Chapter 4
Recycling and fragmentation.
Collage in the Almanacs

- Père Ubu, vous n’indiquez pas les foires dans votre Almanach ?
- Eh ! de par ma chandelle verte, mon Almanach la donne aux lecteurs à force de rire. Encore une économie de médecin.¹

Introduction
Traditionally, an important task of the popular almanac was to indicate all the fairs of the month.² Ubu’s first Almanac does not really live up to this practical function, for the section ‘Foyers’ consists solely of the brief dialogue cited above. ‘Foire’ was in fact a favourite word in Jarry’s vocabulary, due to its obvious connotations (meaning both fair/market and diarrhoea).³ Despite the characteristic joke, the word ‘foire’ can also be considered as a metaphor, albeit a rather unsavoury one, for the way the texts are constructed in the Almanacs. The bits and pieces of texts are recycled and scattered all over the pages; a collage of texts and images.

Although the term collage was never used by Jarry, I argue in this chapter that its technique and its aesthetic principles are clearly noticeable in both Almanacs. After defining what I understand as collage in literature, I will discuss the three aspects that contribute to the collage structure of Ubu’s Almanacs; generic hybridity, the insertion of (pseudo-) ready-made material and the mixing of media. Through a close reading of several fragments from the Almanacs I will show in more detail how the collage works, how the material is selected and combined together and what effects they have on the text, the narrative and representation.

4.1 Collage in literature

The term collage I use here must be defined first, as it is not usually associated with literature. Collage made its first public and official appearance in the visual arts with the Cubist ‘papiers collés’ made by Picasso and Braque in the years just before the First World War. Picasso and Braque stuck newspaper fragments, wallpaper and other pre-existent materials into their compositions as ‘representatives of the tactile reality Cubist formal analysis tended to destroy’.⁴ Their collages tended to break with the flat plane of a painting and with the unity of composition. The Petit Robert defines collage by its original meaning as an ‘action de coller’ or an ‘assemblage par adhésion’, and by its artistic meaning as a ‘composition faite d’éléments hétérogènes collés sur la toile, éventuellement intégrés à la

¹ OC I, p. 537.
² Bollème, Les almanachs populaires aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles. Essai d’histoire sociale p. 28.
³ Sitting next to Colette once at a dinner party, who asked him what was the matter with him, since he could not sit still, Jarry replied loudly: ‘Madame, j’ai la foire!’. Arnaud, Alfred Jarry, D’Ubu Roi au docteur Faustroll, p. 431.
peinture.’ From the early historical avant-garde movements and throughout the twentieth century, collage became a much used technique and principle in all the arts.\footnote{For an illustrated overview of the collage in modern art see, among others, Hanno Möbius, Montage und Collage. Literatur, bildende Künste, Film, Fotografie, Musik, Theater bis 1933 (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2000), Brandon Taylor, Collage. The making of modern art (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), Herta Wescher, Die Collage. Geschichte eines künstlerischen Ausdrucksmittels. (Köln: M.DuMont Schauberg, 1968).}

However, a literary collage is obviously different from a collage painting and its definition therefore deserves some further consideration. Some scholars closely follow the visual arts, defining literary collage as the use of pre-existent, heterogeneous material, texts or images, in a new text.\footnote{Franz-Josef Albersmeier, "Collage und Montage im surrealistischen Roman," Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik 12, no. 46 (1982): p. 62.} This also includes pseudo ready-made material, made to look as pre-existent. This is an important aspect of any collage, but such a definition of literary collage is not completely satisfactory. In painting the collage is always visually heterogeneous; the inserted materials are easily identifiable. However, the heterogeneity of collage in literature does not just take place on a graphic level. A literary text can be visually heterogeneous, juxtaposing texts and image for example, but it can also be stylistically or grammatically heterogeneous. Jean-Pierre Morel argued that a rupture in style or grammar can also indicate the presence of a heterogeneous element in a literary work.\footnote{Jean-Pierre Morel argues that the heterogeneity of collage in literary works is not always strictly visual, but can also be stylistic or grammatical. A rupture in style or grammar indicates that the element has not been completed integrated. Jean Pierre Morel, "Collages, montage et roman chez Döblin et Dos Passos," Revue d’Esthétique, no. 3/4 (1978): p. 216.} It seems therefore more useful to define literary collage not solely by the actual act of cutting and pasting, but also by the effect it has on the text.

Collage in literature is often connected to or even confused with the common practice of quotation.\footnote{Recently Gilles Dumoulin, in his master thesis, discussed the transition from the (Symbolist) practice of quotation to an aesthetic of collage in the novel Faustroll. Gilles Dumoulin, "Jarry-Faustroll. De la citation au collage: le docteur Faustroll d’Alfred Jarry" (Mémoire de Master 2, 2005). A clear distinction between quotation and collage is however lacking.} Like collage, quotation relies on the insertion of an existing text in a receiving text. It is double coded, meaning that it is both part of a strange, outside context and part of a new context.\footnote{Möbius, Montage und Collage, p. 51} However, collage suggests more than the mere practice of citing existing texts or images and quotation is only one aspect of a collage work. A collage can include many quotations, but the emphasis in collage is always placed on the singularity of the inserted material or quotation and not on its integration in the new context (as is in principle the case with quotation).\footnote{Ibid., p. 58.} In literature, as in the original Cubist paintings, it has a disrupting effect on the composition, unity and coherence of the work. As part of the collage, quotation is used as a means to achieve that effect.

The term collage is also often intertwined with that of montage. I prefer to use the term collage over montage with respect to Ubu’s Almanacs mainly because the term collage suggests the insertion of pre-existent, non-literary material or non literary media (image, music) in the text, whereas the broader term montage refers to composition, to the internal arrangement of a
work.\textsuperscript{11} I also prefer ‘collage’ because the word itself, more than the term montage, suggests that the glue is still visible and emphasizes the fact that the fragment is not fully integrated in the work.\textsuperscript{12} I understand literary collage primarily as a provocative strategy intended to disrupt a work’s coherence.\textsuperscript{13} The technique of collage itself was not in itself new or revolutionary, but it was picked up by twentieth century artists and writers as a subversive aesthetic principle and a very ‘conscious act’ to rethink pictorial and narrative conventions and modes of representation.\textsuperscript{14}

Contrary to conventions of illusionist aesthetics, a literary collage does not hide its constructed nature; most of the fragments are still recognizable, despite their new arrangement. Sometimes there is more tension between the various fragments than at other times in the collage work, but the ‘glue’ remains visible. A literary collage can appear heterogeneous not only on a graphic level but also on the level of coherence. Certainly in Jarry’s time this challenged the concept of the literary work as a coherent and organic whole.\textsuperscript{15} For the contemporary reader, used to a finished, harmonious work, the collage’s incoherence and fragmentation could thus produce an effect of estrangement. At the same time however the collage work would force the reader to take up an active role in its interpretation.

I therefore understand literary collage as: an intentional, provocative strategy, which involves the incorporation of various pre-existent or pseudo pre-existent materials (texts, image) in the text, resulting in a heterogeneous and fragmented work, including a disrupting effect on the unity and coherence of the narrative. In Ubu’s Almanacs three aspects in particular contribute to

\textsuperscript{11} I am well aware of the debates on and various definitions of terms ‘collage’ and ‘montage’ in critical literature. Some scholars distinguish strictly between them; others see the terms as synonyms or derived from one another. A detailed discussion of the debates on these terms exceeds the scope of this book, but their definitions greatly depend on critical traditions, artistic discipline and language domains. In French and English tradition preference is given to the word ‘collage’ when describing a work of art that cuts and pastes heterogeneous materials, whereas montage is often limited (in English especially) to photography, film, or more generally to the technical, industrial process of assembling and less specifically to a text. In the \textit{Thames & Hudson Dictionary of Art Terms} (2003) for example, montage is therefore much more generally defined as ‘a design, not necessarily intended as a work of art, made by sticking one material over another or the process of creating such a design. In German on the other hand, the word montage is used more often; its meaning is extended to include collage. See Möbius, \textit{Montage und Collage}, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{12} Möbius considers collage as a subcategory of the broader term montage. He makes a distinction between a ‘demonstrative (open, irritating)’ montage strategy and an ‘integrating (hidden)’ montage whereby the first form has become characteristic for many works of the historical avant-garde. The provocative montage is an attack on conventions of the organic work, whereas the integrating montage confirms a work’s unity and is a way of arranging the material to achieve a suggestion of authenticity, not provocation. However collage, in avant-garde art, already suggests such a provocative strategy, disruptive to the work’s coherence. Möbius, \textit{Montage und Collage}, p. 28/9.


\textsuperscript{14} Louis Aragon, author of the collage novel \textit{Le Paysan de Paris}, also emphasized this when stating that the essence of modern literary collage for him was this ‘acte conscient’, a ‘démarche décidée’. Collage, he says, is a form of quotation, but the primary aim of collage is to question and scrutinize the conventions of literature and art. Louis Aragon, \textit{Les collages} (Paris: Hermann, 1980), pp. 125-35.

\textsuperscript{15} As other scholars have also argued with regard to avant-garde literary collage works, such as Holger Lund. \textit{Angriff auf die erzählerische Ordnung. Die Collagenromane Max Ernsts.} (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2000), Perloff, \textit{The Futurist Moment}, p. 246. Throughout her book Adamowicz also argues that such a creative and subversive strategy is central to Surrealist collage texts. See Elza Adamowicz, \textit{Surrealist Collage in Text and Image} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
their collage aesthetic. These aspects of Jarry's poetics were already announced in 'Linteau'. First of all there is generic hybridity. Secondly ready-made or (pseudo-) ready-made elements are inserted in the texts, a vital aspect of any collage work. The third aspect is the combining of artistic media (although still textual material), in particular the juxtaposition of text and image. I will discuss these three aspects in this order for each Almanac and combine that discussion with a close reading of several fragments for a better understanding of the effects of the collage.

4.2 Collage in the first almanac

4.2.1 Generic hybridity

Jarry's œuvre was described by Béhar as a 'cultural kaleidoscope', but it could just as easily be labelled a kaleidoscope of genres. In chapter two I already addressed the appeal the almanac genre must have had on Jarry. Traditionally, the popular almanac was comprised of an eclectic range of textual genres. In Ubu's first Almanac we find a similar variety of genres (see the outline of its content in Fig. 1). The titles of the texts and the structure appear to conform to those of a regular popular almanac. The small format, the cheap paper, the mixture of archaic-looking fonts equally complied with the characteristics of the genre. The seemingly original mentions on the cover of the title page, such as 'on sale everywhere' and 'second edition' were, as said, fictional. However they do suggest that much was done by the authors to keep up the appearance of a regular almanac, giving the impression of a successful and widespread publication.

Judging from the titles, the first Almanac seems to concur with Lüsebrink's division of the traditional popular almanac: a pragmatic part, a calendar part, a historic/current events part and a 'various' section. Titles such as 'connaissances utiles', 'calendrier', 'éphémérides actuelles' and 'variétés', could easily convince the reader that each section will deliver what their title promises. However, most either seem to parody their title or do not cover the content at all. The 'useful knowledge' section for example has Ubu triumphantly announcing his latest 'inventions', umbrellas, gloves and slippers. Obviously the information is neither new nor very practical. The section 'L'Agronome Citadin' contains horoscope-like predictions and recommendations for the months of January, February and March. February starts with 'Under the sign of Pisces' and March with the phrase 'Good this month are'. The January text however is a very hermetic, poetic text about rain, floriculture and opera, the February text is a story narrated in the first person plural by Ubu and March is a seemingly incoherent list of things and people. Whereas these texts seem to conform to the pragmatic function of an almanac at first, their content, as I will show later on in more detail, does not. The title of the following section, 'Éphémérides actuelles', suggests that this is the traditional current events section. However, the subtitle 'Île du Diable' (pièce secrete en 3 ans et plusieurs tableaux) reveals that it is in fact

---

17 The outline of the content is based on the original editions, manuscript numbers 90633 (first Almanac) and 17251(second Almanac), Bibliothèque Municipale de Laval. The reason for relying on the original editions is the fact that later in re-editions of the Almanacs the last pages, which contained the advertisements and the table of contents, were omitted.
also a play, starring the protagonists from *Ubu Roi*. So at first glance Ubu's Almanac remains faithful to the sections traditionally found in a popular almanac, but in most instances they hardly abide by the conventions of the genre in question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almanach du Père Ubu, illustré (Lanvier-Février-Mars 1899) - En vente partout. Prix : 50 centimes. Abonnement d'un an (6 numéros) 1 fr. 50.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articles principaux de l'almanach pour l'année 1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comput ecclésiastique et civil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fêtes mobilières et immobilières de cet hiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quatre-temps, Salons, Éclipses du Soleil et de la Lune, Éclipses du Père Ubu, Tableau des grandes saisons en 1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendriers et Saints, Janvier, Février, Mars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connaissances utiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pour teindre les cheveux en vert, pour faire tomber et choisir les dent, à faire que vis vienne en dégout à quelque magne. Pour affiner l'or avec les salamandres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variétés - Exhortation au lecteur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- L'agronome citadin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Feuilles, Janvier, Février, Mars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tableau de Politique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephémérides actuelles - L'Île du Diable (pièce écrite en 3 ans et plusieurs tableaux)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettres et Arts - La fête automobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Néologie - Stéphane Mallarmé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conseils aux capitaines et port-de-famille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand ordre de la Guêpe - Starse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propriétés d'un saucisson pour l'Exposition de 1899 - Proust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amarnacien : Vallant, L'Héritier et Les Poêles (Franck-Nicolai, Terrasse), Poèmes de Sang de Charles Bonnard, Éditions Mercure de France, Éditions Revue Blanche (Flètés par Franck-Nicolai), La Critique (Georges Barn), L'Argue de la Preuve, Table</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1: Outline of the first Almanac**

A certain degree of generic hybridity was characteristic of traditional almanacs. It partly resulted from their adherence to short and simple forms. Destined for a wide audience, texts in traditional almanacs hardly ever exceeded three pages. The brevity and simplicity of the texts (in the form of proverbs or small poems for example) were supposed to inspire the reader to repetitive reading, to reflection and to memorisation. As Lüsebrink describes, the fragmentary nature of the texts was meant to prompt the reader to make multiple connections and associations within the almanac. In the light of Jarry's ideas on literature, this fragmentary, associative quality must have appealed to him, but no doubt for a different reason. It seems more likely that these traditional characteristics allowed Jarry and his collaborators to mix various types of texts in their own almanac, perhaps to satirize popular almanacs, but mainly to challenge contemporary ideas on literary genre and

---

composition. In fact, such genre crossing would become characteristic of many literary collage works. In later collage novels, such as Aragon’s *Le paysan de Paris* (1926) or Breton’s *Nadja* (1928), the juxtaposition of genres helps achieve an effect of heterogeneity and fragmentation. With the Almanacs, the generic hybridity also seems to facilitate the ideal heterogeneous, collagist work Jarry had already alluded to in ‘Linteau’.

4.2.1.1 Lists in the first Almanac

The effect of generic hybridity and its role in the collage is perhaps best illustrated by a closer look at a very specific genre that appears in Ubu’s Almanac; the list. Lists, in particular lists of names, are a striking feature in the work; even visually they stand out in the text, isolated or interspersed in between the texts and disrupting an ongoing narrative.

The most conspicuous list in the first Almanac is the Saint’s Calendar covering the first three months of the year, spread out on six pages in the original edition. The official holy days of the Roman Catholic Church are respected in this calendar and so are the Saints. The calendar appears to have been copied from the *Almanach Hachette*. Although the names are simply duplicated and although the Saints’ calendar is a necessary part of any almanac, it does reveal Jarry’s general fascination for lists of all sorts. The other lists in the Almanac also reflect that fascination, but they also reveal a more important aspect of Jarry’s writing.

![Figure 2: List of names at the end of ‘Agronome Citadin. Mars’, first Almanac.](image)

The second list appears at the end of the section ‘L’Agronome Citadin’. It sums up seventeen contemporary politicians, journalists, artists and writers (Fig.2). They are introduced in a Rabelaisian manner as ‘de joyeux civils nos bons amis et sujets, gens notables de Paris’. Several names refer to

---

19 See Béhar, Dubbelboer, Morel, ‘*Commentaires pour servir à la lecture de l’Almanach du Père Ubu illustré*’, 2009.
intellectuals who were prominent during the Dreyfus Affair and some of them reappear at the end of the mini-play Île du Diable.\textsuperscript{20}

The insertion and meaning of this list can only be explained if we look at the entire text. In the section ‘L’Agronome citadin’ two functions of the traditional almanac are kept intact. First of all the popular almanac provided tips and information to readers related to the seasons and the calendar. Secondly its task was to provide an interpretation of the world and of the relationship man has with the world through the calendar and zodiac. These features of the traditional almanac enable Jarry to refer to contemporary culture and politics by means of the associations made in the text with each calendar month and its zodiac sign. It also reflects an essential aspect of pataphysics in which apparently absurd and trivial details are used to reflect upon the world and interpret events. Thus the section March (with the title \textit{Mars} above the section) contains an inventory prompted by associations with the month of March:

\begin{quote}
’Sont bons tout ce mois tous animaux, ustensiles et végétaux cornus, béliers (signe zodical du mois), taureaux, escargots, diables, lièvres, fourches, fourchettes, la lettre Y et les racines de crocus.’\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

The zodiac sign of Aries (ram) that dominates the month of March guides this associative enumeration. The ram of course has horns and the common symbol for this zodiac sign is the letter Y.\textsuperscript{22} Every animal, utensil or plant with horns, a corn (‘cornu’ meaning both), or in the shape of Y is therefore considered suitable for this month in this fragment. Some are listed because of their semantic association with ‘cornus’, such as bulls, devils (with horns), snails (for their horned shell). Others share a visual resemblance with the shape of Y; hares, forks, the letter Y itself and the roots of a crocus. A similar procedure is applied in the sections of January (Aquarius) and February (Pisces). Here we see the semiotic polyvalence Jarry addressed in ‘Linteau’ in action. The irony is obvious, since the items mentioned are hardly useful, in a way one would expect from an almanac. They are ‘bons’ only because their presence is justified by their connection to the sign Mars. While they might have looked rather random at first glance, each item has been selected on the basis of their associations with this ‘sign’ of the zodiac. The (semiotic) sign, its referents and associative potential are here explored to the fullest.

In fact this way of writing is not only characteristic for the Almanacs, but for most of Jarry’s work and it is more reminiscent of poetry than of prose writing. The ‘trigger’ for the narrative is a word, a sign, an image. Jarry then explores all possible synonyms, as well as a word’s homonyms and antonyms. He associates on the level of sound, on the level of their resemblance or opposition between words, on the level of their meaning (s), but even on a visual level, as in the case with the Y shape. This associative way of writing impedes a conventional narrative reading and interpretation of the texts. Essential and striking in Jarry’s use of collage is this play with

\textsuperscript{20} In chapter seven I will discuss the theme of the Dreyfus Affair in greater detail.
\textsuperscript{21} OC I, p. 541.
\textsuperscript{22} These zodiac symbols could also be found in old almanacs and calendars. They helped to indicate the months and signs to people who could not read.
literal/figurative meanings and phonetic punning. This play is the primary trigger for the writing. However these associations are not gratuitous or devoid of meaning if we look at the remainder of this section.

The associations with the sign ‘Mars’ continue in another list also introduced by a similar verb-subject construction (‘Sont bons tout ce mois et peuvent rendre de bons service tous soldats, militaires, pompiers, vidangeurs, plongeurs de vaisselle, sergents de ville’).\(^{23}\) This time ‘Mars’ is understood as the god Mars and this triggers a list of people associated with war, violence, repression and authoritative figures in general; loyal guardians and defenders of the French Republic. From a list of rather trivial objects, plants and animals, the text now evolves into a record of names which refer to contemporary figures, cultural life and political events.

It is here that we find the list of names introduced in the Rabelaisian manner. Ubu lists his joyous citizens, his good friends, subjects and notables of Paris. The names refer to well-known personalities; artists and writers, some personal friends of Jarry, or journalists/politicians playing some active role in contemporary political and cultural life. The first person listed is Gaston Danville, a writer/journalist, who was also a friend of Jarry and who co-edited Faustroll in 1911.

Every now and then the list is interrupted by short fragments of dialogue uttered by Captain Bordure, one of Ubu’s ‘bons sujets’ in Ubu Roi. His unexpected appearance here is justified by his status as Ubu’s military accomplice. While the narrator Ubu sums up the names, one can picture the image of Bordure standing next to him, asking questions and handing out orders to his ‘soldiers’ standing in line. Bordure’s comments all refer to contemporary French army politics and further develop the association between Mars and everything military.

The fact that the wordplay is never random in Jarry’s texts is nicely illustrated by the name of Gandillot for example. His title as ‘chevalier’ in the Légion d’Honneur connects him to the military ‘theme’ of this list. This prompts a dialogue intermezzo, in which Bordure asks if Gandillot was awarded this title in Madagascar. Bordure continues by saying that, judging by Gandillot’s name, he must have been delivering shoes for the army (see also Fig. 2 for this dialogue). The word ‘Godillot’, argot for shoes, might explain why Gandillot is thought to deliver this particular, but far from heroic service to the army. His name is apparently confounded with that of Alexis Godillot (1816-1896), official shoe supplier for the army. Gandillot does not just remain a name, but suddenly comes to live as an active participant in the dialogue, as he replies to Bordure: ‘Non, mon capitaine, je travaille sur mesure pour le Palais-Royal’.\(^{24}\) There are several references in this few sentences. First of all Bordure’s remark refers to French military and colonial exploits in Madagascar, which had been made a French colony in 1896. Secondly Léon Gandillot was a highly successful playwright at the time. The phrase ‘fournir sur mesure’ might not just refer to his alleged imaginative shoe business, but seems to comment implicitly on his success as a writer as well. It suggests that he delivers neatly measured plays for the

\(^{23}\) OC I, p. 541.

\(^{24}\) OC I, p. 542.
Palais-Royal. It also connects his success as a playwright to the French military 'successes' in Madagascar.

In the second dialogue intermezzo Bordure gives the order: 'Tournez-vous vers Metz, l'ennemi! Où plutôt cela a changé...Sur les Anglais. Par le flanc droit, gauche! Les Anglais sont toujours du côté du Manche.'\(^{25}\) There are references to two traumatic defeats for France in these sentences. Metz of course refers to the surrendering of this city during the Franco-German war of 1870. In more recent years England had become a colonial adversary ('du côté du Manche' an expression meaning 'on the right', but Manche also evokes the Channel, la Manche) due to the 'Fachoda crisis' in 1898.\(^{26}\)

The list of names is a careful selection of people from Jarry’s inner circle (Roussel, Franc-Nohain), celebrated authors (Hermant, Gandillot) and some movers and shakers of fin de siècle political life (Scheurer-Kestner, Judet, Freycinet). They form an imaginary queue of (cultural and political) soldiers, with Bordure walking up and down along the formation, giving out orders. The sudden dialogue draws the attention of the reader. These snippets of dialogue bring the narrative to life. Through this sudden change in register, the reader’s attention is pointed to these references to contemporary politics. Every time dialogue is inserted, this small text becomes more referential, at least for the informed reader. The dialogues read as a transcription of something overheard, fragments of conversation. Like the names of actual people, real cultural symbols, these dialogues appear as life-like and fleeting fragments of reality. This also creates the impression of simultaneity, a central aspect to collage and in Jarry’s poetics. The simultaneity could here be seen as a response to the fleeting and hectic reality of everyday life. Modern, everyday life could only be experienced in a fragmented way by our visual and reading capacities and the collage aesthetic seems best capable to capture this in the work of art.\(^{27}\) The fragments (names, snippets of dialogue) in this list therefore convey an impression of reality as collage-like and fragmentary.

Through the sudden changes in register (from list to dialogue) the reader is also made aware of the artificial construction of the text. The author guides the narrative and the reader, by associative, but carefully selected words. Here we see the sort of author figure Jarry also hinted at in ‘Linteau’; one who does not place the meaning solely in his text or in the hands of his reader, but who visibly and cautiously constructs his texts. In this text the author steers the reader through the arrangements of words, or by sudden switches to dialogue. From the start the word Mars is fore grounded and provides a clue for understanding the text. Other hints in the text (‘signe zodiacal’, ‘bélïer’, ‘la lettre Y’) equally point to the importance of the ‘sign’ Mars. The list of names ends with Freycinet, au ministère de la Guerre, sans

---

\(^{25}\) OC I, p. 542.

\(^{26}\) Both France and England sought control of the Sudan region in Central Africa, when Lord Kitchener forced French general Marchand to retreat.

\(^{27}\) Möbius also ties collage and montage to experiences of modern life and of the modern city. Since the nineteenth century the city had been associated with new concepts of time and space by artists and writers. Möbius, Montage und Collage. Literatur, bildende Künste, Film, Fotografie, Musik, Theater bis 1933, pp. 43-44.
Freycinet had been one of the principal accusers of Dreyfus and he returns several times as a character in the first Almanac. He had resigned in May 1895 but returned to the post of minister in November 1898. In the Almanac, Freycinet (‘sans renagement’) is not reinstated. Moreover, the capitalization of the last word ‘Guerre’ connects it directly to the word Mars from the beginning and the text comes full circle.

The list of names also has another effect. The cultural canon is re-arranged by explicitly naming the artists and writers of Jarry’s circle alongside more established ones. By mixing up artists and politicians, the worlds of arts and politics are united in an equally militaristic atmosphere, the (avant-garde) artists fighting against the cultural establishment, whereas the political/cultural establishment are fighting their own battles. Thus the collage text, however abstract, through the list of names and the puns, appears to implicitly comment on both cultural politics and military politics of French society, favouring certain artists, writers, while mocking the establishment (whether artistic or political).

In many of the texts of the Almanacs there is a similar entanglement of various semantic threads, in which meaning is created primarily through associations made between words and signs. On the one hand the collage is heterogeneous and the narrative is incoherent, but on the other hand various layers of meaning do surface when one looks closer at the words, their associations and arrangement.

---

28 OC I, p. 542.
29 See also appendix, ‘Freycinet, celui qui guerroie.’
events. At the end of their stroll, they stumble upon a crowd gathered together around Rodin’s latest work, a statue of Balzac. Rodin was commissioned by Zola, president of the Société des Gens de Lettres in 1891, to make this sculpture. However, after it was revealed on 29 April 1898, it was refused by that same Société and criticised in the (conservative) press. A support rally for Rodin was launched, dividing the cultural world in two sides, hence this odd mélange of people gathering around Balzac’s controversial work. Fourneau asks Ubu to ‘list them in Homeric fashion’ to which Ubu replies with this epic enumeration of names. It is a true ‘who’s who of the Belle Époque’, listing people who mattered in the worlds of politics, art, music and literature at the time.

Each name is followed by a description starting with the formula ‘celui/celle qui’, ‘he/ she who’ followed most of the times by a verb derived from a noun or adjective associated with the person’s activities or with a pun on their name. Although there are 136 names, they correspond to 135 individuals; the two Natanson brothers appear under one name, writer Henri-Gauthier Villars appears under his two pseudonyms (Willy and L’Ouvreuse) and composer Bourgault-Ducoudray also has two entries as both Bourgault and Ducoudray. As for its structure, the list is in non-alphabetical order and seems to be fabricated ad hoc. However, the order of the names seems also partially guided by association. The name of actress Louise France for example, who played Mère Ubu in 1896, precedes (and seems to trigger) the name of writer Anatole France. Their shared last name provides an excellent tool for wordplay. Elsewhere in the Almanac Anatole France appears as the son of Mère Ubu (Louise France). A similar imaginative exploration of names, punning on their phonetic and semantic possibilities, is characteristic of this entire list (see appendix).

The list includes writers, artists, composers, politicians and actors. Patrick Besnier has remarked that the names do not always refer to a personal relationship, but reflect Jarry’s diverse roles as journalist, writer and playwright. However it also seems plausible that this mix of artists, musicians, writers and politicians reflects the input of Bonnard and Terrasse. Most of the musicians listed were acquaintances of Terrasse and not of Jarry. Bonnard was familiar with most of the painters and artists mentioned in this list. Considering what we know about the collaborative composition for the 1901 Saint’s Calendar and for the Grand Ordre de la Gidouille (see previous chapter), it is not unthinkable that this list was constructed in a similar way.

More important however is the fact that the list replaces the ongoing narrative. The section Arts and Letters consists of a discussion of current events, but the dialogue between Ubu and Fourneau ends in this seemingly endless inventory of names. Representation is no longer poured into a conventional narrative form, but substituted by this encyclopaedic list, as if the conventional narrative no longer suffices. The same effect also applies to the use of (pseudo-)ready-made text and materials in the Almanacs.

4.2.2 Ready-made and pseudo ready-made elements

The insertion of heterogeneous pre-existing material is, as mentioned in the introduction, an important aspect of any collage work. In the Almanac one can discern between pre-existent ready-made elements, copied and pasted, either unaltered or manipulated, and pseudo ready-made elements, which give the impression of being pre-existent and authentic, but which are created by the author(s). The use of these elements reveals first of all a new conception of literary creation and a re-evaluation of what is deemed ‘worthy’ to be integrated into a work of art. Furthermore the insertion of these ‘foreign’ fragments helps trigger incongruous associations and is a source for wordplay. The integration of ready-made material also allows the author to create an alternative version of that reality by bringing (pseudo-)fragments from that reality straight into the literary work, altering them and alienating them from their original context. They remain tied to their original context, but they also receive meaning in their new context. Through their strangeness in the new context and the separation (or alteration) from their original context, the reader is actively made to think about their significance.

4.2.2.1 Calendars, dates and numbers

The use of pre-existent material is already visible in the first pages of Ubu’s first Almanac, where we find the ‘pragmatic section’ which includes calculations for holidays, important dates and a Saint’s calendar. Most of the components in this section appear to have been literally copied from a popular almanac, most likely the contemporary Almanach Hachette. The Almanach Hachette, ‘petite encyclopédie de la vie pratique’, was a recently introduced (1894) and successful popular and practical almanac. The first Ubu Almanac was announced in the Mercure de France together with only one other almanac, the Almanach Hachette. But the typography of the first Almanac also resembles that of the contemporary Catholic Almanach populaire for example.

The section begins with a list of six different dating systems. Many popular almanacs contained a segment indicating the different calendars used throughout history. The Almanach Hachette listed no less than twenty-seven, but only the following six are mentioned in Ubu’s Almanac.31

Articles principaux de l’annuaire pour l’année 189932

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Année de la période Julienne</td>
<td>6611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depuis la première Olympiade d’Iphitus(juillet)</td>
<td>2674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De la fondation de Rome selon Varron (mars)</td>
<td>2651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De l’époque de Nabonassar depuis février</td>
<td>2645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De la naissance de Jésus-Christ</td>
<td>1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Du règne du Père Ubu</td>
<td>8374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31 For more details on these calendars as well as on the other numbers and calculations in this section of the Almanac, see Béhar, Dubbelboer, Morel, ‘Commentaires pour servir à la lecture de l’Almanach du Père Ubu illustré’, 2009.
32 OC I, p. 527.
The Julian calendar was introduced by the humanist Scaliger. It counted back from 4713 BC and it was thought then that this covered the whole of human history. According to legend, Iphitos, king of Elis organized the Olympic Games after consulting the oracle of Delphi to achieve peace with Sparta. Ancient sources record the first Olympic game at 776 BC, but the exact date remains speculation. The date of the founding of Rome was set in the year 753 BC by Roman scholar Marcus Terentius Varro. The start of the reign of King Nabonassar of Babylon (in 747 BC) served as a point of departure for a calendar proposed by Greek astronomer Claudius Ptolemeus. The birth of Jesus Christ speaks for itself, as it is the basis for our Gregorian calendar; it became official in France in 1806. The Saint's calendar of Ubu’s Almanac also indicates the dates of the Revolutionary calendar in use before (for the month of January: ‘1er janvier, 12 nivôse an 106; le 20, 1er pluviôse’).

Although Ubu’s Almanac is intended to cover the year 1899, the numbers all concur with the year 1898 (for the year 1899 it should have been 6612, 2675, 2652 and 2646). Only the birth of Jesus Christ complies with 1899. This might be a ‘correction’ on the part of the Jarry, since astronomers argued that the birth of Christ should be situated in the year zero. The calendar should therefore not, as the Catholic Church had decided, start with the year one.

The care with which all these ‘facts’ have been copied, assembled and even ‘corrected’, shows how carefully constructed each section is. This is also emphasized by the insertion of a completely new, obviously ‘pseudo’ calendar, that starts with of the ‘reign of Père Ubu’. This dates back a staggering 8374 years, as it sets the beginning of Ubu’s reign in the year 6475 B.C. Apparently Père Ubu’s existence outdates and overshadows that of all the others; his calendar is by far the oldest.

A similar procedure of mixing up pre-existent elements and pseudo pre-existent elements also applies to the numbers and calculations in the rest of this calendar section. The ‘comput ecclésiastique et séculier’ are traditional elements in a calendar, containing the numbers (such as ‘épacte’) necessary to calculate the dates of Christian holy days. Moveable and non moveable feasts are indicated as well as the start of the seasons, the eclipses of moon and sun and a table indicating the exact hours and minutes of the tides for 1899. Ubu’s Almanac even issues warnings for ‘several disasters’ caused by the high tides. The maritime information seems to have been literally

---

33 The Republican calendar was based on a system proposed by poet and anti-religious propagandist Pierre-Sylvain Maréchal in his Almanach des honnêtes gens. The calendar started on September 22, 1792, the day after the establishment of the Republic. The calendar divided the year into 12 months of 30 days and each month included three, 10-day weeks called décades. The names of the months were based on nature and natural phenomena associated with each particular period, like Nivôse (snow), Floréal (blossom) or Messidor (harvest). Five days (six days in leap years) were added to the end of the year, named after festivals and holidays in honor of Republican traits: Virtue; Genius; Labor; Opinion; and Rewards. The sixth day added during leap years was dedicated to the Revolution. This Republican calendar was the official French calendar from 22 September 1792 (1er vendémiaire an I ) until 1 January 1806 (11 nivôse an XIV).
34 See also Béhar, Dubbelboer, Morel, ‘Commentaires pour servir à la lecture de l’Almanach du Père Ubu illustré’, 2009.
35 The table in Ubu’s Almanac is exactly similar to the one in Almanach populaire 1899, p. 3.
36 ‘Ces marées, surtout celles des 11 février et 13 mars, pourraient occasionner quelques désastres, si elles étaient favorisées par les vents’, OC I, p. 528.
copied as well, as the phrasing from Ubu’s Almanac is similar (although slightly revised) to that of a popular almanac. Thus in a random edition of the almanac of Matthieu Laensberg one can read ‘on aura remarqué que’ whereas Ubu’s Almanac says ‘on a remarqué’, and ‘par le tableau ci-contre’ instead of ‘par ce tableau’.

Such information was usually recycled from one almanac to another and Jarry and his collaborators have made the dates and tables fit Ubu’s Almanac. This collage of ‘facts’ suggests that Ubu’s Almanac sticks to its ‘practical’ function. The solar and lunar eclipses for example comply with those announced in regular almanacs. Nevertheless this section also contains some highly unpractical information including false dates and calculations. As such the reader learns that a very unique eclipse is taking place in the upcoming year:

Éclipse du Père Ubu
Éclipse partielle du Père Ubu, les 29, 30 et 31 février

Ubu partially eclipses on these dates in February. Since the 29th only occurs every four years and the other two dates not at all, it comes as no surprise that Ubu can barely be seen on these days. Entries like these show the care with which the ‘authentic’ details of the almanac were emulated or manipulated, mixing up real features and pseudo-original elements.

But what is the effect of this collage of real and imaginary dates and numbers? Obviously it satirizes the ‘practical info’ section of a popular almanac or calendar. In history many dating systems coincided and the standardization of the calendar in the Western World was only relatively recent. By listing Ubu’s ‘calendar’ among the real ones the collage questions the objectivity of these numbers and calculations. It mocks the arbitrariness of these calendars and man’s need to control time and emphasizes instead the subjectivity of man’s conception of time. One can spot the influence of Jarry’s teacher Bergson and his ideas on (the relativity of) time and space here. In fact one can situate this re-evaluation of time within a general rethinking of ‘objective’ knowledge around 1900 in favour of subjective perception. In line with these contemporary ideas Jarry would write in 1903: ‘la vérité actuelle est celle-ci: l’espace et le temps ne sont que des formes’.

The fact that time is a mere constructed form is well illustrated in Ubu’s Almanac. The collage of real and imaginary dates and numbers thus has a parodist function.

On the other hand the sheer fascination for time revealed in the use of dates and numbers might also suggest a desire to manipulate if not master time. Jarry’s preoccupation with time is revealed in many of his writings. He had emphasized art’s capacity to transcend time in ‘Le temps dans l’art’. Art

---

37 See Almanach liégeois pour 1848 par Matthieu Laensberg contenant jour par jour le lever et le coucher du Soleil et de la Lune ; des Prédicitions pour chaque mois ; des Anecdotes intéressantes, Le Tableau des Foires, etc. Rouen, imprimerie Mégard, rue du Petit Puits, 21 et Grand’ Rue, 156. See also Béhar, Dubbelboer, Morel, ‘Commentaires pour servir à la lecture de l’Almanach du Père Ubu illustré.’

38 ‘Il y aura en 1899 trois éclipses de soleil et deux éclipses de lune. Éclipse partielle du soleil, le 11 janvier 1899, invisible à Paris’, Ubu’s Almanac 1899, OC I, p. 528. The exact same phrases can be found in the Almanach populaire 1899, p. 3.

39 OC I, p. 528.

could capture a fleeting moment of history in order to put it on hold for eternity.\textsuperscript{41} Interestingly, this was also an important feature of the traditional popular almanac, which through its heterogeneous, encyclopaedic collection of knowledge, sought to master time and nature. Popular almanacs were considered timeless and worthy to be preserved and their readers were often explicitly advised to do so.\textsuperscript{42}

Therefore, besides satirizing man’s fascination with time, the collage of dates and calendars also seems to have the advantage of eternalizing the fragmentary and the fugitive, by fixation a moment in time and manipulating it. The collage aesthetic and its fragmentary simultaneity appear to be the right artistic means to achieve these seemingly contradictory aims

\textit{4.2.2.2 Recipes}

A similar procedure of cutting and pasting selective practical ‘information’ can be found in the section ‘Connaissances utiles’. This section contains four ‘useful’ recipes; one to paint one’s hair green, one for pulling teeth, one for curing alcoholism and one alchemist recipe to make gold out of salamanders.

Such recipes were a common feature of almanacs and passed on from one almanac to another. Three of these recipes are in fact cut and pasted from an outside source and Jarry does not hide this fact. The subtitle of this section (Fig. 4) clearly states: ‘recueillies par le Père Ubu, spécialement pour l’année 1899, d’après les Secrets de son savant ami le révérend seigneur Alexis, Piémontais’. The recipes are taken from a popular book of recipes of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, written by Alexis Piémontais, a pseudonym of Girolamo Ruscelli, entitled ‘Les Secrets du seigneur Alexis Piémontais’, which appeared in various versions and sometimes augmented by other authors. Girolamo Ruscelli was an Italian doctor and alchemist whose pseudo-scientific pragmatic recipes were translated into other languages from the 16\textsuperscript{th} century onwards and copied over and over again in Almanacs and other popular publications.\textsuperscript{43} They appeared in a French translation under the pseudonym of Alexis Piémontais. In Jarry’s time the Bibliothèque Nationale possessed 13 versions of the book published between 1591 and 1691. The phrase ‘le réverend seigneur Alexis, Piémontais’ appears to be an exact copy of the phrase from Ruscelli’s book of recipes, if we look at the first page from an edition of 1564 (Fig. 4).\textsuperscript{44} The recipes are all inserted with only an occasional small alteration. Sometimes the spelling and the punctuation have been modernized. Compare for example the last recipe in

\textsuperscript{41} In the article quoted above Jarry also remarked: ‘l’homme pourrait-il vivre sans les secours des dates?’ (\textit{La Plume}, no. 330, 1903, p. 142.) Another example is the essay ‘Visions futures et actuelles’ (\textit{l’Art littéraire}, May 1894, OC I, p. 337/9) and of course ‘Commentaire pour servir à la construction pratique de la machine à explorer le temps’ (\textit{Le Mercure de France}, n° 110, February 1899, pp. 387-96). Signed by Dr Faustroll, Jarry’s manual for how to build a time machine was inspired by the recent French translation of H.-G. Wells’ \textit{The Time Machine} by Henry D. Davray, Société du Mercure de France, 1898.


\textsuperscript{43} Béhar, \textit{Les cultures de Jarry}, p. 129. Alexis Piémontais was known in Italian as Alessio Piemontese and in Latin as Alexius Pedemontanus.


87
Ubu’s Almanac (‘pour affiner l’or avec les salamandres’) with its ‘original’ taken from Les Secrets d’Alexis Piémontais (Fig. 5). ‘Prends’ becomes ‘Prends’, ‘jusques au’ is updated to ‘jusqu’au’, but otherwise the text has remained unchanged.

The four recipes might first of all have been chosen because they ironically refer to personal details of Jarry’s life. They could be seen as ‘cures’ for several of Jarry’s own problems. The first one relates to his alcoholism, the others to his miserable financial situation (making gold would solve that) and to his dental problems. The recipe ‘Pour teindre les cheveux en vert’ is taken from a supplement to Ruscelli’s original book, attributed to ‘various authors.’ Legend has it that Jarry, as a tribute to Baudelaire, actually did paint his hair green once.

Whereas the recipes might be partly chosen for their references to Jarry’s biography, the collage of these recipes has more interesting effects. They obviously satirize popular tradition, but the attention with which they were copied also suggests a fascination Jarry and his collaborators shared for popular culture in general and for these odd texts in particular.

Figure 4: Recipes Almanac 1899 and an excerpt from Ruscelli (1564)

45 In real life Jarry also had a tendency to turn his personal problems into literature. In a letter to Rachilde for example Jarry related ‘Père Ubu’s’ visit to the dentist under the title ‘journal dentaire du Père Ubu’, OC III, pp. 591/92.
47 According to an anecdote told by Franc-Nohain, Jarry painted his hair green one day to attract attention. Unfortunately, when he walked into a café, everyone (warned in advance) pretended not to notice it. Arnaud, Alfred Jarry, D’Ubu Roi au docteur Faustroll, p. 430.
There is however another more important effect. Even though Père Ubu explicitly mentions his debt to the work of ‘his friend’ Ruscelli, the uninformed reader might nevertheless wonder about the exact origins of these four recipes. For someone unfamiliar with Ruscelli’s book or with Jarry’s biography, these recipes inserted by Ubu might appear utterly random and fictional. At best they might cast doubts about the originality of all the other texts in the Almanacs. The collage thus blurs the distinction between the authentic texts and these borrowed texts and authorship of the texts is rendered uncertain.

The fictitious author of the Almanac, Père Ubu, takes on the role of the medieval compilator in this segment. He merely recycles and compiles the texts, in line with the tradition of popular almanacs. However set in Jarry’s contemporary literary context, such an author-role has more profound implications. As such the collage questions both a concept of originality and rethinks the function of the author, much in the same way the collaborative authorship of the Almanacs did. The originality of the texts is made less important; they need not be the unique creation of a singular individual, they can be copied, borrowed to function in a new context. Instead the collage favours a concept of the endless repetition and recycling of texts. Furthermore the author is no longer a singular creator of unique material, but receives as bricoleur, someone who carefully selects both authentic and non-authentic material.

4.2.2.3 Auto-collage and recycling

Another example of the collage of ready-made material can be found in the section ‘Nécrologie’. A traditional almanac function, of keeping track of important current events, is respected by this obituary announcing the death of Mallarmé. Mallarmé died in Valvins on 9 September 1898 and was buried at the cemetery near Samoreau on the 11th. Jarry attended his funeral. Many obituaries for Mallarmé of course appeared at the time, such as the one from Le Temps (see Fig. 7). Ubu’s Almanac equally commemorates
this poet, and mentor to Jarry. The text (see Figure 6) begins and ends with a thick, black line, common for regular newspaper obituaries.

The obituary starts with quotation marks. The first line reads: ‘L’île de Ptyx est d’un seul bloc de la pierre de ce nom...’ The unsuspecting reader might think he is dealing with a quote from Mallarmé’s poetry, since this entire fragment is written in a style reminiscent of Mallarmé.

Figure 6: Obituary for Mallarmé on page 79, on page 78 the end of the list of names, Almanac 1899

Figure 7 Obituary for Mallarmé, Le Temps, 11 September 1898
However, the quoted text was written by Jarry himself. It is an excerpt from *Gestes et Opinions du Docteur Faustroll*, posthumously published in 1911, but written mostly in 1898. ‘De l’île de Ptyx’ is the title of chapter XIX in book III, dedicated to Mallarmé. The chapter quoted here in the Almanac is a prose poem which, through the image of the island of Ptyx (a nice metaphor for Mallarmé’s hermetic poetry and status in the literary world), evokes Mallarmé’s work. The word ‘Ptyx’ comes directly from Mallarmé’s vocabulary and brings to mind his famous poem ‘Sonnet en –yx’ and the pseudonym, Yx, which he used for some of his journalism. The style employed by Jarry also evokes Mallarmé’s work and the text contains references to Mallarmé’s Tuesday salons. Mallarmé is described as the lord of the Island of Ptyx, welcoming his guests: ‘Le seigneur de l’île vint vers nous dans un vaisseau [...] sa chaise à bascule hochait ses gestes de bienvenu.’

Sitting in his rocking chair, smoking his pipe, Mallarmé appears in the pose characteristic of how he received his guests: ‘Le seigneur de l’île vint vers nous dans un vaisseau [...] sa chaise à bascule hochait ses gestes de bienvenu.’

When reading further, the previously unsuspecting reader is now quickly and explicitly made aware of the fact that this is a quotation from Jarry’s text. After the quotation, the title of Jarry’s novel is mentioned between brackets and, after the quote from *Faustroll*, Mallarmé himself now appears in the text:

…”le vaisseau clair et mécanique recula vers l’horizon de l’île son haleine bleutée, et la chaise hochante qui saluait adieu.”

(Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien. De Paris à Paris par mer.)

Mallarmé se réjouit de lire le périple et se leva une dernière fois, la main vers le docteur, du fauteuil à bascule dans le décor de suggestive beauté."

This first line does not belong to the quotation from *Faustroll*, but it is a citation nonetheless. It is a (slightly altered) auto-collage from one of the last letters Mallarmé ever wrote, addressed to Jarry. Jarry had sent him excerpts of *Faustroll* and on May 16th 1898 Mallarmé answered with a flattering letter, praising Jarry’s texts and comparing him to Rabelais:

Mon cher Jarry.
La suite des estampes est surprenante-, du Rabelais, dira-t-on, mais ce que ce divin eût écrit originellement tout à l’heure : je ne me suis jamais, moi, sur un décor de plus significative beauté, levé du fauteuil basculant que, cette fois, pour vous presser la main.

S.M.

In Jarry’s rephrasing of the letter, Mallarmé’s final act before his death was to get up from his chair, offering his hand to the doctor (doctor Faustroll), as if to confirm his approval and to pass over an imaginary torch to Faustroll/Jarry. There is a hint of self-promotion here, but this is not that

48 OC I, p. 564.
49 OC I, p. 565.
50 Mallarmé, Correspondance X Novembre 1897-Septembre 1898, pp. 190/91.
odd, as such self-promotion pops up again in Ubu’s Almanacs. Through the quote from Mallarmé’s letter to Jarry, Jarry’s work receives a sign of approval from the prince of poets himself. The rest of the ‘obituary’ evokes the burial at Samoreau attended by Faustroll. Jarry had been at Mallarmé’s funeral, very distressed according to an eye-witness, and wearing an inappropriate casual outfit and shoes he had borrowed from Rachilde at the last minute.\textsuperscript{51} This might explain why, in the text, Faustroll ‘redescendit à l’automne, pieds nus sur la route, vers les arches de Valvins.’\textsuperscript{52}

The collage of the chapter from Faustroll (already an ode to Mallarmé) and the quotation from Mallarmé’s letter function primarily as a personal and moving homage to the poet, who had supported Jarry from early on. Instead of writing a generic obituary, such as the one in Le Temps, Jarry allows Mallarmé to speak through his own letter. Jarry expresses his sentiments and evokes Mallarmé’s poetry through citing his own text from Faustroll. The poetic and serious tone of this section is radically different from the tone of the other texts in the Almanac. Furthermore the more serious, scholarly Faustroll is the protagonist here and not the ‘idiot’ Ubu which further emphasizes the singularity of this text. The segment evokes Jarry’s personal memories of Mallarmé and his funeral, not through a conventional narrative or in a personal style one would perhaps expect from an obituary, but through a collage of texts, from Jarry’s own work and Mallarmé’s own letter.

4.2.2.4 An encyclopaedic text and the ‘sign’ of Pisces

The use of pre-existent material in the collage text does not always have to be very visible or explicit. As said in the introduction, the rupture on the level of coherence which takes place in a collage work can also take place on the level of style and syntax. This is the case in ‘L’Agronome citadin’, in the February section, where a sudden rupture in style triggers the by now suspicious reader to think that this might be a ‘foreign’ fragment: one that is not completely integrated in its new context. Here the reader stumbles upon a pseudo-extraneous text, a paragraph seemingly drawn straight from an encyclopaedia. To understand the position of this encyclopaedic-like paragraph, one must first take a look at the whole text and how the collage writing works here. At first glance the February text seems to wander off in various random directions, with bits and pieces of texts and (seemingly incomprehensible) associations, not allowing the reader to discover any coherence or meaning. However this small textual collage does turn out to have a, carefully constructed, intrinsic logic. Thus this text offers two perspectives on the collage. Alongside the heterogeneous and the associative effect the text produces, which complicates the reader’s interpretation, one can also discern various and simultaneous layers of meaning.

The February text starts with a paragraph narrated in the (royal) first person plural by Ubu:

\textsuperscript{51} ‘De tous ceux qui s’affligeaient, personne ne m’a paru plus atteint que Jarry. Il semblait abîmé. La seule tenue d’été, ou de sport, qu’il avait trouvée, ou dont il disposait, ne l’avait pas arrêté. J’en ai vu se détourner pour rire. En 1898, elle pouvait choquer à un enterrement. Encore ignorait-on que ses souliers de bicyclette, jaune paille, il les avait, au dernier moment, empruntés à Mme Rachilde. [...] Dans le visage assez mat, un peu contracté, de Jarry, ses yeux noirs étaient secs. Aucun visage en larmes n’exprimait plus d’affliction’, Thadée Natanson, \textit{La Revue blanche}, n° 128, 1 October, 1898.

\textsuperscript{52} OC I, p. 565.
Février
Sous le signe des Poissons. Errant un jour (le 30 février prochain) en notre tempomobile par les rues, nous partîmes des hauteurs de Montmartre, et comme un fulgurant météore notre gidouille avançait d’un pas majestueux et lent. Semblable à une sphère roulante, nous dévalâmes la rue Lepic, la rue Blanche vers la Trinité, où les cloches conviaient les fidèles par l’ouverture des portes au moyen des grandes orgues Alexandre Guilmant, suivîmes la rue Laffitte ; la rue de Richelieu, le pont des Arts.53

On an imaginary day in the future, February 30th (also the day of Père Ubu’s partial eclipse), Ubu thus sets off on his ‘tempomobile’ to travel through the streets of Paris. The oxymoron of the title ‘l’Agronome citadin’ translates here into Ubu’s account of his activities in the city of Paris and in the surrounding countryside later on in the text. The future is predicted, not through astrology, as in a real almanac, but by way of Ubu’s tempomobile. In Homeric fashion Ubu relates his own ‘epic’ journey through the city. Ubu’s descent from Montmartre to the left bank, when visualized on a map of Paris, literally gives the impression of a ‘fulgurant météore’, tumbling down from the north (Montmartre) to the south (Quartier Latin/St Germain) of the city.54 This description of Ubu travelling through both space and time conveys again a preoccupation with time and mastering time already visible in the previously discussed collage of numbers and dates. Ubu and his tempomobile transcend the boundaries of time and space.

The phrase ‘sous le signe des Poissons’ (under the sign of Pisces) at the beginning is all telling. As was the case with the March text, the word ‘sign’ must again be understood in its broader semiotic sense. Pisces does not just guide the month of February as a zodiac sign, it can also be read as a semiotic sign which triggers associations in the text and guides the narrative. Various ‘thematic threads’ are associated with each other and with the sign of Pisces. They can be discerned in this short, but dense text, most notably: text-image, biographical references, literary and artistic references and allusions to contemporary politics.

**Text and Image**

The relationship between text and image is explored in this text through the constant play with both the textual and visual capacities of the sign of Pisces. On his majestic simultaneously fast and slow ride through the city Ubu suddenly comes to a halt on the Pont des Arts when he sees:

‘...non pas un rassemblement, c’étaient des passants qui passaient, sans s’arrêter, mais peut-être se seraient-ils arrêtés sans l’intervention possible d’un sergent de ville, il n’y avait pas de sergent de ville, mais il aurait pu venir un sergent de ville, même deux sergents de ville, voire une brigade centrale de

---

53 OC I, p. 539.
54 This analogy between Ubu and a ‘fulgurant météore’ is also made in César-Antechrist, ‘Acte Héraldique’, OC I, p. 293, ‘Gestes érotiques’, OC I, p. 520 and Visions actuelles et futures, OC I, p. 337.
sergents de ville, et nous nous sentîmes attirés vers la contemplation de l’eau. Et non sans raison, jugez-en.\textsuperscript{55}

The word ‘rassemblement’ operates as a clue for the polysemic and phonetic wordplay that follows. The passing passers-by do not stop, but they could have been stopped (in the sense of arrested) without the ‘possible intervention’ of a ‘sergent de ville’. There could have been a ‘sergent de ville’ and his presence here is not just guided by the one meaning of the word ‘arrêté’, but also evoked by the ‘signe des Poissons’. In Émile Zola’s novel L’Assommoir (1877) the character Poissons becomes a policeman. Zola’s name is also mentioned further down in the February text, perhaps as an extra clue, which leads the reader to believe that this sudden intervention of a policeman is not entirely coincidental. The ‘sergent de ville’, related to ‘Poissons’ is the reason why Ubu feels the sudden need to contemplate the water.\textsuperscript{56} The story is thus guided by the polysemic associations of this text. All the various referents of one sign are constantly explored, in which one sign evokes this referent which then evokes yet another sign. The association constantly jumps between figurative and literal meaning or between phonetic or visual resemblance. Such a visual association is made for example in the following fragment.

If the relationship between this fragment and the Pisces sign was not yet clear, the next fragment steers the reader towards a more concrete visual image of the fish, in which bits and pieces (literally) come together in a bizarre and humorist and at first abstract description of a limbless creature in the water:

Un être était immergé [...] sans souci d’aucune pudeur, il était entièrement nu, sans paralysie causée par le froid de saison ; sans l’aide de membres artificiels, car il n’avait ni bras ni jambes, il nageait ma foi très bien, un poisson, quoi!\textsuperscript{57}

From Ubu contemplating the water, the reader is taken through the abstract image of a limbless creature, to a more concrete and gruesome image of a drowned person (‘noyé’) and back again to the image of a ‘fish’. Then the narrative becomes even more specific, concentrating on a particular species of fish: the ‘barbillon’, the barb, also known as ‘barbeau’, which could be found in the Seine. It is here that we find the insertion of the encyclopaedic-like fragment:

Or le barbillon est un beau poisson, couvert d’ écailles fines qu’à sérieux examen on reconnaît en toile métallique ; son nom lui vient de ses amples moustaches moscovites, dont il fouit. Son corps très dense supporte aisément les pressions des grands fonds d’eau où il se plait. On le découvre dans les eaux claires comme un plat d’argent qui vit sur le sable. Il ne boit que de l’eau, mais il est souvent victime de son goût immodéré pour le fromage de gruyère.\textsuperscript{58}

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{55} OC I, p. 539.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Jarry would also write one of his ‘Spéculations’ about the ‘sergent de ville’, entitled ‘La cervelle du sergent de ville’, \textit{La Revue Blanche}, 15 février 1901, OC II, p. 277.
\item \textsuperscript{57} OC I, p. 539.
\item \textsuperscript{58} OC I, p. 539.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The matter of fact, descriptive tone constitutes a stylistic rupture with the previous fragments. It might suggest that this is a piece of encyclopaedic information was taken straight from a dictionary, encyclopaedia or fishing manual. Some of the sentences can indeed be traced back directly to the descriptions of this fish found in encyclopaedias. Although slightly altered, this paragraph consists of largely borrowed sentences. Bonnard’s illustrative drawing of the barb (see Fig. 9 below) also seems to mimic the illustrations accompanying encyclopaedic entries for the ‘barbillon’, such as for example the one in the Nouveau Larousse illustré from this period (Fig. 8).\footnote{Augé, ed., \textit{Nouveau Larousse illustré: dictionnaire universel encyclopédique}.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure8.png}
\caption{‘Barbeau’ Nouveau Larousse illustré, 1898.}
\end{figure}

The narrative is thus suddenly disrupted by an extraneous text. The rupture in style and tone suggest that the strange element is not completely integrated into its new context. Whereas the encyclopaedic fragment is fitted into the text (typographically or otherwise visually it does not stand out), the fragment achieves all the effects of collage through its stylistic rupture with the rest of the text.

The insertion of this fragment could stem on one hand from the authors’ desire to mimic the traditional, encyclopaedic function of a popular almanac, providing ‘practical’ information and knowledge. There is an obvious irony in recycling the banal clichés of the description of the barb. On the other hand, and more importantly, it reveals Jarry’s way of writing. Jarry often used encyclopaedic information which he would insert directly in his writings. In a letter to Vallette in the spring of 1898 he asked Vallette to provide him with two lines from Larousse he wanted to copy in the text of \textit{Faustroll}.\footnote{‘En outre, vous serait-il loisible de nous fournir un renseignement fort utile à notre \textit{Faustroll} que nous venons de recopier. Il existe dans le dictionnaire Larousse, au mot \textit{Haha}, deux vers de Piron, qui sont cités et qu’il nous embête de faire le voyage de Paris pour rechercher dans une bibliothèque’, OC I, p. 1064.}

\footnote{Jarry}
would gather snippets of information, texts, images he found in books or other sources and paste them into his work. Instead of describing the barb in the Almanac a piece of encyclopaedic-like text is inserted as a substitute for more conventional story telling.

The ‘barb’ paragraph ends with the word ‘gruyère’ with which the barb can be captured (an actual fact according to fishing manuals) and this word starts off a similar (and ironic) encyclopaedic-like paragraph about the fascinating specifics of making another cheese, Emmenthal.\footnote{In an article about fishing Jarry also writes about capturing the illustrious barb with gruyère cheese: ‘Que s’il vous est arrivé de mettre à mal, le séduisant au moyen de gruyère préalablement compassé par une jeune vierge, le gros barbeau de quatre à sept livres, vous aurez été ébahi, peut-être, des objurgations et jurons malsonnants que la bête éructe hors de sa barbiche’, ‘La Pêche à l’Amiral’, \textit{Le Canard Sauvage}, 4-10 octobre 1903, OC II, p. 521.} Again the last sentence of this ‘cheese’ paragraph (‘On dirait de vastes quartiers de lard.’) functions as a trigger for the following segment. Jarry’s ideal of words as infinite ‘polyèdres’, opening up a new path in every direction, is truly put into practice. The word ‘lard’ is part of the name of one of Jarry’s (literary) friends. Therefore the following paragraph opens with ‘M. Pierre Quillard est l’un de nos plus grands poètes.’ ‘Lard’ can also be read as a homonym for ‘l’art’. Together with the word ‘vers’ (‘L’Emmenthal est jaune, sans trous, sans vers.’) in the previous sentence, they also seem to announce the presence of poet and art-critic Quillard in the text.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure9.png}
\caption{Le barbillon and Pierre Quillard, Almanac 1899.}
\end{figure}

Furthermore Quillard’s presence is justified by his link to the Pisces sign and more specifically to the barb. Quillard is linked to this fish by visual resemblance, thanks to his distinctive beard. Insiders knew that Quillard was often nicknamed ‘Barbeau’ by his friends. If this is not yet clear to the reader, Bonnard’s sketch of the bearded Quillard, right beside that of the
barb on the previous page, reinforces the visual association between the two (Fig. 9).

**Biographical references**

Another semantic thread in this short text is a biographical one. Both the barb and Quillard appear in the text due to their personal connections with Jarry. Throughout the text, the Pisces sign allows Jarry to relate parts of his personal life. Jarry had already warned Quillard that he had confounded him with the barb. Quillard is therefore also connected to the Pisces sign because of his status as Jarry’s fishing companion (and drinking buddy) and his contribution to the development of ‘pisciculture’ at the Phalanstère.

Ubu’s journey through Paris at the beginning of the February text can equally be read as a thinly disguised personal account of Jarry’s own bicycle route from Montmartre, home to Claude Terrasse for example, to the left bank, where Jarry’s apartment was situated. In Ubu’s further explorations as a ‘paysan de Paris’ the reader can see a mirror image of Jarry in 1898, literally travelling back and forth between Paris and Corbeil. In fact both in his life and his work Jarry had a tendency to transform the most trivial details of his own biography into facts of mythic proportions. All of Jarry’s apartments received legendary names, such as the Chasublerie de Saint-Sulpice (his tiny apartment at 7, rue Cassette), and in the Almanac his bicycle tours and fishing trips became epic (Ubu) adventures. These references would of course only be obvious to Jarry’s inner circle. The Pisces sign allowed Jarry to relate the (happy) memories of the country-life he enjoyed at the Phalanstère with Quillard and the other compagnons, to explore his knowledge of the barb and his love for fishing. Jarry had already expressed his love for fishing in the play ‘l’Ouverture de la pêche’, about a family who enjoys fishing, in 1888 when he was only fifteen. As an adult his passion for fishing showed for example in his review of Gaston Lecouffe’s *Code-manuel du pêcheur* et *Code-manuel du chasseur.* He also planned writing a fishing manual as he announced in his article ‘La pêche à l’aimiral’.

Furthermore Jarry once wrote to Vallette that Père Ubu was a respected member of the ‘Société des pêcheurs à la ligne’.

The ‘barbillon’, a large and fat fish found in the depths of the Seine, was Jarry’s favourite. He prided himself in being able to capture it with cheese. For the members of the Phalanstère and others in Jarry’s circle, Jarry’s special bond with this fish became legend. In letters Jarry sometimes refers to the barb as Monsieur, ‘Fourneau’ or, when he had caught a small representative of the species, as ‘celui qui petit barbillon’:

---

63 OC II, p. 521.
65 It led to some pittoresk, but often hard to believe anecdotes. Writer Lucie Delarue-Mardrus for example ‘remembers’ how Jarry ate the barb raw and straight from the water, ‘Invité, comme plusieurs autres convives, à déjeuner à la campagne chez le père du père Ubu, toute la bande et Mirbeau trouvèrent le couvert mis sur un établi. Les assiettes étaient des ronds découpés dans du papier. Au centre, sur une feuille de chou, s’allongeait, pour tout repas, un barbillon cru ; car Jarry, qui pêchait beaucoup à la ligne, avait l’habitude de manger le poisson à sa sortie de l’eau, sans même arracher l’hameçon.’ Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, *Mes Mémoires* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), p. 141.
In Ubu-like manner Jarry compares the barb (in this case ‘celui qui petit barbillon’) to a turkey (or ‘celui qui dindon’). The last line of Jarry’s description in this letter to Vallette re-appears, straight from a fisherman’s handbook, in the Almanac. The tone of the letter is also similar to the tone in the February text, showing that the boundaries between Jarry’s life and his literary works were sometimes very thin.

Considering Jarry’s predilection for polysemy, the choice of words in the previous description of the limbless creature could also be read on a biographical level. In this particular fragment several words hint at his financial situation. Apart from a description of a strange creature (limbless body, fish) in the water, it is figuratively an image of someone keeping his head above the water. The word ‘engloutissement’ is also used sometimes to refer to the disappearance of capital. Furthermore Jarry replaces the normal expression ‘surface de l’eau’ by ‘surface liquide’. Knowing that ‘surface’ also means financial credibility and ‘liquide’ can signify cash flow, one can easily read this description as a metaphor for Jarry’s financial problems.

The rest of the February text continues with an account of Ubu’s (Jarry’s) and Quillard’s fishing trip and traces their route from Corbeil along the Seine and Yonne. (‘Il rama pendant trois jours comme forçat avec nous-même sur l’Yonne et la Seine pour suivre les poissons frayants.’). The names of La Cave, Vinneuf and Port-Renard all refer to small villages along the river. There are also other references to the Phalanstère. The name of the village La Cave for example triggers the following paragraph about quite a different ‘cave’:

In his letters, Jarry mentions the ‘cave’ at the house in Corbeil where the wine and food was stored. In his letter to Quillard, Jarry (who was in charge of the stocks in the cellar when the others were absent) gave him the ‘mot de la Cave’, the secret code for the lock, QQQQ. The phrase ‘de laisser couler dans nos verres le vin par trois jours’ is an obvious reference to the drinking habits of Jarry and the other Phalanstère members, and perhaps a reason for neglecting to see that water had reached an alarming level. As said, Jarry

---

66 Jarry to Alfred Vallette, November 1898, OC I, p.1068.
67 In November 1896 Jarry had bought a state of the art racing bicycle on credit, but he never paid off his debt. Throughout the year 1897 he was pursued by letters from bailiffs from Laval urging him to pay. First of all there was a Monsieur Trochon, (immortalized in Faustroll as ‘Troccon’) and then a Maître Brieux, with whom in 1897 and 1898 Jarry corresponded frequently on the subject of his payments. Jarry sold his furniture and was forced to leave his house at 78, boulevard de Port-Royal. He stayed with painter Rousseau, before moving into the apartment at the rue Cassette in 1897.
68 OC I, p. 541.
turned many aspects of his life into literature. Thus Ubu and Quillard’s quest for fish is narrated in a legendary fashion, in terms that suggest a Homeric epos rather than a simple fishing trip. In real life, the cellar at the Phalanstère was prone to some occasional flooding caused by the river. However in Ubu’s Almanac this flooding is transformed into a nightmarish, hallucinatory image of monstrous herds of fish invading the cellar to devour the cheese.

References to art and literature
Ubu’s journey through Montmartre, as well as the rest of the February text, also contains references to Jarry’s artistic and literary context. Several names, places, but also less obvious words belong to a semantic field that conveys this particular thematic layer in the text.

Père Ubu first passes along the rue Lepic, the rue Blanche and the Trinité church, with the ‘grandes orgues Alexandre Guilmant.’ Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911) was its resident organist. Claude Terrasse was of course also employed as an organist at this church and his house and the Théâtre des Pantins were situated in the rue Ballu, close to the rue Blanche. The Chat Noir and Lugné-Poe’s office of the Théâtre de l’Oeuvre were also in the vicinity. Ubu then speeds to the rue Laffitte, home to many art galleries, among which that of Ambroise Vollard. Thus Ubu’s journey through Montmartre reflects Jarry’s inner circle and the artistic context in which the first Almanac was written.

It is perhaps not a coincidence that Ubu, after he comes to a halt on the Pont des Arts, that he witnesses the (rather gruesome) image of a limbless creature in the river Seine, which is described in very poetic terms. As said, the words ‘vers’ and the ‘quartiers de lard’ (quartiers de l’art) conjure up poet and art critic Quillard and might generally refer to the artistic community of the Phalanstère. Quillard’s contribution to the ‘pisciculture’ can also be read in a different way. Jarry chose his words carefully and the word’s (convenient) double reference to both fishing and culture in relation to Quillard could have inspired him to use it. Quillard had written one of the first Symbolist plays ever to be staged, La fille aux mains coupées, and he had written a Symbolist theatrical ‘manifest’, ‘De l’inutilité de la mise en scène exacte’, published in Revue d’art dramatique, May 1891. This manifest was of great influence on Jarry’s theatrical ideas in his essay ‘De l’inutilité du théâtre au théâtre’. Pierre Quillard was one of Symbolism’s prominent theoreticians and this text is a witty homage to his status as Jarry’s friend and his literary reputation.

The, partly archaic, naval terms (‘ramer’, ‘forçat’, ‘chiourme’, ‘périple’, ‘escale’, “tap-en-bouche”) used to describe Quillard and Ubu’s fishing adventure are also striking. Apart from giving an epic Homeric feel to their quest for the barb, these terms also evokes the story of Ubu enchaîné, in which Père Ubu is condemned to become a slave on a galley. Jarry finished writing this sequel to Ubu Roi in 1899 (it was published in 1900 by La Revue Blanche). In other texts of the Almanac similar references to Jarry’s artistic

69 See appendix.
context, his literary contemporaries (friends and enemies), and his own work pop up, some more explicitly, others more hidden.

**Political references**

There is also a fourth, less obvious thread in this short text, namely the political one. Quillard, while rowing the boat with Ubu, triggers the unexpected mention of Zola. When they approach a lock the ‘population qui habite les écluses' ouvrait les deux portes à la fois sur notre passage et déclarait avec pleurs que ce n’était pas nous, mais Zola, qui eût dû ramer.'\(^70\) This sentence appears to be a veiled reference to Quillard’s and Zola’s role in the Dreyfus Affair. Quillard was an ardent defender of Dreyfus. He had published articles on the case and had joined the newly founded ‘Ligue des Droits de l’Homme' in 1898. Quillard publicly spoke out in defence of Zola, when the latter was convicted and exiled to England after the publication of *J’accuse*. The phrase in the Almanac suggests that, in the absence of Zola, it is now left to Quillard (and Ubu) to do the rowing, hence to fight his battle.

Political and social references are hidden in the wordplay of the text, a procedure we already saw in the March text. At the end of the February text there is a return to the previous association between ‘sergent de ville' and fish, when Ubu and Quillard’s idyllic fishing trip ends with them being pursued by the fishing guard and a ‘gendarme'.

Le gendarme est un être redoutable, non par ses attributions légales, mais parce qu’il est impur. Nous ne rééditerons point les plaisanteries classiques, injustes d’ailleurs, sur son parfum. Nous connûmes un gendarme cul-de-jatte. Le relent nauseabond est, croyons-nous, sauf votre respect, celui de la Loi.

Sous le signe des Poissons, il est utilisable en halieutique, comme amorce de tous poissons de rivière.\(^71\)

The ‘gendarme cul-de-jatte' brings back to mind the limbless creature in the water we met before. The pun on ‘gendarme', who is depicted as an impure creature with a nauseating odour (the word ‘gendarme' also meaning herring in French) allows Jarry to link this figure to fish and to state that the Law, and people’s respect for it, smell equally unpleasant. As was the case with March, the sign of Pisces lets Jarry make a satirical reference to a pillar of French society, in this case the Law. The ‘gendarme' was a favourite ‘target' for Jarry. A similar link between fishing and the ‘gendarme' is made in *L’Amour absolu*.\(^72\) In Ubu's Alamanac the reader learns that the ‘gendarme' can also be used as fish bait, conveniently leaving in the middle whether that applies to the herring or to the police officer, or to both. In the last sentence of the February text all associations come together (sign, Pisces, fish, policeman) and the phrase ‘sous le signe des Poissons' provides the reader with yet another clue regarding the associations made around this ‘sign.'

\(^{70}\) OC I, p. 540.

\(^{71}\) OC I, p. 541.

\(^{72}\) See Jarry’s articles ‘Psychologie expérimentale du gendarme' and ‘Appendice au “gendarme”', *La Revue blanche*, 1 September and 15 September, 1901, OC II, pp. 313-316. In *L’Amour absolu* one reads : 'Le soleil est couché réglementairement, le pêcheur à la ligne, de par le gendarme, rétracte ses tentacules'. OC I, p.919.
First of all this 'play with the sign' shows the arbitrariness of signifiers when put in a different context. On one hand, it might seem as if 'it leaves the reader free to experience his own subjective response to the signs', as some scholars have argued with regard to visual collage. However in the Almanac collage text we see that the author, who makes deliberate associations between signs, whether on a semantic, a phonetic, or even a visual level, uses this as a compositional tool for the text, and to manipulate the reader's response. The collage of encyclopaedic-like fragments introduces and triggers the rest of the more personal story of the fishing trip. However every time an object, name or thing appears in the text, it is not described in a traditional sense, but by an ironic, pseudo ready-made informational text. Consequently the reader is left lingering between the abstract and the concrete, between a narrative relating Ubu's adventures, personal references to Jarry and his circle (only available to insiders) and impersonal, encyclopaedic-like fragments.

Jarry's method of writing appears to involve careful composition, pasting together fragments of texts (and images). The narrative is no longer held together by a story or a conventional plot, but by the signifier. A word or a sign and its referents trigger by association the next line or paragraph. On the one hand there is polysemy, a dissemination of meanings and free play with the sign. On the other hand the author leaves clues on how to read the text and steers the reader's interpretation. The small fragment I discussed here is in fact exemplary of the Almanacs and of most of Jarry's other texts. The collage aesthetic in the Almanac is already a novelty in itself, announcing an aesthetic which would become important in avant-garde movements, but the way Jarry uses collage is also striking. The text constantly wanders from literal to figurative meaning and back, the wordplay and the phonetic puns are used to trigger the next fragment, including the insertion of pre-existent material. The wordplay thus leads the narrative and also generates meaning.

In the other texts of the Almanac, although some are slightly less hermetic than the texts of 'l'Agronome Citadin', similar strategies of writing are put into practice; wordplay, the juxtaposition of text and image and the collage of ready-made materials. Furthermore the same layers of meaning found in this small text re-appear in the rest of the Almanac; references to Jarry's biography, to his artistic environment and to contemporary issues.

4.2.2.5 Advertisements

Among the use of 'ready-made' material, the use of newspaper fragments and publicity is a striking feature of many visual collages, but also of Ubu's Almanac. That being said, traditional popular Almanacs also contained advertisements and Ubu's Almanac might simply appear to abide by the

---

73 See for example Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Picasso Papers* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), p. 40, Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism and the Invention of Collage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 254. These scholars point to the free circulation of signs when it comes to the collage work, leaving meaning suspended and open to the beholder. But whereas one can emphasize this openness of meaning in the visual collage, one can equally stress the fact that a collage artist selects his material purposefully, both in visual art and in literature. Jarry's use of collage also shows that the author can guide the narrative this way and use the collage to attract the attention of the reader to the layers of meaning in the text.
conventions of the genre. However, like many of the other texts, the adverts in Ubu’s Almanac seem to have been carefully chosen and manipulated. Some give the impression of pseudo-publicities rather than real advertisements. It seems likely that they were not merely placed in the Almanac to adhere to the conventions of the genre, or for commercial and financial purposes, but for other reasons.

One advertisement, bearing the title ‘prophéties’ (reminiscent of a popular, astrological almanac), announces the opening performance of Jarry and Terrasse’s ‘national play in five acts’ Pantagruel at the 1900 World Exhibition in Paris. It contains a very detailed outline of the various acts and scenes of the play. Jarry and Terrasse were working on this project at the time as a play for the Théâtre des Pantins. It was an adaptation of Rabelais’ famous second book to which excerpts from some of his other works were added. The irony of this ‘prophecy’ is obvious: this marginal, experimental play, with its sixteenth century language would hardly qualify as a ‘pièce nationale’ suitable for the prestigious World Fair. Furthermore it remained a never-ending project and Jarry would not live to see it performed. The title ‘prophéties’ is painfully appropriate in this light.

![Image: Excerpt 'Conseils aux Capitalistes et Perd-de-Famille' Almanac 1899]

For this first version Terrasse called upon writer and critic Willy (Henri Gauthier-Villars) to help modernize the sixteenth century text. Terrasse tried to get it accepted by theatres, but without luck. Three other versions followed: a second one, again with Jarry, and a third one in collaboration with Eugène Demolder, at a time when Jarry was no longer capable of finishing anything. The final version of Pantagruel, finished by Terrasse, was an ‘opéra-bouffe’ and performed 11 times in 1911 at the Grand Théâtre de Lyon.

---

For this first version Terrasse called upon writer and critic Willy (Henri Gauthier-Villars) to help modernize the sixteenth century text. Terrasse tried to get it accepted by theatres, but without luck. Three other versions followed: a second one, again with Jarry, and a third one in collaboration with Eugène Demolder, at a time when Jarry was no longer capable of finishing anything. The final version of Pantagruel, finished by Terrasse, was an ‘opéra-bouffe’ and performed 11 times in 1911 at the Grand Théâtre de Lyon.
Another ad in the first Almanac (Fig. 10) has a similar ironic tone and is entitled ‘Conseils aux Capitalistes et Perd-de-famille’. It advertises a number of recently published works by Jarry, Terrasse and Franc-Noéhin, although their names, as said in the previous chapter, are never mentioned. The works were all part of the ‘Collection du Répertoire des Pantins’ published by the Mercure de France, most of them in 1898. Like the authors’ names, the publisher’s name is also not mentioned, merely its address (15, rue de l’Échaudé Saint-Germain). The first three titles listed and Ubu Roi are texts by Jarry for which Terrasse had written music. Les Trois Chansons à la Charcutière and the other titles are all poems by Franc-Noéhin, also put to music by Terrasse. In addition Bonnard illustrated several of these works. The collective artistic spirit that characterized the genesis of the Almanacs clearly resonates here. Their works are advertised as a ‘good investment’, clearly mocking the commercial nature of such adverts. As for its use in the collage, this ‘publicity’ shows how pseudo ready-made material is carefully selected and inserted alongside the more ‘original texts’. Thus this ad blurs the distinction between what is literary and non-literary, between authentic creation and banal advertising.

The above ads clearly suggest the contribution of the collaborators, but even more intriguing are the ‘real’ advertisements on the very last pages of the first Almanac. In later editions they have been omitted, probably because they were considered as mere commercial texts, hence of no literary significance. However these ads, by their tone and style, resemble the style and tone of ‘Prophéties’ and ‘Conseil aux Capitalistes’. In fact, they also appear to have been consciously selected. Similar to ‘Conseils aux Capitalistes’, they advertise works people in Jarry’s inner circle. Several of these artists and writers appear more than once in the Almanac, whether in Ubu’s ‘Homeric’ list of names or elsewhere in the texts.

There is an announcement for Vollard’s Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris, an album of lithographs by Bonnard, and for works by fellow Nabis Vuillard and Denis. There is also an ad for the Revue Blanche’s publication of Flûtes, Franc-Noéhin collection of poetry, and for the Mercure de France’s editions of Jarry’s works. Furthermore we find two adverts for La Critique, the magazine of Jarry’s friend Georges Bans. Yet another ad promotes L’Argus de la Presse, which delivered newspaper clippings on demand. At the time of Ubu Roi Jarry had subscribed to this service, which delivered twenty-one reviews of the play to him the days after the premiere. Jarry had pasted these newspaper reviews in a notebook. In one way or another, all of these advertisements stood in direct relation to Jarry, his work and his artistic circle.

Another reason to believe that these advertisements are more manipulated than they seem at first is provided by one in particular. On the bottom half of page 92 in the original edition (Fig.11) there is an ad that does not try to sell the work of Jarry’s friends, but a very specific chemical product called ‘poudre de sang’. This substance, drawn from cow’s blood, was added to wine to filter out small particles. The address refers to an actual street of Bercy, home to numerous warehouses where barrels of wine

---

75 Besnier, Alfred Jarry, p. 276.
were stored. Whereas this might seem an odd ad among the others, the manufacturer’s name, Charles Bonnard, explains a lot. Charles was Pierre Bonnard’s brother. He was the director of the Théâtre des Pantins and was also mentioned as the initial vendor of the first Almanac. Again the ad is promoting someone from Jarry’s inner circle. More important however is the tone of this text, which begins with the exclamation ‘Commerçants, bistrots, propriétaires, ivrognes’. It resembles the popular, Rabelaisian tone of other texts in the Almanac, such as that of the ‘Conseils aux Capitalistes’. At first glance this advert appears real, but at second glance one gets the impression that it was also written by the authors. There is another reason to believe that the advertisements were indeed intended to be an integral part of the work. In the announcement for the first Almanac in *La Revue Blanche*, reference was made to this particular ad. Interestingly enough, it was therefore considered part of the work by whoever wrote the announcement (most likely someone well acquainted with the Almanac, if not Jarry himself).

![Figure 11: Two of the advertisements, original edition, Almanac 1899.](image)

It therefore seems safe to argue that these adverts were not included solely for commercial motives or to comply with the demands of the almanac genre. The texts of course did promote the work of Jarry and his friends, but at the same time they were clearly intended to be part of the literary work as well. The effect of this confusing mix of real and pseudo-advertisements is that it again blurs the distinction between what is authentic and what is not. Furthermore the incorporation of adverts in a literary work constitutes a break with contemporary literary aesthetics in which literary language was clearly seen as distinct from the ‘vulgar’ discourses of newspapers and publicity.
4.2.3 Mixing media; text and image

Not just the generic heterogeneity and the use of ‘ready-made’ material, but also Bonnard’s images scattered throughout the text, contribute to the collage aesthetic in the Almanac. This mixing of media is crucial to the collage, although it must be emphasized of course that these ‘media’ all come in the form of textual material. Sometimes the artistic media come into conflict with each other, adding force to the fragmentary nature of the collage; at other times they appear to complement each other.

The cover image adheres to the traditional iconography of almanacs. It portrays Père Ubu as an astrologer in his study amidst astrological paraphernalia; books, telescope, globe. Peering out of the window with his telescope, he contemplates the stars. If one compares the cover of Ubu’s Almanac to a cover of the *Almanach de Nostradamus* from the sixteenth century (1563) for example, the similarities are striking (Fig. 12). The astrological, symbolic imagery is recycled, with Père Ubu taking the place of the astrologer Nostradamus, thus emphasizing of course his authority over all matters.

On one of the first pages of Ubu’s first Almanac we find a small, idyllic picture of a farm house set in a winter landscape. Smoke is coming out of the chimney. This is an almost archetypical image for the month of February, found in most popular Almanacs and calendars. In *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* for example, the famous, richly illustrated, book of hours from the early fifteenth century, we find a similar image for the month of February, a winter landscape, a farmer’s house, with people warm inside.

![Figure 12: Cover Ubu’s Almanac 1899 and detail cover Almanach de Nostradamus 1563](image)

Regardless of the exact sources behind the images, Bonnard has obviously recycled the iconographic clichés of popular and astrological almanacs and merged them with Ubu’s iconography. The redistribution of those popular images within a new (literary) context of course transforms them. They gain
new visual potential and become a source for evocations. This was the case for example in Bonnard’s ‘encyclopaedic’ drawing of the ‘barbillon’, a simple generic image that triggered a series of associations. Bonnard’s images thus evoke various cultural spheres: the iconography of popular almanacs, modern images of the city, mingled with scenes from Ubu’s imaginary universe.  

As said, in some instances the collage creates more tension between the various elements than in others. Not all of Bonnard’s images are strongly juxtaposed to the text. Some simply complement the text, while others, such as that of the barb, are illustrative, pseudo ready-made, but also evoke a new semantic thread. Whereas most of Bonnard’s drawings for the first Almanac seem to have first and foremost an illustrative function, the combination of text and image does have another effect important to collage, that of simultaneity. In ‘Le temps dans l’art’ Jarry praised a painting’s capacity to show objets, simultanés, qu’il a plu au peintre d’en rassembler’. Jarry envisioned the same for literature. He sought to substitute conventional narrative sequence with a simultaneous arrangement of textual and visual signs on the page. In the first Almanac this clearly shows in the examples from the March and February texts; one sign or word triggered a range of instantaneous associations.

4.3 Collage in the second Almanac

The second Almanac has a different feel compared to the first one. Its larger format and its luxurious and expensive look differ from the small size and more traditional features of Ubu’s first Almanac. This was mostly due to Vollard who published this Almanac in a lavish style similar to that of the illustrated ‘livres d’artistes’ issued normally by his gallery. The second Almanac contains fewer texts, which leaves more room for the Bonnard’s lithographs. Consequently they are larger and more prominent than the drawings in the first Almanac. The second Almanac has a more minimalist look, with text scattered in between the images and the white space. However, despite these dissimilarities, the same three aspects I distinguished for the first Almanac also contribute to the collage aesthetic in the second; generic hybridity, the use of (pseudo-)ready-made materials and the juxtaposition of text and image.

4.3.1 Generic hybridity

The second Almanac contains fewer sections than the first one (Fig.13). It also conforms less to the traditional division of a popular almanac. Regular features, such as the pragmatic segment and the calculation of holy days or different calendars, are absent. However, some traditional features have been preserved judging by the titles; a Saint’s calendar, a current event section, a ‘useful knowledge’ part. The mix of genres in this second Almanac is again striking, as traditional almanac genres are combined with literary and journalistic ones.

---

The second Almanac includes an elaborate Saint’s calendar for the entire year. The segment entitled ‘Confession d’un enfant du siècle-Commentaire du Père Ubu sur les Événements récents’, suggests a traditional account of current events. However, the text lingers somewhere between a journalistic interview and a theatrical dialogue, complete with scenic indications. ‘Ubu colonial’ is a short play starring Père Ubu, Mère Ubu and Fourneau and the section ‘Philologie-Examen du Père Ubu au Saint-Sulpice colonial’ is also written in the form of a dialogue.

As for the rest of this second Almanac, the reader is confronted with an array of textual genres; a letter, an ‘official’ government document, a song. Since these different generic texts are even more scattered across the pages than in the first one, interspersed with many lithographs and white space, the impression of fragmentation is stronger here. Visually most striking in this kaleidoscope of genres in the second Almanac are, again, the lists.

4.3.1.1 Lists in the second Almanac
The longest list in the second Almanac is the already mentioned Saint’s calendar. Since this Calendar covers every month of the year, it takes up 6 pages in the Almanac. It is accompanied by Bonnard’s evocative and provocative drawings in the margins (see Fig. 14).

The second important list in the second Almanac is the ‘Ordre de la Grande Gidouille’. It sums up thirty-four names of people who are nominated for a rank in Ubu’s prestigious order. This list had been carefully constructed and selected, like most of the lists in Jarry’s work. In the manuscript files of Jarry’s unfinished last novel La Dragonne, a newspaper clipping was found of a list of people admitted to the École Polytechnique in 1907.77 No doubt this was to be used for his work. In similar fashion the

---

77 Besnier, Alfred Jarry, p. 9.
contributors to the Almanac used actual Saint’s calendars and lists of names published in the press to fabricate their own lists.

Several of Jarry’s other works also testify to his general fondness of lists. In *Faustroll* for example we find the twenty-seven ‘livres pairs.’ Found among Faustroll’s possessions by the bailiff, this list catalogues Faustroll’s (and Jarry’s) personal library. Two scholars have briefly addressed the presence of such lists in Jarry’s work. Ben Fisher, writing about Faustroll’s ‘livres pairs’ pointed to the influence of Rabelais. However he does not discuss the effect of these lists in the narrative.  

Patrick Besnier has also briefly addressed the lists in the Almanacs and considers them as ‘lists for list’s sake’. He believes they primarily reflect Jarry’s love of names, words, sounds, phonetic and semantic play. This love for the linguistic imaginative possibilities created by these lists was of course clearly visible in the first Almanac as well. Besnier also suggested that the list of names conveys a certain encyclopaedic desire on the part of Jarry to honour his contemporaries and to preserve their names for history.

[Image: Figure 14: Saint’s Calendar; January and February, Almanac 1901, original edition]

However valid these interpretations may be, these lists also reveal another important aspect of Jarry’s poetics. Jarry replaces conventional narrative by an enumeration of names or things. The list not only takes over from the narrative, but also guides the composition, as each name triggers a different

---


name or object through association. The collage text, made up of these lists among others, thus offers a new way of representation. It conveys a way of capturing the world through the association of heterogeneous fragments, lists, bits and pieces. Jarry mixes various genres, including these lists, to realize a form of representation which he could not achieve through the use of one particular genre or through conventional narrative and composition.

4.3.2 Ready-made and pseudo ready-made material

The insertion of (pseudo)ready-made material is the second and the most noticeable feature of the collage aesthetic in Ubu’s second Almanac and brings about a similar effect as the inclusion of lists.

4.3.2.1 Saint’s calendar

The Saint’s calendar is an amalgam of real and imaginary figures. Some are official names found in original calendars (see the first two months in Fig.14). Most of the other names are inventions by the authors. Each collaborator added some imaginary Saints to the calendar. Claude Terrasse had scribbled no less than sixty names in his notebook, although not all made it to the final list.

Some of the names were borrowed from a long-standing, popular tradition. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance period, a comic tradition of creating fake Saints emerged in France. Some of them also appeared in the work of Rabelais, whose intention was of course to satirize the general worship of Saints, one of the reasons his work ended up on the infamous Index. These pseudo Saints probably ended up in Ubu’s Almanac through Rabelais. In Ubu’s calendar we encounter ‘Sainte Barbe’ and ‘Sainte Nitouche’ for example, both mentioned in chapter 27 of Gargantua, as well as ‘Saint Boudin’, ‘Saint Raisin’ and ‘Sainte Andouille’, who make an appearance in chapter 59 of Rabelais’ Quart Livre.

Noël Arnaud has also suggested another plausible source for the calendar. In October 1896, the Mercure de France had issued the Almanach des Poètes pour 1897. It featured a selection of contemporary poetry, but also included a Saint’s calendar for each month. The Saints’ names seemed to have been predominantly chosen for their oddness, such as ‘Sainte Pélagie’, ‘Sainte Pompeuse’ or ‘Sainte Galle’.

In any case it is clear that the collaborators for the second Almanac would have had plenty of sources to choose from and that Ubu’s second Almanac was rooted in a popular parodist tradition. The Saints of Ubu’s calendar can roughly be divided into four groups:

1. Real Saints.
2. Names or holidays from Ubu’s lexicon (Saint Merdre, 1 January ‘Décervelage’, Saint Phynance), referring to Ubu’s Almanac (Sainte Tatane) or more generally to Jarry’s work.

---

80 For a history and catalogue of these saints see Jacques E. Merceron, Dictionnaire des saints imaginaires et facétieux (Paris: Seuil, 2002).
81 Arnaud, Alfred Jarry. D’Ubu Roi au docteur Faustroll, p. 331.
3. Imaginary Saints or puns on real Saints’ names, some vulgar or obscene (Saint Anal), some borrowed directly from Rabelais or popular tradition (Saint Andouille, Sainte Nitouche, Saint Tignasse), others from the collaborators’ imagination.

4. Names referring to contemporary society and culture (Saint-Saëns, Saint Anatole F, Saint Bougereau, Saint Denis, Maurice).

Some of the names of real Saints have been chosen primarily for their innate humour. They conjure up a humorous association by simply adding a word, such as ‘Saint Lazare, Gare’. Others have the association built in, such as ‘Sainte Messaline’ from January 23. It is the name of a real Saint, but also, conveniently, the infamous heroin from Jarry’s novel Messaline (1901), based on the Roman empress Messalina. The holidays roughly follow the same procedure; some are real, some refer, as said, to Ubu. The French national holiday of ‘quatorze juillet’ for example is replaced by ‘Fête du Père Ubu’. Other holidays refer to themes and episodes from the rest of the Almanac, for instance ‘Répopulation’ or ‘Examen de Conscience’.

The names for each month are certainly not chosen randomly. As in traditional calendars every month is associated with a certain theme, relating to the weather, seasonal activities or the symbolism of its Zodiac sign. March, for example, is governed by the belligerent sign of the god Mars. In the second Almanac the reader encounters associations similar to those made in the March segment of the first Almanac. The Saints of March are in some way connected to warfare, murder or death. Therefore we find names such as ‘St Guillotine’, ‘St Pranzini’ (a notorious 19th century serial killer) or ‘St Chemin-de-Fer, ass’ (major train accidents were quite common). In similar fashion, the Saints of April are all associated with fish and meat (or fishing and hunting). In the first two weeks we find a string of ‘fishy’ Saints, including ‘Ste Truite’ and ‘St Barbeau’. Considering the barb’s prominent role in the first Almanac, it is hardly surprising that Jarry would sanctify his favourite fish in the second. These names come to a halt due to the new holiday of ‘clôture de la pêche’ on April 14th followed by a chain of ‘meat’ Saints and the equally new holiday ‘visite des abattoirs’ on the 21st. On this menu of ‘meat’ Saints we find ‘St Veau’ and ‘St Grenouille’ as well as less refined meats such as ‘Ste Hure’ or ‘Sts Abatis’. It makes perfect sense of course that this copious and unsavoury list of fish and meat ends with a holiday for purging oneself on the 31st, ‘Hunyadi, Ste Foire.’ This is a reference to Hunyadi János, a well-known laxative mineral water at the time, which also makes an appearance in Jarry’s novel Les Jours et les Nuits.\textsuperscript{82} The word ‘foire’, discussed in the introduction, speaks for itself here. The Rabelaisian influences are obvious, in the obsession with the rudimentary aspects of life and in the debunking of Catholic Saints.

---

\textsuperscript{82} Hunyadi János was a mineral water with a mild laxative quality, fabricated by Andreas Saxlehner, a company located in Budapest. The product’s name is derived from the national Hungarian hero, Hunyadi János, who defeated the Turks in the 15th century. It was widely advertised in Jarry’s time. A photograph of the period for example shows a riverboat on the Seine with a large sign promoting it and flicking through contemporary newspapers one stumbles upon numerous ads for this ‘purgative water’. 
Ubu’s calendar is an intricate collage of real, official names, popular imaginary Saints and newly invented ones. Each name or pun evokes multiple, humorous associations. This playful mix of personal and cultural references is characteristic for other texts in the Almanac as well. Like the other texts, the calendar was created with an eye for detail, the names drawn from a variety of cultural sources and foreshadowing some of the themes in the Almanac.

4.3.2.2 Official legal text
On the same pages as the Saint’s calendar we encounter a ready-made element, a legal text. Some of the Saints’ names are in fact marked with an asterisk. This refers to footnote text at the bottom of the calendar on the first three pages (Fig. 15). Together with a list of official names, the official text was provided by Fagus who worked at the birth registration office. This particular law prescribed the names officially suitable for new born children. In the wake of the French Revolution triumphant names such as ‘Liberté’ had apparently been given to children. Freedom did however have its limits for the Revolutionary government and officials quickly restricted the choice of names to those from official calendars and from list list made up by the authorities.

Since then the ‘Loi du 11 Germinal an XI’ prevented the choice of inappropriate or outrageous names. Officially the choice of first names in France is still governed by this law, although several adjustments have been made. The law, as can be read in Ubu’s Almanac, stipulates that:

‘...les noms en usage dans les différents calendriers, et ceux des personnages connus dans l’histoire ancienne pourront seuls être reçus, comme prénoms, sur
Notice that in the Almanac the phrase ‘dans les différents calendriers’ is made bold, a slight alteration of the original text. The emphasis points to an ambiguity in the legal text. The description is so vague and all-inclusive that Ubu’s calendar could easily be included among these ‘various calendars’.

The effect of this collage of the real legal text with Ubu’s imaginary Saint’s calendar is twofold. On one hand, it humorously questions its original context, challenging the clarity of the legal text and its validity. On the other hand, set in its new context, the collage of this pre-existent, official text playfully legalizes the suggestion for ‘official’ names made in the Almanac, thus pseudo-authorizing Ubu’s alternative calendar.

4.3.2.3 Other literary texts

Other literary texts also feature among the pre-existent material recycled in the second Almanac. The section entitled ‘connaissance utiles et inventions nouvelles’ appears to be the pragmatic section (Fig.16). The segment comes in the form of a ‘confidential letter’ from Ubu to the ‘Ministry of Biz’Arts’ reprinted exclusively in this Almanac. In his letter Ubu, ignorant as always, reveals the secrets behind his practical, but not so new inventions: the umbrella, slippers and gloves.

---

83 OC I, pp. 576/77.
The umbrella part is in fact a rewriting of a text by Alphonse Allais entitled 'Une invention. Monologue pour Cadet', written for actor Coquelin cadet. Several sentences are literally taken from Allais’ text; the rest of the text is a pastiche. Such recycling and rewriting of other literary texts is an important part of the collage aesthetic in the Almanacs, but a similar strategy can also be found for example in the novel *Faustroll*. Each chapter in this book represents an island visited by Faustroll. That island/chapter is dedicated to a writer or artist and often contains quotations or pseudo-quotations from that person’s work.

The appropriation of other literary texts is on one hand intended to honour writers Jarry admired. On the other hand, and more importantly, it reflects Jarry’s concept of writing. Throughout the Almanacs texts from all cultural spheres are recycled, whether these are mundane, popular recipes from Ruscelli, legal texts, or excerpts from Rabelais, Mallarmé or Allais. This redistribution of pre-existing texts challenges the idea that the uniqueness of the literary text is defined by the originality of the material. Not the texts or materials themselves need to be authentic; it is the author’s arrangement and their insertion in a new context which ensures their originality.

4.3.2.4 Newspaper clipping

Any (textual) material could therefore be used in the collage and therefore in this second Almanac we also encounter a slightly altered newspaper text. The rules of admission to Ubu’s prestigious ‘Ordre de la Gidouille’ had already been provided in the first Almanac, but now we find an official list of nominees for his Order (Fig.17).

Figure 17: ‘Ordre de la Gidouille’, Almanac 1901, original edition

---

The fact that this list has been cut and pasted from a newspaper is more or less revealed in the text. Ubu’s list is presented as a correction of the names published in the *Journal Officiel* on the 15th of December. This journal was the official publication channel of the French government. The original text listed the nominees for the prestigious Légion d’Honneur. It was reprinted in several contemporary newspapers, for example in *Le Figaro* (see Fig. 18). Terrasse revealed in his journal that he and the other collaborators had copied this list. They altered the names of the real nominees a little and offered Ubu’s ‘Ordre de la Gidouille’ as the ‘rectified version’ of the ‘erroneous’ list of names issued by the government. In Ubu’s Almanac it is explained that the incorrect names in the official list were caused by some unfortunate typographical errors.

![Image of the Journal Officiel](image)

**Figure 18: Le Figaro, 16 December 1900, nominees for the Légion d’Honneur**

The phrase ‘Sont promus ou nommés dans dans la Légion d’Honneur à l’occasion de l’Exposition’ in the original announcement has (logically) been changed to ‘sont promus dans l’Ordre de la Gidouille à l’occasion de l’Exposition’. The French Ministry of Fine Arts and Public Education becomes the ‘Ministry of Public Education and Biz’Arts’, the same institution Ubu previously addressed his confidential letter to. The order of the names complies with the original list, but the names themselves are ingeniously
modified. Painter Bonnat, who was awarded the highest honour, the Grand-Croix, has become painter and Almanac illustrator Pierre Bonnard. Further down the list, the painter Ch. Cazin has been transformed into painter J. C. Cazals, a close friend of Jarry, who once painted his portrait. Other names are altered in irreverent puns on the original name. As such Sully-Prudhomme has become Bully-Prodhomme.

The collage is here obviously intended as a satire. Apart from the simple wordplay and obvious mockery of a prestigious French institute like the Légion d’Honneur, this collage of slightly altered nominees is also a rewriting of the contemporary cultural elite, substituting official names with those from the authors’ inner circle. The effect is the same as in the collage of the legal text in Ubu’s Saint’s calendar. It humorously deflates the validity of the original list of nominees and the importance of the Légion d’Honneur. At the same time the collage provides a pseudo-official validation of Ubu’s own, (and much more important) Order.

In addition, the collage of such a newspaper fragment enabled a more direct connection with reality. Newspapers’ direct link with the world and as part of that everyday world made them a powerful medium in collage. In the visual arts their graphic power proved inspirational in itself, but artists could also engage with the content of newspapers and this is what is at stake here in the Almanac. The newspaper fragment is double coded; it functions as part of the literary work but also continues to refer to an extra-literary reality. By placing the fragment in its new context, that external reality is questioned and, through the alterations, the fragment now represents a very subjective ‘reality’, that of Ubu or that of the author. A similar subversive use of newspapers is also visible in later dada collages for example. By using newspapers, Ubu’s Almanacs equally challenge the ‘objective’ representation of reality newspapers claimed to provide.

4.3.2.5 Advertisements

Advertisements are also an integral part of the second Almanac. There are ads for Vollard’s gallery for example, spread out over two pages. This is hardly surprising, considering Vollard’s involvement as publisher and co-author.

The advertisements for Vollard are followed by an already familiar segment, the ‘Conseils aux capitalistes et perd-de-famille’ (Fig. 19). This advert is a copy of the one from the first almanac with some minor additions. This time the first Almanac is also among the works advertised as indispensable investments for capitalists. The authors’ names are still omitted, but the names of the publishing houses of Le Mercure de France and La Revue Blanche are mentioned explicitly this time. Even the prices for the works at La Revue Blanche are provided.

85 Möbius, Montage und Collage, pp. 237-40. In the ‘city’ novels of the 1920’s and 1930’s (Döblin’s Berlin Alexanderplatz or Dos Passos’ Manhattan Transfer for example) newspaper fragments appear as reflections of the heterogeneity and simultaneity of modern city life. See also Volker Klotz, Die erzählte Stadt (München: Hanser, 1969).
86 Möbius, Montage und Collage, p. 240.
87 Ibid., p. 238.
Both Bonnard’s drawing and the tone of this ad strongly suggest that the authors created this advert themselves. The use of advertising provided Jarry and the others with an opportunity to play with the conventions of advertising as well as with the conventions of a literary work. Despite its mocking, ambivalent title, this pseudo-ad is an integral part of the Almanac as well as a real advert. This self-created commercial platform gave the authors and the publishing houses a chance to promote their work.

Figure 19: ‘Advice to capitalists...’, Almanac 1901, original edition

4.3.3 Mixing media: text, image and sheet music

The third aspect contributing to the collage aesthetic is, also in this second Almanac, the mixing of artistic media. As said, the different look of the second Almanac, bearing fewer resemblances to traditional almanacs than the first one, is partially due to the prominent role of images. Bonnard’s illustrations for the second Almanac are more prominent and more independent than the smaller, more illustrative drawings of the first Almanac. This can be explained by a difference in material. For the first Almanac Bonnard made simple pencil drawings, whereas for this second one he made lithographs. This accounts for the thick, black lines of the images and their larger size. The cover of the Almanacs again adheres to the iconography of the traditional almanac. We see a close-up of Ubu carrying a pen and his own Almanac. The cover drawing seems to have been modelled again after the iconography of popular, astrological almanacs (Fig. 20).
If we compare Ubu’s pose to that of astrologer Nostradamus on the cover of one of his *Prophéties de Nostradamus* from the seventeenth century, one notices the resemblance. Ubu’s pose is similar to that of Nostradamus, who, also in a close-up, is holding a book and a pen.

The typography on the cover is an eclectic mix of several archaic-looking and modern fonts. Jarry had always been fond of experimenting with typography and special fonts; so much so, that it frustrated his publishers and printers at times. Throughout the Almanac the fonts are equally eclectic. For almost every title a completely different one is used, and both old and modern fonts are combined. The playful eclecticism of the Almanac is emphasized by Bonnard’s drawings, which are almost cartoons. They have a more ‘in your face’ quality, emphasized by their thick, crude lines, visible for example in Bonnard’s irreverent drawings of obscene Saints, scattered around the Calendar (see Fig. 14). All of Bonnard’s images in the second Almanac are drawn loosely around the text, both in and outside the margins. Bonnard made similar sketchy drawings for Vollard’s illustrated edition of Verlaine’s *Parallèlement* (1900). In this work his drawings ventured outside the margins, playfully engaged with the poems, characteristics which constituted a small revolution in the art of illustration. Jarry, in a review of *Parallèlement*, had praised Bonnard’s’ light sketches in the margins as they seemed to evoke the rhythm of the words.88

Bonnard was not particularly known as a caricaturist, such as Caran d’Ache, Forain or Steinlen. However, much of his graphic work did possess, like that of fellow Nabi Vallotton, a satirical undertone. This made him a good candidate for the comical illustrations in the Almanacs. More importantly, Jarry considered Bonnard to be capable of painting the grotesque, or as he called it ‘another side of beauty’.89 Jarry’s remark suggests that Bonnard’s images corresponded with a key element of Jarry’s

---

88 ‘Ses crayonnages légers dans les marges semblent les propres fantômes qui s’évoquent des rythmes à mesure de la lecture, assez diaphanes pour ne point empêcher de lire.’ *La Revue Blanche*, 15 février 1901, OC II, p. 608

89 ‘Pierre Bonnard est le peintre de la grâce […] quoiqu’il construisse, quand il lui plaît, le beau ou le grotesque, cette autre forme du gracieux.’ OC II, p. 608.
poetics and of collage; incorporating that which is monstrous and unusual, at least at odds with conventional ideas of beauty. Bonnard’s comical and incongruous images thus complemented the collage aesthetic of the Almanacs.

Several images in the second Almanac have a more or less independent position towards the text; meaning that the pictures can also be read on their own. There is more tension between the textual and visual elements here than there was in the first Almanac. In the section Ubu Colonial, we find a short sort of comic. It is a pictorial narrative in which Ubu chases exotic animals during his visits in the colonies and can be enjoyed separately from the text. An even better example is the Alphabet section, a sort of educational intermezzo. This contains a large-sized lithograph spread out on two pages. It shows Ubu (literally) embodying the vowels of the alphabet. Of course Almanacs traditionally had an educational function and some contemporary almanacs still retained this civilizing mission. In the *Almanach Hachette* for example educational photographs depicting the proper pronouncement of vowels were commonplace (see Fig. 21). In fact it bears some remarkable similarities with Ubu’s Alphabet. Considering the fact that the *Almanach Hachette* had served as a source for some of the ‘factual information’ in Ubu’s Almanacs, Bonnard might have been inspired by these images as well when he created his ‘educational’ drawings.

![Image of a page from Almanach Hachette](image)

**Figure 21: ‘How a pretty mouth pronounces vowels’, Almanach Hachette 1908**

However Bonnard’s illustrations connect the vowels of the alphabet to Ubu’s bodily functions and primal urges. The vulgarity and banality of the images obviously undermines any possible educational or civilizing effect. Besides being a spoof of almanacs or educational manuals teaching how to
pronounce properly, Ubu’s alphabet has a double advantage of referring to Rimbaud’s famous ‘Voyelles’(1871). The images combined with the text thus refer to a variety of so-called ‘low’ and ‘high’ cultural spheres, whether it be a banal educational text on how to pronounce vowels, or a (comical) reference to an admired literary icon such as Rimbaud. 

In the Almanac the vowels are no longer associated to colours or sensory experiences, but, by a similar process of analogy and association, are mainly linked to Père Ubu’s basic emotions and bodily functions. In the poem Rimbaud associates O with blue, due to its phonetic similarity with ‘l’eau’, with strange, mysterious sounds and Omega the violet ray of eyes, whereas in Ubu’s Almanac O is simply linked to the common exclamation of admiration ‘Oh’. Through its form, it also evokes Ubu’s bellybutton (‘O. L’admiration -le nombril du Père Ubu-’). The juxtaposition of text and image enables the polysemic associations so cherished by Jarry. The phonetic and visual punning we saw in the previous texts is again put into practice here, further enhanced by Bonnard’s comical images full of sexual innuendo.

Figure 22: ‘Tatane’ accompanied by Bonnard’s illustrations, Almanac 1901, original edition.

90 Jarry was a great admirer of Rimbaud’s work, which had become available since 1891. Les Illuminations appear in Faustroll’s list of ‘livres pairs’. Critic Albert Thibaudet, Jarry’s classmate at the Lycée Henri IV, remembered how they once walked through Paris and how every place reminded Jarry of a passage in Illuminations. Albert Thibaudet, ‘Réflexions sur la littérature’, Nouvelle Revue Française, February 1922, p. 204.

There is also a third artistic media in this second Almanac, that is a song, or to be more precise, sheet music. At the end of the Almanac we find the lyrics and sheet music for the song 'Tatane', composed by Terrasse (Fig. 22). Judging from the original edition, it appears that the piece of sheet music was casually drawn in around the already printed text. The song is preceded by some blank pages and pages with Bonnard's equally sketchy images of naked, dancing figures. The song, which is part of the section relating Ubu's 'colonial adventures' is said 'to glorify Ubu and make black people blush'. Bonnard's illustrations of the dancing figures emphasize this quite literally, as the African figures are indeed coloured red in the original edition instead of black. The images also seem to suggest movement and dancing. The dancing figures emphasize the rhythm and musicality of the printed sheet music on the following page. The drawings thus complement the notes in the score, attempting to evoke the music. Even the text wanders off in different directions as if to follow the movements of the figures. Together they form a prelude to the song on the next page. Text, image and music interact, in what is almost visual poetry.

At the end of the nineteenth century reuniting art, music and literature was in fact an ideal shared by Symbolists and many contemporary writers and artists. This ideal was shared by Jarry and his circle. The Nabis aimed at bringing art forms together in collaborative projects. The staging of Ubu Roi, the plays at the Théâtre des Pantins; they were all collective projects. In a way we see that collaborative ideal transposed in these pages of the Almanac. However the effect of this mélange of artistic media in the Almanacs could not be further removed from the Symbolist ideal of reuniting the arts. Although the Almanac obviously builds on contemporary ideas, its union of word, music and image is quite opposed to the Symbolist ideal of the Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk, in which the arts formed a natural symbiosis. The end result of the Almanacs could hardly be labelled as beautiful or harmonious in the contemporary sense. The mingling of arts in the Almanac does not result in a natural symbiosis', but in a crude, comical, eclectic and incoherent work.

Terrasse's sheet music is as sketchy as the style of Bonnard's illustrations. Bonnard's images, in both Almanacs, but even more in the second one, give the impression of being preliminary drawings or unfinished studies, of doodles in the margins rather than well composed illustrations. Jarry’s own graphic work, for example the posters he made for the performances of the Théâtre des Pantins, possess a similar, crude style. This has also been remarked by Emmanuel Pernoud, who argues that Jarry’s apparently ‘amateurist doodles’ were diametrically opposed to the luxuriously, elegantly crafted lithographs of the period.92 This corresponds of course to Jarry’s idea of integrating the ‘weak and bad’ or the ‘monstrous’ in the work of art. Through its reunion of unexpected, disjunctive and heterogeneous elements the collage achieves precisely that effect. And this is where Ubu’s Almanac stands in great contrast to the Symbolist ideal of

harmonious unity of the arts and counteracts contemporary conceptions of beauty.  

4.4 Re-inventing the literary text, the author and representation

Several Jarry scholars have in the past linked the notion of collage to Jarry’s work, but a satisfactory analysis of the effects of collage in his work has been lacking. Brunella Eruli for example has pointed to the collage of classical texts in Jarry’s novel *Messaline*. She also related Jarry’s images of monsters to the collage, but focuses mainly on the visual instead of discussing the effects on his texts. Henri Béhar has also remarked the collage of popular songs and other elements of popular culture in Jarry’s works. More recently, Jill Fell has described Jarry’s writing as ‘a series of layers, superimposed like a collage rather than as a coherent linear sequence’, but she does not develop this observation any further. However, as I have shown in this chapter, the collage aesthetic provides an important key to understanding Jarry’s writing and poetics. In Ubu’s Almanacs, the collage practice has several important effects.

Firstly, there is the re-evaluation of what ‘makes up a literary text’. This is achieved through the appropriation of extra-literary and ‘ready-made’ materials, from newspapers, everyday life and popular culture. The recycling of pre-existent materials defies contemporary concepts of (singular and unique) originality and beauty. In that sense Ubu’s Almanacs stretch the boundaries of how, in Jarry’s time, a literary text was defined.

Secondly, the collage practice also re-evaluates the role of the author. The author role in Ubu’s Almanacs is not so much that of an inspired genius or original creator, but that of a collector of materials who cuts and pasts as he pleases, a ‘bricoleur’ of texts. The author’s originality lies in the arrangement of those materials. The almanac genre, through its characteristics, provided a vehicle for assembling and combining heterogeneous materials. This new concept of the author’s role is also reflected in the collaboration and collective production of both Almanacs.

Interestingly, poet and collaborator Fagus seemed to have shared similar ideas on authorship; an idea of (inspired) craftsmanship versus that of the divinely inspired poet. In a letter from 1924 Fagus questioned the perpetuated romantic myth of (divine) inspiration, writing that inspiration ‘comporte rien de mystérieux’ and that poetic creation consisted of a ‘opération à la fois instinctive et réfléchie.’ He also stated that ‘le poète use nécessairement d’assemblages de mots : lesquels ont généralement un sens’, combining words to create an atmosphere ‘que le poète avait délibérément calculée’. Fagus uses a

---

94 Eruli, "Le monstre, la colle, la plume." pp. 51-55.
95 Béhar, "Jarry, l’almanach et le fleuve oral," pp. 31-39. Béhar mainly focuses on finding some sources behind the text and remarks Jarry’s appropriation of popular culture.
98 Ibid., p. 258.
pragmatic, scientific vocabulary such as ‘résultats’, ‘opération’, comparing the writing of a poem to constructing a building, with nothing (supposedly) left ‘au hasard’. He thus underlines the constructed nature of the poetic text and advocates a similar ‘methodical’ view of writing as Jarry’s character Sengle in *Les Jours et les Nuits*. Fagus offers a more intentional, less mysterious and more down to earth version of poetic inspiration and describes it as both ‘inspired’ as well as a ‘conscious operation’. It bears many similarities with the writing practice in the Almanacs and with Jarry’s ideas in ‘Linteau’. With Ubu’s Almanacs the constructed nature of the text and the author’s role as an arranger of materials are equally put to the forefront.

The collage aesthetic in the Almanac, like the strategies of collaboration and ‘anonymity’, put emphasis on the figure of the author. The author is very much at the centre of the work, but in a different manner than in the ideal of the ‘unique genius’. The author in the Almanacs, by cutting and pasting the texts in the collage, is visibly pointing attention to the ‘writing’ process and the text’s construction, and by combining the materials in a specific way is, also visibly, steering the reader through the text, inviting him/her to make certain connections.

The third result of the collage aesthetic is the re-evaluation of writing itself and with it of conventional modes of narration and of representation. The collage first of all defies the contemporary literary aesthetic of homogeneity and narrative coherence and offers a heterogeneous, incoherent work instead. The collage in Ubu’s Almanacs is also about writing itself, about the way a literary work is constructed, as the heterogeneous, not entirely integrated elements emphasize the constructed nature of the text. Conventional representation, which created an illusion of reality, is substituted by, what could be considered as another sort of ‘realism’. In Ubu’s Almanacs reality is documented through bits and pieces from that reality, names, quotations, rather than telling and ordering it through conventional narrative. The reader is left to question both the realism of the literary narrative and that of the inserted fragment, of the new context and that of the original context.

The insertion of (pseudo) ready–made ‘documents from reality’ can also be seen in Jarry’s other works. In the novel *Les Jours et les Nuits*, for example, a copy of the hospital’s medical form revealing Sengle’s condition serves as the novel’s ending. In *Le Surmâle* the lovemaking scene between Marcueil and Ellen is ‘narrated’ through the insertion of the text of a sentimental popular song. A borrowed text that represents the scene or an event also replaces conventional storytelling here. Rather than narrating and ordering reality, reality is presented as a mosaic of scattered fragments pasted together. This mode of representation results in a polysemic work that is instable and incoherent, in which the various signifiers are juxtaposed and interact with each other. This semiotic instability and fragmentation is precisely the intended effect of the collage aesthetic and of Jarry’s poetics. Jarry’s innovative use of collage lies in his particular use of language. He constantly

---

99 ‘Cependant qu’au cours de la confection, des ‘solutions spontanées’, des inspirations, jailliront, surprises, mais non hasards, non miracles : résultats, ou résultantes, si vous préférez.[...]Opération à la fois instinctive et réfléchit.’ Ibid., p. 257.
alternates for example between literal and figurative meaning, associating and playing with words. This demands an active role from the reader. Jarry's phonetic puns are not mere language games, but used to generate meaning by creating a complex mix of semantic threads.

The collage aesthetic in the Almanacs and the consequent reevaluation of existing modes of representation, prefigures the experiments of the early avant-garde movements of the 20th century, of the early Cubist 'papiers collés' and of the work of writers surrounding these painters, such as Apollinaire. Picasso, together with Apollinaire and Salmon, was an admirer of Jarry and his work. He apparently owned the manuscript of *Ubu Cocu*, which he seemed to know by heart and which inspired his play *Le désir attrape par la queue.* Familiar with Ubu and Jarry's work, it is highly likely he knew of the Almanac, if only through Vollard or Apollinaire. In any case Jarry's persona and work influenced this new generation. His literary experiments and reinventions were of course also influenced by others before him. For an earlier example one could think of Lautréamont's *Poésies*, a source of inspiration for Jarry. His work was filled with borrowed texts, and often claimed to be collage poems *avant la lettre.* One could also think of artist experiments in the artistic cabarets, such as wall journal *Le Mur*, featuring a collage of poetry, images and clippings from the visitors of cabaret Les Quat'z Arts.

Jarry's use of collage in Ubu's Almanacs fits the mindset of the period and reflects paradigmatic changes taking place in contemporary art and literature. Around 1900 the 'world as we know it' was under scrutiny, among artists, writers and philosophers. Positivist claims to a universal truth or reality were being re-evaluated and contradicted. Modern life, the city and the hectic it brought seemed to demand new ways of representation, of perceiving the world. Philosophers such as Nietzsche questioned man's perception of the world and himself. Theories of the relativity of time and space could be found in the works of philosopher Henri Bergson, popular among artists and writers around 1900. Jarry himself attended Bergson's classes at the Lycée Henri IV during the years 1891/92 and took extensive notes. Bergson's theories on (the relativity of) time and space influenced Jarry and many other writers of his generation, who were exploring representation in their work. In the Almanacs and in Jarry's work that exploration became visible in his use of collage. Jarry was one of the first to practice collage, but as the artistic expression of broader cultural developments, it was also 'in the air'.

The collage in Ubu's Almanacs, in particular the direct incorporation of elements from everyday life in these works, raises some more questions that were not yet fully addressed in this chapter; questions about literature's relationship to reality, about the text's representation of and 'commitment' to that reality. The following chapters will therefore provide further discussions of the relationship between the Almanacs and contemporary society: the

101 For example by the Surrealists, see Aragon, *Les collages*, p. 132. In 1891 Remy de Gourmont had published extracts of Lautréamont's *Poésies* in the *Mercure de France*. Jarry would discover Lautréamont's work by the end of 1893. Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror* is also one of the *livres pairs* in Faustroll's library and references to Lautréamont's poetry can be found throughout Jarry's work.
appropriation of news and newspapers in the two works, the redefinition of the relationship between art and life and in the last chapter the treatment of contemporary social and political themes.