Postmodern fiction, author and biography:

The avant-garde case of Alfred Jarry.

By Joost Haan s1000233

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The strong poet indeed says: "I seem to have stopped falling; now I *am fallen*, consequently I lie here in Hell," but he is thinking, as he says this, "As I fell, I *swerved*, consequently, I lie here in a Hell improved by my own making."

Harold Bloom, *Clinamen* or Poetic Misprision, 1972

But was I elsewhere in terms of date or of position, before or to the side, after or nearer? I was in that place where one finds oneself after having left time and space: the infinite eternal, Sir.

Alfred Jarry, *Faustroll*, 1911

And yet … when one encounters one of those brief notices of Jarry that appear in biographies of his contemporaries, or in various contexts on the Internet, they are more likely to dwell upon his mode of living than on his work.

Alastair Brotchie, *Jarry*, 2011

Jarry's life inevitably influenced how his works were written – one concern of every biography – but biography is a fiction too, just as a life *as lived* is a work in progress.

Alastair Brotchie, *Jarry*, 2011

Which is written gives me existence by naming me.

Jacques Derrida, *Writing an Difference*, 1976

Fig. 19. Retail address from the title pages of *César-Antechrist* rendered as a cryptogam: "SE VEND A L'JMAGJER-IX- RVE DE VARENNE".

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Introduction

The French writer Alfred Jarry (1873-1907) is mainly known for his absurdist plays about a certain King Ubu and somewhat less known for his 'pataphysics[1], which is described as a science beyond physics and metaphysics, focusing on 'imaginary solutions', and propagating 'a science of exceptions' (Dworkin 31). Being at first historically associated with symbolism (under the influence of Stéphane Mallarmé), decadence (Jarry personally knew Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley) and absinthism (his favorite drink), Jarry was later seen as a forerunner of avant-garde movements such as futurism, Dadaism and surrealism (Fell, *Imagination* 14, 198, 199; Dubbelboer, *Ubusing* 471). There even is the claim that he was the 'inventor' of the word 'cubism' (Fell, *Cubists* 253). André Breton, the initiator of the surrealist movement did acknowledge Jarry's influence and included him in his list of 'figures from the past with whom we felt a bond of kinship' (Breton, *Conversations* 72). He also mentioned Jarry among the surrealists in his First Surrealistic Manifesto ('Jarry is surrealist in absinth'; Breton, *Manifesto* 304) and included some lines of Jarry's poetry in his surrealistic novel *Nadja* (Breton, *Nadja* 65). Another surrealist, Antonin Artaud, called his theatre 'Alfred Jarry'.

Jarry is, however, also often mentioned as having influenced postmodernism, a much more recent cultural development. For example, an important thinker of this movement, Ihab Hassan, calls Jarry an 'antecedent of postmodernism' (Hassan, *Concept* 150), and includes Jarry's 'pataphysics in his argumentations on postmodernism (151, 152). Hassan sees Jarry as a 'proto-postmodernist'. The list of other presumed 'proto-postmodernists' includes Nietzsche ('postmodernity is a kind of extended footnote to his philosophy', Eagleton 210), Rabelais (Hassan, *Beyond* 4), Laurence Sterne (4) and Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. As I agree with these assertions, here, my argument is that someone can indeed be called 'postmodern', even when his or her ideas originate from long before the historically 'occurrence' of postmodernism. As 'sub-argument', I propose that studying 'proto-postmodernists' like Jarry, Nietzsche, Rabelais, Sterne and Cervantes (there are many other examples) possibly can even be of some importance to delineate the historical background, definition and present value of postmodernism, as these are still under discussion.

I will in the present analysis try to answer the question to what extent studying proto-postmodernists will be of importance to delineate the boundaries of postmodernism. I will only focus on Alfred Jarry for my case-study, as including all other possible subjects will be too extensive, and also because I consider Jarry a very enigmatic and fascinating person in general (Haan 291-295). More importantly and specifically, however, I have recognized a combination of postmodern aspects in his work and in his life, and in this sense see him as a good example of a possible 'proto-postmodernist'. For my research question, I will analyze Alfred Jarry's fictional works, but also his life as it is represented in several biographies. I will focus on the link between work and life and will try to show that Jarry's work contains many traces of postmodern themes, but also that, more convincingly, his 'existence' in terms of 'representation' as a referential figure presented in his biographies, even can be considered 'postmodern'. As these 'biographic' texts are mainly based on 'facts' derived from fiction and numerous anecdotes, their reliability can be doubted. In my opinion, they are examples of postmodern historiographic metafiction. Remarkably, this (postmodern) problematic of historic representation was strongly enhanced by Jarry himself, as he probably did everything during his lifetime to de-referentialize and fictionalize himself, in this way doubling, multiplying, radicalizing and emphasizing the most important of the postmodern literary themes, that of ontological doubt.

Here, I will show that Jarry's fiction contains a spectrum of postmodern aspects, but that from a reversal of the analysis from his work to his person emerges that Jarry did not only live in his texts, but that the texts also lived in his person. He did not only write what he did, but did what he wrote. Passing the borders of text and author (of fiction and so called 'reality') turns out to be the main argument to see Jarry as truly '(proto-) postmodern'.

Why study Jarry and postmodernism?

There has been much debate on the definition of postmodernism. For example, McHale (in a double negation) stated that 'nothing about this term is unproblematic' (*Dominant* 3), whereas the already mentioned Hassan emphasized that '… postmodernism was born in strife and nursed in contention; it still remains moot. Lock ten of its foremost

proponents in a room, and watch the blood trickle under the door' (*Beyond* 3), adding that postmodernism is '… a continuous exercise in self-definition' (4). According to Eagleton, postmodernism '… is doubtless the most widely-touted term in cultural theory today, one which, in promising everything from Madonna to meta-narrative, post-Fordism to pulp fiction, threatens thereby to collapse into meaninglessness' (200). So, it is clear that postmodernism is difficult to define.

Whatever the result of the ongoing debate may be, an attempt must be made to define that what is called 'postmodernism', be it only because it is generally considered as an important and inevitable recent cultural phenomenon (McHale, *Dominant* 5). One possibility is to define it in a chronological sense (taking 'post' as 'after'). In this version, postmodernism can be seen as the cultural movement that followed modernism, as a historical condition. This would imply that postmodernism is attached to a certain era, as a consequence of the attachment of modernism to 'modernity', broadly the time between the enlightenment and the beginning of the twentieth century, when society became dominated by industrial development, technical discoveries, mass production and the rise of metropolitans. A key word of modernism is 'ambivalence', as post-enlightenment developments resulted in a society, said to have an empty center lacking social cohesion and a 'soul'.

A second possibility is to define postmodernism as a continuation and radicalization of the ideas of modernism. Now, the prefix 'post' is used in the signification of 'outpost', as if it defines the conceptual borders of modernism. This option, however, has been considered as 'a very conventional thought' (Huyssen 182), as there seems to be a clear distinction between the driving forces of modernism and postmodernism.

A third possibility is a combination of the previous two options. Hassan suggests that in postmodernism a number of related cultural tendencies require '*both* historical *and* theoretical definition' (*Concept* 149), and according to Van Alphen, 'the systematic and the historical groundings of postmodernism do not necessarily exclude each other' (824). This third option opens the possibility that postmodernism on the one hand is historically related with some aspects of modernism and on the other hand is theoretically defined by specific 'contents' or 'ways of thinking' of its own.

What is described to be specific for postmodernism is a way of thinking that 'operates in a field of tension between tradition and innovation, conservation and renewal, mass culture and high art' (Huyssen 216). Postmodernism has a strong and specific interest in the past, expressed in an emphasis on representation. It especially points at the mechanisms with which images of the past are formed. Important features of these mechanisms are ideology and interpretation (Eagleton 201).

A major issue of postmodernism, especially in the analysis of literary texts, is the distinction between the epistemological and the ontological dominant (McHale *Dominant* 9-10). Epistemology is defined as 'account of knowledge' and is mainly associated with modernism. It is asking questions such as 'How to interpret the world?', 'What am I?', 'What is there to know?', or 'Who knows it?' Ontology focusses more on a 'theory of being', expressed in questions as 'Which world is this?', 'What is to be done with it?', and even 'What is a world?' (9-10). Postmodern texts investigate the boundaries of the possible worlds a subject can live in (Korsten 252). Ontological borders are crossed so that, for example, authors and protagonists 'live' in the same world (253). Persons from 'reality' can occur in fictional texts (254) and – in reverse – fictional personages can be presented as being real. Examples of this can be found in the works of postmodern authors such as Paul Auster and Michel Houllebecq, who frequently 'occur' as personages in their own novels. Often, the postmodern self asks what or who he/she is, which adds to the notion that any human being is uncertain of him or herself and of his or her world, without, however, denying the existence of a 'world'.

Narrative techniques that are associated with the ontological dominant include the 'mise en abyme', which is called 'one of the most potent devices in the postmodernist repertoire for foregrounding the ontological dimension of recursive structures' (McHale, *Chinese-Box* 124). Mise en abyme disturbs the orderly hierarchy of ontological levels by creating worlds within worlds and thus complicating the ontological point of view. Another technique, the 'trompe l'oeuil', causes the reader to mistake a representation at one narrative level for a representation at another level (113). Other important narrative techniques of postmodern fiction are self-reference and parody. Texts often refer to themselves causing a 'book-consciousness-of-its-bookness'. By means of this technique, characters in novels are often aware of their own fictionality and sometimes even hear

their master's (authors) voice (121). Parody can be expressed in ironic quotation, pastiche, appropriation or intertextuality, referring to other texts in order to rewrite the past in a different context, a mechanism that is especially operant in so called historiographic metafiction (Hutcheon, *Politics* 101).

A consequence of defining postmodernism largely on its contents and not on its (chronological or other) associations with modernism is that authors and thinkers can be considered postmodern even if they lived and worked (long) before modernism / modernity, with as examples the already mentioned proto-postmodernists. This argument forms the basis of the present analysis of Alfred Jarry's life and work. To the best of my knowledge, a possibel association of Jarry and postmodernism – although often mentioned – has not been studied systematically before. Such an analysis, however, could be of importance as Jarry might be an example of the possibility that authors live in their texts, but that texts also can live in their authors. His case can show that postmodernism may be extended by not only including texts, but also the author's life.

Here, I will first present a detailed analysis of a selection of Jarry's works by using 'close-reading'. In these texts, I will systematically analyze the presence of a number of postmodern themes and techniques such as 'self-reference' ('book-consciousness-of-its-bookness'), and 'parody' (ironic quotation, use of names, intertextuality), aspects of 'historiographic metafiction', 'mise en abyme' and 'trompe l'oeuil'. My main focus, however, will be at a possible presence of an 'ontological dominant', as this would point to one of the most typical literary characteristics of postmodernism. My argument to focus on the 'ontological dominant' is that it also seems to form the core of Jarry's philosophy of 'pataphysics:

> 'Pataphysics will be, above all, the science of the particular. [..] It will investigate the laws that govern exceptions, and it will explain *the universe supplementary to this one*; or, less ambitiously, it will describe a universe that one might envision – and that perhaps one should envision– in place of the traditional one (Dworkin 31; italics added).

A supplementary or envisioned universe: that is a postmodern theme.

The ontological dominant and other postmodern themes in Jarry's work.

The virtual world of Ubu

The play *King Ubu* (*Ubu Roi*) is certainly Jarry's most famous work. The 'story' is based on a text which Jarry wrote with some schoolmates when he was young. It started as a mockery about one of their teachers and resulted in such a depiction of an irrational tyrant that the French language later was enriched by the eponym 'ubuesque' for 'absurd', or 'grotesque'. In the story, King Ubu takes over by force the throne of good king Wenceslas of Poland. Ubu reigns as a tyrant, 'debrains' everyone who does not agree with him, and murders the aristocrats of the country to take their money, titles and land. He also raises the taxes for the peasants to a considerable amount. The family of the murdered Wenceslas joins forces with the Russian army and the suppressed peasants to fight King Ubu. He is defeated and gives up the claim to the throne. He flees to England.[2]

About *Ubu*, it has been stated that 'The grotesque of the imagery, the juxtaposition of objects, and the collage of chronological periods would seem to qualify this famous production as the first postmodern design' (Aronson 8). This is said because in Ubu '… no single point of view can predominate' (2). There is an emphasis on 'stage-as-stage' (5), which is not only Artaudesque or Brechtian, but also ubuesque and postmodern. *Ubu* appears to contain some 'ontological' aspects, for example as it gives a machine (the so-called 'debraining machine') a status on the same ontological level as the other characters. Remarkably, this machine only works on Sundays, 'like the priest debraining the congregation' (Barker 76).

The 'world' in which the action of *Ubu* takes place is Poland. This seems rather straightforward, but one must realize that at the time of the release of the play, in 1896, Poland did not exist as an independent country. Its territory was divided between the German, Austrian and Russian empires. In a speech given before the first performance, Jarry indeed emphasized that Poland was actually 'nowhere at all', and added 'Nowhere is everywhere, and to begin with the country in which one finds oneself' (cited in Williams Hyman 115). So, an 'ontological' doubt presented in *Ubu* is whether we deal with a 'real' world or a non-existing one.

Secondly, the text of King Ubu contains many new and non-existing words, for example (French with English translation): Merdre (shikt), de par ma chandelle verte (stagger me sideways), bougre (shickastick) and ventrebleu (blubberit). In one of the last scenes of Act four, King Ubu survives an attack by a bear. He falls asleep and talks in his sleep:

> Russkies, don't shoot. There's someone here. Whosat? Dogpile. Can't bearim. Bear. As bad as Billikins. He's after me as well. Geroff. Shoo. Buggeroff. Nick Nackerley, now. The Tsar. Can't touch ME-hee. Missussubu. What you got there, girl? Wheredyoo get that gold? Thassmine, you old bag, you been digging in the cathedral. Digginup my tomb. I've been dead for years. Billikins done me in. Laid to rest in the Cathedral. Next to Vaslav the Versatile. And in the cemetery, next to Roger the Ratbag. And in that prison cell, next to Dogpile. Not him again. Bear, buggeroff. Satanspawn, begawn. What d'you mean, can't hear me? Oh, the Barmpots lopped your lugoils. Debrainin, snackersnikin, taxnabbin, boozinanboozin, thassalife. For Barmpots, Cashlads, his right royal cashness, me (Jarry, *Ubu* 41-42).

It is obvious, King Ubu not only lives in a non-existing place, but also uses a language that does not exist, except in *Ubu*. Of this it has been said that Jarry 'underscores the assertion that language here has lost any possibility of communication and merely stands to signal its own emptiness and inanity' (Williams Hyman 117). In addition to the questionable status of language and whereabouts, *Ubu* also contains several scenes in which there is doubt about the level of consciousness of the protagonists. For example, in the beginning of Act five, King Ubu still sleeps, but nevertheless has a 'conversation' with Ma Ubu, who advises the audience / readers to: 'exploit the state he's in, the dark. Pretend to be a spook. Make him promise to forgiveusour cashpassin' (Jarry, *Ubu* 44). King Ubu then responds (from his sleep?) with 'Dogalmighty. There is someone there. O-elp. I wish I was dead' (44). It becomes, however, never clear whether he has woken up or not. So, dream and death are interrelated and expressed on two levels: that of the play and that of the audience, the borders are porous. In their further conversation Ubu

and ma Ubu talk about the bear, lice and Ubu's responsibility for the murder of good king Wenceslas ('Not my fault. Ma Ubu made me'). Then he throws the dead bear at Ma Ubu, who collapses under the weight, but survives. In the next scene, King Ubu and Ma Ubu are in good terms again. They (again) are in 'The middle of Nowhere' (49).

It has been said that in *Ubu* Jarry aimed for '..not only the dehumanization of the actor but the creation of a sense of the uncanny that would be profoundly unsettling for the spectator' (Williams Hyman 113). The actor Gémier, who played the role of Ubu in the first performance of the play, was advised to use Jarry's own voice for the role. That voice was described as 'a machine for crushing humanities' (Brotchie, *Jarry* 155), an example of 'dehumanization'. Jarry obviously aimed at distorting the human image (of the actor), by replacing his/her face by a mask and replacing his/her voice to sound 'as if the cavity of the mask's mouth could only emit what the mask would say' (Spingler 1-4). This 'makes the meaning of the sound of words independent of their conceptual meaning' (4). *Ubu* became an '..imaginary space within which a double of mankind can operate' (6), and a '..concrete and solid hallucination, which leads the spectator to the perception of a double of his world and himself' (9). In short, in the end the boundaries of fact (the performance of the play) and fiction (the contents of the play) are hard to distinguish.

Ontological escape in Days and Nights.

Jarry wrote his novel *Days and Nights*, which has as subtitle 'Novel of a Deserter', when he was 24.[3] Sengle, the main character, is an army conscript who tries everything to escape everyday life. The text contains descriptions of dreams, hallucinations and the effects of drugs. The 'desertion' of the subtitle of *Days and Nights* is not only the desertion from the army, but here also the desertion from reality itself in different ways. In his search for a better world, Sengle creates a 'double', named Valens.[4] But: 'Sengle was not sure whether his brother Valens had ever existed' (Jarry, *Days* 47). When Sengle looks at the picture of Valens, it says: 'This simulacrum holds the grave's vain knell' (47), and then concludes that 'It is admirable to live two different moments of time simultaneously; this experience allows you to live out authentically one moment of eternity – or rather, all eternity, since it has no moments' (48). So, the enjoyment of

anachronism also includes the possibility to live at two different simultaneous moments of time, but, as eternity has no moments, you live all eternity, or not at all.

The mix-up of chronology (past, present, future) goes further: 'Before Valens he had had several friendships which came to nothing; he later realized he had put up with these second-bests because they looked vaguely like Valens' (49). How could he compare earlier lovers with someone whom he had not even met at that time? The answer is given later in the novel: '… he was aware of time through the discontinuity of events whose only relationship was by succession, and they filed past towards one welcome date' (98). So, chronology can be reversed. Memories of the past are more precise than perceptions of the present (Brotchie, *Days* 11). This is 'historiographic metafiction' in reverse, as it is not a representation of the past as seen from now, but a construction of 'now' as seen from the past. Reality is shown relative to Sengle's past and present consciousness.

As soon as Sengle enters the army, he feels another person. 'He who was scared of mirrors saw himself, through these openings, reflected in other soldiers' (29). He even starts to use the word 'we' to symbolize that he becomes part of a larger 'body': '… we have left behind places like Bruges..' (29), or 'The soldier's proper position is cataleptic rigidity, auto-hypnosis…' (41), and 'it takes brains and nerves to have phobic shakes' (51), to conclude that 'military life is enacted' (81), and can only been escaped through narrative 'inside their heads' (92). Sengle adjusts his view of things by looking at it 'as through field-glasses reversed' (67), and 'topsy-turvy' (84). To further illustrate this referenced point of view, Sengle's world is filled in with numerous intertextual references, as if truth or happiness must be sought elsewhere, in another (written) world. To mention a few, there are quotes from De Quincey (*Confessions of an English Opium Eater*), Cervantes (*Don Quixote*), Rabelais (*Gargantua and Pantagruel*) and Coleridge (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*).

Examples of 'book-consciousness-of-its-bookness' are also not hard to find in the novel, as the narrator of the text very often addresses the readers directly, and often speaks of 'this chapter', 'this book', 'we' or 'us' (he and we). For example, when undergoing a medical examination for the army ('… naked in another hall, anthropometry commences'), Sengle's weight must be measured. He sighs: '… let's hope

Sengle is not heavy enough' (23). This sentence creates an important interaction between Sengle, the writer and the reader. The writer steps out of the third-person narrative to enter a sort of first-person one ('us' is 'I' plus someone) to encourage or ask the reader to hope with him. The reader may do so, but then – in case this hope is fulfilled – there would be not much to read further, as the novel then would be without content. In fact, the hope is not fulfilled, which puts some blame on the reader as he/she did obviously not hope at all, or not hard enough, so Sengle has to enter the army.[5] So, all the schizophrenic 'hoping' and 'not-hoping' of 'fictional' and 'real', see note) persons obviously was in vain.

Another paragraph highlights the book-consciousness-of-its-bookness even more:

> May this chapter make clear to the world at large, that great hemeralope which can only see by familiar glimmers of light, that others can consider it a morbid exception and calculate the right ascensions and declinations of what, to it, is a starless night; may it gain him a pardon for what in this book it considers a sacrilege towards its idols, since all things considered we state the following: that not every day do military hospitals collapse due to the carelessness of medical officers, that this may even be a rare occurrence [..] we have the indulgence to describe it as only a hallucination… (74-75).

Here, Jarry creates a 'doubleness of the self' (Hutcheon, *Politics* 38). There is a split between the self-image and the imaged self, there is a difference between Sengle at daytime and at night. The novel sketches desertion in its widest sense: how to escape reality to another world? How to blur reality and fiction? Or, fitting my argument: how to be postmodern? My preliminary answer to the last question is: by being like Jarry/Sengle.

Postmodern machine metaphor in Supermale?

Le Surmâle (*The Supermale*) has been considered one of Jarry's most accessible works.[6] It tells the story of the protagonist's (André Marcueil) superhuman sexual powers. There also is a description of a bicycle race of five men against a locomotive.

> *The Supermale* is obsessed with potentialities of man and what he considers to be his limitations; with the idea of extending frontiers, pushing the possible to the limits of the imaginable, discovering what might be done by will power to liberate and control the energy of the universe (Wright xiii).

When questioning the limits of the imaginable, ontology is in question.

In *The Supermale*, there are many examples of so-called book-consciousness-of-its-bookness. In a conversation with Marcueil 'The General' says: 'He did not himself have the slightest idea what the end of his sentence was going to be, but one could imagine that it would be pejorative' (35). Elsewhere, the external narrator remarks: 'As for the question of whether or not André Marcueil took part in the race, although Miss Elson was convinced that she had recognized him there, that we leave to be judged from this chapter' (51).

It is clear that various characters in the novel live in separate worlds. The most remarkable example is Jewey Jacobs, one of the five racers in the race against the locomotive. Jacobs dies during the race, but continues cycling, even with more force than when he was alive and now faster than his cycling mates. He 'increased his speed beyond ours, and Jacobs' death-sprint was a sprint the like of which the living cannot conceive' (58-59), according to Ted Oxborrow, the internal narrator of this chapter. He calls this '.. no doubt a hallucination' (59). When talking about his five-man team as 'we', Oxborrow, however, includes four living and one dead person, making no distinction between these states of 'being'. Consequently, he must be a hallucination himself. By using a stimulant called The Perpetual Motion Food, the five-man cycle wins the Ten-Thousand Mile Race against the locomotive. Only at the finish, Oxborrow speaks of '.. Jewey Jacobs in the other world' (71), thus separating the different ontological levels.

In Chapter 8, called 'The Ovum', the external narrator describes how doctor Bathybius, who earlier in the novel talked of 'a chair in the department of the impossible' (73), discusses the 'relativety' of God:

> It is also not impossible that his personality underwent a singular bifurcation, and that one side of him was timing, supervising, analyzing, recording, and checking

technical details at every visit of the Indian to the washroom, and the other side of him was generalizing and transforming his impressions into this literary form, which was most unusual for him:

GOD IS INFINITELY SMALL

[..] man created God in his own image and likeness, enlarged to a degree where the human mind can no longer conceive of dimensions.
This does not mean that the God that man conceived is devoid of dimensions (93).

When God would have a dimension, this would be a limitation on his creation.

According to Hadlock, *The Supermale* contains an association of 'The Creation' and the shaping of men by means of machines. In/after modernity, there were '..the dramatically altered roles that machines begin to play in shaping and (re) defining relationships between consciousness, the human body, and notions of subjectivity' (131). He explains the scene that describes Marcueil, when attached to the Love Machine, presents '..a curious supplement to maleness' (133). In *The Supermale* it is persistently suggested that in the cultural accounts of this maleness '.. there is another dimension of man's story that has always been suppressed' (136). By means of their virulence and power, machines '.. become privileged sites for literary creation', and they '.. overtake the body's place in the field of vision' (137). In *The Supermale* the narrative creates a breakdown of the distinction between inside and outside, between live men and dead ones, between man and machine; a confusion of worlds that I see as truly postmodern.

Absolute Love as a hysterical dream

For his early novel *Absolute Love*, Jarry sought inspiration in the writings of the famous neurologist Jean-Marie Charcot and the psychologist Pierre Janet (Edwards 222). Of these two, especially Janet published much on the subconscious and on dreams. According to his ideas, some people remained somnambulists during long periods of their lives, but forgot the 'dreamed' part of their life as soon as they 'awoke'. Jarry was

especially interested in the description of hallucinations and dreams of so called 'hysterics'. So, Charcot and Janet gave him 'the material he needed' (Fell, *Jarry* 138).[7]

In the opening chapters of the novel, the reader is left uncertain whether the hero Emmanuel Dieu (!) is a murderer waiting for punishment, or an ordinary person sitting at a desk and being half-asleep. The ambivalence is mainly expressed in the sentence: 'And yet if he did not kill, or if *nobody realized that he wanted to kill*, then he has no other prison than his cranium, and he is but a man who sits and dreams by his lamp' (229). So, inside a prison or inside one's own skull, that is the choice. As the text goes on, none of the possible choices becomes the 'right' one. Both remain possible. The novel seems to end in a dream, but even this is not certain. The reader remains in (ontological) confusion.

Inversed religion in Caesar Antichrist

Caesar Antichrist (or *Antechrist* in French) consists of a play in four acts; called Act I: Prologal Act – the Reliquary, Act II: The Heraldic Act – Orle, Act III: The Earthly Act – Ubu Rex and Act IV: The Last Act (*Judgement*) – Taurobolium. Between the acts, three intervals and a Postact each consist of only one sentence. The text is illustrated with several woodcuts depicting medieval images, some by Jarry and some by other artists. The list of characters of Act I contains Caesar Antichrist, The Reflection, The Sun and The Crowd. In Act II Ubu is introduced. Of the characters of Act III, The Disembraining Machine is the most remarkable. The list of Act IV mentions Jesus Christ and God the Father, and ends with a personage called The Ass. Here, at the same level as God, are God's son, the antichrist, a fictional character created by Jarry (Ubu), an animal and a machine.

Act III takes place in a country that does not exist, in which humans, animals and objects have speaking parts, and in which a reflection of a character in the water talks back (Jarry, *Antichrist* 32). There are also three Christs. This multiplication can be explained as follows: 'Peter denied Christ three times but, by virtue of the identity of opposites, to negate = to affirm, and by virtue of the sign being equivalent to the signified, to affirm = to create. The result: three Christs' (Brotchie, *Antichrist* 23). The appearance of the straightforward character Ubu in the otherwise complex and symbolist

drama has been described as ‘an act of iconoclasm’ (67). Ubu turns out to be the representative of Antichrist on earth. His first words in Act III are ‘O you know, it isn’t me’ (Jarry, *Antichrist* 73), which at the same time introduces him and negates who he is. Being him and not-him, he must be in another world.

In Scene seven of Act IV, in a long monologue, Caesar Antichrist explains his double identity.

> My herald spoke thus to the Templar who believed in the binary nature of principles. I and the Christ are Janus, and I have no need to turn round to show my double face. A being with some intelligence can see these two simultaneous opposites, these two infinities which co-exist and could not exist otherwise, in spite of the philosophers’ ineradicated errors. I alone can perceive these things, for I was born to be lord over them and see all possible worlds when I look upon a single one. God – or myself – created all possible worlds, they co-exist, but men cannot even catch a glimpse of one (121-122).

At first sight, the title of the book consists of the name of a person. According to Hutcheon, such a title ‘does alert us to the place to look for a means of access’ (*Politics* 105). We search for information about the name and the person and check out who he/she was, and ‘this question of accessibility is undeniably part of the politics of postmodernism’ (105). *Caesar Antichrist* is also represented by a name, but here this raises a lot of problems. First, ‘Caesar’ is a name, but also a function. ‘Antichrist’ is the negation of a ‘person’ over whose existence there are many discussions. As Ubu probably is the antichrist, the name could also be read as Caesar Ubu, which is a contradiction in itself.

Docherty describes the postmodern technique by means of which a personal name from history (called ‘personnages-référentiels’) is introduced in a text at the same level as fictional persons (Docherty 175). ‘What has been assumed by a reader to be an epistemological category begins to operate in the manner of an ontological one’ (175). Historic persons so become ‘signifiers devoid of a signified’ (175). As Hutcheon writes: ‘Novels [with a personal name as title] work to present a portrait of an individual and yet

to subvert any stability in or certainty of ever knowing – or representing – that subject' (Hutcheon, *Politics* 116). Because of the title, *Caesar Antichrist* at first looks like a biography, but the complex and contradictory nature of the name, and the uncontrollable and probably even deliberately confusing information given in the text, illustrate the existence of various 'worlds', inside and outside of the text.

The imaginary worlds of doctor Faustroll

On the one hand it is very easy and on the other very difficult to detect an ontological dominant in Jarry's *Exploits & Opinions of dr. Faustroll, Pataphysician*. It is easy because in the work no one knows where he or she is, and this includes the reader who is left uncertain what is his or her place in the world constructed. It is difficult, because the novel is that 'novel', experimental and strange, that every 'scientific' analysis will miss its point. As has been said: 'explaining 'pataphysics contradicts its very essence' (Dubbelboer *Ubusing* 37).

Faustroll describes a literary and adventurous journey across Paris. It starts with 'Proceedings' printed on official paper of the bailiff René-Isodore Panmuphle who needs to obtain from the doctor a considerable sum of money. Doctor Faustroll is born in Circassia at the age of sixty-three and retains this age all his life. Together with his persecutor Panmuphle, who later becomes his prisoner, and a baboon called Bosse de Nage whose only words are 'Ha Ha', Faustroll goes on a boat trip, which is some sort of a trip, but not on a boat, as their means of transportation is 'perpetually dry' and 'called a skiff' (Jarry, *Faustroll* 16), or 'a sieve'. It is also described as 'this bed, twelve meters long, is not a bed but a boat, shaped like an elongated sieve' (15). Shortly before they start their trip 'Faustroll conjured up into the third dimension' (17) and 'Panmuphle, bailiff, began to read Faustroll's manuscript' (20). So, what we are reading is a book of which the manuscript is being read by one of the characters in the book. This strongly resembles a 'mise en abyme', and directly changes the ontological level of the narrative, placing us readers on the same level as Panmuphle, who is a prisoner in Faustroll's power. The use of first person narrative with Panmuphle as focalisator in large pieces of the text makes that we see and read through his eyes and through his interpretation, but

this is abruptly interrupted near the end of the book with the remark (96; italics, parenthesis and put in the center in the original):

(Here ends the narrative of Panmuphle)

This remark is one of the many that point us readers that we are reading a book, nothing more or less. For example, when the baboon Bosse-de-Nage is introduced in the text, the narrator (Panmuphle?) writes: 'This character will prove very useful during the course of this book' (27). To which book does he refer? To the one Panmuphle is reading? The one we are reading? The virtual one in his, or the 'real' one in our hands? Anyhow, this is an example of postmodern 'book-consciousness-of-its-bookness', mise en abyme, trompe l'oeuil and intertextuality. Other examples can be found in several 'impossible' dialogues. 'Only his brain – and the anterior motor centers of the medulla – are dead. And because of this inertia he is, on our navigator route, not a man but an island, and this is why (if you both behave, I will show you the map)…' (33). The 'bookness' (or is it 'essayness') is further underlined by several notes to the text. On page 48: '*Since the writing of this book, the river around the island has turned into a funeral wreath. [Author's note].'[8] Which author is this? Faustroll or Jarry? And on page 82: '*Sic. The Isle of Dreams, lyric by Reynaldo Hahn, words by P. Loti, A. Alexandre and G. Hartmann. [Author's note.]'[9]

Faustroll, Panmuphle and Bosse-de-Nage navigate over dry land from Paris to Paris and visit many islands. In the inversed (postmodern) logic of 'pataphysics the surfaces of the islands are 'of still water, mirror-like (it was natural that the islands should appear to us as lakes, during our navigation over dry land)' (49).

Another important (postmodern) technique in *Faustroll* is the use of intertextuality. Chapter 4 of the 41 presents a long list of 'Equivalent books of Doctor Faustroll', which contains books by Baudelaire, Coleridge, Rachilde, Maeterlinck, Mallarmé, Rabelais and Jules Verne. The list serves as a guide through many of the subsequent chapters. It also contains a form of 'self-reference', as under nr. 24 Jarry's own *Ubu Roi* is listed. Remarkably, in chapter 39 of *Faustroll* Ubu is mentioned as the author of *Caesar Antichrist* (108), so there is intertextuality, but also 'auto-

intertextuality' (reversed self-reference placing a writer and a fictional character on the same ontological level).

Of Bosse-de-Nage, the baboon it is said that he 'though not professing it by a thoughtlessly variegated loquacity, prided himself on being deontological' (sic) (61). In his study of moral obligation, he says 'ha, ha' and nothing more. 'One may confidently assume that he could only perceive space in two dimensions [by saying only 'ha, ha'], and was refractory to the idea of progress, implying, as it does, a spiral figure' (75). So, his (limited) vocabulary determines his character and his 'deontology'. After seeing a horsehead Faustroll is overtaken by insanity and strangles Bosse-de-Nage, whose last words obviously are 'Ha ha!' (73). Shortly thereafter, 'Faustroll carried out a subfumigation, and the specter of Bosse-de-Nage – who, having only existed imaginarily, could not really die – manifested itself, said "ha ha" respectfully, then was silent, awaiting orders' (83). When you are not alive, you cannot die; when you cannot talk, you exist only imaginarily. Bosse-de-Nage's luck is that he is only an imaginary personage as otherwise he 'really' would have 'died' and disappear from the story.

In the end of the narrative, Faustroll leaves this world and goes to 'Ethernity'. From there, he writes a 'telepathic letter' to Lord Kelvin. In its first sentences he states: 'I do not think you will have imagined that I was dead. [..] I am no longer on earth. [..] I was in that place where one finds oneself after having left time and space: the infinite eternal, Sir' (100-101). As complex as this may seem, the message is clear: the borders of 'here and now' to 'there and eternity' can be crossed, for example by a letter.

Jarry uses parody and contradiction, he incorporates other texts, mixes real and fictional characters, as in postmodern historiographic metafiction. Faustroll urges the reader to place himself in the situation of a perplexed man outside time and space. The fact that Faustroll appears to be the author of the book, is also 'postmodern', as 'the ontological status of a text can be altered by a character claiming to be the author' (McHale, *Dominant* 14). In case of Faustroll this can be extended to a character claiming to be the reader, to be us.

Postmodern themes and techniques in Jarry's biographies.

The 'ontological dominant' which is so characteristic for postmodernism, appears – together with several other postmodern techniques – to be present to some extent in several of Jarry's works of fiction, which is not surprising as Jarry's philosophy of 'pataphysics also seems to contain a strong 'ontological' basis, by aiming to create a supplemental universe in place of the 'traditional' one. Nevertheless, the 'ontological dominant' does not form the main part of the texts (with an exception for Faustroll, perhaps), and the question emerges whether his published works of fiction are wholly representative as an expression of Jarry's thoughts.

In his essay ' "Excuse Madame Rachilde". The failure of Alfred Jarry's Novels', Cutshall (1988) argues that there were several problems with the seven novels written by Jarry. Although Jarry needed to live by his writing, he had tremendous problems in finding publishers for his work. Virtually all of his novels failed to sell. It is suggested, but not proven, that the majority of the texts that later 'became' the novels were written in a short period, roughly between 1894 and 1901. Because of his lack of income, Jarry probably decided to finish and print a number of previously unfinished texts within a short period of time. It is possible that this influenced the quality of his novels. In addition to Jarry's lack of income, his debts increased enormously because he ordered large quantities of alcoholic beverages, but even more so because he bought a very expensive bicycle.[10] It is, however, too simple to explain the quality of Jarry's work in financial terms only. Although he indeed very frequently suffered from a lack of money, and had to improvise to survive,[11] it is much more likely that he only used his works of fiction to express some of his thoughts. The major part, however, was expressed in his way of living and his philosophy, which was never literary put on paper, but can be reconstructed from traces of ideas scattered throughout his texts.

Christian Bøk, in his *'Pataphysics. The poetics of an imaginary science* focusses on the postmodernity of Jarry's philosophical thoughts. According to Bøk 'Pataphysics is a philosophical alternative to rationalism, and symptomatic of a postmodern transition in science from absolutism to relativism (3). He stresses that in Jarry's philosophy the universe is an arbitrary formality. 'Reality does not exist, except as the interpretive projection of a phenomenal perspective – which is to say that reality is never *as it is* but

always *as if it is'* (8). For Bøk, Jarry's thoughts have close associations with those of Derrida, Deleuze and Baudrillard, making 'pataphysics a source of postmodernism. I agree with this, but wish to push this one step further. My argument is that an analysis of the way in which Jarry constructed his thoughts in his texts and his philosophy, but in parallel also in his life, must answer the question how 'proto-postmodern' he is. Jarry made no distinction between being alive or being in Eternity, making no distinction between the living and the deceased. He also made no distinction between the real or the fictional, or being writer or reader.

Postmodernism has an ambivalent position to language. On the one hand, the idea is that language often fails in its description of what 'really' has happened, but on the other hand language seems able to create history and 'reality' (Korsten 260). The argument I try to raise here is that not only 'text' and 'language' matter but also the one who has produced these artifacts. Not everyone agrees with Barthes' meanwhile classical proposition of the 'death of the author' (Barthes *Death*), including Barthes himself:

> The Author himself – that somewhat decrepit deity of the old criticism – can or could some day become a text like any other: he has only to avoid making his person the subject, the impulse, the origin, the authority, the Father, whence his work would proceed, by a channel of *expression*; he has only to see himself as being on paper and his life as a *bio-graphy* (in the etymological sense of the word), a writing without referent, substance of a *connection* and not of a *filiation*: the critical undertaking (if we can still speak of criticism) will then consist in returning the documentary figure of the author into a novelistic, irretrievable, irresponsible figure, caught up in the plural of its own text (Barthes *S/Z* 211-212; emphases in the original).

Derrida even compares a writer with God:

> *Absence* of the writer too. For to write is to draw back. Not to retire into one's tent, in order to write, but to draw back from one's writing itself. To be grounded far from one's language, to emancipate it or lose one's hold on it, to let it make its

> way alone and unarmed. To leave speech. To be a poet is to know how to leave speech. To let it speak alone, which it can do only in in its written form. *To leave* writing is to be there only in order to provide its passageway, to be the diaphanous element of its going forth: everything and nothing. For the work, the author is at once everything and nothing. Like God (85; emphases in the original).

When the standpoint is accepted that the author *does* matter, it seems legitimate to not only focus on texts, but also on the writers. Considering this, I will now focus on ontological aspects of Jarry's life.

Jarry's world is called 'the universe that we ought perhaps to see' (Fell, *Jarry* 135), an imaginary world, a supplementary universe, in fiction, but also in 'reality'. Before starting my analysis of Jarry's life, at first, it must be realized that not much details are known about his life, as there is a lack of primary sources.[12] Because of this, the person of Jarry was 'filled in' and he became a sort of mythological figure; an 'unquestionable genius of the underworld' (Fell *Jarry* 175). There are even some who claim that he did not die in 1907, but lived until 1962 (Soulignac), or in a way may even be still alive (Haan).

What is 'known' about Jarry's short life is based on a great number of anecdotes. In general, the historical value of anecdotes is debated. On the one hand, they are 'supposedly based on real life' but 'not considered fit to be a serious basis for a philosophical discussion or scholarly elaboration' (Jullien 66), on the other hand they can 'capture an essential truth about something; they are often supposed to be in some sense exemplary' (66). Anecdotes can be seen as short stories that can 'underline the explosive force of literature itself' (69). Biographies can even become fictional biographies.

Separating fact from fiction on the basis of the available anecdotes turned out to be a tremendous task for all of Jarry's biographers. 'The pataphysician would see no virtue in such a distinction [fiction from fact], but the biographer cannot avoid it' (Brotchie, *Jarry* ix). Many of the anecdotes about Jarry are repeated over and over again in various texts and biographies. The picture we have from him depends largely on these uncontrolled and uncontrollable pieces of repeated information. In addition to this, and important for my 'postmodern' analysis, Jarry probably deliberately produced anecdotes

about himself that were not or only partly true, as if he was trying to mystify his own existence and to influence his own biography. Jarry was 'fabulizing' his life. In a sense, his use of language was mainly performative, as he almost always acted according to the utterances and texts he said and wrote. He also deliberately identified with the fictional characters he had created, causing a confusing mix-up between himself and his literary alter-egos, and between his fictional characters and himself. So, the boundaries between his work and life became increasingly blurred.

Although the 'real' cores of the anecdotes can be doubted, in their repetition they give us an image of the representation of their protagonist, making Jarry a more fictional than real figure, even in his so-called 'biographies'. In my opinion, these arguments allow for a study of the biographies as if they are works of fiction, or – to use a 'postmodern' term – examples of 'historiographic metafiction'. A principle of postmodernism is that 'the use of language necessarily creates fiction' (Van Alphen 819). By paraphrasing Van Alphen, the same can be said of biographies: as the use of language is inadequate to refer or describe reality adequately, it only can create fictional lives. 'The postmodern insistence that it is language that speaks in a text, not the author, obviously butts its head against the popular image of biography as the discovery of the "real" author in his or her works' (O'Mealy 417). The question is: 'How does one write about another's life?' (Lambert 306). Postmodern biographers acknowledge the problems with representing another's life and the 'uncertainties a biographer experiences when piecing together a life narrative' (324-325). 'Any literary biography that posits the existence of an author absolutely knowable from his texts is doomed to failure' (O'Mealy 417). Most biographers know this; literary biography lives off the impossibility of its own project (417). To say it otherwise, there are several different interpretations of a life, and many possible biographies. As said, in my opinion, this means that biographies can be seen as examples of historiographic metafiction, with an emphasis on the importance of representation and a mix of 'real' and 'fictional' protagonists. The 'biographies' of Jarry can be read as texts about 'real' figures (all except for Jarry himself), and one fictional figure (Jarry). Ontologically, the figure of Jarry then changes between the world of the 'real' to that of 'fiction' (anecdotes).

Here, I will close-read some prominent biographies of Jarry as if they were fiction / historiographic metafiction, focusing on the turning around and changing of reality. The biographies are discussed in chronological order. Aspects of the ontological question will be sought for, especially by analysing to what extent the figure of Jarry is put down as a product of fiction. The leading question here is whether the classical form of the biography can do justice to a person like Jarry.

Rachilde (1928)[13]

Rachilde (Marguerite Eymery 1860-1953) was married to Alfred Vallette, editor of the important Parisian literary journal *Mercure de France*. Rachilde was a very productive author of fiction, publishing more than thirty novels, including the more or less famous *Monsieur Venus*, *A Mort* and *L'Heure sexuelle*. Around 1900, she was especially known for her Tuesday evening gatherings, on which she invited authors, musicians, painters, etc. On such an occasion, Jarry, coming from Rennes, was introduced to the Parisian artist-world. Alfred Vallette and Rachilde became very fond of him and at first supported him financially and professionally wherever they could. Much of Jarry's early work was published in the *Mercure de France*, but his later novels, especially *Faustroll*, were considered too experimental for publication.

In 1928, 21 years after Jarry's death, Rachilde published a book with 'biographic' sketches on Jarry in a series called "La Vie du Bohème", under the title '*Alfred Jarry ou le Surmâle de Lettres*. This publication is of much interest, as Rachilde is the only one of Jarry's 'biographers' who knew him personally. As a result, her text served as an 'objective' source of information for most subsequent biographies. Her descriptions 'made' an image of Jarry that was hard to neglect. Nevertheless, it is very important to realize that Rachilde was a novelist herself and that she wrote her reminiscences more than twenty years after the occurrences took place. Furthermore, her relationship with Jarry was not unproblematic or 'unbiased', to say the least.

Rachilde's *Alfred Jarry ou le Surmâle de Lettres* starts with a 'Préface' (3-8), consisting of a reprint of the obituary originally written by her husband Alfred Vallette, published in the *Mercure de France* on the 16th of November 1907 shortly after Jarry's death. In 2014, and probably also in 1928, it is rather peculiar to read this text about

someone who has died many years before, and whose name later became associated with various important topics that are not mentioned in the obituary at all. Vallette praises Jarry's intelligence and originality, but also spends words on his irresponsibility in matters of finances, his 'inclairvoyance rare', and the fact that – in his opinion – Jarry should have produced a more significant oeuvre, based on his talents. There are also some hints pointing at Jarry's 'other universe', for example: 'il ignora la vie comme personne' [he denied to live as a person]. Vallette concludes with the words: 'Alfred Jarry n'eût plus été le père Ubu' [AJ could not have been Ubu any longer].

The text of *Alfred Jarry ou le Surmâle de Lettres* is full of anecdotes. There are, however, no references or any other proofs of what is said ever was real. For example, when Rachilde writes about the first time Jarry came to the 'salon du *Mercure de France*', she adds 'La scène est encore présente à mon imagination, laquelle imagination enregistre à la façon photograhique les moindres details d'un incident qui l'a frappée' (11) [the scene is still present in my imagination, which photographically registers the tiniest details of any remarkable incident]. So, for our picture of Jarry, we must rely on Rachilde's 'photographic' imagination. Rachilde writes about Jarry's family, the holidays she and Vallette spent with Jarry in their house in Corbeil, Jarry's small shack in the country called the 'Tripode' and his fondness of bicycle riding.

After the obituary / 'Préface' written by her husband, the first sentence of Rachilde's own text reads:

> La première fois que je vis cet étrange personnage, qui se jouait à lui-même la comédie d'une existence littéraire poussée jusque'à l'absurde, ce fut dans le salon du Mercure de France (11).
>
> [The first time I saw that strange personage, who played by himself the comedy of a literary existence driven to the extreme, was in the salon of the Mercure de France.]

Here the tone is set for Rachilde's 'biography', and for most of what follows. Jarry is called a 'personnage' and not a 'person' or 'man'. This word has a connotation with a

play or other work of fiction and suggests that Rachilde has already stopped to see Jarry as a 'real' person, but instead saw him as a product of fiction. This is underlined by the words 'la comédie d'une existence littéraire' [comedy of a literary existence]. Of her first meeting with Jarry, Rachilde remembers: 'Ma-da-me! disait le père Ubu un peu plus tard, vous avez un bien mauvais caractère! Vous êtes une quantité négligeable d'atomes crochus.' [Madame! said father Ubu after some time you have a bad character! You are a negligible amount of bent atoms] (absence of quotation marks in the original) (21). Here, Rachilde makes her intentions clear, for how can she call Jarry 'father Ubu' at their first meeting, which took place long before the premiere of Jarry's play and his personification with this character (see below)? It seems that Rachilde intends to make him into a fictional character from the start of her text. In her opinion, he was the victim of his creation Ubu and of drinking too much alcohol.[14] She even doubts whether Jarry is of the human sort (170) and describes him as 'a ghost of himself' (215). She blames Jarry for descending 'l'escalier de ses dangereuses fantaisies jusque'au caveau de la misère noire' (34) [the stairs of his dangerous fantasies into the cellar of black misery] (34). To be short, in 1928 Rachilde has stopped to describe and/or see Jarry as a person of flesh and blood. She writes about him as a fictional 'personnage' with an artificial face, artificial thoughts and movements, and a self-created destiny.

Shattuck (1955)

> In Jarry, we confront a reversal of values in which the baseness and incongruity of life must be understood as a source not of disgust but of joy. The intelligence can feed on triviality and by persistence create the sublime. By clinging to this attitude, Jarry pushed systematic absurdity into the realm of hallucination, of violated consciousness (34).

Rogers Shattuck's *The Banquet Years* served as a 'reanimation' of the memory of Alfred Jarry in the nineteen fifties. At that time, virtually everyone had forgotten the name and work of Jarry, who was considered an obscure figure from an uninteresting period (symbolism, fin de siècle). In his book, Shattuck describes the origins of the avant-garde

in France by discussing in detail four of its forerunners. He argues that the painter Henri Rousseau ('le douanier'), the composer Erik Satie, the poet Guillaume Apollinaire and Alfred Jarry inspired the early twenty-century avant-garde movements. The chapters on Jarry are called *Suicide by Hallucination* (187-222) and *Poet and Pataphysician* (223-251).

From the first lines of this text about Jarry, Shattuck aims at 'suspense', 'suggestion' and 'fiction'. He admits that on Jarry's life, 'the only facts we have form a paltry debris' (197). Examples of literary and poetic sentences, based on this so-called 'paltry debris' are: 'All his life Jarry was haunted by the insistent reality of dreaming consciousness' (35) and 'Jarry's incredible life takes place in the atmosphere of a self-inflicted nightmare' (35). Shattuck starts by mentioning that Jarry's birth was on the feast of the Holy Virgin and that he died on All Saints' Day (187). Jarry's lodgings in Paris are 'a dead-end alley, where handprints in blood decorated the walls'. This Dead Man's Calvary was 'the first of his legendary lodgings' (195).

Shattuck intends to describe Jarry's life, but intermingles this with non-historical suggestive sentences: 'Jarry took the final step and fused his life and his art through literary mimesis: he adopted in "real" life the fictional role of Ubu, his most horrendous creation' (39) or, 'The conscious and the unconscious fuse into a continuum which coincides with the fusion of thought and action, art and life, childhood and maturity' (201), and 'He forced his life into a mold closer to literary fiction than biological survival' (202). The picture Shattuck offers is not that of a person of flesh and blood, but one of literary suggestions and poetic interpretations, culminating in:

> So it was that through drink and hallucination Jarry converted himself into a new person physically and mentally devoted to an artistic goal – a person in whom Jarry, the man, spent the rest of his days dying (203).

A new person, a place to die, Jarry 'unlived his life' (203). He changed his person and his speech to nonhuman standards. He ate nothing, fish from the Seine, or a meal backwards. He dressed as a bicycle racer or wore women's shoes, even on official occasions such as

the funeral of Gustave Mallarmé, one of his protectors. He spoke in a staccato speech in a 'periphrastic style' (212) developed from Homer and cultivated in Ubu.

According to Shattuck, Jarry chose for a radical transformation, but was overwhelmed by his own power, as some sort of Faust: 'Ubu acknowledges no affections, no damnation; for him nothing is sacred, not even, as in Faust, the clutch of his own mind. A distorted image of Faust, Ubu-Jarry is engaged in the only act left for him to perform: self-destruction' (217). For Shattuck Jarry was 'as much as a pretence as a personality' (222). He puts down Jarry as a pose and as one of his own fictional characters. Jarry is a literary mimesis, who violated his own identity and exceeded the limits of literature. 'His biography, his legend, and his literary work are so organically combined that, strange to say, no sustained effort to isolate one from another aids in explaining him' (250). The fact that Jarry transformed his life in something as 'lovely as literature' (251), is possibly the reason that 'today he is very much with us again', as Shattuck wrote elsewhere (Shattuck, *Faustroll* vii). Although Shattuck – as Rachilde – gives a very distorted image of Jarry, this seems to touch the postmodern turn: the representation of the life and thinking of someone of the past is determined by many factors. The 'facts' may even be the consequence of representation.

To summarize this, first, there are the historical 'facts', which necessarily are (often ideologically) presented ('poetics') and interpreted ('politics'). 'Facts' form the contents of the events, but postmodern thought emphasises that they remain dependent on representation, as in historiographic metafiction. Shattuck's 'biography' is good fiction, but 'Jarry' is elsewhere.

Fell (2005; 2010)

In 2005, Jill Fell published a book on Jarry titled *An Imagination in Revolt*. In this work, Fell focusses on the 'pre-Ubu' (before 1896) part of Jarry's life, and especially on Jarry's prominence as a poet-engraver and editor of books and magazines. This part is sometimes called Jarry's 'symbolist' period, but Fell argues that even as a 'symbolist' Jarry was a 'protosurrealist' (Fell, *Imagination* 13). She discusses Jarry's enigmatic artistic inventions, in which 'it is typical of Jarry to make us think that there is something out there that others have defined and of which we never have heard, when there is nothing!'

(13). Fell calls this a banana skin that Jarry throws under his readers' feet (13). As Jarry says in his 'Contract with the Reader':

> The very fact of having actively written the work oneself, puts one in a superior position to the passive listener. All the meanings that the reader will find in it have been foreseen and he will never find them all; the author can put him on the wrong track engaging in a game of blind man's buff and directing him towards unexpected, posterior and contradictory meanings (33).

Fell mentions Jarry's statements about the possible relations between writer, text and reader (33):

1) The reader as writer's dupe, who cannot aspire to finding all the meanings in the text, because the writer has seen them all and will actually lay false trails;
2) The reader who is infinitely superior to the writer in intelligence, but who is still at a disadvantage through not having written the text himself. The barriers are still up;
3) The reader who identifies with the author, but who nevertheless cannot place himself at the same unique and unrepeatable moment in history, at which the work was written.
4) The writer can have forgotten the circumstances that made him write what he did.

So, according to Jarry, many interpretations of a text are possible. There is no fixed meaning, no definite understanding. There are only different degrees of misunderstanding, and this even includes the writer in relation to his or her own text.

In 2010, Fell follows with a biography covering Jarry's entire life. It must be said that she here also intermingles fact and fiction, as she repeatedly uses Jarry's works of fiction to explain his 'non-fictional' life. She starts with a description of a (preliminary plaster model for a) statue of Jarry by Ossip Zadkine showing his bicycle and revolver. Then she explains how André Gide used Jarry as a character in his novel *The Counterfeiters* (Fell, *Jarry* 7). In this novel, the character Jarry wore circus clothes and

his way of speaking was affected, by hammering out syllables and inventing bizarre words. The depicted Jarry 'had belonged more to the world of fiction than to the real one'. Fell stresses that with many of the anecdotes about Jarry the same is true. There is, for example, a story about a dinner where Jarry did shoot a fellow artist. It is, however, doubted whether Jarry shot his colleague or hit him with his fist. Besides, nobody knows for sure who were present at the time of the shooting (some sources say that also Pablo Picasso was present, whereas other say he was not). It also is not clear whether Jarry shot at a person called Little Bercail or one called Manolo. Some say that two pregnant women fainted during the shooting / fight, but others say that nobody took notice. Obviously, historical recollections of this event differ enormously. An important contribution was later made by Guillaume Apollinaire who claimed to be also present and thought to remember that after the fight Jarry told him in Père Ubu's voice: 'Wasn't that just beautiful as literature?' Fell argues that this example and many other 'biographical' facts about Jarry are more to be seen as fiction than as reality, mainly because of their imaginative power.

Fell criticises Rachilde for her picture of Jarry:

> Her lively anecdotes about Jarry passed as a serious factual account of his life for many years. Unfortunately the time lapse of 21 years between his death and the publication of her book, together with her knack for telling a good story, led her to produce an over-dramatized version of Jarry's life (31).

In chapter 4 of her book, Fell describes Jarry's military service, under the title 'Fiction and fact' (61). She starts the chapter by stating that about this part of Jarry's life 'there is little record apart from his novel' (61). Nevertheless, she gives in this 'biography' a lively account of what has happened. For example, according to Fell, Jarry's time in military service resulted in the set-up of a 'secondary existence inside his imagination' (61). The description that Jarry produced (in the novel *Days and Nights*) swerved between 'real experiences, an idealized world, and filtered childhood memory' (61). Here, Fell (probably unintendedly) illustrates the problems of a biographer. It is necessary to use 'facts', but what to do when these are not available?

Fell also illustrates this when describing a meeting of Jarry with Oscar Wilde, of which the 'events of the rest of the evening are unrecorded' (125). It was suggested that Wilde called Jarry 'a most extraordinary young man', who is 'very attractive'. It is even said that he compared Jarry with a male prostitute (126). Wilde and Jarry were together seen in various places, but it was uncertain whether this was 'the same evening or another one' (126).

Fell comments in detail on Jarry's perception of time, especially as described in his article *Commentary for Use in the Practical Construction of the Time Machine*. Jarry proposes time as 'a fourth dimension of Space or as an essentially different locus' (142). Time and space may be different forms of thought. Jarry suggested that it must be possible that one could be isolated from the aging process by locking oneself. Remarkably, he signed the article with the name of Dr Faustroll, again intermingling reality with fiction. In his thoughts about time, Jarry obviously was inspired by H.G. Wells and Henri Bergson, among others. Jarry's main conclusion is summarized in the question: 'What [..] if we are already in another world that we cannot perceive?' (153). This imaginary world in space and time is what it is, always 'inappropriate to aspire to exact historical reconstruction' (156). This has – as I will show – a very strong resemblance with postmodern 'representation', and historiographic metafiction.

Brotchie (2011)

The most recent and voluminous biography is *Alfred Jarry. A Pataphysical Life* by Alastair Brotchie, described as 'enthralling, scrupulously researched, and elegantly written' in an extensive review in The New York Review of Books. I would rather also call it the least 'poetic' and most 'scientific' of the biographies, as Brotchie, a 'Regent of the Collège de 'Pataphysique', tries to base his biography more on facts than on fiction, anecdotes or rumours. He has chosen a hard task, but found an elegant solution. Where there is doubt on the truth of a certain anecdote, Brotchie simply offers the different readings (which by itself reflects a sort of Bergsonian virtuality; see later). For example, about Jarry's introduction in the 'salon' of the Norwegian composer William Molard Brotchie writes that: 'A number of accounts record Jarry there, but none give first-hand

sources. He could have been introduced by Gauguin, but also by Rousseau, and later on by Apollinaire' (145).

In Chapter 13, called *A Question of Interpretation*, Brotchie analyses 'how previous writers have looked at Jarry's life and myth, and what conclusions they have drawn about his motives and personality' (303). In the short chapter (six pages), Brotchie summarizes how early information on Jarry's life, most of which came from his friends, describes how Jarry fell down because of his difficult character. In contrast, later biographers tended to value Jarry's work, and the difficult character and downfall were seen as positive. So, 'some saw his life as a demonic possession by Père Ubu, others as the hagiography of a pataphysical saint' (305). All this leads to the situation that 'the different versions of Jarry's life reveal the individual preferences of their authors' (306). A contemporary of Jarry, Paul Chauveau, for example, described Jarry's life as melodrama, in which the creation of Ubu crushed him. Rachilde and Vallette, at the time of Jarry's death, also focussed on his 'unworldliness with an edge of bitterness and tragedy' (307). The writer Fagus concluded that Jarry was disembrained by the everyday. Later biographers concluded that Jarry enacted a masquerade to conceal his inner self. However, all agreed: Jarry's life was shaped by literature. Brotchie quotes Shattuck, who even goes further to conclude that there is no distinction between Jarry's life and work. Shattuck: 'while he was dying he was at liberty. No worldly restraint could touch him' (308). With this, however, Brotchie does not agree: 'Jarry's myth should not be substituted either for his writing or for his life' (308). He argues that 'a biography should avoid transforming a life into a destiny' (308), a task which was not very easy after Rachilde and Shattuck. Nevertheless, 'his' Jarry, which he intended to consist more of facts than of fiction, turned out to be an ambivalent, but still fascinating figure.

The clinamen, ontology and postmodernism.

Many unverified and unverifiable anecdotes contribute to the picture of Alfred Jarry we have today. Jarry has become a presence made of many words. In this sense, he has 'multiplied'. The possible alternative 'readings' of his person add to his own notion of 'parallel universes', making all texts about him very 'Jarryesque', as he even provides a way of creating parallel worlds and inhabitants himself: the clinamen.

The clinamen is mentioned as a source of Jarry's creativity and philosophy. It can be metaphorically described as the chance born swerve or turn of atoms. As Bök writes:

> Jarry may borrow this notion from a classical context (the clinamen in Lucretius or even the parenklisis in Epicurus), but such a principle of deviance also provides a pretext for postmodern philosophy about the theme of misprision (e.g., the détournement in Derrida or the déclination in Serres) – vagaries that diverge from what directs them, escaping the events of the system that controls them. The clinamen is simply the unimpeded part of a flow which ensures that such a flow has no fate (43).

The clinamen can function as the opening of a discourse, but it can also be the unexpected beast of which, out of the circle of rational inclusivity, creation is made (Barker 72).

The American literary critic and professor of humanities Harold Bloom describes Jarry's work as 'apocalyptic irony', and calls the study of poetic influence as a branch of 'pataphysics, 'because the swerve, parodied in the clinamen, reflects the change from destiny to slight caprice' (Bloom 389). In other words, creative interpretation is necessarily a misinterpretation. An example of such a misinterpretation is given by Jarry himself in *Days and Nights*, when he describes how Sengle:

> …came to believe, on the strength of his testing his influence on the behaviour of small objects, that he had the right to assume the probable obedience of the world at large. If it is not true that the vibration of a fly's wing "makes a hump on the other side of the world," since there is nothing at the back of infinity, or perhaps because movements are transmitted in the Cartesian sense, in rings [..]; it is evident that a tiny motion radiates outward with significant displacements and that the reciprocal collapse of the world is incapable of moving a reed in such a way as to make it aware of the fact (Jarry *Days* 82).

Ontological questions refer to the possibility, probability or necessity to represent, change, create or improvise alternative worlds, because one can ask: 'when this world is one of the possibilities, why should another world not be also possible?' It is very important not to confuse this with the standpoint of the philosopher Leibniz (whose philosophy is parodied in Voltaire's *Candide* and to a lesser degree in Jarry's *Days and Nights*) who considered a 'given' world (present reality) as 'the best of all possible worlds' offered by a deity. The offered circumstances should be accepted, how horrible they may be (Russell 607). In Jarry's novel *Days and Nights* it reads:

> As a result of these reciprocal relationships with Things, which he would habitually control through his thought processes [..] he no longer made any distinction at all between his thoughts and actions nor between his dreaming and his waking: and perfecting Leibniz' definition, that perception is a hallucination which is true, he saw no reason not to say: hallucination is a perception which is false, or more exactly: faint, or better still: foreseen (remembered sometimes, which is the same thing). And he believed that above all there are only hallucinations, or perceptions…' (Jarry *Days* 83).

Remarkably, the quote 'perception is a hallucination which is true' is misattributed by Jarry, as it is a phrase by the philosopher Taine and not by Leibniz (Brotchie *Days* 11), but maybe this is an example of a deliberate or non-deliberate 'clinamen'. It can be argued that there always is a motive to create new worlds, but that the reasons to do so are not logical. 'God always acts for the best, but He is not under any logical compulsion to do so' (Russell 608). According to Leibniz 'there are an infinite number of possible worlds, all of which God contemplated before creating the actual world. Being good, God decided to create the best of the possible worlds, and He considered that one to be the best which had the greatest excess of good over evil' (612). In postmodernism, however, alternative worlds are a logical consequence of human uncertainty and existential doubt. There is a lack of a fixed point of view, the different worlds allow for the crossing of borders. For Leibniz, everything is 'an act of God', and the given world is a fixed one. In a postmodern fashion, it can be argued that 'non Gods', or even 'Antichrists' and

‘Jarry’s’ can have a considerable influence on reality, as in the following example/anecdote:

> One day he was lunching in good bourgeois company when, at the end of the meal, the lady of the house leaned over him. “But monsieur Jarry, you are just like everybody else, not at all the extraordinary and extremely ill-mannered person described to me, indeed it is obvious that you have been very well brought up.” “Merdre,” Jarry replied, knowing what was expected of him. “Bring back that roast, or by my gidouille, I’ ll have you all disembrained” After that, Jarry grabbed the roast and devoured it in a theatrical manner as in a freak show. It appeared that by this conduct, he made a great impression on the company (Brotchie, *Jarry* 181).

This anecdote illustrates some of the points I like to raise here. Jarry adjusted his behaviour to the circumstances by using intertextuality (he refers to *Ubu*). Here, the intertextuality puts a ’real’ person (Jarry) and a fictional one (Ubu) on the same narrative level. Further, (the anecdote about) Jarry illustrates how a choice of behaviour can change a situation, can change reality. An important issue in postmodernism is Deleuze’s theory about ‘virtuality’, the border where ‘the possible’ switches to ‘the unimaginable that became reality’ (Korsten 264).[15] According to the theory of ‘virtuality’, in certain circumstances it can be predicted which is the spectrum of possible developments. It is, however, unpredictable which part of the spectrum will become reality. ‘We take the quasi-snapshots of reality as it passes, and, as they are characteristic of this reality, it is enough for us to line them up’ (Fell *Imagination* 50). Only after a certain part becomes present, it goes from ‘virtuality’ to reality. ‘Virtuality’ is not yet reality, but in its essence it can already be seen as real (in contrast to ‘virtual reality’, which is artificial). So, if the virtual is already real, for its development it only has to be actualized (rather then realized). This, in its turn, can lead to a ‘Faustrollian’ supplementary world where perceptions and hallucinations are indistinguishable.

Imaginary solutions are par excellence possible in literature. In postmodernism, these solutions develop simultaneously, leading to different and parallel possible realities.

Such parallel universes belong to the core of Jarry's philosophy of 'pathaphysics. Interestingly, Deleuze saw 'pataphysics as a predecessor of phenomenology by literally quoting the explanation from Faustroll: 'An epiphenomenon is that which is superinduced upon a phenomenon. '*Pataphysics* [..] is the science of that which is superinduced upon metaphysics, whether within or beyond the latter's limitations, extending as far beyond metaphysics as the latter extends beyond physics' (Deleuze 75; Jarry *Faustroll* 21). In Faustroll it is added:

> Ex: an epiphenomenon being often accidental, pataphysics will be, above all, the science of the particular, despite the common opinion that the only science is that of the general. Pataphysics will examine the laws governing exceptions, and will explain the universe supplementary to this one… (21).

This notion of a supplementary universe is central in Jarry's work. The aim is to 'describe a universe which can be – and perhaps should be – envisaged in the place of the traditional one' (Jarry *Faustroll* 22). Reality does not exist in and of itself, but is a projected perspective. It is a representation for which choices must be made. Bringing this into practice is an ontological dominant *pur sang* and makes Jarry's work truly postmodern. Even more than expressing this in his philosophy and works of fiction, Jarry created his life by making use of 'virtuality'. His physical life was as it was, but could also have been completely different. Jarry made his 'life' out of the possibilities, as did his biographers.

According to McHale an important hallmark of the ontological dominant is not only 'abandoning the intractable problems of attaining to reliable knowledge of our world…', but also to '…improvise a possible world' and 'to fictionalize' (McHale, *Dominant* 10). This contains a remarkable similarity with the doings of Jarry, who made himself an artificial person between dream and reality, adopted a new way of talking (like Ubu), a new language, and even a new concept of time. For the latter, Jarry created an alternative calendar, which still 'runs' (for example, the last issue of 'De Centrifuge', the official periodical of the Dutch Academy of 'Pataphysics was published on 1 Absolu 139). The 'pataphysical time counting begins on 1 Absolu 0 (vulg. September 8th 1873),

Jarry's day of birth. In the calendar, there are thirteen four-week 29-day months. Each month begins with a Sunday, and contains a Friday the 13th. The 29th day of each month is called Hunyadi (the name of an Hungarian patriot or a laxative), which in most cases is an imaginary day. Months and days have their own names. For example months are called Absolu, Haha, Merdre or Décervelage, and days Chapeau de Bosse de Nage, Tautology, Naiveté de Pantagruel or Caesar-Antechrist. By creating his own calendar, Jarry resembled (and probably parodied) Napoleon Bonaparte, who ordered the creation of the 'Calendrier Republicain', which had to start at September 22nd 1792 the day of the proclamation of the republic. The poet Philippe François Nazaire Fabre d'Eglantine chose the names of the months (eg. Brumaire, Messidor and Thermidor) and of the individual days (eg. Immortelle, Belle de Nuit, Pulmonaire, Pissenlit). After being 'in function' for 13 years, the calendar was abolished in 1805, to be reinstated for a couple of weeks in 1871. Both Jarry's 'pataphysical and Napoleons Republican calendar emphasize the relativity of time, albeit in a very different way. Jarry's original ideas about time appeared to also extend to before his birth, as expressed in his quote: 'Having been born in 1873, my recollections of the war of 1870 are three years previously to absolute nothingness' (cited in Brotchie, *Jarry* 197). Besides, Jarry had a special interest in the time machine and the publications on it by HG Wells (Shattuck 242).

In postmodernism it is emphasized that language is an unreliable medium of referring to reality. It must be realized that language and our knowledge of the past are incredibly unreliable sources. Historiography and fiction work on the distinction of which event will become a fact and which will not (Hutcheon *Metafiction* 122). In Jarry´s writings the idea prefigures that language does not only represent reality, but also constructs it (Dubbelboer, *Ubusing* 133).

Jarry 'lived' as a protagonist in his fiction (as an avant-garde postmodern fore-runner of authors such as Paul Auster and Michel Houillebec), but also as an unique protagonist in his own life, or lives. He crossed the borders between his 'pataphysics, biography, works, universe and self-invented ethernity. In postmodernism the author used to be out of play, but now I dare to argue that, based on my analysis of Jarry's work and life, the author can be revived as a postmodern character, nothing more and nothing less.

Questions posed in modernism can be described as a form of epistemology: where does the text come from, what is its meaning? Postmodern ontological questions, however, do not principally deal with what a text is telling us, but what it does. In my opinion, Jarry has initiated a new step in the ongoing discussion of what defines / is allowed in postmodernism, and what are its borders. My research question for this study was whether studying proto-postmodernists can better define postmodernism. What my analysis of Jarry's work and life have shown – in my opinion – is that postmodernism, although still having obscure margins, can be extended in time (even to the pre-modern period) and in contents: it can also include an author's life.

Alfred Jarry's work, life and 'biographies' make clear that a separation of artist and work is highly 'artificial' (!). Jarry is postmodern because of the great amount of ontological doubt in his work and in his life. The biographers augmented this by (intentionally or not) emphasizing the confusion. Their 'facts' were the result of representation. Even Brotchies praiseworthy attempt for 'restoration' largely remained in vain.

Jarry added multiple new historic and historiographic aspects to postmodernism. What we must remember from his example is that if one can write about a world, one can also live in it, even eternally, if one chooses to.

Legends to the illustrations:

Front cover: Drawing of Alfred Jarry by Pablo Picasso. Although it looks like a portrait drawn from life for which Jarry had posed, it is very likely that Jarry and Picasso (who admired Jarry very much) never met (David 110)

Page 3: Graphic arrangement made by Jarry for the title page of Les Minutes de Sable Mémorial and César-Antichrist. Some lettres have dual functions (V=U and J=I). Dependent on the way of reading (left to right, right to left, top to bottom, bottom to top) there are variable meanings, one of which reads 'Je me reve' – I dream myself (Fell *Imagination* 69-70).

Notes to the text:

1). The inversed apostrophe before 'pataphysics was insisted upon by Jarry to preclude simple word plays (Barker 76).

2). As simple as this story may seem, it contains many fascinating aspects in its contents and staging. The play even was compared with Shakespeare's Macbeth, and the figure of Ubu has been seen as a prototype of and prediction for twenty century tyrants such as Hitler, Stalin and Idi Amin. The presentation on stage has served as example for surrealist plays, for example those by Antonin Artaud and Bertold Brecht.

3). Although nowhere admitted as such for certain, it is believed that Jarry based the figure of Sengle on himself, giving the novel a strong autobiographical content (Brotchie, *Days* 7). As single, unmarried man, in 1894 Jarry had to serve in the French army for three years. As 'invalid', however, he managed to leave the army after little more than one year. One of the techniques he used to reach his goal was to obey the rules of the army 'to the point of absurdity' (9), as a good soldier Schweik avant-la-lettre.

4). This character is said to be based on Jarry's friend from his boyhood, the writer Léon-Paul Fargue, with whom he possibly had a homosexual relationship.

5). In historical 'reality', Sengle's/Jarry's (?) weight was too low (and he also was too small), but he was considered fit to enter the army anyhow.

6). It has been suggested that Jarry – advised by his friend Rachilde – deliberately chose for a 'simple' and possibly 'commercial' theme for this novel to finally have some income from his writing. Maybe for these reasons the novel responded to many of the literary expectations of those days: speed, sexuality, freedom of thought and application of modern technology. There are, however, also alternative interpretations (see text).

7). The work of Pierre Janet also was a great source of inspiration for automatic writing as used by surrealism as well (Bacopoulos-Viau 260).

8). The 'funeral' wreath in this note refer to the death of Stéphane Mallarmé.

9). Reynaldo Hahn (a Venezuelan composer who lived in Paris) and Pierre Loti (writer) are 'real' persons. The other two are not identified.

10). A so-called Clément Luxe, which was very expensive. There are many anecdotes related to the bicycle (Fell, *Jarry* 96-97). A 'normal' bicycle would have cost around 100 francs at that time, but according to the sources Jarry agreed to pay 525 francs for his racing bike. The story goes that Jarry ordered this expensive bike because he 'no doubt foresaw a grand future in store for himself, guaranteed by his coming fame' (96). The bicycle became Jarry's 'most precious possession and a part of his persona' (97) and the attempts of Trochon, the bicycle seller, to get the bill paid, combined with Jarry's endless unfulfilled promises to pay, 'turned into a saga' (97). It is said that Jarry in the end never paid. Trochon nevertheless attended his funeral.

11). It is said that during the last years of his life Jarry lived from fish caught in the Seine and drank ether, as he could not afford to buy wine or absinthe.

12). What is known is that he lived from 1873 to 1907 and died of tuberculous meningitis. His cause of death was only detected at autopsy, the proceedings of which were published by the famous French pathologist Stéphen-Chauvet in 1933 in Le Mercure de France, and reprinted in 1995 in L'Etoile Absinthe, a 'pathaphysical journal.

13). As there is no English translation of Rachilde's texts, the translations are my own.

14). Rachilde on Jarry's drinking behaviour:

> Jarry commençait la journée par absorber deux litres de vin blanc, trois absinthes s'espaçaient entre dix heures et midi, puis au déjeuner il arroisait son poisson, ou son bifteck, de vin rouge ou vin blanc alternant avec d' autres absinthes. Dans l'après-midi, quelques tasses de café additionnées de marcs ou d'alcools don't j'oublie les noms, puis, au diner, après, bien entendu, d'autres aperitifs, il pouvait encore supporter au moins deux bouteilles de n'importe quels crus, de bonnes ou mauvaises marques (Rachilde 180).

> [Jarry started the day by consuming two litres of white wine, he drank three absinthes between ten and twelve, at lunch he sprinkled his fish or steak with white or red wine in alternation with more absinthes. In the afternoon, some cups of coffee, accompanied with marcs or alcohols of which I have forgotten the name, and at dinner, after other aperitifs, he could still bear at least two other bottles of wine, of good or bad quality.]

Rachilde said she never saw Jarry drunk, although she blames the alcohol for most of his behaviour: '..je pensais que c'était surtout ses perpétuelles absinthes qui lui valaient cette effrayante incontinence de language' (136) [I think that it where the numerous absinthes that gave him that frightening incontinence of language]. She states that she herself never drank alcohol but only water. On this, Jarry of course has an opinion:

> Vous vous empoisonnez, Ma-da-me [..] L'eau contient, en suspension, tous les microbes de la tierre et du ciel, et vos sucreries, qui forment votre principale alimentation, sont des alcools à l'état rudimentaire qui saoulent bien autrement que des spiritueux convenablement expurgés par la fermentation de tous leurs principes nocifs (181).
>
> [You poison yourself, Ma-da-me. Water contains, in a solution, all the microbes of the earth and the heaven, and your sweets, that form your main alimentation, are alcohols in a rudimentary state, which nicely turn in spirits, made clear by the fermentation of their main poisons.]

It can be concluded that if Jarry would have drunk only half of what is said by Rachilde, he would have been permanently comatose.

15). Deleuze builds his theory on that of Bergson, who happened to be one of Jarry's teachers in high school, and who probably has influenced Jarry's ideas (Brotchie, *Jarry* 31).

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