom posthumously develops three
personalities. Crommelynck's theme becomes more complex and contrastive, as he expands it beyond the subject of the dichotomy of love into the dichotomy—or, in this case, trichotomy—of the individual. Even after Dom is "figé" in death, it is impossible to define him unilaterally. Since this complex character never appears on the stage, Crommelynck can present him through the same simplistic methods with which he presents Léona/Féli. Through Léona's eyes we see him as a snoring bore, through Féli's as a lyrically inclined lover, and through the eyes of the Burgomaster, Ida, Thierry, and Bellemasse as a Christ figure.

As early as Act One, Léona admits, "(...) je n'ai pas connu monsieur Dom!" (II, 282). Near the beginning of Act Two, she reiterates, "Est-ce ainsi qu'on parle à monsieur Dom? est-ce ainsi qu'il répond? Eh bien! oui, oui! Moi, je n'ai connu que le fourbe, le traître, le cauteleux!" (II, 295). As Léona reads aloud Dom's letter to Féli, we see two opposing views of the man, one from his letter, one from Léona's comments:

"Je me sens libre comme un nageur lorsqu'il me porte sur ses ondes." Oh!...Vénus marine! avoue que l'expression est drôle! Lui, lui? Dans un livre! Tu l'as entendu boire? (....) Tu l'as vu boire, manger? Tu l'as vu se curer les dents, les dix ongles, les vingt!...Tu l'as vu bailler, dormir? (II, 322-323)

The two women divide Dom into "le tien" and "le mien" as each one describes him as she knew him. Léona finally
asks, "Félie, parlons-nous du même homme?" (II, 323).
She even wants to show her Dom's portrait to confirm his identity.

Ida is the first character in the play to notice that there are two Dom's. In Act One, she says,

Et monsieur Dom, lui, quitte sa maison chaque matin, le visage posé sur le col comme le masque du vrai mari, et il rentre chaque soir de la ville, le masque toujours en place, le gilet droit, l'air de quelqu'un qui passe entre les gouttes pendant l'orage. (II, 242)

Bellemasse later recognizes the problem of Dom's incongruity when he says, "Après cela, il sera moins difficile de réconcilier Dom et Dom!..." (II, 341)

As Félie and Léona reconstruct Dom's personality, Thierry, Bellemasse, and the Burgomaster construct the legendary Dom. As Gisèle Féal notes, Dom takes on the aura of a Christ figure. In order to discourage rumors of death stemming from a contagious disease, the Burgomaster proposes, "On peut dire que monsieur Dom est mort en donneur de sang!" (II, 299). The Burgomaster's statement, typically ambiguous, has both a clinical and a religious ring to it: donating blood, on the one hand, and spilling his blood, sacrificing his life, on the other. Although not precisely a parallel to the New Testament account, the legend builds around Dom as the characters present the third interpretation of the man by evoking Christ. Two condemned prisoners carry the body to its grave while rumors of Dom's appearance are reported from various neighboring
hamlets. Several villages dispute the claim to be Dom's birthplace, and Alix arrives to report Félie's words, "(...) c'est aujourd'hui le matin du troisième jour" (II, 306), a statement which Alix repeats several times as the play progresses.

No sooner is Dom dead than the men form "domiste" groups, intending to establish his philosophy and to set up the sort of moral code Dom would have approved of. The Burgomaster calls Thierry "le prophète de la grande pénitence" (II, 300), and Bellemasse wonders whether Dom permitted divorce. Dom's belongings become relics, and his bedroom becomes "le sanctuaire, l'autel de l'Idée..." (II, 357). Dom's spirit—at least the one attributed to him—seems to be alive in his followers as all assembled at his burial reply "présent" to the call of his name. Thierry even makes of Dom a long-awaited spiritual leader, when he says of his Idea, "Il semble qu'on n'attendait qu'elle." (II, 357). As Gisèle Féal notes, even Dom's name lends itself to such inflation, "Dom" deriving from "dominus."¹⁴ André Berger's remark that "Dom" signifies "sot" (silly) in Flemish¹⁵ does not preclude Féal's interpretation but rather adds yet another impasse to arriving at a unified definition of the dead man. The final ironic touch is added when Alix confides that she was lying when she announced Dom's dying words, "J'ai une idée...j'ai une idée..." (II, 271), words which give rise to his legendary self.

Thierry, on a smaller scale, mirrors this theme
of the inability to classify rigidly someone's personality. In Act Two, when Léona reproaches him for having confessed their affair to his wife, he replies, "Pardon, Léona. Je ne sais plus. Etait-ce moi?" (II, 314). Subsequently, Ida says of him, "Je l'ai eue dans mon lit, moi, cette statue de l'absence!" (II, 346). As Léona and Félicie coalesce, Thierry merges with Bellemasse; when Thierry enters the dying man's home, the Burgomaster calls him "un ami du ménage." "Pas plus que Bellemasse, pas moins," he ironically replies (II, 267). The two men frequently reply simultaneously, and they both claim to be heirs to Dom's Idea, which finally unites them. Bellemasse explains, "Thierry et moi, nous avons cherché nos points d'adhérence, nos creux, nos pleins, etc... Nous sommes d'accord sur le but." (II, 304). Thierry confirms, "Pour consacrer l'alliance, nous mêlerions nos symboles. L'un compléterait l'autre?..." (II, 341). The perspicacious Ida noticed their similarity in Act One when she called them "deux paires de cornes au même joug!" (II, 242). Whereas Bellemasse and Thierry inherit Dom's Idea, Odilon "inherits" Félicie, and in this way, takes the dead man's place. He risks, on the other hand, being supplanted by Dom; Léona tells him,

Si tu ne la retiens pas aujourd'hui, quand je serai dans ton étreinte, à me venger d'eux, c'est lui, --sache-le bien --lui, que mon désir évoquera, lui, qu'à toi je substituerai sornoiement. (II, 353).

In his article on Chaud et Froid, Roy Walker
notes that the male roles are deliberately insubstantial. This is so because Crommelynck has no use for rounded agents, for fully developed personalities; his characters are used as devices to project his theme. So highly stylized are they that one could never mistake them for "real" people. Such characters move through the play as motifs surface in a poem, in order to reiterate and elaborate themes, and in this sense, the characters perform a lyrical function. Crommelynck uses them expressionistically as visual manifestations of aspects of one personality.

Just as volatile as the characters, "words" themselves vacillate and defy stable definitions. The theme of the power of language partially defines the characters' inability to arrive at a conclusive definition of themselves and of each other. Léona sums up this aspect of Crommelynck's theme when she says, "Loin de la vérité, les mots mentent tout seuls." (II, 313). In the first act when Odilon suggests murdering Dom, Léona warns him, "Tu es jeune, tu ne sais pas encore le danger des mots! On finit par leur obéir, comme des mécaniques!..." (II, 260). She explains her love for Odilon as the result of "words": "Je t'aime depuis deux jours à vine, deux jours f pour certaines paroles venues d'ailleurs que de nous, avec une force de commandement " (II, 295). The Burgomaster displays a particular awareness of the power and danger of words. As Thierry, Bellemasse, and Odilon gather outside Dom's bedroom, Thierry calls Léona "la veuve"; and Odilon
corrects, "l'héritier" (II, 269). The Burgomaster protests and insists on the exact word. Later he reprimands, "Alix, (...) Fillette, ne joue pas avec le feu, c'est-à-dire avec les paroles." (II, 297).

As the play progresses, we see that, indeed, "words" are responsible for the varying portraits we have of Dom. Félie presents one aspect, Leôna one, and Alix's lie gives rise to yet another. In the last act, as Leôna metamorphoses into Félie, she replaces her own memories with Félie's "words." Bellemasse echoes this theme when he recognizes, "...l'eau entraîne l'eau et le mot le mot." (II, 278). He sees the immense possibilities of "words": "Que de l'innombrable silence des tombeaux vous fassiez un seul consentement et une parole, la voix frapperà avec l'ampleur et la puissance du chœur antique, etc." (II, 277). The Burgomaster's slip of the tongue is partly responsible for the legend that Dom engenders:

Il n'est pas de péril plus grand que de garder très longtemps une idée de derrière la terre. (Il perd pied, il s'affole.) Pardon! pardon! c'est un "lapsus"! Je dis "la tête". (II, 279)

As the theme of language evolves into that of the "idea," it plays a major role in the more comprehensive theme of the indefinable self. Félie and Leôna's unstable self complements this theme, and their contradictory versions of Dom expand it.

As themes reflect and echo one another, Crommelynck
creates a play in which all the characters and dialogue are used to project themes. The playwright does not display characters facing a particular dilemma, as in classical theatre, nor does he try to reproduce a duplicate of "real" life, as in more realistic drama. Although his characters possess certain characteristics of "real" people, they are not merely personifications of certain personality traits, as is sometimes the case in Molière's theatre. As his characters unite to project the playwright's subjective interpretation of reality, they all move together in the same direction, not against each other nor against themselves in a way that would produce a climax, but rather, in the space of the play, they move steadily towards a synthesis of themes, revealing the intricate design of their creator.

Although Crommelynck's method encourages a psychoanalytic approach to the characters, we find in pursuing such a course, his essential lyricism: a unique blend of farce and poem, "une ballade populaire et non un sonnet." The play is a ballad in that it is necessarily dramatic, and, though minimal, a certain amount of action lends the play a narrative aspect, obviously involving dialogue; the theme is love and the setting domestic; characters are portrayed simplistically, and the repetition of certain phrases creates the effect of a refrain. But beyond this, a lyricism emerges from the playwright's revelation of an inner world.

As Crommelynck splits personality and distributes
it among various characters, he exteriorizes an internal struggle. If he places facets of one personality in diverse protagonists, who themselves cannot arrive at a coherent definition of a dead man, it is because he wants to portray expressionistically the ambiguous interior condition of man. He reveals paradoxical attitudes by breaking down the components of personality into more readily definable parts; by putting the parts back together again, we recognize the many-faceted face of the soul.
REFERENCES

5. Feal, p. 78.
8. Tiusanen, p. 12.
12. de Vries, p. 297.
15. A la Rencontre de Fernand Crommelynck (Liège, 1946), p. 35.
Conclusion

Symbolist or expressionist, Fernand Crommelynck infuses his drama with essentially lyrical themes. Love moves center stage only to be assassinated as the curtain goes up. Inevitably ill-fated in all of Crommelynck's plays except Une Femme qu'a le coeur trop petit, love rewards its host only in memory and imagination, never in realization. Although Stella, Louison, and Carine speak joyfully of love in their first scene, before the end of the first act, their happiness eludes them. The Stranger in Les Amants puérils loves only a phantom, and Marie-Henriette's love for Walter evokes only a justified fear for her fate. Love eludes Pierre-Auguste, while Félie must content herself with memories, which do not sustain her, but betray her as Léona usurps them.

As in classical drama, each play focuses on a restricted amount of time in which the lives of the characters change significantly, and usually for the worse. We learn of their past through modified monologues proffering verbal images, most frequently of love. Though literal and not figurative images, such reminiscences figure in the characters' lyricism. Louison evokes images of happy love set in the springtimes of her past, and Pascal imagines himself free and happy in the approaching spring of the future. In some of the most lyrical lines of Crommelynck's
theatre, the Stranger of Les Amants puérils pictures himself joyfully going to his lover's grave in the month of May. Stella recalls the joys of childhood when she, Bruno, and Pétrus played outdoors. As Pierre-Auguste evokes Azelle, he speaks of "une seule journée heureuse" (II, 79), indicating that the realization of their love belongs only to a limited amount of time in the past, and he frequently evokes scenes of conjugal harmony in the future, a happiness as elusive for him as for the Stranger. Carine recalls the joys of furtive rendezvous with her lover Frédéric, and Félie dotes on the memory of her first glimpse of Dom from her vantage point in the limbs of a tree. The characters thus capsule love and seal it off from the time covered by the play; they dole out their mental visions bit by bit in the form of lyrical images, set in another place, usually external nature, and characterized by a season, usually spring or summer. The events of the play radically alter their mental visions, either by death or disillusionment.

Even in Crommelynck's "pièce rose," Une Femme qu'a le coeur trop petit, love finds expression only in verbal images recounted by the characters, in particular Patricia. Throughout the play, love remains endangered, and only at the end do dreams materialize. Like the lines of Crommelynck's other lyrically inclined protagonists, Patricia's imagery does not consist of imagistic language but rather of literal word pictures, descriptions, often of nature, recounted emotionally as prose poems.
In *Tripes d'or*, *Une Femme qui a le cœur trop petit*, and *Chaud et Froid*, the most lyrical lines of love are spoken about a character who never appears on the stage. Pierre-Auguste relegates Azelle to the wings, Aldo exists only in Patricia's imagination, and Dom dies without appearing in the play. Similarly, Bruno's extravagant jealousy of Stella is engendered by a non-existent lover in *Le Cocu magnifique*. Both Bruno's and Balbine's fear of other characters' dreams indicates the significance of the subliminal world in Crommelynck's theatre. Love appears thus all the more elusive, a fleeting phantom of the imagination, a misleading dream.

Whereas love continuously eludes most of Crommelynck's protagonists, death faithfully comes to those who seek it and to some who do not. Both Louison and Carine die from disappointment in love, a rather common disease but rarely fatal outside the lyrical mode. Marie-Henriette and Walter take the course more common in tragedy—suicide, even though they seem uncomprehending as they are mysteriously drawn to the water by voices. Crommelynck's treatment of these deaths belongs to the lyrical tradition of symbolist drama, while in his treatment of death in *Le Cocu magnifique*, *Tripes d'Or*, and *Chaud et Froid*, he flirts with expressionism. Dom's corpse lying in an adjoining room in *Chaud et Froid* seems an unlikely catalyst for the exaggerated religious and amorous fervor it generates. In *Le Cocu magnifique* and *Tripes d'Or*, allusions to murder pervert the
the lyrical theme of death and along with Pierre-Auguste's
death by defecation herald the extremes of Crommelynck's
expressionist tendency and predict the theatre of the
absurd.†

The playwright's most characteristic device, the
use of masks, costumes, and festivities, bridges the gap
between his symbolism and his expressionism and serves to
remove death to another plane, where it functions more than
poetically possible if left amid the mundane surroundings
of the "real" world of the characters. In Le Sculpteur de
Masques, carnival recurs as the central motif, reaching
its point of greatest intensity at Louison's death. Images
of seasonal renewal and death throughout the dialogue
coalesce in the last scenes as Louison dies amidst the
festivities of spring carnival. The ever-present masks
in Pascal's shop prefigure the characters' facile transla-
tion into the fanciful world where death becomes a ritual.
Chants, music, and masks recreate the world of primitive
liturgical drama, the orientation of the Symbolist theatre.²

Similarly in Les Amants puérils, Marie-Henriette
and Walter commit suicide during nocturnal festivities,
and the prosaic world of a pension at the height of the
season metamorphoses into a midsummer night's dream.
Allusions to the deaths of other lovers, to the dangers of
nature, particularly of maritime storms, and to the
proximity of the sea crystallize in this final scene. The
literal voices that we hear calling Marie-Henriette to the
sea manifest the siren that Walter claims has called him. As Marie-Henriette and Walter drown, Elisabeth removes her gloves and veil, revealing herself to the Stranger for the first time, and thus shatters the illusion provided by her "masks."

The nocturnal celebration in honor of the village saint affords Bruno the occasion to be literally the man he imagines Stella to love. He climbs a ladder to her window, a romantic gesture made appropriate by the occasion, and wears a mask, the very manifestation of his desire to be someone else. As he cuckold himself by making love to Stella in disguise, he realizes his greatest fear. The entire scene serves as a scenic image of Bruno's instability of personality; it is a metaphoric culmination of his recurrent confusion of himself with other characters: the unidentified man of the first act and his valet Estrugo. Stella's near death as the women try to drown her takes place as part of their frenzied festival. Like a victim of a primitive tribe, the Stella of their village submits to the rites of submersion as if to be reborn as the Stella Maris that allusions often make her out to be. This act serves as the point of greatest intensity of such imagery, and by its violence, Crommelynk passes into the realm of expressionism. Although murder hardly figures as a lyrical theme, it can be classified here as lyrical by its function as a culmination of images and by its ritualized presentation.
In *Tripes d'Or*, extravagant costumes and a parodic wedding produce hallucinatory effects similar to those produced by masks and festivities in Crommelynck's previous plays. Here, too, they frame a death. Recurring allusions to Pierre-Auguste's royalty culminate in the last scene as he impersonates Louis XIV. By the time he dies, the characters have moved completely out of the "real" world and into the realm of fantasy, as verified by their acknowledgement of his death: "Tripes d'Or est mort!" "Vive Tripes d'Or!" (II, 122). Illusion reigns as Herminie in a dress borrowed from a stage set marries, as a proxy for the intangible Azelle, Pierre-Auguste in a room decorated in the "trompe-l'oeil" style of the Sun King. Crommelynck orchestrates the entire scene as a visual metaphor, summing up the various images aroused by the characters' dialogue. The lyricist's desire to render the subconscious explodes in expressionistic splendor.

Carine's death, too, takes place as an "unrealistic" outgrowth of the bacchanal. Images of the hunt, the Uncle's pavilion, and the masquerade blend in the final scenes as Carine succumbs to the fate expected for the hunters' quarry. By her inability to participate in the vulgarity of the world, Carine embodies both symbolist and expressionist ideals, and by Crommelynck's tightly knit structure, in which all of the motifs culminate in her death, the playwright defines his own lyricism.

In *Chaud et Froid*, the masquerade or carnival motif
is replaced by the religious rallying around Dom's corpse. Images portraying Dom as a religious leader crystallize as his bedroom becomes an altar and merge with the sexual imagery of Léona, as Félie makes love with Odilon on Dom's bed. As Léona substitutes Félie's memories for her own, the lyricist stakes his claim to the domain of the subconscious, which he exploits with the expressionist's penchant for the exaggerated.

In general in Crommelynck's theatre, death occurs as part of a ritualized event, which, by its stylization and universal implications, lends his drama a lyrical quality in addition to the one arising from the theme of love.

The lyrical culmination of images reached in each play's final scenes derives much of its impact from the dialogue of minor characters, from the setting, and, especially in his early plays, from symbolic events, such as the bird escaping from its cage just as Louison faints. Crommelynck's most recurrent device is the use of anecdotes recounted by servants or other minor characters. Like a poet embroidering image upon image, Crommelynck allows Cador repeatedly to tell a story of lovers reminiscent of Magdeleine's and Pascal's situation. Zulma and Fideline, who at the first of Les Amants pueriles seem destined to provide comic relief, give neither comedy nor relief, as they continuously recount stories counterpointing the main theme. Fideline's emphasis on the sensuous recapitulates in a lower form the more abstract aspirations of the lyrical
protagonists; she is a forerunner of the grotesque characters of the expressionist theatre. All of the characters in Carine recount at one time or another an incident of illicit love, thereby contributing to the amassing images making inroads into Carine's idealistic concept. Such dialogue creates "récits" set "en abîme," a device Crommelynck uses lyrically as images elaborating and counterpointing one another.

Like other expressionist dramatists, Crommelynck frequently calls minor characters by their profession; his plays are peopled with the Burgomaster, the Carpenter, the Governess. The events of the play or the personality of the characters often lend significance to the name of those characters who have one: Stella evokes light, for example, Walter evokes water, Léona a lioness, and Félie both felicity and feline. As symbols of their personality, names divulge a part of the characters' inner world and thus function lyrically.

Whereas the characters evince a certain lyricism in their attitude towards love and, in Une Femme qu'a le coeur trop petit, towards life in general, the technical aspect, such as Crommelynck's ritualization of death, his use of masks, costumes, and festivities, his highly organized arrangement of motifs, anecdotes which allude to the main theme, characters like Léona and Félie who represent aspects of the same personality, and his use of setting and names derives from the playwright's own lyricism. The characters'
repeatedly unfortunate experiences with love also reflect their creator's subjective view, tempered by the optimism of *Une Femme qui a le coeur trop petit*.

By the exaggerated proportions with which he draws characters like Bruno, Pierre-Auguste, Léona, and Balbine, Crommelynck displays the psyche in cross sections revealing tendencies in the extreme. The inner world revealed belongs traditionally to the lyrical mode and by the manner in which Crommelynck styles it to both symbolism and expressionism. In addition to the playwright's lyricism, the characters themselves often demonstrate a lyrical penchant as they reveal their personal thoughts in extended emotional passages. Both Louison and Pascal are inclined to poetic revelations as are the Stranger and Marie-Henriette. Even the psychotic Bruno elicits our sympathy as he recites a love poem to Stella, and the farcically ridiculous Pierre-Auguste evokes 'lyrical' images in his passages on Azelle. Although Carine and Frédéric reveal their love to each other and to the spectator, the most lyrically evocative lines of the play are spoken by the cynical Uncle. Patricia, Gabriel, and Olivier in their lyrically spontaneous evocations of love and nature enlist our moral support against "l'implacable Allégorie de toutes les Vertus domestiques." (III, 297). Félie indulges herself in lyrical reminiscences of Dom, who himself speaks from the grave, as it were, in his love letters read aloud by Léona. Since the characters, however, are not autonomous, their lyricism also reverts to
the playwright. Their repeated preoccupation with love and their continuous disappointments can only derive from their creator's lyrical perception. Only in *Une Femme qu'a le coeur trop petit* does Crommelynck offer an optimistic view of love's fate.

As Crommelynck arranges the world in aesthetic designs, he runs the risk of disappointing the spectator who wants to see flesh and blood people, saying what people would "normally" say in their situation. André Berger responds to this hypothetic criticism:

Chacune de ses pièces est comme une vaste allégorie ou l'hypostase de forces latentes, des tendances les plus secrètes, les plus profondes de l'être. Chacune d'elles personnifie, anime, un fait purement mental, et si elle présente un univers artificiel, truqué, où tout ce qui s'accomplit a l'incohérence et le schématisme de nos rêves, c'est qu'elle imite les rythmes secrets de l'âme tels que l'intuition les communique au poète. L'univers crommelynckien est comme une parodie de la vie apparente, parodie dont la structure serait modelée sur celle du monde intérieur.3

The English critic Ashley Dukes did not hesitate to rank Fernand Crommelynck with O'Neill, Pirandello, and Shaw,4 and Paul Werrie calls him "le plus foncièrement, le plus naturellement 'théâtre' de toute la lignée d'avant guerre... Et peut-être l'ultime détenteur du grand secret: celui du langage théâtral authentique."5
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3 André Berger, A la Rencontre de Fernand Crommelynck (Liège, 1946), p. 43.


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