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AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF
NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN
GIONO'S REGAIN

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To My Family

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SUMMARY

The dominant theme in Regain is that of death leading to rebirth. This dissertation attempts to explore Giono's narrative techniques within this context. No single chapter will be devoted to a specific technique; instead, the various devices used by the author are discussed as they emerge from the structure of the chapters.

Justifying the field of study as defined in the "Introduction", the following three chapters outline the passage of life from death to eventual rebirth. With acknowledgement to Frank Kermode, who writes: "A concord of past, present and future ... three dreams which, as Augustine said, cross in our minds, as in the present of things past, the present of things present, and the present of things future"¹, the first three chapters bear his terminology for their headings.

Chapter One, "The Present of Things Past", deals with Mamèche's loss of her husband and son. Chapter Two, "The Present of Things Present", focuses upon Mamèche's realization of Gaubert's departure, and the decision that she must do something to save the dying village of Aubignane. Chapter Three, "The Present of Things Future", sees Mamèche setting out in search of a wife for Panturle, and succeeding. This brings to an end Part One of the novel.

Interwoven throughout the chapters are paradigms from Greek mythology, rich in universal symbolism, and the author's belief in

¹ The Sense of an Ending (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), rpt., 1970, p.50

man's ability to fuse himself with his surroundings.

The conclusion summarizes the findings of this study, attempting to show how an analysis of Giono's narrative technique provides an insight into such a novel as Regain.

NOTES ON PRESENTATION

Page references to Regain or to any other novel in the Trilogie de Pan are from Jean Giono, *Oeuvres romanesques complètes*, Volume I, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Paris: Gallimard, 1971. Similarly, quotations taken from critics in the edition, will also bear the page reference only, as will the one reference to Giono's Présentation de Pan, which is found in this edition.

Where a writer, other than the author, is frequently quoted from a single source of reference only, the first foot note will detail the reference. Thereafter the writer's surname and the name of the book, followed by the page reference, will appear in the footnote.

For the most part this study adheres to the recommendations of the M L A Handbook, but there are circumstances where other styles have been used.

The Bibliography is divided into two sections. The first deals with works cited in the course of the study. The second records works consulted because of their relevance to the thesis.

INTRODUCTION

For technique is the means by which the writer's experience, which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it; technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and, finally, of evaluating it.

Mark Schorer

Implicit in Schorer's statement is the synthesis of form and content in the study of a writer's techniques. Using this premise as a basis for procedure, this dissertation will attempt to investigate Jean Giono's narrative technique in Regain. It will concentrate on (i) the author and his novel, and (ii) the techniques employed to construct and tell the story. A personal element that also impinges on the study, is that of the thesis writer who brings to the text his own "accumulated remembered past".¹

(i) The author and his novel

Jean Giono was born to a cobbler and a laundress in Manosque on 30 March 1895. His Piedmontese descent on his paternal side, and his Picard-provencal ancestry on his maternal side, coupled with holidays in the country where the young Giono spent much time, formed an important background to his writings. An avid but impecunious

¹ Robert M. Adams, "Introduction", Narrative Theory and Practice by E. Miner, et al, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), p.v.

reader, the author was forced to buy what he could afford. The cheap Garnier editions of the classics in translation were available, and Giono bought them. The ancient writers instantly captured his imagination, providing a vital source of inspiration, particularly to his earlier, pre World War II works.

Claudine Chonez, one of Giono's biographers, remarks on this influence:

Ceux qu'il lit donc, dans l'enthousiasme, ceux qui ont formé et marqué pour longtemps son style, s'appellent Homère (il préférerait l'Odyssée à l'Illiade), les Tragiques Grecs, Virgile.... 2

Strongly identifying Giono with the ancient texts, another biographer, Pierre de Boisdeffre observes:

Tant il est vrai que c'est la Grèce légendaire, celle des demi-dieux et des mystères dionysiaques, que Giono semble habiter en rêve.... Ce n'est pas le fils du cordonnier de Manosque qui nous parle, mais l'enfant nourri chez Gaea de nectar et d'ambrosie qui accompagnait en chantant la troupe de Satyres et de Bacchantes. 3

Adapting old myths at will, Giono abandons the method employed in Naissance de l'Odyssée (1927), where he imaginatively adheres to the traditional myth. In Regain, the author creates his own fictive characters, sometimes adding a mythological dimension to their being. Under the constant gaze of an omniscient Pan, the three main protagonists assume the guise of their mythological counterparts. Mamèche takes the complex figure of Demeter, Panturle enacts a kind of Triptolemus, and Arsule represents Persephone Establishing

² Giono (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1956), p.36.

³ Giono (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1965), p.48.

a link between the texts of antiquity and his modern novel, Giono would seem to confirm Gilbert Highet's postulation that "every writer who attempts to create anything on the basis of myth, must add, subtract or alter."⁴

The writer chooses the plateaux and mountainous regions of Haute Provence for the Trilogie de Pan (1928-1929). Similar to the geographical and climatic conditions of Greece, this austere corner of Southern France provides the required setting for his work. Isolated from the modern technology of industrialized cities, it preserves its ancient life-style, enabling Giono to re-enact his quasi-mythological drama. Dominique Baudouin comments that,

La haute Provence de Giono n'est pas le Midi facile à vivre et rieur; c'est un pays plus âpre, où la vie paysanne, encore assez semblable à la vie antique, est restée patriarcale et naturellement païenne....⁵

while according to Claudine Chonez,

Le souffle panique puisé aux sources antiques s'est désormais uni à la terre de Lure et de Baumugnes, aux montagnes âpres où brûlent le soleil et les odeurs aromatiques, aux sites grandioses, pays de haute tradition pastorale et poétique.⁶

Against this background, the author "draws upon a limited body of mythological material, and offers this as comment on part of the modern plot. His aim is most frequently to use myths, not to create a whole mythology, be it old or new."⁷

⁴ The Classical Tradition (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p.533.

⁵ "Etudes et notes", Regain by Jean Giono (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, Livre de Poche, 1930), p.191.

⁶ Giono, p.42.

⁷ John White, Mythology in the Modern Novel (New York: Princeton University Press, 1971), p.16.

Another factor influencing Giono's writings, were the years that he spent as a soldier in the Great War. He became acutely aware of the futile loss of young lives, vowing thereafter never to fight again. With a heightened sense of the meaning of life, Giono determined to stress its importance in his novels. It is not surprising that he should entitle this novel Regain, as it simultaneously embodies the concept of an agricultural aftergrowth and a human renewal, in essence, a continuity of life.

The story is a simple one. Only two men, the aged Gaubert and the virile Panturle, together with an old woman, Mamèche, live in the derelict village of Aubignane. After Gaubert's departure, Mamèche is left alone with Panturle. She realizes that he needs a woman to perpetuate life and the hamlet's existence, so assuming the role of questor, she sets out from the village to find him the woman who will become his wife. Arsule is the young woman whom Mamèche 'releases' from the 'captivity' of a knife-grinder Gédémus, guiding her to the waiting Panturle. Together they set their house in order, restore the fields, and Aubignane is reborn.

Forming an integral part of the action is the god Pan, whose name meaning "All", announces his participation in the story. Conceived as the spirit of the wind, he appears in many a different guise to usher in the changing seasons. Within this framework lies a much altered, but easily recognizable myth of Demeter which lends complexity and interest to the story. Symbolizing winter and the death of vegetation, Demeter searches for her lost daughter. Mamèche, taking cognisance of her loss sets out at the end of winter to 'hunt' for

a woman, who could in a sense be regarded as her daughter.⁸ Persephone, joyously reunited with her mother, represents spring and the reawakening of nature, while Arsule's union with Panturle embraces this concept.

In the light of the above, it can be seen that "every phase of human existence, is made alive with symbolical suggestion"⁹, elevating this apparently simple story to exciting heights. Giono presents timeless themes of universal significance. "Regain does not merely reincarnate an ancient Greek myth, it also re-enacts the old prehistoric passage from the world of the nomadic hunters to that of the settled cultivators"¹⁰, producing a continuous life cycle with its sorrows and joys, always in harmony with the natural elements, and the seasonal decay and growth of vegetation.

(ii) The techniques employed to construct and tell the story

Maxwell Smith remarks that "the most persistent quality in Giono as a novelist has been his marvelous capacity for telling a story that holds the reader breathless until the end."¹¹ Perhaps this is a little excessive in its enthusiasm, since some of Giono's stories, like Regain, end on a predictable 'and they lived happily ever after' note, which is not calculated to hold the reader spellbound to the conclusion. But in spite of this, most critics would agree that Giono is an accomplished story-teller.

⁸ Odile de Pomerai, ed., Regain by Jean Giono (London: University of London Press, 1967), p.19, also expresses this idea.

⁹ Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces (New York: Princeton University Press, 1949), p.43.

¹⁰ de Pomerai, p.21.

¹¹ Jean Giono (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1966), p.176.

From the opening sentence of the novel the writer's conscious artistry emerges, creating the illusion of listening to a peasant narrator as opposed to reading what he says.¹² 'Talking to the reader as if he were telling a story -- and he is -- the author establishes an instant rapport between story-teller and listener. Dissolving the barriers between written and spoken French, Giono uses a colloquial style to render an informal approach to the novel. His words are those of a rustic in daily locution, lending an air of authenticity to his imagined characters.

For the most part, the peasant narrator is anonymous and omniscient, but sometimes his role is played by one or other of the characters, or even by the author himself, when the reader is conscious of the poet's voice substituting for the peasant's. Using the device of 'point of view',¹³ Giono determines how to present the reader with the materials of the story, changing narrators as the context demands. This technique is constantly employed throughout the novel, effecting a reliable "spoken narrative tone",¹⁴ for unlike many modern writers who create unreliable narrators to add interest to their novels, Giono adheres to tradition, always filtering the reader's perception of the story through the voice of a reliable narrator.

¹² de Pomerai comments on "the vaguely felt presence of a peasant narrator... who tells the story, as such a person well might, to a group of friends to pass the time of an evening.", p.25, and also on p.31, she says: "The illusion thus created is that instead of reading the printed page, the modern reader is listening to the narrator as was, and still is done in primitive civilizations."

¹³ In Philip Stevick's words, 'point of view' is "the angle from which a fictional work is narrated." Philip Stevick, ed., The Theory of the Novel (New York: Free Press, 1967), p.85.

¹⁴ de Pomerai, p.25.

In the author's assertion to Christian Michelfelder, he says:

Avant d'écrire un mot, je le goûte comme un cuisinier goûte le produit qu'il va mettre dans sa sauce; je l'examine aux lumières comme un décorateur examine un vase chinois qu'il va mettre en valeur; je le pèse comme un chimiste qui verse dans une éprouvette un corps qui peut tout sauter; et je n'emploie que des mots dont je sais le saveur intime et la puissance d'évocation et de retentissement. 15.

This is an invitation to the reader to analyse Giono's form of expression.

Often dubbed a poet-in-prose, the author imaginatively perceives the suggestive capacities of the image, using it to enhance the aesthetic quality of his writing. Henry Peyre draws attention to this stating:

Giono's rarest gift is his inexhaustible ability to create precise, yet expanding and soaring images. He fixes the essence of reality through them and enobles it at the same time; he simplifies and yet transfigures. 16

Comparisons form the basis of many an image, prefaced by "comme", "à croire", "on dirait", "comme si" and "il semble". Stephen Ullman remarks:

An interesting feature of imagery in Regain is the frequency of comparisons. This is not surprising in a writer like Giono, close to nature, nurtured on Greek classics, and hostile to urban civilization. His comparisons fit into the simple and epic tone of his style; some of them have a distinctly Homeric ring. 17

¹⁵ Jean Giono et Les Religions de la Terre (Paris: Gallimard, 1938) pp.45-46.

¹⁶ The Contemporary French Novel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p.143.

¹⁷ Style in the French Novel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp.218-219.

Images appear in every shape, colour and size, offering the reader a new insight into familiar perceptions. Ullman continues:

The density of metaphorical element in *Regain* is very great; at first sight, it might even appear excessive.... In fact, it is hard to open the book anywhere without coming across an image or, more often than not, a whole series of images. One may legitimately wonder how a short novel, dealing with a narrow subject, can bear the strain of such a heavy load of imagery 18

The reason for the success of Giono's imagery "is due partly to the quality of the images, the freshness of vision from which they spring, and partly to the important role which they have in the structure and impact of the story."¹⁹

Within this framework Giono poetically imparts his ideas, portraying man as an undeniable part of nature. Borrowing from Baudelaire, the author writes of that "mélange", which effaces "the boundaries separating individual self and the world".²⁰

L'extraordinaire est notre puissance de mélange,
cette partie divine de nous-mêmes, toujours
insoumise et qui fait de nous l'expression
du monde. 21

Linked to this is his hostility to urbanism, contrasting the artificiality of the sophisticated man-made world with "les vraies richesses" of the natural world.

¹⁸ Style in the French Novel, p. 218.

¹⁹ Style in the French Novel, p. 218.

²⁰ Alan Clayton, "Giono's Colline: Pantheism or Humanism?", Forum for Modern Language Studies, April 1971, p. 117.

²¹ Jean Giono, Les Vraies Richesses (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1937), p.173.

Sustaining a rhythmic lyricism rare to prose in a novel, Giono achieves poetic effects with unremarkable literary devices, and figures of speech. Repetition in varying forms chants its way through narrative and dialogue, musically evoking a poem, prayer or song. Verbs set the tense, pace and tone of the story.

The use of the present and perfect tenses stresses the spoken character of the narrative. Besides its effect of immediacy and closeness to the events and the characters, it is a style perfectly adapted to the personality of the narrator.... 22

This causes the reader to be aware that he is listening to what is, in terms of what was. Often one verb sets off a chain reaction of verbs, accelerating the pace of a particular passage, for example Panturle's reaction when he sees Arsule with her bodice open (see p.125 of this study). At other times, one verb is used in all tenses, or as present and past participles to suggest the mood of the protagonist, and the prevailing weather conditions, such as the anticipated and subsequent departure of Gaubert, harmonizing with the chilly winter which revolves around the verb "geler" (see p.22 of this study). Acutely receptive to sense impressions, the author modifies the verbs, finally adjusting his "world of smells, tastes, palpable masses and shapes"²³, as Peyre says:

The reader actually smells Giono's verbs, breathes the fragrance of his adjectives, feels the caress of his adverbs on his skin. 24

²² de Pomerai, p.26.

²³ Peyre, p.143.

²⁴ Peyre, p.144.

In an effort to maintain the poetic effect, the author sometimes takes the liberty of using nouns adjectivally, like "le vent chèvre"(p.347) or adjectives as nouns, such as "le tendre du ventre"(328). On occasions they succeed, but there are times when they render a passage artificial, and detract from his style. Short sentences give the lie to their length, expanding the reader's imagination far beyond the full stop. Silences fill the gaps between phrases to imply thoughts and actions that would have spoilt a passage had they been verbalized. Personifications abound in "soaring images",²⁵ transporting the reader to an imagined world where Greek gods touch the heart of modern-day, peasant society "with renewed attempts to solve mankind's perennial question -- how to live?"²⁶

When these two approaches to the present study are synthesized, it is hoped that the leitmotif suggested by the title, Regain, will highlight themes and key-words from the story, elements of Greek mythology and nature, thus revealing Giono's ability to create a written symphony worthy of his narrative technique.

²⁵ See footnote 16.

²⁶ de Pomerai, p.38.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PRESENT OF THINGS PAST

Introducing Mamèche

A familiar, anonymous narrator, seemingly a regular traveller who knows the driver, passengers and route, opens the novel during a journey to Aubignane. What on a first reading might have appeared to be an ordinary trip to the village, gradually reveals itself as a means of penetrating the character of Mamèche. However, the reader's introduction to her is controlled by another peasant narrator, l'Oncle Joseph, who first describes her appearance, and then recalls the tragic events of her past.

Frank Kermode says,

in exploring events anterior to its opening, such a novel has a truth missing from other kinds, for we muse on our disasters after they have happened, and live our lives in these cross-currents of past and present. ¹

Giono uses this technique to introduce Mamèche to the reader. From the beginning she embodies the concept of tragedy, gaining the reader's sympathy before he actually makes her acquaintance.

"C'est une vieille cavale toute noire: la zia Mamèche c'est son nom" (p.327), are the words that l'Oncle Joseph chooses to introduce

¹ Frank Kermode, Essays on Fiction (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p.63.

"The black horse is funerary and heralds death and symbolizes chaos; it appears at the twelve days of chaos between the old and the new year."⁵ Seen in this perspective, Mamèche, as "une vieille cavale noire", is the metaphor representing the passage of life. Contrasting age and youth, death and life, the author confers upon Mamèche the role of intermediary between the past and the future. It is a vital role, since the very myth of Demeter depends upon constant renewal, and theme of Regain is regeneration.

Mamèche is afflicted by the senseless loss of her loved ones. Demeter is angry and grief stricken at the loss of her daughter. The tragic overtones in the combined image of these two characters, lend stature to this novel, forming a powerful point of departure. Mamèche's sorrow complements Demeter's anguish, creating a ripple effect which flows over into the despair that Giono experiences before unnatural death. As he says: "Quand la mort est naturelle, la mort est heureuse",⁶ "c'est la continuation logique"⁷, but when death is unnecessarily incurred, it distresses him deeply. He never forgets the Great War, and the futile loss of life witnessed in the trenches around him. "L'horreur de ces quatre ans est toujours en moi."⁸ Evoking

⁵ J.C. Cooper, An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978), p.85.

⁶ Jean Giono, quoted by Gilbert Ganne, "Giono règle ses comptes," in Les Nouvelles Littéraires, avril 1956, p.11.

⁷ Jean Giono, Les Vraies Richesses, p.209.

⁸ Jean Giono, "Refus d'Obéissance," in Giono, by Pierre de Boisdeffre, p.25.

the ancient myth of Demeter, transferring her sense of loss to Mamèche -- whose harrowing experiences themselves also serve to remind the reader of life's transience -- the author shifts the reader's perspective from the novel to a war-torn twentieth century. Mamèche, at times Demeter incarnate, could be France weeping for her children.

Sketching a brief outline of Mamèche's tragic life since her arrival in Aubignane, l'Oncle Joseph, still the narrator of the moment, mentions: "Puis, son homme est mort... Puis, son petit est mort..." (p.327), before divulging details of the two tragedies that befall her. Punctuating the sentences in this way, Giono separates the incidents, making the reader aware that each death contains its own story.

Whereas Demeter has no husband, the author adds a husband-figure to Mamèche.

Though the priestesses of Demeter, goddess of the cornfield, initiate brides and bridegrooms into the secrets of the couch, she has no husband of her own. 9

He links the idea of Hades, and the earth opening up to swallow Persephone, with the death and simultaneous burial of Mamèche's husband. Persephone's "cries for help were heard by no one except Hecate and Helios, and Zeus was far away."¹⁰ As Homer says:

22 Mais personne, parmi les Immortels ni les hommes mortels, ne perçut ses cris, non plus que les Olives aux beaux fruits: seule, dans sa tendresse, la fille de Persée, Hécate au bandeau brillant - ainsi que le Seigneur Soleil, fils radieux d'Hypérion - entendit, du fond de son antre, jeune fille invoquer le Père; 11

⁹ Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*:1 (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1980), p.89.

¹⁰ Richardson, p.1.

¹¹ Homère, *Hymnes*, p.42.

No one heard the well-sinker call out, but l'Oncle Joseph recalls, "On a entendu couler du sable et tomber des pierres. Il n'a pas crié. Il n'est plus remonté. On n'a jamais pu l'avoir"(p.327). Instead of ringing a bell to announce the death Giono conveys the message in three terse sentences. Taken individually, "il n'a pas crié" expresses silence, "il n'est plus remonté" evokes a spatial voice, and "on n'a jamais pu l'avoir" reiterates the husband's disappearance. Each successive phrase contains an extra syllable, creating a resonant effect, "é -- é -- oir" (crié - remonté - l'avoir), which could conceivably have been the unheard scream of the well-sinker as he was buried alive. It would seem that the author paradoxically uses the orchestration of sound to convey silence, extending the perspective of form from visual to auditive.

Adding the death of her son to that of her husband intensifies Mamèche's suffering. This further substantiates Hight's theory for a daughter has been subtracted and the myth -- at this stage of the novel -- altered by substituting a son. Mamèche's son is snatched from her after eating a poisonous hemlock; Persephone too, is in the field, but picking a magical narcissus when the earth suddenly gapes, and Hades enchantedly whisks her away. L'Oncle Joseph's account of the child's death is rich in symbolic interest and pathos. It describes the child lying "dans l'herbe"(p.328) in the beautiful tranquility of a verdant nature, but the harmony of this tableau champêtre is shattered by the observation that the small boy is "tout noir déjà, et tout froid"(p.328), suggesting that the poison has insiduously taken its toll.

The prevailing season is autumn, as the olive trees are in full fruit when Persephone and little Rolando (in some editions he is called Orlando) are 'taken' from their respective mothers. Homer writes of "les Olives aux beaux fruits", while l'Oncle Joseph says, "c'était à l'époque des olives"(p.328) when referring to the time of the tragedy. Olives are traditionally symbolic of peace, and it is unusual to find the olive tree used in this sense. However, in Graeco-Roman interpretation, "the olive tree of the Acropolis held the life and fate of the people",¹² and it is no doubt in this context, apart from indicating the season of the year, that Homer and Giono choose to use it.

Invoking the god, Pan, spirit of the wind, the narrator replaces l'Oncle Joseph, to usher in the mood of the tale. The wind "est tout bien froid, jusqu'au fond"(p.325), suggesting winter's iciness, and foreshadowing a chilling start to the story. Pan remains inactive while l'Oncle Joseph tells the listener that there are only three residents still living in Aubignane. But, as soon as he mentions "la Piémontaise"(p.326), as one of the three, the narrator notes that "le vent soulève le ciel comme une mer. Il le fait bouilloner et noircir, il le fait écumer comme les montagnes"(p.326). Anticipating some fearful upheaval with these powerful comparisons, "ce vent plonge, écrase le bois, s'élance sur la route" (p.326) gathering strength in its wake. Once the deity learns of

¹² Cooper, p.122.

Mamèche's husband's death, "le vent hurle derrière les nuages" (p.326). Her loud wailing soon follows on the heels of perception when she realizes that her son, too, is dead. Picking up Pan's cry, "et ça hurlait toujours, en bas, à déchirer le tendre du ventre." (p.328), Giono synthesizes the mood of the wind's force with that of Mamèche's grief. Although grammatically incorrect, using the adjective "tendre", as a noun, the author appeals to his sense of rhythm to convey her intense sadness. Perhaps a little contrived, it achieves a musicality if not really enforcing her pain. A moment's silence, then Pan tearfully concludes his introductory role to the novel. "Le vent éparpille le bruit des clochettes comme des gouttes d'eau"(p.328).

Hardly a critic of the author, whatever his approach, has been able to resist the temptation to write about Giono's affinity with the natural elements, the wind in particular. Michelfelder says of Regain,

voici le livre de Pan, celui, où le dieu est
immédiatement présent, comme fondu en toutes
choses. ... Pan emprunte pour orchestrer
le roman sa voix naturelle; le vent; le
vent qui clame sa rage sur les plateaux ou
sussure sa chanson, le soir dans les roseaux. 13

W. D. Redfern subsumes the essence of Michelfelder without acknowledgement. He writes:

Pan, as his name indicates, is everywhere present;
he equals nature and is no mere addition to it.
He now uses his most natural voice, the wind, which

¹³ Jean Giono et Les Religions de la Terre, p.67.

pervades everything and provokes the action. 14

Odile de Pomerai in her "Introduction" to Regain refers to Pan as "the surge of the wind"¹⁵, while de Boisdeffre quotes M. Charles Vildrac as saying:

Car le voix du poète, nous l'entendons quand même dans le grand vent parfumé qui enveloppe le hameau d'Aubignane. 16

Luce Ricatte in her "Notice" on Regain also observes:

Au départ, il a voulu contrer l'histoire sur la force panique du vent, et tout particulièrement du vent printanier, tant de fois terrifiant et voluptueux. ...le vent tient une place de choix.(p.992)

Finally Stephen Ullman offers the following:

To take the most striking case of all, the wind is part of the basic inspiration of the story and one of its protagonists.... But the wind could not play this role without the innumerable personifications and other metaphors through which every aspect of it is identified and made sensible in the novel. 17

From the above, it can be seen that the wind's importance as a narrative device in the novel cannot be overlooked. It not only announces the changing seasons, donning many an imaginative guise, but foreshadows events harmonizing the characters' moods with each change.

¹⁴ The Private World of Jean Giono (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p.33.

¹⁵ p. 19.

¹⁶ Giono, p.113.

¹⁷ Style in the French Novel, p. 229.

Life in Aubignane

Quand on touche ce bord d'Aubignane qui pend au-dessus du vallon, à main droite, c'est tout de suite la maison de la Mamèche. Ça n'est pas sa propriété, bien sûr, mais personne ne viendra réclamer elle n'a eu qu'à choisir dans le tas une maison pas trop démolie avec, autant que possible, un peu de toiture. (p.333)

Giono develops an architectural metaphor to evoke the sensation of "the present of things past". Once a thriving village, Aubignane is presently in a state of ruin. However it provides Mamèche with a temporary shelter, "un peu de toiture," in an animal-like manner. Mamèche is a solitary figure, the inescapable memories of her past, linked to the indecision regarding her future, are all that tie her to the neglected hamlet. Unlike Demeter, who immediately leaves the assembly of the gods to start the search for her lost daughter, Mamèche remains in Aubignane a little while. Relying on the inner conflict between her physical freedom -- she possesses neither family nor property -- and her emotional imprisonment -- her loved ones are buried in Aubignane -- the author retards her immediate progress. The reader finds Mamèche in an amorphous state, at the crossroads of past and future. "And here, in this brief time-span, one gets the sense both of the displacement and the nonetheless continuity of events."¹ Analogous to war-ravaged France, whose future is nebulous, Mamèche embraces the concept of tragedy, extending the metaphor to mankind. Giono uses this analogy, appealing to the reader to take stock of his past, and to bear it in mind when contemplating his future.

¹ Malcolm Bradbury, and James Mc Farlane, "The Name and Nature of Modernism," ed., *Modernism* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1983), p.43.

The seasons change, autumn becomes winter. The past recedes, the present advances, and with the shift in time, the reader approaches the turning point in Mamèche's life, meeting her for the first time just beforehand, when Panturle brings the goat for milking.

Panturle fait un petit détour pour venir
pousser la porte.
"Tiens, Mamèche, voilà Caroline. Prends
le lait."
Comme la chèvre, sur le seuil, tremble de
la voix et du poil, la Piémontaise l'appelle:
"Cabro, cabro."(p.333)

Instantly establishing a close affinity between Mamèche and the goat, Giono evinces a delicate balance between the human and animal aspect. The narrator filters the reader's perception of Mamèche through this image, in a sense justifying her need for a shelter rather than a home, as unbeknown to her, she is on the threshold of a new dawn, and does not require a permanent dwelling.

Linked to the traditional image of Pan -- who has the legs, horns and beard of a goat -- Caroline embraces the concept of fertility. At this stage, the reader is not aware that Panturle's opening address to Mamèche associates him with this concept, it is only later that the significance becomes apparent. Closer scrutiny of this passage reveals "little disturbances in the surface that indicate the existence of activity below ... symptoms to be interpreted".² The name, Caroline, at once indicates the goat's sex, but together with the word "lait", symbolizes fertility, suggesting the feminine and nutritive aspects respectively. Relating this symbol to the human and animal image

² Frank Kermode, Essays on Fiction 1971-1982, p.63.

of Mamèche, Giono contrasts the image of death that continually haunts her with the possibility of a rebirth. Even though the story is in its infancy, the author already uses veiled motifs to hint at the main theme.

The passage ends on a foreign note. "Cabro", the Piedmont dialect for the Italian, "capra", a nanny-goat, discloses Mamèche's origin suggesting her visiting status in Aubignane. Perhaps Giono uses this background to denote Mamèche's transience which is characteristic of her role in the novel.

Prior to Panturle's encounter with Mamèche, the narrator notes that the natural elements do not share the veiled optimism just expressed.

Ce matin, c'est le grand gel et le silence. C'est le silence, mais le vent n'est pas bien mort; il ondule encore un peu; il bat encore un peu de la queue contre le ciel dur. Il n'y a pas encore de soleil. Le ciel est vide; le ciel est tout gelé comme un linge étendu. (p.332)

An empty, icy silence frames this extract. Even "le ronflement du vent-de-toujours"(p.325) is absent, and Pan is observed half-heartedly moving in the background. The light of Panturle's fire suggests a sudden flash of life which harmonizes with the accompanying dawn, and is picked up by "le vent [qui] d'un coup, ronfle plus fort que le feu"(p.332), contrasting starkly with the frozen pre-dawn image. But this ray of hope is quickly extinguished, for when Panturle fetches Caroline from having been milked, the narrator once more focuses his attention on the cold.

A la Font-de-la-Reine-Parque, le bassin de la fontaine est déjà gelé. C'est une fontaine perdue et malheureuse. ... Elle est là toute seule. ... L'hiver, elle gèle jusqu'au coeur. Elle n'a pas de chance; comme toute cette terre.(p.336)

The effective use of the verb, "geler", in this and the last quoted passage, consciously distinguishes between the fact of a bitterly cold winter, and the mental concept, expressed in physical terms, of the chilling consequences that Gaubert's departure will have on Mamèche and Panturle. The state of the fountain highlights the sense of loss and neglect, which is intensified through symbolic contrast. Traditionally a fountain symbolizes "the waters of life... eternal life"³, while the earth is seen as "The Great Mother; Mother Earth... archetype of fecundity and inexhaustible creativity."⁴ Now both lie abandoned, reminding the reader in a tenuous way of "la terre inerte" in Colline(p.150), where after an uneasy silence it is noticed that the spring has dried up. Perhaps Giono uses this image to reiterate his message that man should work harmoniously with nature, and not take her for granted. From the story's perspective, it would seem that the author employs the frozen image to foreshadow Gaubert's departure.

"C'est Gaubert qui faisait les meilleures charrues"(p.331). Seemingly of little importance at this point in the story, especially since the old man is about to leave Aubignane, the alert reader wonders why the narrator finds it necessary to impart this knowledge, taking care to provide information of Gaubert's hammer and anvil, which

³ Cooper, p.70.

⁴ Cooper, p.58.

still appear to be in pristine condition. "L'enclume est toute luisante, toute vivante, claire, prête à chanter. Contre elle, il y a aussi, un marteau pour 'frapper devant'"(p.332). On a first reading, the ploughshare, hammer and anvil might well be overlooked as motifs, and simply be regarded as implements of rural life. However, a complete reading of the novel reveals that Giono uses them as a foreshadowing device, even implying their future role in these sentences so early in the story.

As the cart carrying Gaubert away, disappears over the hill, "on entend encore un 'hu' et un fouet qui claque"(p.336), then "l'on n'entend plus rien"(p.336). Vaguely reminiscent of the sound of falling stones, and then silence, that accompanied the well sinker's death, the author establishes a subtle link between the two departures..Breaking the time-frame of the tale, Giono weaves a past event into the present time-fabric, reinforcing the thematic idea of departures heralding new beginnings and new meanings.

Before changing from narration to laconic dialogue, the narrator pre-empts the protagonists' greeting, observing that "Panturle se sent gelé jusqu'au fond des os"(p.336), to anticipate the tone of the encounter.

"Oh, Mamèche!
-- Oh, fils!"

La voix de la Mamèche, c'est grave et dur, ça vient de profond.(p.336)

Their reiterative, "Oh", followed by exclamation marks after addressing each other, echoes the intensity of the terse greetings. The word, "fils" reveals Mamèche's motherly attitude to Panturle, although the reader is aware that he is not her son. Symbolically, Mamèche's response could be that of the Mater Dolorosa mourning the death of

her son, "the "grave et dur" timbre suggesting her sorrowfulness. Perhaps Giono creates this mother-image to convey the nature of their relationship, simultaneously establishing Mamèche as a mother-figure.

The following text which presents Mamèche's abode, is richly evocative of precisely this Christian, as opposed to Pagan, concept of maternity.

Les dalles sont couvertes d'un jour qui est là, épais comme de la paille d'étable et qui ne monte pas vers le plafond parce que les hauts carreaux de la fenêtre, on les a remplacés par des planches. Ce sont de vieilles fenêtres, et même, pour les deux carreaux de bas qui sont encore en vitre il faut se méfier, il y en a un qui commence à se décoller et on ne peut pas empêcher le vent de jouer avec. De cette façon, il n'y a jamais de la lumière que sur la moitié des gens. Il y a le jour sur la moitié de Mamèche, sur le morceau qui va des pieds nus jusqu'à la taille.

Là, près de la table, il y a une grande Sainte Vierge de plâtre tout éclairée. La Mamèche l'a prise avec elle depuis que l'église est quasiment une bauge de loups avec toutes ces herbes... La Vierge s'est bien habituée; on la dirait chez elle, là, avec ses pieds nus, son rosaire en noyeux d'olive, sa robe qui est comme le ciel, de même couleur et toute raide.

Ce qu'on voit de la Mamèche est pareil, mais tout noir. (pp.336-337)

This scene inside Mamèche's dwelling alternates between the dim daylight afforded by the semi boarded-up windows, and the female figures that it illuminates. Significantly the narrator singles out Mamèche and the Virgin, suggesting a spiritual connection between the two. The Catholic faith has sustained Mamèche through her tragedies. She is comforted by the presence of the "Sainte Vierge", even though her life and the village have fallen into ruin. Drawing a parallel between the peasant woman and the statue, the narrator

notices that the Virgin wears a stiff, sky-blue dress, while that of Mamèche "est pareil mais tout noir." Their similar appearance highlights their affinity, but the sharp distinction between light and dark, reveals their difference. Symbolic of mourning and chaos, this "vieille cavale toute noire"(p.327) could perhaps represent a black Virgin in the sad concatenation of events linking past to present. Bathed in half-light, Mamèche symbolizes darkness, and the period of transition between chaos and order.

Seen in another perspective, Northrop Frye says: "In Christianity, the Virgin Mary took on some of the attributes of a Queen of Heaven with her blue robe...."⁵ In contrast, could it not perhaps be thought that Giono attempts to portray Mamèche as a kind of Earth Queen (Mother Earth), her black robe corresponding with the hidden riches of the soil?

The importance of this scene relates to future themes, becoming "the background against which the next segment takes on its actuality, and so on."⁶ Establishing the connection between the visual and religious concepts of Mamèche and the Virgin, the author corresponds the wintry time of the year with the dimly lit room, and the half-lit figure of Mamèche. But he absolves the Virgin from such effects, portraying her aglow in spite of the lack of light, revealing the power of religion to transcend all earthly things.

⁵ The Great Code (Great Britain: Art Paperbooks, 1981), p.70.

⁶ Wolfgang Iser, "The Interaction between Text and Reader," The Reader in the Text, ed., Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crossman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p.115.

"C'est plus la peine d'en mettre trois, dit Panturle
 qui s'assoit à côté de bols.
 -- Comment? Il est...
 -- Non, il vient de partir."
 Elle a baissé la tête vers Panturle: un visage maigre
 et rouillé comme un vieux fer de hache. Toute la vie
 est dans le feu de l'oeil.
 "Répète un peu.
 -- Je dis: il vient de partir.
 -- Et pour où?"
 Là, au soleil, après avoir dit les mots, la lèvre de la
 Mamèche bouge encore dans sa faim de parler.
 "...chez l'enfant.
 -- Chez l'enfant? ...chez l'enfant?..."(p.337)

The passage opens with Panturle's arrival at Mamèche's house, bringing her news of Gaubert's departure. Aware of the explosive portent implicit in his message, Panturle, generally clumsy, but not insensitive, tries to cushion the blow of his tidings, referring to the third bowl of milk that is no longer required. Mamèche's questioning response makes Panturle realize that she has the wrong impression. Interrupting her with the fact of Gaubert's departure, before she articulates her thoughts, momentarily stuns Mamèche into silent disbelief. Taking advantage of the silence, the narrator observes that the only living aspect of her face, is reflected "dans le feu de l'oeil." Otherwise, the rest of her visage portrays aged decay. The author displays his imagination using the simile "comme un vieux fer de hache" to capture the precise picture of her withered state. During this time, Mamèche thinks over what Panturle has just said, but not wanting to accept the news asks him to repeat it in the faint hope that she might be mistaken. "Je dis:" says Panturle, stressing its importance before repeating verbatim, "il vient de partir." Giono fixes this statement for "special inspection,"⁷ repeating

⁷ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1981)p.90

it with a slight variation at the beginning of the restatement to emphasize the finality of the old man's departure. Again Mamèche's response is questioning, but having grasped that Gaubert has gone, she asks where? Timeously intervening, giving Panturle a chance to phrase his answer, the narrator builds up the tension, noticing Mamèche's growing anxiety. "Sa faim de parler" expresses her unspoken thoughts which keep the reader's attention on the action. Giono has no intention of distracting the reader at this moment, so he focuses on the narrator who catches Mamèche's silently moving lips in full sunlight, foreshadowing some kind of revelation against the background of the preceding scene, where only the lower half of her body was illuminated, while the Virgin shone irrespectively. Not quite anticipating the full impact of his intended disclosure Panturle utters the dread words, "chez l'enfant". Immediately conjuring up memories of her loved ones, Mamèche echoes Panturle's words twice in verbatim fashion, the interrogative tone in her voice again expressing disbelief.

Giono shifts the emphasis in repetition from an accomplished situation with psychological overtones -- "il vient de partir" -- to a direct psychological crisis -- "chez l'enfant". These two sets of repetition follow in close succession, reinforcing each other in the sequence. Using this literary mechanism as a unifying device to connect the first and second sets, the author sustains a thematic development between past and present. Two thematic key-words, "partir" and "enfant" enunciate and develop the historical and psychological interpretations of the story thus far, one word lending intensity to the other. Taken individually, "partir" is associated with the

disappearance of Mamèche's husband, while "enfant" belongs to the death of her child. Uniting these concepts of disappearance and death with Gaubert's departure and subsequent destination, Giono succeeds in fusing the horizons of her past with those of the present. With immediate effect Mamèche is caught up in the maelstrom of her dawning insight, revealing the horrific recognition of personal loss. In the words of Henri Bergson, it is Mamèche's 'spontaneous memory' that suddenly manifests itself.

La conscience éclaire donc de sa lueur, a tout moment, cette partie immédiate du passé qui, penchée sur l'avenir, travaille à le réaliser et à se l'adjoindre. Uniquement préoccupée de déterminer ainsi un avenir indéterminé, elle pourra répandre un peu de sa lumière sur ceux de nos états plus reculés dans le passé qui s'organiseraient utilement avec notre état présent.... C'est dans cette partie éclairée de notre histoire que nous resterons placés... 8

Reminiscent in a sense of Proust's madeleine, a sudden resurgence of the past instantly erupts, throwing Mamèche into a state of mental confusion. These successive revelatory events occur with such rapidity, that the speed with which they are recalled, cumulates, leading her to a point of crisis where she can no longer restrain her emotions. Giono demonstrates her agony in two stages. First, the narrator observes her walking slowly, trying to claw the stone floor with her long toe-nails. Evocative of an animal desperately trying to cling to its remaining possessions, Giono portrays Mamèche unsuccessfully trying to hold on to the only remnant of her past. Breaking her silence, the author now reveals -- in a further series of repetitions -- her agonised turmoil, as she confronts the present, facing the realities of her past.

⁸ Matière et Memoire, Edition de Centenaire (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p.291.

"Ah, Madonna!" elle crie soudain avec toute sa gorge qui se serre.

Elle s'est abbatue en tas par terre. Elle est là, à se tordre les mains, à balancer sa tête comme dans un vent.

"Madonna, Madonna! Alors c'est tous... alors c'est tous... Je suis pas vieille, moi? Je pars, moi? J'en ai, moi, de l'enfant? A quoi il a servi mon homme mort dans votre porc de pays? A quoi il a servi d'aller vous chercher l'eau. Il est allé vous la chercher avec sa vie. Je pars, moi? Je suis pas vieille, moi? (p.337)

This passage captures the reader's attention at once. Strikingly irreverent, and significantly powerful in its evocation, the thrice repeated "Madonna" exhibits the uninhibited manner in which a peasant of Mamèche's calibre, addresses her God in a time of stress. Perhaps it is the author's way of varying the appeal to The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit, keeping the metaphor at a primitive level. Hieratic in recurrence, the dramatic effect of this repetition produces a kind of mental echo that stays with the reader throughout the passage. Giono creates a break between her first and second uttering of "Madonna" so that the narrator is given a chance to describe her accompanying actions, thus slowing down the passage a little. Availing himself of this opportunity, the narrator provides a graphic description of Mamèche's movements, evoking the 'image' of a weeping willow, swaying uncontrollably in the wind, to convey the intensity of her grief. Until now, a passive figure in her own destiny, the cry, "Madonna" resounds like a spiritual appeal of pure emphasis, stressing the need for immediate action. It is a vital moment of self confrontation, for what has happened in the past, transforms her view of the present as she assesses her own place in it.

"Alors c'est tous..." follows the last call to the "Madonna", suggesting that nothing more can be done to her, or taken away from her. Both her dear ones have died, and her resources have been drained.

Complementing rather than qualifying the repetitive "Madonna", this reiteration adds a psychological dimension to the religious aspect, revealing the mental agony that Mamèche is experiencing in spite of her strong faith.

A series of subjective questions ensue in rapid succession, with the word, "moi", following after every question that begins with, "je", to focus the reader's attention on her plight. Thematic key-words reappear in the psychological build-up "partir" becomes "pars" as Mamèche refers to herself in the present and implied past, while "enfant" remains the same, confirming its unchanged status. Directing the reader's attention away from Mamèche to her late husband, the author changes from the first person, "je", to the third person, "il", evoking the futility of the well-sinker's existence. But the Madonna achieves the interceding status of the second person, "vous", manifested by her invocation in all three questions involving the husband. In the first she represents a malevolent France. In the next two she symbolically enacts her dual role of Creator and Destroyer, underlying the tragic irony of Mamèche's husband losing his life in search for the life-giving "eau". Giono establishes a repetitive see-saw movement, with the Madonna forming the pivot between her husband's past, and her present. Mediating in the second person, the statue emerges as the unifying feature in Mamèche's life. The passage concludes as it began, shifting the emphasis once more to Mamèche. The inverted, but exact questions asked earlier in the passage, stress the tragedy of her wasted life, referring to her age, and the fact that she has remained in Aubignane in spite of everything.

Having gained greater insight into Mamèche's psychological and religious traumata, the reader now witnesses her verbal, and somewhat

physical assault of the Madonna.

"Ah, porca!"

Elle raftè le bol de lait chaud qui était là pour Gaubert; elle jette ce lait à la figure de la Vierge. Un voile de vapeur coule sur les plis droits de la robe bleue puis s'efface. Le rosaire mouillé brille; la Vierge sourit avec de la crème de lait sur la lèvre. La Mamèche tend vers elle un poing noir et moussu comme un coing gelé.

"Porca!..."(pp.337-338)

In the preceding passage, the unfamiliar address, "Madonna" evokes surprise, but Mamèche still uses the vouvoiment. Realizing the futility of her existence, the "vous" degenerates into "tu", the "Madonna" becomes "Porca", and the retrobative questions change into accusations. Seen in a religious (Catholic) perspective, the twice repeated "Porca" is blasphemous and inconceivable, having a nullifying effect; reducing rather than reinforcing the intended impact. Mamèche's spiritual beliefs have left her so bewildered, that she temporarily denounces her faith. It would seem that Giono identifies with Mamèche at this point, claiming that "la religion n'a aucun rapport avec Dieu."⁹ Yet the author has a profound knowledge of the Bible, the Evangelists and St. Thomas Aquinas, as his father used to read these texts aloud to him when he was young. Pierre de Boisdeffre remarks:

Chose étrange, vingt siècles de christianisme ont glissé sur le jeune Giono comme une averse sur le dos d'un canard sauvage. De son éducation catholique, il n'a rien retenu: ni un thème ni une image, alors qu'il retrouve d'instinct, comme s'il

⁹ Jean Giono, quoted in Giono by Pierre de Boisdeffre, p.41.

avait été nourri par elle la vieille mythologie gréco-latine. ¹⁰

This statement cannot remain unchallenged. The last two passages indicate a very definite influence of Giono's Catholic education. His choice of the Madonna as a paradigmatic image, is evidence itself. Although he may not use the Virgin in the strict Catholic sense, he still chooses her to symbolize a universal image, thereby acknowledging her origin as background. Recognized as a source of comfort and security in universal and religious terms, the Madonna embraces both these concepts which Mamèche now rejects.

Linking Mamèche's cry, "Porca!" to the preceding passage where she questions, "A quoi il a servi mon homme mort dans votre porc de pays?" (p.337), the author shifts the interpretation of the repetition from the religious to the patriotic. Disillusioned with her religion and her country of adoption, Mamèche perceives the Madonna as an incompassionate France. Once more identifying with Mamèche, Giono unites his lack of faith with war carried out in the name of religion for the sake of a country. Henry Peyre suggests that

His [Giono's] anger against Christianity springs in part from the lamentable record of modern history, with war condoned or incited by religion. ...he spoke as a plain soldier who had seen too much actual shedding of blood ever to celebrate the mystical value of that rite. ¹¹

Constituting a reversal in the evolution of religion, Giono marks the transition from Christianity to Paganism as he switches

¹⁰ Giono, p.47.

¹¹ The Contemporary French Novel, p.130.

from a religious to a secular frame of reference. Setting the time in anti-chronological motion, Giono illustrates a poetic freedom to evoke unrestricted images of a universal nature. Northrop Frye comments "that when idolatry is condemned in the Bible, it is often regarded as 'literal' projection into the external of an image that might be quite acceptable as a poetic metaphor".¹² Seen in this new perspective, the swine-like image of "Porca" could symbolize fertility, although the lack of it is being emphasized at this stage.

Giono has consciously surrounded Mamèche with fertility symbols since the tale began. Even "grosse"(p.326) Laure's mistaken identification of Mamèche is associated with such symbols as "cochons" (p.326) and "cerisettes"(p.326). Panturle's first verbal encounter with Mamèche also contains the words "chèvre"(p.333) and "lait"(p.333), while the past few passages contain symbols like "fontaine"(p.336), "La Font-de-la-Reine-Porque"(p.336), "Sainte Vierge"(p.336), "La Vierge"(p.337), "Madonna"(p.337), "enfant"(p.337), "eau"(p.337), and "bol de lait chaud"(p.337), all centring around fertility.

In between Mamèche's scream of "Porca!", the narrator observes her wild gestures. Hurling the bowl of unwanted milk over the Virgin's face, displays her inability to cope with her crisis, but the resultant smile emerging on the statue's lips mocks Mamèche's attempt to refute her belief. "Le rosaire mouillé [qui] brille"(p.337) reveals the power of religion to continue irrespective of man's behaviour. Mamèche despairs, threatening the Virgin with her fist, which Giono compares to a frozen quince evoking a lack of fertility, since the quince

¹² The Great Code, p.161.

is a Greek symbol of fertility"¹³. Receiving no satisfaction from her actions, Mamèche resorts to yet another verbal attack on the Madonna.

"Porca! Que toi tu fais comme tu veux; et que tu m'as battue comme le blé, et que tu m'as sechée comme le blé, et que tu me manges comme le blé!... (p.338)

The significance of this passage revolves around the simile "comme le blé", connecting Mamèche at once with Demeter, Goddess of the Corn. Traditionally symbolizing fertility of the earth, especially its awakening aspect -- life springing from death¹⁴ -- corn at this point in the story still lies dormant, relating Mamèche to Demeter in the sense of withholding fertility from the earth. Frazer says of Demeter:

In her wrath at her bereavement the goddess suffered not the seed to grow in the earth but kept it hidden underground, and she vowed that never would she set foot on Olympus and never would she let the corn sprout till her lost daughter should be restored to her. 15

Resembling a poem, the lyrical quality of Mamèche's accusations is constituted by its structure. The parallelism created not only through repetitive words, but also through approximately identical rhythms, renders a steady musical beat consistent with repetition, which is never really repetition if the meanings of the words are scrutinized. The reiterative "et que tu" after each pause achieves a progressive effect,

¹³ Cooper, p.136.

¹⁴ Cooper, p.43.

¹⁵ J.G. Frazer, The Golden Bough (London: Macmillan Press, 1922), rpt., 1983, p.51.

heightened by the repetitive "comme le blé" which also ends each association. Giono uses this pattern of repetition within a uniform frame, associating Mamèche with certain recurrent themes, in a gradual build-up, through a fixed sequence of motifs, to the portentous moment in her life. Robert Alter observes that,

this pattern appears most commonly and most clearly in the folktale form of three consecutive repetitions, or three plus one with some intensification or increment from one occurrence to the next, usually concluding in either a climax or a reversal. 16

The author seems to have adhered to this pattern, transforming the outward expression of Mamèche's inner thoughts into a series of images by means of comparison, culminating in a psychological crisis. The intensity of her spiralling emotions develops with each repetition, creating a regular crescendo as it stresses the importance of human and natural survival in a urgent cry for help.

Simultaneously, Giono develops the image of the "ble" motif through ever-changing verbs. Each new verb adds a different dimension to the same structure, slightly altering the sound pattern to avoid monotony, and introducing a fresh meaning and vision with each variation. The verbs, "fait" and "veux" stand outside the repetitive form qualifying Mamèche's relation to her God. The reader realizes that she acknowledges some supreme power manipulating her at will, revealing that she has, and implicitly had, no choice in arranging the events of her life. The verb "battre" used in the perfect tense, suggests a close association with the corn that has been

¹⁶ The Art of Biblical Narrative, p.96.

threshed, and the disappearance of fertility thereafter, while also serving to remind the reader that Mamèche is beyond child-bearing age. But looking at the past participle "battue" from another perspective, perhaps Giono relies on its military connotation to conjure up memories of war, echoing with the sound of machine-gun fire battering the troops in the trenches. "Je ne peux pas oublier la guerre,"¹⁷ says the author, frequently using this theme to explore consequent reality. The next verb "secher", also used in the perfect tense, evokes a sterile image, linking the now barren France to Mamèche's infertility, and signalling an end to the productive phase of life. The present tense returns with the last verb, "manges", which Giono uses as a metaphor for destruction, illustrating its continuous effect. In the normal course of events, ripe corn is joyously threshed, dried and eaten, but in Mamèche's case, the author uses these very actions to convey her sorrowful state. Time is fused in the interplay of the verb structure. Mamèche's accusations begin with the present being recreated in the past, and conclude with the past being recreated in the present.

17

See Giono by Pierre de Boisdeffre, p.24.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PRESENT OF THINGS PRESENT

La souffrance est une inventeuse de remèdes;
une inventeuse d'espérance. C'est quand on
souffre le plus sans espoir qu'on a le plus
d'espoir.

Jean Giono

The moment of crisis has passed. A numbed silence hangs in the air. Mamèche and Panturle, embraced in thought, contemplate their respective losses.

Contre l'homme, la Mamèche tremble des nerfs comme
une chèvre. Elle s'apaise. Elle caresse la
grande cuisse solide, et maintenant elle parle une
parole douce venue de son coeur comme une figue.(pp.338-339)

The author's aim is not to centre the reader's attention on the sadness of these two solitary figures, but rather to see in them hope for the future. Neither is he trying to hoodwink the reader into thinking that Mamèche has become rejuvenated, he is simply using her as a metaphor for fecund woman. In an attempt to arouse Panturle's awareness of his potential role as progenitor, Giono concentrates on Mamèche's gestures. At first he evokes an image of hesitancy, "Mamèche tremble des nerfs comme une chèvre", while symbolically he probably employs the goat to represent possible fertility. Her movements are sensual, "elle caresse la grande cuisse solide", even the sound of her voice is rich, "douce...comme une figue", suggesting the ripeness of flesh. This is in sharp contrast to the earlier tone of her voice which was

"grave et dur, [venant] de profond"(p.336). However Giono quickly extinguishes these flickers of optimism, as the time is premature, and focuses once more on Mamèche's reflections.

Je pense à l'enfant, a mon petit, mon Rolando, celui qui est aussi sous la racine de l'herbe. C'est pas de la justice, braë! Eux, ils les ont encore en chair qui marche et c'est parti pour chercher la bonne place. Moi, tout ce qui me tenait le coeur c'est devenu l'herbe et l'eau de cette terre et je resterai ici tant que je ne serai pas devenue cette terre, moi aussi.(p.339)

In spite of her obvious sadness, underlying the sincerity of Mamèche's feelings, Giono informs the reader of his philosophy of life. He believes that man returns to the earth, becoming part of it once his function of living has ceased. Through Mamèche he endorses this sentiment of transformation, inherent in man's complicity with nature. Perhaps he waxes a little too poetic when trying to convey these feelings through Mamèche's character, for the reader is familiar with her rustic manner of speaking, and does not anticipate the simple elegance that she suddenly acquires. In an attempt to uphold her peasant vernacular, Giono frames the first and last sentence with "Moi" and "moi aussi" respectively, but the way in which she phrases her thoughts in between these two 'struts' alienates her from her true personality and disconcerts the reader.

Death receives a twist at the hands of the author evoking fertility and a desire for continuity rather than an abrupt halt to the process of life. Mamèche has come to realize that

only birth can conquer death - the birth, not of the old thing again, but of something new. Within the soul, within the body social, there must be - if we are to experience long survival - continuous "recurrence of birth" (palingenesia) to nullify the

unremitting recurrences of death. ¹

Her losses and Gaubert's departure form a significant series of past events which transform the present. They establish the points in time that are "filled with significance" and though they remain unresolved, these crises are the 'plots' that relate the past to the present. Mamêche has watched her past disintegrate, and is about to witness it happening to her present, unless she does something to alter the situation. Panturle is her only hope. Through him the present may take on a new dimension, so she relates the story to the charcoal burner, hoping to stir the creative force within him.

"Ecoute: dès les premiers temps qu'on était mariés avec l'homme, on était du côté de Pignatello à travailler. J'allais avec lui sur le chemin; on traversait le bois et il y avait des charbonniers. Une fois, on s'est approché d'un endroit où il y avait toujours une meule de charbon qui fumait. C'était rasé tout autour; nous savions que l'homme allait couper le bois et qu'il apportait pour le cuire juste à cet endroit-là. On voulait savoir pourquoi. On s'est approché; alors on a vu: il y avait une baraque sous trois arbres; una casa di niente, de rien, je te dis, grosse comme une noix. Il y avait là devant, une femme et deux petits vautres comme des chiennots.

"On a honnêtement demandé et la femme nous a dit. Ça n'était pas toute la famille, ces deux bessons-là, il y en avait un autre dans la terre, bien sage pour toujours avec une barrière de bois autour de l'endroit où il était. Il y avait aussi dans la terre le père de la femme, un tout vieux, et une petite d'une heure, morte pendant qu'on la faisait.

"Il y avait surtout, braë, celui qui passait dans la fumée de la charbonnière, l'homme bien vivant et, dans lui, qui sait, qui sait combien d'enfants nouveaux prêts à venir.

¹ Campbell, p.16.

² This idea comes from Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending, p.47, where kairos for Tillich means "moment of Crisis", and for Cullman and Marsh, "the season, a point in time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end".

"Ça, ça a peut-être fait un village, depuis.

"Au lieu d'ici... (p.339)

The passage opens with the instruction, "Ecoute:", instantly capturing the reader's attention. Once gained, the author adds a colon which creates a break, giving the reader a chance to imagine that he too, is the listener to whom Mamèche is speaking. Using Mamèche as narrator, Giono renders an immediacy to the event which he could not have established had the omniscient narrator related the story. Filtering it through Mamèche's consciousness, he removes the distance necessitated by the narrator, dramatizing the effect of first hand information as opposed to second-hand hearsay.

Again the author intersperses fertility symbols throughout enriching the message implicit in the parable. "Mariés avec l'homme" symbolizes the unity necessary for procreation while "le bois" is "that which gives shelter at birth and death... [and] also forms the marriage bed".³ Completing the picture, "une baraque sous trois arbres...grosse comme une noix", suggests that regardless of size, the hut is the centre, symbolizing the matrix of fertility which is further enhanced by the protection of three trees, synthesizing all aspects of life.

In case Panturle has not grasped the gist of her story, Mamèche refers to him as "braë", securing his attention before she verges on the explicit intention of her talk. Adding a touch of "local colour"⁴ with an occasional Italian word or phrase, Giono simultaneously uses it as an attention-seeking device. It achieves its purpose. Panturle

³ Cooper, p.194.

⁴ Odile de Pomerai mentions this aspect in her "Notes", p.189.

interrupts Mamèche, stressing the need to drink the milk in the bowl. "Mamèche, il faut boire"(p.339), he says indicating that he understands what she has been saying. Traditionally regarded as a life-food, milk is not only food for the newborn, it also symbolizes rebirth. Linking Panturle to the life-giving liquid, Giono hints at his future role, but the narrator focuses on the present situation, observing Mamèche as she removes a goat-hair from the milk with one of her fingers. The visual impact of this gesture captures the peasant's spontaneity, simultaneously involving her in the 'fertility game' while associating her with man, life-food and animal.

Like Wolfgang Iser, Giono is concerned

with the way in which the text will stimulate the reader's creative participation, and it is these 'unwritten' aspects of often apparently trivial or commonplace scenes, the words which are left unsaid by the characters, the events passed over all-too-briefly by the narrator, which represent a major form of game between narrator and reader. This is a game of co-operation...since there is a sense of complicity between the two...⁵

The reader notices that Mamèche has changed her attitude since accepting that Gaubert has left Aubignane. 'Purifying' the milk for drinking contrasts markedly with the despair witnessed earlier when she threw the milk over the statue of the Virgin. Fate is no longer her master. She has taken destiny into her own hands, choosing not to remain the plaything of circumstance which previously vitiated her freedom. "Everywhere man is confronted with fate, with the chance of achieving something through his own suffering."⁶ It would seem that Giono uses

⁵ Quoted from Peter Hutchinson, Games Authors Play (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1983), p.22.

⁶ Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, tr. by Ilse Lasch (New York: Pocket Books, 1963), p.107.

Mamèche's suffering to act as "une inventeuse d'espérance".⁷ Benefitting from the tragedies afforded her by her past, she transcends her suffering, and reaches an inner strength which raises her above her fate.

Mamèche realizes that Aubignane has fallen into ruin. With only two inhabitants left in the village, and no chance of childbirth, the future is bleak. The author creates this situation to remind post World War I readers of the reality of a depopulated countryside. Acting as a metaphor, Aubignane serves to highlight these effects, illustrating the devastating consequences on sparsely populated hamlets, if nothing is done to restore them. "J'avais toujours l'envie d'écrire quelque chose sur les villages désertés"⁸, says Giono in an interview with Luce Ricatte, who in turn suggests that Redortiers was one of those villages abandoned during the War, and visited by Giono in its final hours. "Aubignane, c'est Redortiers"⁹, remarks Ricatte -- a connection that the author does not deny. Giono's reminder is a plea for action, he wants the reader to take cognisance of what has, and is happening, so that like Mamèche, he too can reconstruct a new future.

Returning to the text, the narrator watches as Panturle takes leave of the old woman.

Maintenant, la Mamèche est là, seule devant la
Vierge qui vit sous la crème du lait.
"Bellissima!"

Elle a un élan de ses grands bras noirs.
"Mia Bella, celle que j'aime plus que tout,
viens que je t'essuie."

⁷ See the introductory quotation to this chapter.

⁸ *Oeuvres romanesques complètes*, Vol. I., p.989.

⁹ *Oeuvres romanesques complètes*, Vol. I., p.989.

Elle a pris la Vierge sur ses genoux; elle a déroulé le rosaire, elle en a essuyé les grains l'un après l'autre. Elle crache sur un coin de sa jupe et elle lave la bouche de la Vierge. "Va, ne t'inquiète pas, tu as toujours ma belle." Puis, elle regarde au fond de l'air quelque chose qui est son souvenir et sa peine.(p.340)

This scene derives its significance from the contrasting perspective of the previous scene where Mamèche confronted the beliefs inherent in the statue. The reader no longer observes the anguish of a trapped animal whose only defence is attack, he perceives a spirit of revival in Mamèche whose tragedy has been the source of her growth. Neither the author nor Mamèche tenders a verbal apology for her former outrageous behaviour, rather the state of the statue gives her the chance to redeem herself. The narrator, providing reliable comment on Mamèche's gestures that accompany her monologue, observes her welcoming, outstretched arms, enhancing the dramatic quality of her words as she affectionately addresses the Virgin. Reassuring Her of her love and faith, which Giono's narrator detects with a touch of humour, "vit sous la crème du lait", Mamèche reconciles herself with her former beliefs. In typical peasant fashion, Mamèche returns to her faith as if she had been reconciled with a long lost relative.¹⁰

The narrator notices that Mamèche carefully cleans each bead of the rosary, and it would seem that Giono is focusing attention on this cleansing act for two reasons. 'Ritually' cleansing Mamèche of her past, it reaffirms her restored faith in religion and in the present. Achieving a sense of balance, the author replaces her wild scream "Porca!"(p.337) which had become a synonym for "Madonna!"(p.337),

¹⁰ In Odile de Pomerai's notes on "La Sainte-Vierge de plâtre", she says: "Note the typical approach to religion of the old Italian woman: the Virgin is a real person, a relative even", p.190.

with "Bellissima!" and "Mia Bella", illustrating that her concept of religion, indicative of her temperamental character, is viewed in polar terms of love and hate.

It could be that Giono resuscitates the Virgin to help Mamèche overcome her past belief where she held Christ -- through the Virgin's image -- responsible for the loss of her loved ones. Now, having reconciled herself with the past, and her religion, Mamèche provides the following explanation which the author omits from the final edition. In the earlier manuscript she offers;

Ça n'est pas la faute de Christ. C'est la faute
de cette race d'homme. /Ah! c'est la faute à
ce pays. Dur. (p.1014)

which he now feels is not necessarily appropriate to the story. But it provides an interesting insight into Giono's thinking, which further refutes de Boisdeffre's claim that the author has retained nothing of his Catholic education.

Another, and perhaps more significant reason for bringing the Virgin back into the picture at this juncture, is to reestablish the fine link between the Mother and Mamèche. Isolating the words spoken by her in this scene -- "Bellissima!... Mia Bella, celle que j'aime plus que tout, viens que je t'essuie....Va ne t'inquiète pas, tu es toujours ma belle" -- the reader perceives that Mamèche reacts maternally towards the statue. Her loving words, and the narrator's observation of the maternal act of picking up the statue and putting it on her knees, suggest that of a mother soothing her hurt child. In not quite the same sense, but evoking a motherly image with a child on the knees, an analogous event later in the story derives some significance from this scene.

In the meantime, Panturle has become restless. The reality of

Gaubert's departure makes him realize that he is alone with Mamèche, whom the narrator wryly notes "n'était pas de grosse distraction"(p.340). He has other needs which the narrator does not specify at this moment, but hints at through an already familiar motif like "une enclume"(p.340).

Tout le jour, Panturle a porté l'enclume sur ses épaules, une enclume d'air, imaginée, mais bien plus lourde que la vraie de ce matin.

Tout le jour! (p.340)

...

L'enclume était partie....Il n'entendrait plus: pan pan; pan pan; pan pan; ce qui était le bruit encore un peu vivant du village.

...

Et tout le jour il a porté la lourde enclume.(p.341)

The narrator's insistence, "tout le jour", frames these passages, stressing the persistence of Panturle's uneasiness. Within the frame, the repetitive feature of the "enclume"-motif provides psychological commentary in physical terms on the protagonist's troubled state of mind. Incipiently symbolic in the theme "regain", this motif sustains a thematic bond between the various scenes. Giono first uses this device when he tells the reader of Gaubert's craft (see p.23 of this dissertation); then again at the old man's departure, "quand le père Gaubert a été installé sur la carriole, le Panturle a placé l'enclume entre les jambes du vieux [puis Gaubert] a posé ses mains sur l'enclume"(pp.335-336); now, transferring this motif directly to Panturle at the point in the story where Mamèche has just adopted a new attitude to life, it would seem that he consciously severs the active connection between Gaubert and the motif, conferring the symbolism inherent in this implement onto the younger man. "Together the hammer and anvil are the male-female formative

forces of nature"¹¹, so it could be construed that Panturle's restlessness is probably manifested by the missing force.

The contrived, but effective onomatopoeic use of Pan's name through rhythmic repetition paradoxically suggests his simultaneous absence and presence. Imaginatively perceived negotiating Gaubert's departure, and then endorsing the narrator's reiterative observation of Panturle bearing the weight of the anvil, the deity acts as the intercessor between past and present.

Le dernier doigt du soleil lâche le pin, là-haut.
Le soleil tombe derrière les collines. Quelque
gouttes de sang éclaboussent le ciel; la nuit
les efface avec sa main grise.(p.341)

More the author/poet than the narrator painting this impressionistic picture of a personified nightfall, Giono evokes a visual image signifying the end of the past. But ushering in change, "le vent a commence sa colère de trois jours"(p.341) which suggests the need for Mamèche to save Aubignane, while keeping Panturle in a constant state of agitation.

Like the heroic figures of antiquity, Mamèche is about to begin her initiation. She has emerged from her ordeals with a totally different attitude from that which she previously possessed. Having awakened unfulfilled wishes in Panturle, she feels responsible for finding the means to that fulfilment. Timeously returning to Mamèche's house, just after the narrator's comment on the weather, Panturle is greeted by her in an unexpected manner. "'Tourne-toi un peu que je te regarde', dit la Mamèche. 'Mets-toi un peu devant le feu,

¹¹ Cooper, p. 14.

braë, que je voie..."(p.341). Without formally greeting him, or giving him any reasons, Mamèche instructs Panturle to move as she commands. Questioning her lack of explanation, Giono invites the reader to participate in Panturle's search for the answer to Mamèche's strange requests. Luce Ricatte notices that the author

tend de plus en plus à suggerer plutôt qu'à d'écrire ou à expliquer, l'écrivain s'efface pour établir un contact plus direct entre le lecteur et les acteurs, qu'ils soient des êtres humains ou de grandes forces naturelles.(p.999)

Using this formula, the reader relies upon the narrator to provide the clues missing from Mamèche's words. "Panturle se courbe pour être bien éclairé. Il entre dans le jour de la flamme"(p.341). The first sentence is overt and self explanatory, but the second is couched in more oblique terms, symbolising fertility through the flame's image. In this context, regarded as sexual power, the renewal of life, transcendence and illumination,¹² it would seem to confirm Mamèche's reason for wanting to have a good look at him, as she 'answers', "Alors, christou, je pense à ce charbonnier..."(p.341).

In an earlier manuscript, instead of ending the sentence with an ellipsis, to emphasize the statement, the author adds an explicit codicil, "Il était comme toi fils"(p.1014), leaving nothing to the reader's imagination. This time, avoiding such explicit emphasis, Giono not only draws attention to the parable without further explanation, but uses the Christ-like comparison "christou" to evoke creative force.

¹² Cooper, p.66.

Panturle immediately grasps the situation, and enters into dialogue with Mamèche.

"Oui, il faudrait une femme. L'envie m'en prend, quelquefois aux beaux jours. Mais, où elle est, celle-là qui voudrait venir ici
 -- Où elle est? Elle est partout si tu la forces.
 -- Ah, tu crois, toi que ça se fait comme ça?
 -- Tu n'es rien alors?
 -- Je suis comme les autres, mais je te dis; ça ne se fait pas comme ça. Il faut que ça vienne de plus loin et de longtemps.
 -- Si je t'en mène une, tu la prends?"
 Panturle s'arrête de mâcher sa chique. Il regarde la Mamèche au fond des yeux, pour voir. Il est comme ça tout immobile et tout muet, à chercher... Elle repète:
 "Si je t'en mène une, moi, de femme, tu la prends?"
 Alors, il opine profondément avec la moitié de son corps et il dit:
 "Oui je la prends!" (pp.341-342)

The striking feature of this dialogue is the unusual manner in which the 'betrothal' is conceived. Giono uses no precise language to denote betrothal negotiations, and the mysterious bride is conspicuous by her absence.¹³ The progress of the dialogue is slowed down by Panturle's hesitancy which the narrator conveys through the words, "s'arrête", "regarde", "tout immobile" and "tout muet", inserted in between Mamèche's almost verbatim repetition "si je t'en mène une, tu la prends?" It would seem that the author deliberately uses this device to stress the importance of this particular scene on the novel. Panturle's acceptance is tantamount to a formal treaty between him and Mamèche, binding him to fulfil his obligation, upon which the novel rests or falls. It is also an invitation to the

¹³ This idea originates from Alter's betrothal type-scene, where the future bridegroom, or his surrogate travels to a foreign land "to discover a mate in the world outside"...."The plot of the type-scene, then, dramatically enacts the coming together of mutually unknown parties in the marriage." *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p.52 However in Giono's story it is reversed, the bride travels to foreign place to find her husband.

reader to forecast imaginatively what might happen.

The concept of 'bride', or in the animal sense, 'mate' constitutes one and the same thing -- a pointed divergence from the conventional betrothal scene. Mamèche exhibits purely animalistic instincts in her approach to finding Panturle a partner. The personality, appearance or background of the woman, all or some of which usually play an important part in betrothal negotiations, are not considered. The feminine counterpart is simply a species of the female gender, and as such she will serve her purpose. Giono tries to conjure up the feeling of oneness between man and animal, without wholly succeeding since the dialogue itself separates the two. The only similarity exists in Panturle's need to satisfy his sexual longings, thus his unconditional acceptance of any woman. From another angle, perhaps the author treats the betrothal scene in this manner, stripping it of its conventional robes to remind the reader that perpetuity is clothed in regeneration, and the aesthetics of finding a suitable partner disappear, since the issue is both human survival, and the survival of Aubignane.

This betrothal scene provides the background for a forthcoming series of approximately parallel episodes, in which Mamèche, having accepted Panturle's word as his pledge, starts preparing for her quest. But before she does so, the narrator takes pains to inform the reader of the bitterly cold winter being experienced at Aubignane. "L'hiver est dur, cette année, et jamais on n'a vu cette épaisseur de glace du ruisseau; et jamais on n'a senti ce froid, si fort, qu'il est allé geler le vent au fond du ciel"(p.342). Repeating the words "et jamais" twice, he appeals to the senses to stress the seriousness of the situation facing the protagonists and the village, but at the same time, as Odile de Pomerai points out, Giono probably

creates this "empty loneliness and harshness of winter to provide contrast with the later renewal of life".¹⁴

When the narrator introduces Panturle to the reader, he likens him to "un morceau de bois qui marche ...c'est un arbre"(p.329). Now reintroducing Mamèche in the first scene of the episodes just mentioned, the narrator observes her, through Panturle's eyes from Vincent's wood, on the moor "debout comme un tronc d'arbe." (p.343).

It would seem that the author chooses tree-imagery for these protagonists, to evoke their affinity with nature, while Redfern suggests that "trees hold a special place in Giono's mystique, perhaps because they are both rooted in the earth and also move in the wind; they link the underground, the surface and the sky; in addition, with their arms and trunk, they seem particularly related to the human body."¹⁵ This complies with tradition, in terms of which a tree is frequently an image of man, but in this instance, the author gives the classic example a gentle twist. Mamèche becomes the image of a tree. As the season is winter, the reader can understand why Giono likens this black-robed figure to a stark and leafless tree, but it is only when he accompanies Arsule on her journey with Gédémus, that the significance of the simile gradually emerges.

Il [Panturle] allait appeler quand il s'est rendu compte
qu'elle parlait.
Il a écouté.
Elle disait:
"Il faut que ça vienne de toi d'abord, si on veut
que ça tienne."

¹⁴ See "Notes," p.189.

¹⁵ W.D. Redfern, p.63.

Elle parlait à quelque chose, là devient elle, et devant elle il n'y avait que la lande tout malade de mal et de froid. (p.343)

Mystery surrounds this passage, as what Mamèche says, and to whom, puzzles Panturle and the reader. Almost in response to Panturle's earlier statement, "il faut que ça vienne de plus loin et de longtemps" (p.342), Mamèche echoes the beginning of his phrase, but shifts the emphasis from the place and time of the woman to the invisible "toi" whom she now addresses, and holds responsible for effecting a change. The narrator gives the reader no help in solving the mystery, he adds to it, observing that Mamèche is talking to "quelque chose" which is nothing more than the ailing moor, stricken by the cold. It would seem that Giono is starting a 'game' with the reader, whereby the omniscient narrator 'plays along' with the protagonist who knows the secret, but deliberately withholds information from those wishing to know. Peter Hutchinson calls this technique one of "'co-operative conflict'".¹⁶ Adapting his idea to this situation, it can be seen that there is 'conflict' between the parties. On the one hand, we have Panturle and the reader wishing to know the identity of the mysterious "toi", on the other, there is Mamèche -- and by implication the Narrator-- who is determined that they shall not know. Then "there is 'co-operation' between the two, where the listener will accept such a disadvantage in the interests of suspense...".¹⁷

¹⁶ In the "Introduction" to his book, Games Authors Play, Hutchinson says: "There is 'conflict' between the parties in that one them wishes to know the outcome of a situation and the other is determined that he shall not know until the other, the narrator, considers it appropriate ", p.1.

¹⁷ Hutchinson, p.1.

From another perspective, perhaps authorial intention is to evoke the Eleusinian Mysteries and the cult of Demeter, where only the initiates understand the secrets. As Panturle has not yet started his 'initiation', he lacks the understanding necessary for revealing the enigmatic "toi". Giono shrouds Mamèche's words in a veil of secrecy, arousing both the reader's and Panturle's curiosity. Even the weather which provides some sort of clue, remains unchanged in the grip of winter.

The second episode, like the first, takes place outdoors when Panturle is once more out hunting. In the previous scene he spots Mamèche while waiting to ensnare a hare, now the narrator notices that

Panturle s'est approché doucement sur ses pieds
entourés d'étoffe. Il s'est approché d'elle
comme s'il avait voulu la prendre au lacet.

Elle était encore devant ce morceau de colline
toute sale, emboussée de givre et de boue gelée
devant les arbres nus et qui n'en menaient pas
large.
Elle disait encore

"Ne t'inquiète pas, ça me regarde! J'irai la
chercher là où elle est, mais, je te dis, il
faut que ça vienne d'abord de toi."

Elle le disait bien à tout ça qui était devant
elle parce que, à la fin, elle a bougé son bras,
elle a pointé son doigt vers l'herbe, l'arbre,
la terre. (pp.343-344)

Again through Panturle's eyes, the narrator catches sight of Mamèche, this time in the middle of a thicket on Resplandin Hill. No longer resembling a single, bare tree, she is one of many wretched trees that lose their leaves in winter. Symbolic of a deciduous tree in its leafless state, Mamèche represents "the world in constant renewal

and it is still "toi" that initiates the action. The repetition has a certain cumulative force, imprinting itself on the mind of the reader as he proceeds along the narrative stairway. Each anticipatory glimpse does not mould into a single picture, but encourages the reader to keep on climbing.²⁰

The narrator ends this episode in much the same way as the first, observing Mamèche talking to "tout ça" instead of "quelque chose" (p.343) in front of her. Concluding her speech, Mamèche points in three directions; to the grass, which could represent a submissive female, to the tree, which might symbolize a male, and to the earth, which incorporates the substance that harmoniously unites the two. "La terre qui, seule, enfanta tous les êtres,"²¹. According to Aristotle, "three is the first number to which the word 'all' has been appropriated"²². Pan too, embraces this concept, so seen in this perspective, Giono instructs Mamèche to move her imaginary baton in triangular motion, conducting the trio of nature into a symphony, to convey yet again the idea of potential regeneration.

Anticipating a change, the narrator creates a break to comment on the weather. "L'air est presque tiède. Il n'y a pas encore de vent. Ça fait trois jours qu'à la barrière de l'horizon, au sud, un grand nuage est à l'ancre, dansant sur place"(p.344). Aware that this bit of information is not merely casual observation, the reader follows the narrator's gaze as he transfers his attention directly to Mamèche, releasing Panturle from his role of observer.

²⁰ See Robert Shattuck, Proust (Glasgow: Fontana, 1974), p.136.

²¹ See Eschyle, Les Chéophores, quoted in Michelfelder, p.36.

²² Cooper, p.114.

La Mamèche s'est plantée face au sud et, pendant un long moment elle a regardé le nuage qui ne bougeait pas. Elle renifle de longs morceaux d'air, elle le goûtait comme on goûte un vin pour voir s'il est fait, s'il a fini de bouillir, s'il a de l'alcool. Et puis, voyez: le nuage montait doucement vers le large du ciel; il quittait la côte, il partait pour le voyage. C'est ça qu'elle voulait voir. (p.344)

In this passage, Giono uses the narrator's comments to reveal the affinity between Mamèche and the natural elements. Breathing the air as she would taste wine symbolically evokes the image of Mamèche embibing "the liquid of life"²³ which harmonizes with the onset of Spring. The thematic key-word "partait", used in the imperfect tense, suggests departure as in the past, but implies continuous movement. Changing its connotative meaning, the author adds a prospect of a journey to the departure, foreshadowing a future event, instead of depicting sudden death or final departure. The moving cloud anticipates Mamèche returning home to finalize preparations for her search.

Panturle remains outside the action as the narrator accompanies Mamèche indoors to watch what she is doing. Observing that she cooks all the potatoes in her possession, and then methodically counts them to see whether they'll suffice for the trip, reflects both the occasion and the speaker. It informs the reader that Mamèche intends to be away for some time, while also displaying her organizing ability. Content with the quantity, "elle a mis les pommes de terre dans une serviette avec une poignée de gros sel et elle a attaché le paquet avec une liane de clématite"(p.344). Relying on the reader's knowledge

²³ Cooper, p.192.

to expose the narrator's camouflage, Giono carefully selects the clematis creeper, also known as "traveller's joy"²⁴, to secure Mamèche's bundle. Briefly hinting that the outcome of the trip will be happy, the author provides a subtle clue to the novel's future.

Having provided for her physical needs, the narrator remarks that "elle a enlevé le rosaire du cou de la Vierge et elle a mis a son cou. Elle est restée un moment à regarder la Vierge. Ses lèvres ne bougaient pas"(p.344). Until this moment, the Virgin was Mamèche's source of strength, but the act of transferring the rosary from the statue's neck to her own, conveys the notion that she has summoned up the courage to accept responsibility for her decisions. Through Mamèche's silence the author suggests a hitherto, undiscovered strength of character which contrasts markedly with an earlier silence -- "la lèvre de la Mamèche bouge encore dans sa faim de parler"(p.337)-- where her grief surpasses words. It would appear that Giono uses silence as a technique to produce "a sense of ambiguous depths in character"²⁵, displaying both the weak and strong side of Mamèche's character as the story unfolds.

Gaëton Picon says of Giono that "ses personnages sont des êtres de légende, sans visage individuel, et nous ne percevons d'eux que leur taille surhumaine".²⁶ To a certain extent, Picon's observation is valid, but perhaps the critics who share this opinion, fail to notice that the author, like his biblical forebears, reveals character "through the report of actions; through appearance, gestures, posture,

²⁴ Patrick Hanks, ed. Collins Dictionary of the English Language (London: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1979), see "clematis, p.283, and "traveller's joy", p.1544.

²⁵ Alter, p.115.

²⁶ Panorama de la nouvelle littérature française (Paris: Gallimard, 1960),p.78.

costume ... through direct speech by the character; through inward speech, either summarized or quoted as interior monologue; or through statements by the narrator about the attitudes and intentions of the personages" ²⁷ Mamèche's conscious intentions are disclosed through the narrator's report, affording the reader entrance to "the realm of relative certainty about [her] character".²⁸

C'est la nuit de ce jour-là qu'il y a eu la grande débâcle du ciel. Tout ce que le froid avait gelé et durci, tout ce qu'il retenait immobile: tout ça subitement s'est délivré et a repris la vie. C'est le nuage à pluie, c'est le vent des quatre coins, c'est la grande chanson des arbres aux feuilles sèches, ces chênes têtus qui ont gardé le pelage de l'an passé et qui parlent dans le vent avec la voix du torrent.(p.345)

Giono evokes a glorious arrival of Spring, while the narrator comments on the rebirth that is in the offing. It seems only natural that Mamèche should venture outside once more to join forces with the powers of nature, symbolically giving herself to life, not death. At the same time the reader realizes that the mysterious "toi" to whom she spoke, must have been the coming Spring, because she made no attempt to set her plan in motion before obtaining certainty from the moving cloud, which acted as harbinger.

The author uses the previous scene inside the house to act as a buffer. It creates a balance between the first two occasions where Panturle observes Mamèche, and the next two situations when Panturle is once again observed observing Mamèche. At this stage the reader is one step ahead of Panturle, having the foreknowledge of Mamèche's

²⁷ Alter, p.116-117.

²⁸ Alter, p.117.

intended journey as well as having 'solved' the identity of the invisible "toi". Isolated from the activities inside Mamèche's house, Panturle is ignorant of her impending plans. He attributes her enigmatic behaviour to loneliness, understanding why she needs to talk to herself, as he does, and perceives nothing beyond her immediate conduct.

Jusqu'au coucher du soleil, ça a marché, puis
 Panturle a renfermé Caroline qui avait l'air
 d'être un peu excitée, puis il a levé la tête
 vers le village. Il y avait là-haut la
 Mamèche assise sur le rempart et elle regardait
 quelque chose au ciel dans la direction du sud. (p.345)

Giono contrasts this episode with the previous two. Mamèche no longer stands nor speaks, but sits in contemplative silence. The rampart indicates a different locality, but its use could also be highlighted by the author to jolt the reader's complacency lest the memories of the War be forgotten. Extending the reader's perspective beyond the imaginary setting, Giono adds a new dimension to Mamèche's continuing gaze. In the first two scenes she tends to look at something in front of her, but since the advent of Spring, her stare is directed skywards. Suggesting in a tenuous way the words of Psalm 121:12, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help", but not including the biblical source of help, Mamèche seems to be gathering even more strength as she sits and waits.

Night "épaisse comme une soupe de pois"(p.345), captures the reader's imagination through its defamiliarized comparison, suggesting the evening meal of a peasant, while denoting the texture of the air. Ullman comments that Giono's "analogies are so unexpected and the vision behind them so fresh and unique, that the total effect is arresting even if not always convincing. They derive their impact,

not from the distance which they span, but from the discovery of latent affinities between objects close and yet unconnected."²⁹ In this instance the author chooses night, to intervene between the preceding scene and the final episode, to suggest to the reader the impact of the forces of nature on Panturle's body.

Panturle a été vite endormi. Il était las. Sans savoir pourquoi puisqu'il n'est pas allé chasser de ces quelques jours. Il n'est pas las de fatigue, il est las comme si on avait fait des trous dans ses bras, des trous à ses jambes et qu'on a laissé couler sa force. Oui, et qu'on ait mis à la place de cette force du lait avec des fleurs de sarriette. Du lait. Il sent que ça coule le long de son corps et ça le chatouille, et ça le fait rire. Mais, il est las, et il a vite été endormi. (p.345)

The passage begins and ends with the narrator's reiterative observation that it did not take Panturle long to fall asleep, as his strength had been sapped from his body, making him feel limp. Giono conjures up a military image, vaguely reminiscent of Rimbaud's "Dormeur du Val", with the repetitive "trous", but this is probably not intended. It would seem that the author 'empties' Panturle of the past, as Winter melts away, and fills him with renewed life, "du lait", as Spring bursts into flower, to evoke the familiar fertility image, now in its awakening stage opposed to its prior dormant state.

During the past three outdoor scenes, the narrator filters the reader's perception of Mamèche through the eyes of Panturle. She is not aware of his presence at any time, imagining that she is alone with nature. This misconception now leads Mamèche to cry out with

²⁹ Style in the French Novel, p.226.

such force that Panturle is instantly aroused from his sleep as if it had "venu le toucher dans l'oreille comme une pierre"(p.345). The resonance created by this striking image sends the half-awakened Panturle outside. Catching sight of her standing on the rampart with a flaming torch in her hand, he wonders what is happening.

Elle haussait la main et le feu. On la voyait tout
entière. Elle avait mis sur la tête son fichu noir.
La fumée du feu montait vers le nord. (pp.345-346)

The visual image that the author portrays is at once dramatically effective and philosophically suggestive. Mamèche's black-veiled figure vividly illuminated by the flame against the dead of night symbolically reveals the power of the source of light to dispel the force of darkness. But the main purpose of this image would seem to be Giono's desire to establish yet another parallel between Mamèche and ancient Demeter. The Greek goddess is reputed to have roamed the earth for nine days with a flaming torch in one of her hands, searching for her lost daughter.

47 Dès lors, pendant neuf
jours, la noble Dée ne cessa de parcourir la terre, ayant
en mains des torches ardentes: 30

The torch in Mamèche's hand invites recognition of the significance of this parallel, inferring that Mamèche, like Demeter, is about to begin her search. The author consciously links this protagonist to classical myth, using unmistakable characteristics to stress the idea of a search, which Mamèche had already entertained in the second

³⁰ Homère, "Hymne à Déméter", p.42.

episode when she said "J'irai la chercher là où elle est"(p.343).

Seen as an extension of this mythological perspective, it appears that worshippers would arrive at Eleusis at night holding their burning torches aloft in imitation of Demeter searching for her lost daughter. "In the morning more solemn rites were announced by the herald with the summons 'You who are about to die, come near!' For the mystery of Demeter took the form of a death - a death into life."³¹ In the light of the above, Giono can be seen to use this aspect of the myth, predicting the outcome of Mamèche's search. Roland Barthes observes that "le mythe est un système double, il se produit en lui une sorte d'ubiquité; le départ du mythe est constitué par l'arrivée d'un sens."³² Culminating in renewed life, it also links up with the second episode, when Mamèche stands in the bare thicket, symbolizing anticipatory death before resultant rebirth.

These allusions to mythology are no doubt intended as brief moments of illumination. The author employs this technique at a crucial point in the story, giving substance to a rather far-fetched incident that might belong more properly to a fairy tale than a rustic novel. E.M. Forster suggests that when an author uses fantasy, he asks the reader "to pay something extra. It compels us to an adjustment that is different to an adjustment required by a work of art, to an additional adjustment. The other novelists say 'Here is something that might occur in your lives; the fantasist 'Here is something that could not occur. I must ask you first to accept my book

³¹ Robert Payne The Triumph of the Greeks (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1964), p.59.

³² Roland Barthes, Mythologies (Editions de Seuil, 1957),p.208.

as a whole, and secondly to accept certain things in my book."³³

In this regard Giono could be deemed a fantasist, but he uses the Demeter-motif -- as most writers of myth usually do with their specific motifs -- to suggest timeless patterns of a universal nature. Portraying Mamèche in this final episode, Giono directs the reader's attention to the feature that he wishes to emphasize, endowing her with "a symbolic aura"³⁴ which encourages the reader to search for further allusions, while simultaneously creating "a new reading dimension."³⁵

The use of myth in literary criticism is often questioned for it is felt that myth imposes a pattern from the outside on the text itself, and the originality of the work is disregarded, or that analogy is frequently misused, and its role exaggerated, distorted and sometimes even violated. However in Giono's case -- particularly his earlier works, and notably Regain as one of the Trilogie de Pan -- myth is a basic tool used by the critic in his analysis of the novels. It neither imposes, nor disregards the unique contribution of the work, but associates the modern text with the ancient myth, enhancing the resemblances between them in the exchange from old to new. In Mamèche's instance, myth provides a means of access whereby critic and reader alike can come "directly and with dispatch to the structural and thematic core of a literary work... [deciphering] the uses to which the poet puts the myth in terms of a specific metaphor and theme".³⁶

³³ Aspects of the Novel (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1927), p.101.

³⁴ For a fuller discussion of this subject, see Hutchinson, Games Authors Play, "Myth", p.74.

³⁵ Games Authors Play, p.75.

³⁶ John B. Vickery, "Literary Criticism and Myth", Yearbook of Comparative Criticism, ed. by Joseph P. Strelka (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), Volume IX, p.228.

Within the thematic framework of the novel, the flaming torch symbolizes the life principle. This interpretation ties up with two earlier scenes where fire plays a role. The fire in Mamèche's eyes depicts a thin source of life persisting in spite of Gaubert's departure and shortly afterwards, Panturle's figure is highlighted against the flame to symbolize the life principle. In an indirect way, the story of the "charbonnier" also serves as a reminder of this concept. These earlier episodes have their weight in the present scene, and reinforce the images of fertility and renewal.

"Que tu as? crie Panturle de toutes ses forces.

-- Rien.

-- Malade?

-- Non.

-- Alors?..."(p.346)

This laconic exchange has a formal frame, it starts and ends with a question. Rigorously economizing on words, Giono manages to convey the essence of Panturle's thoughts through his questions. Containing a mere five words, the author underlines Panturle's single-minded concern for Mamèche's well-being. The first question infers more than just "what's the matter?", it implies that Panturle thinks that there is something wrong with Mamèche. Her terse denial maintains the opacity built up since the beginning of these strange episodes, wherein Panturle sees the effect but not the cause of her enigmatic behaviour. Instead of providing him with an explanation, the author deploys Mamèche's response with almost teasing provocation, giving no satisfactory answer. Panturle is now obliged to rephrase his query in an effort to solve the mystery. Ambiguous in meaning, "malade" could refer to a physical or mental illness. In all likelihood,

Panturle implies the latter, but Mamèche refutes both with a monosyllabic reply. Making the text adhere to its principle of blocking access, Giono prevents Panturle from penetrating the screen that he has deliberately built up around Mamèche. Thwarted by her second response, Panturle changes his tactics, structuring his next question in the hopes of eliciting more than a one-word answer. His reward? The narrator's reply, "Un moment sans répondre "(p.346), but then the silence is broken, and Mamèche screams "Ça vient, ça vient!"(p.346) confirming in Panturle's mind that she is indeed a bit mad.

Careful not to provide Panturle with sufficient information to draw any definite conclusions, the author merely confirms the reader's speculation with Mamèche's repetitive cry. The key-word "vient", in the present tense, which has changed from the subjunctive "viennne"(p.343), contrasts with the past key-word, "partir", indicating the advent of Spring, and all that it symbolizes.

In a neatly structured series, the reader watches Mamèche progressively alienating herself from her surroundings. The first episode establishes her as a solitary figure. Evoked as the only perpendicular image on a horizontal plane, Giono focuses attention on Mamèche to highlight this solitude. Her odd address to something intangible creates a sense of mystery around Mamèche, enhancing her initial isolation. The second episode sees her withdrawing from sight within a cluster of trees. Perfectly hidden, she eludes not the prying eyes of Panturle, who hears her words and observes her actions. But the absence of verbal exchange sustains the mystery. Almost like the hunter and the hunted, Panturle is within reach of Mamèche, however understanding is withheld from Panturle, and Mamèche escapes his 'trap'. The indoor scene acts as an hiatus. Mamèche

makes a conscious break from the present, orientating her thoughts toward the future. Presenting the third episode in silence, Panturle simply observes a silent Mamèche. Neither party speaks. Campbell points out that "Enlightenment cannot be communicated only the way to Enlightenment. [Mamèche's words and actions] are but guides to the brink of transcendent illumination, the final step [] must be taken by each in his own silent experience."³⁷ The last episode is brought to light as a shriek thunders into the quiet of night. The flaming torch draws attention to itself while illuminating Mamèche. Reminiscent again of Demeter, this time when she reveals herself to the astonished Queen Metanira, Giono substitutes the golden glow of the flame for the yellow locks of the goddess. Revelatory in a sense that it demonstrates Mamèche's readiness to initiate action, it has no obvious significance for Panturle. The reader realizes that Mamèche, like any hero of antiquity, is withdrawing from her immediate society to undergo a period of separation. Seen in this context, Mamèche bids farewell to the present, answering the "call to adventure"³⁸ as destiny has summoned the hero, transferring her spiritual centre of gravity from within the pale of her society to a zone unknown.³⁹

Concluding this episode, the author slips into the narrator's shoes to evoke in Baudelairian style the commingling of perfumes and odours to suggest the idea of a rebirth.

Ça a changé depuis la tombée du jour; une force

³⁷ The Hero with a Thousand Faces, p.33.

³⁸ Campbell, p.36.

³⁹ See Campbell, p.58.

souple et parfumée court dans la nuit. On dirait une jeune bête bien reposée. C'est tiède comme la vie sous le poil des bêtes, ça sent amer. Il renifle. Un peu comme l'aubépine. Ça vient du sud par bonds et on entend toute la terre qui en parle.
Le vent du printemps!(p.346)

This passage contrasts vividly with the narrator's previous comment, "c'est toujours, l'un après l'autre, les mêmes jours"(p.343). Movement in the form of life, springs from every image, "obliterating the borderlines between the various realms of nature, [and pervading] the portrayal of human beings [who are] more often than not [] compared to animals."⁴⁰ The spring wind, compared to a well-rested young animal, is used as a metaphorical device to evoke a human response to nature. Changing from something sweet-smelling to something bitter, the author attempts to convey the notion that although the smell at birth is not pleasant to breathe, the smell of life is his main concern. Focusing on Panturle, referred to as "il" to symbolize man-in-general, it is poignant that the protagonist should "renifle" rather than "aspire" the air at this moment. Linking him at once to the image of the young animal, Giono sustains the metaphor just created. But an unsuspected simile immediately follows, and the bitter smell now becomes "un peu comme l'aubépine". Traditionally the hawthorn represents the bridal flower of classical antiquity, and it would seem that the author uses this image to tie up simultaneously with the parable of the charcoal burner and the scene of the betrothal, while foreshadowing a later event. The passage ends with the announcement that Spring has arrived, revealing definitively

⁴⁰ Ullman, p.223.

the full import of Mamèche's last words.

Au matin Panturle a ouvert sa porte sur le monde délivré. C'est la vie, c'est la belle vie avec des gestes et des courses. Tout le bois, les bras en l'air, danse sur place une grande danse enervée. De larges navires d'ombre naviguent sur les collines. Le vol des nuages s'élançe d'une rive du ciel à l'autre. Il passe dans le vent un corbeau tout éperdu, roulé comme une feuille morte. (p.346)

Still the poet-narrator of the moment, Giono captures a vivacious Spring, reeling with Dionysian pleasure in its newly found life. Although Panturle witnesses this delightful return of life, the narrator focuses attention on the frenetic movement almost forgetting the protagonist's presence. de Pomerai observes that "the world in movement, characteristic of spring is powerfully present to Panturle's senses, but his undeveloped consciousness cannot be used as the medium to render his sensations actual to the reader".⁴¹ But perhaps the narrator's reason for giving Panturle the privilege of seeing "le monde délivré", is to provide him with the answer to Mamèche's strange behaviour.

Acknowledging in direct speech that Spring has arrived, Panturle surmises that Mamèche might have meant just that. And yet, if the season was all that she had in mind, he fails to understand why she acted so mysteriously. Hoping to clarify the matter, he proceeds to her house.

Il n'y a personne chez la Mamèche. La chambre est vide. Le matelas est roulé. On a rangé la table et les chaises contre le mur comme si on était parti pour longtemps. Et sur la table on a posé un drap

⁴¹ "Introduction," Regain, p.27.

tout neuf, plié dans ses huit plis... posé là, bien en evidence. (pp.346-347)

Mamèche's absence dominates the passage. The narrator adopts the impersonal "on" instead of the personal "elle" to suggest that Mamèche is no longer there. Following Panturle's gaze around the room, he focuses on the aspects of the mattress, the chairs and the table. But it is the sheet, conspicuously folded in eight, that has a psychological impact on Panturle, making him aware that Mamèche has departed. "Spiritually, eight is the goal of the initiate, having passed through the seven stages of heavens, and it is, thus, the number of Paradise regained; regeneration.... As 7 + 1 it is the number of the octave and a beginning again." ⁴² In Christian symbolism, eight also represents regeneration and rebirth, so here again Giono conveys his message of perpetuity embodied in the concept of death. Like Mamèche, when she refused to accept Gaubert's departure, Panturle refuses to accept hers, and doggedly continues to search for her. He searches the entire village, before returning to her house which the narrator observes is "toujours vide, et le drap neuf sur la table"(p.347). The word "toujours", juxtaposed alongside the twice repeated motif of the unused sheet, stresses the permanence of the old woman's departure, but Panturle still fails to accept it, as his remark, "Je vais aller voir sur le plateau"(p.347) indicates.

Sur le plateau, on n'y va pas souvent et jamais volontiers. C'est une étendue toute plate à perte de vue. C'est de l'herbe, et de l'herbe,

⁴²
Cooper, p. 118.

et de l'herbe sans un arbre. C'est plat.
 Quand on est debout là-dedans et qu'on marche,
 on est seul à dépasser les herbes. Ça fait un
 drôle d'impression. Il semble qu'on est toujours
 désigné pour quelque chose. (p.347)

The narrator paints an uninviting picture of the plateau. Reminiscent of Mamèche as she first stood on the moor, conspicuous by her height, it would seem that the author evokes this memory imprinting it on the reader's mind to foreshadow her next appearance. "C'est de l'herbe, et de l'herbe, et de l'herbe sans arbre", stresses, through repetition of the grass, that there is not a tree in sight, so when Mamèche is later observed as a 'tree' on the plateau, the reader is mindful of this clue which Giono has subtly given him. "Ca fait un drôle d'impression, further hints at Mamèche's visual image, while the last sentence, "Il semble qu'on est toujours désigné pour quelque chose", suggests an unexpected happening. In retrospect, through hidden clues in a piece of narrative that 'innocently' depicts part of the landscape, it can be seen how the author prepares for a future event.

Panturle returns to Mamèche's home, and through the narrator's eyes observes that "le peu de jour qui reste éclaire le drap blanc sur la table"(p.348). Variouslly described as "tout neuf"(p.347), "neuf"(p.347 and "blanc"(p.348), the image of the sheet sustains its freshness, while becoming a salient motif with attention constantly focused on it.

Using this motif as a foreshadowing device, the reader is again alerted to it in Part Two, when the narrator recalls that Arsule "a trouvé, couché dans le pétrin comme du beau blé, trois draps plus blancs que l'eau"(p.384). Finally, its full significance is realized when Panturle discovers the skeleton of Mamèche, and wanting to bury

it, goes to her house to fetch the sheet folded in eight. "Il a essayé de déplier les draps qui sont sur la table. C'est de la charpie. Entre les rats et les autres bêtes, ça les a bien arrangés ces draps"(p.397). Unable to use the sheet for its intended purpose, Panturle returns to his house, "il a pris le drap dans lequel ils se couchent"(p.397) -- no doubt one of those found in the kneading trough -- and wraps Mamèche's skeleton in it, burying it.⁴³ Giono develops the motif of the sheet from her unseen departure to the eventual finding of her skeleton, picking up the theme of "regain" as it winds its way through the story.

The rampart signals an end to Panturle's search for Mamèche. Again a parallel exists between this situation and the previous episode where she is last seen standing on the rampart. The former scene marks the end of her life in Aubignane, heralding the beginning of her quest. Now it marks the end of Panturle's search for Mamèche, heralding his new beginning.

Panturle's search alternates between outdoor and indoor scenes. Each outdoor scene evokes some life-like presence of Mamèche, while every indoor scene evinces the same death-like image. Juxtaposing one against the other, the author's imagination fines yet another way of bringing the antithetical leitmotif of life and death to the fore.

⁴³ A point of correction is necessary in Professor Redfern's book, The Private World of Jean Giono. He writes: "(Death is accepted by all as part of a cycle. Panturle buries Mamèche in the well where her husband drowned, wrapped in the crisp sheet that she had thoughtfully left ready)." pp.37-38. From the above quotations in Giono's text, Redfern is obviously misinformed.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PRESENT OF THINGS FUTURE

O Déméter, lourde à la fois d'Adonis et du sanglier, nourrice des vivants, qui te rejouis des faucilles et des semoirs, donne nous la douce concorde, les vraies richesses et la santé.

Jean Giono

Outside a tobacconist in Sault, the reader in company with the narrator, meets Gédémus the knife-grinder, and another, Reboulin for the first time. Intrigued to know why Gédémus has purchased so much tobacco, Reboulin receives the following reply:

-- Monstre, dit Gédémus, toi, quand tu veux fumer, tu fais trois pas et tu es au bureau, moi je pars demain. Tu as pas vu que c'était le printemps? De quatre jours je ne vois plus le marchand de tabac. (p.348)

Reminiscent of Mamèche inside her house counting the potatoes to see whether they would be sufficient for four days -- "Un jour, deux jours, peut-être trois, peut-être quatre"(p.344) -- the reader ponders over the similar length of the proposed journey. Using Gédémus' rough manner of speaking as a blind to direct the reader's attention to the knife-grinder, Giono slips two thematic key-words, "pars" and "printemps" into Gédémus' response, alerting the sensitive reader to a possible link between the two incidents.

Although he has enough tobacco to last a week, Gédémus parts so sparingly with it that Reboulin asks: "Tu mets huit jours pour traverser?"(p.348), only to receive the answer, "Tu es fou: je mets

quatre jours"(p.348). Within a very short space of time the author deliberately repeats the number of days, again focusing the reader's attention on its length. At this stage it is still too early for the reader to be aware of the parallel, although given Giono's technique, its probable significance may be suspected.

Unperturbed by the knife-grinder's rudeness, Reboulin enquires whether the intended route requires sleeping on the plateau. The word "plateau" immediately revives memories of Mamèche and Panturle, and the reader is transported back in time and space to the place where he last saw these protagonists. No doubt the author uses the plateau as a motif to foreshadow events, but he does not elaborate. Instead he keeps the reader's mind on it with another question from Reboulin, who assumes that because the cart is laden with sharp knives, Gédémus does not mind sleeping on the plateau. Quick to disillusion him, the knife-grinder says:

-- Oh, ça n'est pas ça qui empêcherait, mais c'est mon chemin. Que ça soit d'un gros plaisir, non, mais je n'ai jamais eu bien peur. Le tout, c'est de bien connaître la direction et d'avoir de bonnes étapes.(p.349) (my emphases)

Braggart that he is, Gédémus confidently maps out his trip. A first reading conceals the pointers in this speech, but a second reading reveals significant anticipatory clues, as the underlined sections indicate.

It is obvious that Giono disapproves of Gédémus' type. Except for the word "printemps", the author omits nature from his vocabulary, symbolically depriving him of feelings that nature inspires in the other characters. The knife suitably depicts severance, and it is in this context that Giono views Gédémus. He is an unwanted intruder, contrasting sharply with the nature-lovers, but a necessary element

in the novel's structure.

Finally a persistent Reboulin asks the crucial question: "Tu mènes Arsule?"(p.349) to which Gédémus replies, refuting the implied sexual connotation: "Tu ne vois pas que je lui fais traîner la voiture?" (p.349) Luce Ricatte observes that at the end of Présentation de Pan, the author writes:

Il faudra que je parle de celui-là qui était tout seul, au fond du plateau et puis qui a acheté une femme avec les soixante francs d'une âne et qui, de ça, a fait revivre toute sa terre, et qu'une herbe nouvelle a poussé et qu'on a pu faucher le regain. (p.777)

This passage could well have been the source of inspiration for the character of Arsule, whose debauched past reduces her to a beast of burden. Her character is analogous to that of Angèle in Un de Baumugnes, where Giono employs a similar device to elicit the reader's sympathy for the woman in disgrace.

Arsule?

Ah, c'est toute une histoire!

Arsule, elle s'est d'abord appelée "Mille Irène" et même: "Mille Irène des grands théâtres de Paris et de l'Univers". Ça vous comprenez bien, c'étaient des mensonges. Pourtant, c'était écrit sur une affiche faite à la main et collée sur la vitre du café des Deux Mondes. (p.349)

The omniscient narrator delves into Arsule's past, simultaneously preaching the evils of city life. Microcosmically perceived as the universe, it evinces the falsehood that Giono associates with Paris and the industrialized world. Hand-written notices smack of artificiality, contributing to the lies inherent in their messages. Even the name of the café in italicized letters stresses the dual

nature of the world, maleficent and beneficent. As for Arsule, the author sees her as a victim of a mendacious society, badly needing upliftment. The narrator's point of view is indistinguishable from that of Giono, in fact the author himself could be talking.

Describing the arrival of this sadly clad figure, a worn-out Arsule allows herself to be dragged by the cart's brake-rope, while her 'partner', a murderous-looking villain, "L'illustre Tony"(p.349), swears at the mule he leads by the muzzle. "Elle était enfarinée de poussière jusqu'à la taille"(p.349). Implying that Arsule is only visible from her waist upwards, Giono contrasts the narrator's present observation with that of Mamèche when first seen inside her house. "Il y a le jour sur la moitié de Mamèche, sur le morceau qui va des pieds nus jusqu'à la taille"(p.336). Imaginatively using the interplay between the concepts of light and dark, perhaps to evoke the difference between this world and -- in both senses -- the underworld, the author envisages Arsule as a sort of Persephone, rising from the realms of Hades. Having only partially ascended -- Arsule needs rehabilitating -- and on her way to greet Demeter, he focuses the light on the upper part of her body. By comparison, his perception of Mamèche is that of an old woman preparing to meet her Maker. The light has gone out in her face, leaving only the lower half of her body illuminated, suggesting that her life on earth is now beginning to cease.

Choosing the "café de Deux Mondes" to illustrate the ugly side of human nature, the narrator once more gains the reader's sympathy, describing the humiliation to which Arsule is exposed in her role as "Mlle Irène".

... Mlle Irène est montée sur l'estrade. Elle avait de pauvres mains d'éplucheuse de pommes de terre. Elle avait des yeux, on ne savait pas dire, ça vous faisait peine, tenez. Elle était

là, toute fatiguée de mille choses, je vous dis,
 bien plus pénibles encore que la route, pour une
 femme. Elle était là.
 Ça a fait rire. (p.350)

Capturing and holding the reader's attention with the twice repeated "vous", the narrator focuses on Arsule. Framing his description of her with "elle était là", the author brings home to the reader the woman's meaningless existence. From another perspective, Giono could be using this repetition as a mechanical device, for "the mechanical in human affairs is a primary source of comedy,"¹ as "ça a fait rire" confirms. Arsule is trapped between two conflicting conceptions of reality where mechanical repetition simultaneously brings forth comedy and tragedy. This is characterized by the contrast between the audience's laughter and the reader's sympathy. Elaborating further, the narrator relates in detail the events of the following day, when Arsule, afraid to leave with "l'illustre Tony", stays behind sitting near the fountain.

A midi, il arrive toute l'équipe de Garino, le lavandier. ... Quand ils ont vu la femme, ça a fait leur affaire, ils se sont mis autour d'elle, et de lui dire ci, et de lui dire ça, jusqu'au moment où il y en a un qui a dit: "Viens, on va te faire manger." Alors, elle a levé son oeil vide sur celui-là et elle s'est dressée. Et, au lieu de lui donner à manger, ils l'ont fait boire comme un plant de courge, puis ils s'en sont servis. Ils l'avaient menée dans l'écurie de Martel et ils étaient tous devant la porte à rire pendant qu'un était dedans avec la femme. Puis, celui-là sortait. Il était rouge. Il se mettait à rire encore plus fort que les autres, on voyait bien qu'il se forçait pour ça. Et un autre entrain. Et comme ça. (pp.350-351)

¹ Alter, p.106.

The reader's sympathy is again enlisted against the crowd. The concept of rape is depravity, and the concept of laughter -- in this context -- is derision. The reader protests, the audience cheers. From the latter's view, rape is lust, and laughter, conquest. Arsule is the victim, the crowd, the victor. In both cases cited, the author uses laughter as a means of exposing society's callousness towards individual suffering.

Every so often in his writings, Giono uses facets of his story to highlight the differences between town and country life, contrasting the unauthentic city with the authentic village. Critics have interpreted this as a direct appeal to return to the land, but in response to this very suggestion by Gilbert Ganne,

-- Mais il y avait dans votre oeuvre d'autres thèses, comme le retour à la terre, qui plaisait à Vichy.

the author replies:

-- Vous conviendrez que j'avais précédé de beaucoup le gouvernement de Vichy. C'était le régime qui prenait ses mots d'ordre dans mes livres. Comment l'en aurais-je empêché? Quant au retour à la terre, c'est vite dit. Je n'ai pas écrit un mot qui justifie le retour à la terre. J'ai dit simplement qu'on était plus heureux à la terre qu'à la ville, qu'il y avait un avantage énorme à y vivre. Mais je n'ai jamais dit qu'il fallait redevenir paysan. Je ne l'ai jamais été. ²

² An interview with Jean Giono, "Giono règle ses comptes," Les Nouvelles Littéraires, le 1 avril, 1965, p.11.

Arsule and Gédémus set out on the first leg of their journey to ... Aubignane. On a first reading, the reader imagines the destination to be Gallibert's farm, but as the novel progresses, he realizes that the author has a somewhat different intention. Beginning the story with a trip to Aubignane, Giono provides the reader with an insight into Mamèche's character via her past. However at this stage of the novel, the reader is already acquainted with Arsule's past, and the journey to Aubignane provides him a perspective of her present. Seen in structural terms, the two approaches to Aubignane balance the first half of the novel, dividing it into two distinct parts. As yet there is no apparent attempt to weld together the disparate levels of identity between Mamèche and Arsule. The author is content to allow the reader to focus attention mainly on Arsule, while not permitting him to forget Mamèche.

Similar to previous trips undertaken by Gédémus and Arsule, this one differs from them only in various words that the narrator uses in the course of his tale. The first flicker that sparks off a question of whether there is any connection between Mamèche's veiled figure and the cloak that Arsule carries, is "On porte aussi une grosse pèlerine"(p.352). The second signal is the reiteration for the third time in this chapter of the journey's length. "Autrement dit, du manger pour quatre jours"(p.352), establishing a manifest link between Mamèche's proposed journey and this one. Next, commenting on the poor state of vegetation, "les pauvres champs domestiques"(p.352), the narrator alerts the reader to the myth of Demeter, and to the possibility of an association between Arsule and Persephone, similar to that between Mamèche and Demeter.

The allusions to the ancient myth, embodied in the cloak and the wretched vegetation, together with the four-day period -- which

lies completely within the writer's imagination, and derives significance from the novel itself -- raise questions in the reader's mind about the direction of the plot. Is the author using these allusions as a system to organize his fictional material or is he interspersing them as and when required "as part of a constantly developing continuum?"³ It would appear that Giono leaves it to the reader to discover for himself what relationship can be found between the pattern chosen and its effect on the narrative.⁴ The interplay between mythological motifs and those created by the author, refers the reader to archetypal patterns in the novel's plot, and "they are presented in such a way as to generate in the reader patterns of hypothesis, conjectures and illusions concerning what is going to happen to the fictive characters."⁵

Comme on arrive sur le dos du mamelon, on entend le ronron sauvage des genévriers. C'est là-bas, de l'autre côté d'un petit val. La terre est nue. Il n'y a, au fond de ce pli, qu'un vieux peuplier. On remonte de l'autre côté sur un sentier qu'il a fallu tailler à la barre à mine. Plus d'herbes seules, quelques touffes de thym, un plan de sauge et son abeille (p.352)

Ostensibly describing the countryside accompanying Arsule and Gédémus on their journey, the narrator once again uses certain words and phrases that alert the reader to seek nuanced revelations of meaning. In Graeco-Roman symbolism, protection is one aspect of "genévriers", and perhaps it is in this context that Giono 'tells'

³ John White, Mythology in the Modern Novel, p.113. Also see p.112.

⁴ For a fuller discussion, see John White, p.113, from where these ideas originate.

⁵ John White, pp.118-119.

the reader that no harm will befall the travellers. The bare earth with "un vieux peuplier" as the only living upright plant, is reminiscent of the perpendicular image of Mamèche standing alone on the moor appearing more like a tree than a human. At this stage the import of this observation is barely noticeable, but it is sufficient to revive the reader's memory, making renewed contact with an image that he might otherwise have forgotten. In the spectrum of repetition, using this image as a reiterative device, the narrator provides a subtle link in the structure of the story. Keeping the reader's mind on Mamèche, he also observes that "un sentier a fallu tailler à la barre à mine", which brings back vague memories of Mamèche's mine-sinker husband. But as the herbs disappear, except for "quelques touffes de thym" and "un plan de sauge", he draws the reader's attention to the usual bee, "son abeille", resting on the sage. This is no mere coincidence, as the bee, besides symbolizing rebirth and purity, also represents Demeter who is considered the pure Mother Bee. The officiants at Eleusis were Bees, and as an emblem of Demeter the bee was lunar and virgin. Pan, too, was a protector and keeper of bees.⁶ In this respect, Giono regards Arsule's journey as a rite de passage, taking the form of a purification ritual. She leaves the corruption of town life, entering nature's doorstep as a pitiful remnant of society. Nature provides her with the opportunity to reclothe herself, giving her a second chance, a chance of a rebirth. In case the reader loses sight of reality in the wake of this idealism, the author makes sure that Gédémus remains Arsule's companion for

⁶ Cooper, pp.19-20.

the time-being, contrasting the idea of a newly-found purity with the ever present concept of evil.

Encore dix pas qui comptent, dix pas où tout est utile, l'épaule qui pèse en avant, la cuisse qui pousse, le pied qui fait ressort, la tête qui commande; encore un, encore un... Gédémus est aussi attelé à la charrette. Dix pas, et puis, pour revenir, c'est trop tard: les grands genévriers bouchent la route, derrière. On est en plein dans la terre libre. C'est le plateau: voilà le plateau! (p.352)

Giono uses repetition as the device to slow down the pace of this passage, and to foreshadow a future event. Thrice informing the reader that only "dix pas" are needed to reach the plateau, the narrator relates the beast-like movements, "l'épaule", "la cuisse", "le pied" and "la tête" of Arsule and Gédémus, in between the repetitive "dix pas" and "encore", to reinforce their laboured trudge. Almost step by step, the author captures a visual impression of the travellers as they drag their cart past the junipers onto the plateau.

Symbolically, "ten is [] the number of completion of journeys and the return to origins".⁷ Mythologically, Demeter wandered for nine days before finding Persephone, possibly on the tenth. Could it be that the author uses "dix pas" to stress in a veiled way that Mamèche will soon find Arsule?

Giono's steady emphasis on the plateau illustrates its importance. Already seen in different perspectives by Mamèche and Panturle, Arsule is about to complete the trio. Comparing the plateau to a threshing floor, "plat comme une aire"(p.352), it would seem as if the author is consciously establishing another link between Arsule and the myth

⁷ Cooper, p.119.

of Demeter.

C'est au ras des yeux comme une grande mer toute sombre avec une houle de genévriers. Des genévriers, des genévriers. De larges corbeaux muets jaillissent de l'herbe et le vent les emporte. (p.352)

Creating a powerful visual impression with the repetitive image of the "genévriers", the narrator seems to imply a sense of solitude with the silent crows emerging from the bush, and being carried away by the wind. But this is misleading, as the reader is soon to find out.

Gédémus et Arsule s'en vont seuls. Le vent souffle à travers les montants de bois de la machine à aiguiser comme à travers la mâture d'une barque.

"On ne s'est pas trompé?"

-- Non, marche; ça va.

-- Ça, là-bas, qu'est-ce que c'est?"

-- Rien, un arbre, un arbre mort.

-- Tu es sûr?"

-- Eh! oui, marche. Chaque fois qu'on est ici, tu as peur. Qu'est-ce que tu crois que c'est? C'est un arbre, pas plus. Marche, je te dis." (pp.352-353)

In this passage, the first in a series of three, the reader meets Arsule in dialogue with Gédémus. Giono introduces her directly at the point where, in spite of, or because of her past, Arsule no longer accepts unquestioningly without personal conviction. Her part of the dialogue takes the form of three questions. The first insinuates a mistaken route, the second requires an explanation, and the third, confirming an unsatisfactory answer to the second, requests reassurance. Through Gédémus' answers, the author conveys a lord-slave relationship, where one human being oppresses another,

dismissing any doubt with orders to "marche". His lack of concern for her, is balanced by his concern for himself. Arsule is his beast of burden, and he treats her accordingly. Using the thrice repeated "marche" in Gédémus' speech, Giono evokes a visual image similar to that of a man whipping his donkey, which continues to elicit the reader's sympathy for Arsule.

Gédémus' response, "Rien, un arbre, un arbre mort", alerts the reader to the possibility that it might be Mamèche, but at this stage he is not yet certain. However, a further reading reveals that it is Mamèche whom the author uses in the guise of a tree, as his device to change the direction of the story.

Chiding Arsule for her fear, "Chaque fois qu'on est ici, tu as peur", Gédémus psychologically implies "je n'ai jamais eu bien peur"(p.349), reinforcing his boastful remark to Reboulin. Through implication, rather than explicit speech Giono contrasts Gédémus' confidence with Arsule's diffidence, demonstrating their difference in character.

L'ombre marche sur la terre comme une bête; l'herbe s'aplatit, les sablonnières fument. L'ombre marche sur des pattes souples comme une bête. La voilà froide et lourde sur les épaules. Pas de bruit. Elle va son voyage. Elle passe. Voilà. (p.353)

The poetic interlude neatly separates the preceding scene from the next, bearing testimony to the author's ability to develop an unusual image. He compares an element of nature with that of an animal, visualizing the cloud as a creature walking on the earth. In the first sentence, he emphasizes the place where it walks, in the second, shifting the focus to the means whereby it walks, he repeats the simile, "comme un bête", adding another detail to the

same image as it unfolds in his mind.⁸ The adjective, "souples" conveys the idea of stealth, which "pas de bruit" confirms, drawing a veiled parallel between the shadow's movements and those of Mameche. Ambiguous in the sense of "sous l'ombre de l'ombre", it would seem that the author chooses a feminine word to refer to the shadow as "elle", and double up on his initial meaning.

"N'aie pas peur, je te dis:

-- Et ça, là-bas, qu'est-ce que c'est?

-- Oû?

-- Ça, là-bas, droit dans l'herbe et tout noir, avec des bras, on dirait?

-- Ça, c'est encore un arbre. Attends un peu. Je me demande si on ne s'est pas trompé. Il n'y a pas tant d'arbres que ça de ce côté. C'est bien un arbre mort pourtant. Qu'est-ce que ça pourrait être autrement? Et on est bien dans la direction. ... C'est ça. Marche, c'est encore un arbre. Tu fais attention à tout, aussi! (p.353)

Giono's humour filters through this dialogue, lifting the tension on the reader's part, if not on the part of the protagonists. Gédémus has the last word in the previous passage, but judging from the manner in which he begins this conversation, the reader would have imagined that Arsule had last spoken. It is obvious, as his sudden burst of speech indicates, that this time, he is the first to notice something in the grass, and whatever it is, it alarms him. In order to conceal his growing apprehension, he projects his nervousness onto Arsule, making her the scapegoat of his anxiety. But his command, instructing her not to be frightened, elicits the opposite reaction. Repeating

⁸ See Ullman, p.220.

the same question that she posed in the preceding dialogue, adding "Et" to indicate that she has asked this question before, Arsule says: "Et ça, là-bas, qu'est-ce que c'est?" Trying to remain detached, Gédémus enquires "Où?" The reader is not fooled by his transparent question, but Arsule, so wrapped up in the spirit of the moment, fails to see the flaw, and provides the anticipated answer, forgetting that it was Gédémus who first saw the object.

Arsule's words, "tout noir, avec des bras" remind the reader of occasions where l'Oncle Joseph and the narrator describe Mamèche, and events concerning her, in similar terms. Initially, l'Oncle Joseph says: "C'est une vieille cavale toute noire" (p.327),⁹ then a little later, commenting on Mamèche's child's death, he says: "Son petit était dans l'herbe, tout noir déjà" (p.328). While the narrator observes, comparing Mamèche to the Virgin, "Ce qu'on voit de la Mamèche est pareil, mais tout noir" (p.328). Later, when she threatens the Virgin, she does so, with "un poing noir" (p.338), and removes a hair from the milk with "son doigt noir" (p.340). Finally, reconciling herself with the Virgin, the narrator comments, "Elle a un élan de ses grands bras noirs" (p.340). In all these instances, "tout/e noir/e" or simply, "noir/s", is the striking feature which the author uses to characterize Mamèche. So, it does not tax the reader too much to conclude that Mamèche is the "arbre".

Emerging from this scene, the reader perceives a veiled parallel between the upright image of Mamèche and the horizontal image of her child lying dead in the grass. Giono omits the word "droit" from the earlier episode, but otherwise he uses similar language

⁹ This, and subsequent emphases concerning this image are my own.

to depict these two scenes. The recent suggests that the dying lives, whereas the former indicates that the living dies.

Before Arsule completes her observation, Gédémus interrupts, reiterating that the object is a tree, but then hesitates as he ponders over their directions. He asks Arsule the same question that she asked him in the preceding passage, but the author prefaces Gédémus' query with, "Je me demande si", to make it seem as though he (Gédémus) were the first to notice this discrepancy. However, quick to realize that he is losing confidence, Gédémus attempts to recover his equanimity saying: "Et on est bien dans la direction", which makes the reader think of his earlier remark to Reboulin, "c'est de bien connaître la direction"(p.349).

This passage illustrates an interesting feature of Giono's writing. A single character may repeat a sentence made in an earlier episode, or different characters may speak identical words at different times, but every repetition reveals a different meaning in spite of the apparent similarity.

Temporarily regaining his confidence, Gédémus ends this scene in a similar vein to the last, resuming his lord-slave attitude with the command, "Marche," and blaming Arsule for her perspicacity.

Taking advantage of the break between this, and the following dialogue, the narrator refreshes the reader's memory with fertility images, while the author provides a meal as a means of refreshment. "Et c'est d'abord une miche trapue comme un cochon de lait.... Il y a aussi deux boîtes de sardines"(p.354). Bread is universally accepted as a symbol of life, but conceived as a sucking pig, it also embodies the concept of fertility. Sardines could represent fish in general, and it would seem that Giono uses them to reinforce the procreative image, symbolic of fish. Initially the author links

Mamèche to images of fertility, now it's becoming Arsule's turn for association with these metaphors.

"Oh! oh!" ...

"Quoi?"

Les yeux d'Arsule sont grands et blancs.

"La!"

Et elle dresse un peu son doigt.

"Eh bien! quoi, là!"

-- Ça a fait: hop! ça a monté au-dessus de l'herbe un moment, puis, hop, ça s'est baissé.

-- Quoi ça a fait hop, quoi?"

Gédémus reste avec du saucisson à la main.

"L'arbre!"

-- L'arbre? Tu es un peu malade?

-- Oui, l'arbre. Ce qu'on voit depuis ce matin. Cette chose noire avec tantôt une branche de ce côté, tantôt une branche de là. Cette chose que je t'ai dit trois ou quatre fois: "Qu'est-ce que c'est?" et que tu as dit: "C'est un arbre, marche." C'est là encore. Ça a fait: hop!

-- C'est dans ton oeil, bestiasse; comment veux-tu qu'un arbre ça fasse: hop!

-- Ça l'a fait; c'est peut-être pas un arbre?

-- Et qu'est-ce que tu veux que ça soit ici dessus?

-- Je sais pas, moi, mais, ça a fait: hop, c'est sûr; c'est pas dans mon oeil, j'ai bien vu.

-- Ne commence pas avec tes histoires."(pp.354-355)

There is an evident parallelism between this, and the previous two dialogues, but subtle changes have occurred along the way. The narrator intervenes for the first time, reinforcing the bond between uttered speech and unspoken observation, for example, the expression in Arsule's eyes after sighting the object, and before indicating its position.

Gédémus' responses alter over the three dialogues. At first, he shows disregard for Arsule's observation, then in the second dialogue, his unspoken thoughts disguised as instruction, acknowledge the object's presence. His deceptive "Où?"(p.353) merely invites confirmation of its locality. In the two previous dialogues, Gédémus responds to a question, but this time without being asked, he blurts out "Quoi?",

to Arsule's first exclamation, "Eh bien! quoi là!" to her second, and "Quoi, ça a fait hop, quoi?", to a description of the object's movements. Repeating the word, "quoi", four times with three responses, Giono illustrates the intensity of Gédémus' wish for an explanation, which marks a change from the character's initial attitude to the "arbre".

The author intends that Mamèche deliberately 'intrude' upon the three dialogues. In fact, she is the cause, and the dialogues the effect. She causes increasing anxiety with each encounter, and the characters exhibit their progressive uneasiness in the subsequent dialogues. Giono does this for a number of reasons. Firstly, it enables him to reestablish contact with the Greek god Pan, viewing the deity in his terrifying aspect of being able to inject irrational fear into the minds of unsuspecting travellers.

The Arcadian god Pan is the best known Classical example of this dangerous presence dwelling just beyond the protective zone of the village boundary. The emotion that he instilled in human beings who by accident adventured into his domain was "panic" fear, a sudden groundless fright. Any trifling cause then -- the break of a twig, the flutter of a leaf would flood the mind with imagined danger.... 10

Within the context of the novel, Michelfelder sees Pan as an all-encompassing image.

La voix de Pan éclate sur le plateau et transfigure tout. C'est elle qui donne aux arbres des attitudes étranges, qui fait que Gédémus et Arsule prennent les arbres pour des apparitions, la Mamèche gesticulante pour un arbre ...Pan joue avec sa proie, avec Arsule. 11

¹⁰ Joseph Campbell, p.81.

¹¹ Jean Giono et Les Religions de la Terre, p.68.

Secondly, Giono structures these dialogues to provide a comedy of errors. He treats the reader to a bit of fun, while uncertainty leads to panic on the part of the characters. Juxtaposing appearance and reality, it is difficult to imagine that a female figure, clad in black would consistently be mistaken for a tree; and then for the tree to pop in and out of the grass at suitable intervals, is so incongruous, that it renders the situation ridiculous. Not overlooking the powers of human imagination, and the ability of mythological goddesses to transform themselves, Giono nevertheless achieves a comic effect with the repetitive use of the unusual word "hop" especially when it is followed by Arsule's outburst "L'arbre!" (p.355). A strange admixture of anxiety and laughter, but a much happier kind than previously experienced by the reader, when Arsule was the victim of derisive humour. Perhaps Giono feels that he has been a little too solemn hitherto, and indulges in light-hearted comedy to balance the more serious aspects of the novel. Seen in another perspective, it could also be that element of fantasy, which Giono adds to the novel, giving it that "something extra" (see Forster, p.61 of this study).

Thirdly, looking at the dialogues from yet another angle, the reader finds Giono at play.

Indeed, practically all texts have playful elements in them to the extent that they tease, frustrate, deny information, make suggestions, above all, that they challenge the reader, and the zest to create makes itself felt far more clearly in those sections of the text in which such activities are taking place. Playful writing demands a different sort of effort from the reader than does standard prose. This, then, may be seen as another feature of literary play: it is provocative,

seeking to arouse speculation, reflection or deduction.¹²

He involves the fictive characters in the age-old game of Hide-and-Seek, while the role of Scotland Yard is assigned to the reader. Arsule and Gédémus are not willing participants. On the contrary, they move on, rather than search. But their fear and curiosity are aroused to such a pitch after the third dialogue, that Gédémus relents, and volunteers to find the object. Unlike the characters trying to establish the where, and the what of the object, the reader knows that it is Mamèche. Giono could have reported this as narrative summary, but expressing it through dialogue, especially Arsule's recapping of the events, he is able to highlight, and expand the images of "l'arbre," and "cette chose noire," adding a touch of immediacy to their existence.

In a dialogue-bound narration, the narrator reports that the look in Arsule's eyes, -- "Elle a toujours ses grands yeux de pâquerette"(p.355) -- prompts Gédémus to search for the object. "Il a fait quelques pas dans l'herbe, mais il se retourne..."(p.355), to take his knife with him as a precautionary measure before setting out again. Continuing his account the narrator says: "Il s'en va alors avec le couteau tout nu à la main. Il marche doucement en regardant de chaque côté comme s'il avait peur de mettre le pied sur un serpent"(p.355). Portraying a very nervous Gédémus, who returns after finding nothing, the narrator comments: "On dirait qu'il a du souci. De temps en temps il regarde derrière lui"(p.355). Had

¹² Hutchinson, p.13.

the narrator not been present, only the dialogue would have been heard, and Gédémus' speech in particular would have created a very different impression. It would have sounded like this: "Attends, je vais voir... Tu ferais bien de me donner le couteau"(p.355). Arsule points to the place. Gédémus goes there. "Si c'est là, tu as rêvé; il n'y a rien. Il n'y a rien: pourtant, si tu te sens mal ici, partons...."(p.355). There is no verbal evidence of anxiety, Gédémus appears confident, even caring to a degree, and the listener would not be aware of the ambiguities that arise from what is said, and left unsaid in dialogue. Weaving narration through dialogue, Giono intimates that actions speak louder than spoken words, and sets the tone of events essential to the unfolding of the plot, which he might not otherwise have been able to indicate in dialogue.

Reckoning with the wind as Arsule and Gédémus resume their trudge, the narrator's role is short-lived. All he manages to observe is: "Sitôt debout et le pied dans la piste, il a fallu compter avec le vent. Il venait bien en face...."(p.355), when the author, quick as a flash, assumes his role, completing the sentence and this whole episode. So intimately in tune with the elements of nature, especially the wind, Giono captures its spirit, animating its gestures as "le vent du printemps" places "sa grande main tiède sur la bouche"(p.355) of the travellers, or "s'est mis à leur gratter les yeux avec ses ongles"(p.356). Using the force of the wind as a pretext, "puis il a essayé de les déshabiller"(p.356), Giono changes his tone, evoking fertility images in a very sensual manner.

Arsule tire la bricole et, pour ça, elle s'est penchée en avant. Le vent entre dans son corsage comme chez lui. Il coule entre les seins, il lui descend sur le ventre comme une main; il lui coule entre les cuisses; il lui baigne toutes les cuisses, il la rafraîchit comme

un bain. Elle a les reins et les hanches mouillés de vent. Elle le sent sur elle, frais, oui, mais tiède aussi et comme plein de fleurs, et tout en chatouilles, comme si on fouettait avec des poignées de foin; ce qui se fait pour les fenaisons, et ça agace les femmes, oh! oui, et les hommes le savent bien.

Et tout d'un coup, elle se met à penser aux hommes. C'est ce vent aussi qui fait l'homme, depuis un moment. (p.356)

The loving caress of the poetic wind is immediately felt. Arsule's body tingles with the sensation, and the reader identifies with the author's personal, and richly imaginative piece of narration. Rejuvenated and refreshed, a changed Arsule emerges after the wind's embrace. Her fear temporarily abates, contrasting markedly with Gédémus' persistent uneasiness. She even looks at the old knife-grinder with "un oeil tendre et caressant"(p.356), while he anxiously enquires whether she has seen anything. So momentarily transformed, "son corps est en travail comme du vin nouveau"(p.356), Arsule, oblivious of what preceded this feeling, replies simply, "Non, plus rien"(p.356). Until now a bedraggled figure with a debauched past, the new image of Arsule is revealed through sheer contrast. In true Gionian fashion, the wind acts as a "guérisseur", a theme dear to the author, and his belief in "mélange".

Another feature of the above narration, is the divergence, opposed to the similarity, between the statements occurring in this narration, and those uttered in dialogue. Earlier it is observed that even though narration contributes to unheard aspects of the dialogue, it is still dialogue-bound. Now, there is no relation between Gédémus' question, "Tu n'as plus rien vu?"(p.356), and the general theme of the narration. Using the narration as a poetic metaphor to convey a sense of anticipation, Giono carefully nurtures an image of fertility around Arsule. The brief dialogue, in question and answer form, serves

as an anchor, bringing the reader back to the scene of the tale with the newly evoked sensations hovering conspicuously in his mind.

Tout par un coup, il est venu la lourde
trêve du crépuscule; il n'y a plus de vent
et il y a un grand silence craquant comme
une pastèque. (p.356)

It has been said before, but the evidence is worth repeating. It is a pity that Giono cannot restrain himself, and feels the need to search for a striking image after the wind subsides. The reader realizes the author's attempt to expand the fertility image beyond the presence of the wind, but the disparity between the watermelon and the crisp hush all round is too wide. The image does not emerge spontaneously, in fact it rings false.¹³

It must be said, however, that some images seem far-fetched and on occasion it is too clearly the self-conscious voice of the poet, of the image-maker, that is heard when a comparison occurs, too complex or too unexpected, acceptable in a poem perhaps, but at odds with the circumstances of the tale. 14

Expressing his view of the same subject, Stephen Ullman says:

It was also inevitable that such an extravagant wealth of imagery should produce some mixed or incongruous metaphors. ... The incongruity is especially marked when the images themselves are open to doubt.... Here we reach the limits of the technique: the demand on our capacity for visualisation is so heavy, and the transition so abrupt, that the author's virtuosity defeats its own ends. 15

¹³ See de Pomerai, p.33.

¹⁴ de Pomerai, p.33.

¹⁵ Style in the French Novel, pp.230-231.

Returning to the tale, the travellers continue their journey. Nightfall descends. Arsule and Gédémus arrive at the derelict hamlet of La Trinité.

C'est presque au milieu d'un tas de décombres que Gédémus a découvert une grangette encore tiède. C'est là qu'on passe la première nuit. Il faut enjamber des débris de murs et écarter les branches des figuiers fous et, ces branches, maintenant nues et tordues, et fraîches de nuit, quand on les touche, on dirait des serpents.

La grangette est au milieu de ce nid de figuiers.(p.357)

Symbolically, "une grangette" represents shelter, and "is associated with the Great Mother, the archetypal feminine, in her protective aspect."¹⁶ As Arsule is about to enter the barn, perhaps Giono feels that it is his duty to reassure the reader once more that she will not be harmed. Describing the "grangette" as "encore tiède" amidst the decay of the village, and the overgrowth of plants, the narrator suggests that it is a resting place, but the author takes it one step further, seeming to indicate by way of contrast, the potential of growth. Linked to this concept are the "figuiers", symbolizing fecundity, life, peace and prosperity.¹⁷ Chilled by the night, their twisted and stripped branches feel like "serpents" when touched, anticipating in a veiled manner, events to come. The presence of a serpent is almost universally associated with pregnancy, which accompanies all female deities and the Great Mother.¹⁸ Also embodied in this concept is the word "milieu", appearing at the beginning

¹⁶ Cooper, p.152.

¹⁷ Cooper, p.66.

¹⁸ Cooper, p.147.

and end of the narration. Representing not only the heart of the village, but also the middle of the nest of fig trees, it symbolizes the origin of all existence, and reinforces the concept of growth, in the sense of life springing from death.

The aforementioned narration also reminds the reader of Giono's younger days, when as a bank clerk he used to travel the countryside visiting outlying villages. Luce Ricatte recalls:

Les propos tenus par le romancier confirment bien que l'abandon des villages à demi ruinés de la Provence intérieure l'avait depuis longtemps intéressé (pp.988-989)

Le village était donc déjà agonisant. Et au lendemain de la guerre, Giono avait assisté aux "derniers moments" de Redortiers: "[...]Après la guerre, il n'y avait déjà plus personne.... (p.989)

Aubignane, within the novel as a whole, symbolizes Redortiers -- -- as has already been mentioned -- but at the present stage, La Trinité could well be a Redortiers too. In either case it allows Giono to write about "cet aspect fantastique des ruines qui avait plus d'une fois mobilisé [son] imagination sous des formes diverses" (p.989). Seen in this perspective, the "grangette" provides a perfect setting for this flight of fancy. It not only serves structurally as the last planned stop of Arsule and Gédémus, but could also be regarded as the turning point in the story.

The scene inside the barn witnesses a repast mirroring the one on the plateau. Fertility images previously evoked, reappear, but wine and water now complement the food, adding a new symbolic dimension. "Il y a deux gourdes qui tiennent chacune dans les deux litres. Dans une, il y a le vin; dans l'autre il y a de l'eau. Il est bien entendu que c'est pour mélanger"(p.358). "Wine and water are solar and lunar ...the two great powers of the universe; they also represent

the blending of the divine and human natures, or divinity invisibly mingled with humanity."¹⁹ Through the narrator's observations Giono attempts to enlighten the reader making him aware of the possibility that some semi-divine being may influence future happenings. But he is not ready to impart the full extent of his knowledge, so it is difficult for the reader to gauge the exact nature of authorial intention. An unsuspecting Arsule and Gédémus lack this foreknowledge, however vague, and act out of instinct rather than insight. Playing on their ignorance, an imaginative Giono once again invokes the god Pan to assist him in yet another little game of fear.

Arsule a préparé deux tartines de pain. C'est à ce moment-là que c'est venu. Ils ne parlaient déjà plus. Ils mangaient; ils regardaient la flamme de la bougie et ils pensaient chacun à leur chose, et, pendant un bon moment, ils se sont dit: c'est le vent qui est revenu, puis ils sont restés encore comme ce tantôt, la bouche pleine, à écouter.

Et il n'y avait rien à écouter. (p.358)

Shifting the focus from the tangible -- the food -- to the intangible -- "c'est à ce moment-là que c'est venu" -- the narrator recalls the moment in the present tense while relating the mysterious incident in the perfect tense implying that something has happened. But as the scene is still unfolding, he changes tenses yet again, using the imperfect to give the sense of continuity. The shifting of tenses causes the reader to pause, and reflect on the happening before observing what effect it has on Arsule and Gédémus.

Silence dominates their actions: "Ils ne parlaient déjà plus",

¹⁹ Cooper, p. 193.

as they eat, look, think and listen. For a fleeting second, evocations of fertility and life flicker in "la flamme de la bougie", but it is more a matter of refreshing the reader's memory than of capturing the characters' gaze or thoughts. Reminiscent of recent events on the plateau, where "Arsule reste comme ça, la bouche ouverte avec du pain et de l'ail plein la lèvre"(p.354), the narrator again catches a mesmerized Arsule with "la bouche pleine, à écouter." "Pendant un bon moment," Arsule and Gédémus associate the incident with the wind, but Giono seizes the opportunity to call on the god Pan, changing their realistically imagined "vent" into the imaginative vision of a fearful entity.

The author envisages a twofold silence, that of the characters and that of nature. George Steiner observes that, "Pascal is nearer the mainstream of classic Western thinking when he says that the silence of cosmic space strikes terror."²⁰ On a very much diminished scale, and in much lighter vein, Giono aptly demonstrates this, relying on the reader's imagination to give shape and vitality to actions that silence speech, yet convey fear. In an effort to compensate for the lack of sound, Gédémus begins to philosophize on life. The narrator notes that, "Arsule écoutait les mots mais, autour des mots, elle écoutait le silence aussi parce que, vraiment, il y avait eu tout à l'heure dans ce silence quelque chose de pas naturel"(p.359). Interpreting Arsule's thoughts to indicate that no matter how much talking takes place, it will not prevent what has happened, from

²⁰ George Steiner, *Language and Silence, The Retreat from the Word* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1958), rpt. 1969, p.31.

happening again. We see that the same thoughts are attributed to Gédémus: "la preuve [qu'il] y pensait aussi, c'est qu'il regardait la porte de temps en temps"(p.359). In spite of the barn's door providing a so-called protection, they sense that they are vulnerable. The power of this unnatural silence dominates their thoughts, and no amount of speaking really alleviates the tension. Suggesting sleep as a means of escape, "quand on dort, on n'entend rien".(p.359), the narrator preempts Gédémus' "Tu es fatiguée, Arsule, on dort?"(p.359) This is ironic since in their present waking state, it is the very lack of sound that engenders fear, and yet the narrator offers sleep, with the compensation of silence, as a temporary panacea.

All omnipresence belongs to the narrator. He observes Gédémus checking the door, and then half opening it to peer outside. Reporting nothing untoward on the plateau, he directs his gaze upward. "Il n'y a rien dans le ciel. La lune, toute nue, est seule au milieu de la nuit comme une almond"(p.359). Universally symbolic of the rhythm of cyclic time,²¹ the moon also represents universal becoming, and controls the span of life. Naked and alone in the middle of the night it symbolizes a paradisaal state, or a pre-natal darkness that precedes rebirth. However, linked to the image of an almond, it also suggests virginity and conjugal happiness. Taking a global view of this sentence, it would appear that it is Giono's intention to convey a sense of the future to his reader. Imperceptibly bound to previous passages hinting at a rebirth, he once more reflects on its possibility.

²¹ Cooper, p.106.

Comme Arsule commençait à s'endormir, elle n'a plus su ce qu'elle faisait et ça a été son corps en travail qui a commandé. Elle s'est approchée doucement de Gédémus, elle s'est serrée contre lui, elle s'est mise là contre la cuisse et le bourgeon de ses seins était contre le dos de Gédémus. (p.359)

In a wide sweep of recall and recognition, the narrator recommences the theme of fertility culminating in a rebirth. The reader is at once reminded of Mamèche's suggestive caress of Panturle's thigh when Giono, much earlier in the novel, uses her as a metaphor for fecund women in order to arouse procreative desires in Panturle. Here Arsule is no metaphor, she is fecund woman, and Gédémus, like Mamèche is a substitute for the longed-for partner. Arsule's action, in the tips of her breasts against Gédémus' back, evokes ideas of motherhood and love. As an accompaniment to her longings, nature intensifies and reinforces the central issue. "Il était venu un vent de nuit de forte haleine; il galopait bride abattue à travers tout le plateau, il avait un long gémissement comme pour boire tout le ciel"(p.360). Personified, the excited wind heaves and moans, opening its mouth to drink in the sky, while the junipers below cry out, and the fig trees wildly scratch the walls of the barn. Attributing these natural powers to the god Pan, Michelfelder says: "le vent fait l'homme avec elle [Arsule], met en travail tout son corps de jeune pouliche." ²²

An analagous situation is developed between Panturle and Arsule. Like her, he recognizes the need for a mate, but beyond acknowledging "Oui, il faudrait une femme. L'envie m'en prend"(p.341), it is the narrator who expresses Panturle's feelings through physiological

²² Jean Giono et les religions de la terre, p.68.

sensations. Feeling as if his strength has been drained, observing Mamèche in her enigmatic episodes on the hill, Panturle, like Arsule, is on the point of going to sleep, when the narrator observes: "Oui, et qu'on ait mis à la place de cette force du lait avec des fleurs de sarriette. Du lait. Il sent que ça coule le long de son corps ..." (p.345). A shriek from Mamèche brings these sensations to an abrupt halt, just as the sound of a footstep, accompanied by the flapping of cloth suddenly awakens Arsule (and Gédémus), temporarily suppressing her desires as fear stares her in the face.

"Tu entends?"

-- Oui, souffle Arsule.

-- Ne bouge pas."

C'est à côté. Ça tâte les murs. Une pierre tombe.

"Ne bouge pas", repête doucement Gédémus à Arsule qui ne bouge pas. (p.360)

Sound replaces silence, but apprehension grows. Wondering whether it is only he who hears the noise a nervous Gédémus asks Arsule if she also hears it. Receiving confirmation, he instructs her to remain motionless. The narrator, playing the role of informant, tells the reader where the noise is coming from, and that a change of sound is caused by a falling stone. The narrative intervention, although dialogue-bound, provides a break between Gédémus' twice repeated instruction, "ne bouge pas", but increases rather than decreases the tension. The only comment is the narrator's wry observation that Arsule is not moving. Gédémus' habit of repeating instructions is familiar with the past, but the reader is aware of a change in attitude. His commands are no longer punctuated by exclamation marks, the harshness has disappeared from his voice, as is denoted by the

unexpected "doucement". Conducted in the present tense, both dialogue and narration are interwoven, laconic, and to the point. Giono uses this technique of interspersing quite lengthy narrations with crisp, terse dialogue to involve the reader not only with external events, but also to allow him to vary his focal length, without altering the sharpness of image, and 'zoom in' on internal issues concerning the characters.

Une ombre a éteint la barre d'argent qui luit
 sous la porte. Ça y est. C'est du bon cette
 fois, c'est là devant. Un bruit de rien frôle
 la porte, tâte le bois. Il semble que c'est
 une main qui s'appuie sur le vantail pour voir
 si c'est fermé. C'est fermé. La grosse pierre
 qui tient fermé a un peu bougé. Elle a grincé.
 Tout léger que c'est, c'est quand même une force
 qui est là, qui est venue voir, qui a taté... (p.360)

Statue-like, Arsule and Gédémus listen to the noise, but their attention is at once diverted as they see the "épaisse barre d'argent large de quatre travers de doigt"(p.360) disappear from under the door. At this stage, the reader is still not told officially of Mamèche's presence, only the recent mention of "quatre" conjures up memories associated with her proposed travels. With a minimum of authorial intrusion, but intent on giving the reader another sort of clue, Giono's narrator alludes to the "force" in human terms, precluding any thought of it being a wild animal. Whether it is a coincidence, or intentional, the choice of the feminine words "ombre" and "force" encourages the supposition that it is Mamèche. The characters' reaction to the shadow differs from the observed narration. Personal fear overrides reason, revealing an incapacity to conceive what immediately confronts them.

"Tu as vu?

-- Oui.

-- Ecoute: cet après-midi, sur le plateau, quand je suis allé pour regarder à l'endroit où ça avait fait: hop, l'herbe était toute couchée, comme sous un poids, comme sous le poids d'une bête; elle était en train de se relever. Mais, quand je suis arrivé là, elle était aplatie. Voilà et tu as vu. Il y a quelque chose contre nous, cette fois. (p.361)

Like the preceding dialogue, the same formula introduces this one, Gédémus asks a question. Whereas previously he spoke in the present tense, conveying a sense of immediacy, he now addresses his query in the perfect tense, suggesting that what he has seen is no longer visible. The change in tense does not obliterate continuity, it merely distances the characters from the event permitting comment on it. Arsule's confirmation of Gédémus' question triggers off an immediate connection between what they have just witnessed, and what he saw on the plateau. Although he mistakes the flattened grass for an animal imprint, Gédémus senses that there is a disquieting connection between the two incidents. He factually recalls his observations of the afternoon until the penultimate sentence, when suddenly, he breaks his train of thought, and switches his attention to Arsule paying her the compliment of a concession -- "Voilà, et tu as vu" -- concerning the very thing that he had so vociferously denied. This interpolation is distracting to the reader, for not only does it detract from the general tone of the report, it also undermines the authenticity of Gédémus' character. If Giono had intended this phrase to substitute for an apology, it is unconvincing and inappropriate if the man's pride is to remain consistent with its previous manifestations. He would sooner have made no mention of Arsule's observations, than to commend her, and own his error.

Immediately following this dialogue, Giono commits a similar error. The narrator comments that it is now broad daylight, whereupon Gédémus remarks: "Arsule, comment veux-tu qu'un pays comme ça nous fasse du mal, regarde-le, tiens, c'est pas beau, ça?" It hardly seems the observation of a coarse-grained knife-grinder, generally insensitive to the beauties of nature. Perhaps Giono was looking for something that would tie up with the preceding dialogue, and anticipate the forthcoming narration, but Gédémus is ill-chosen, as once more his words do not fit his character.

Tout bleu d'iris, terre et ciel avec, à l'ouest, un bouquet de nuages, le jeune soleil marche, enforcé dans les herbes jusqu'aux genoux. Le vent éparpille de la rosée comme un poulain qui se vautre. Il fait jaillir des vols de moineaux qui nagent un moment entre vagues du ciel, ivres, étourdis de cris, puis qui s'abattent comme des poignées de pierre. (p.361)

A beautiful nature proves too tempting for the author to remain outside the action. Replacing the narrator, the poet-Giono elaborates on Gédémus' observations. He appeals to the visual and auditive senses, with colourful and sonorous images. The synthesis of earth and sky in flowery blue, off-set by an arrangement of white -- "un bouquet de nuages" -- on one side, forms the background against which a personified "jeune soleil" penetrates the grass with its warmth. A colt-like wind happily scatters the dew, creating a pleasant change from "le vent [qui] éparpille le bruit des clochettes comme des gouttes d'eau,"(p.328), as it pays its last respects to Mamèche's deceased son. It also gives rise to the birds' frenzied chirping as they enjoy a care-free frolic in the moving air, only to drop, exhausted, once they have expended all their energy. Again it is a far cry from "de larges corbeaux muets"(p.352) who originally accompanied

Arsule and Gédémus, and an even further cry from Homer's Demeter, where "nul oiseau véridique ne vint lui apporter de message"²³ concerning Persephone's whereabouts. The general impression thus created is one of happiness. So in tune with the forces of nature, Giono's personages invariably echo her moods, and the author's poetic intervention could be viewed as a foreshadowing device.

When they are about to set out on the last lap of their journey, Gédémus is back to himself, and Arsule is back in the harness. Having regained his confidence, he expresses embarrassment over their former fears: Ah! on est de beaux soldats, l'un et puis l'autre " (p.361). In an earlier manuscript which does not appear in the final edition, Giono is more explicit, adding the following to Gédémus' words: "et au moins quand on retournera à Sault, ne disons rien, qu'on rirait de nous "(p.1021). The author's decision to eliminate this sentence suggests that the verbal accoutrements are not necessary, and that one sentence suffices to imply Gédémus' embarrassment.

Mapping out their route for the day, Gédémus concludes, saying: "on arrivera là-bas bien avant le soir. En tout comptant "(p.361). However, the omniscient narrator intervenes, disclosing "mais il n'a pas tout compté "(p.361), forewarning the reader to anticipate the unexpected.

Arsule s'est arrêtée

"Ça vient de faire: hop, là devant...

Gédémus se gratte sa tête.

²³ Homère, Hymnes, l 46., p.45.

"Loin?"

-- Non, là devant."

Là devant c'est l'herbe plate.

"Ecoute, dit-il, tournons un peu à droite alors."

(p.362).

This little vignette, the final in the series concerning the mysterious 'tree' is framed by the watchful narrator's observation of Arsule stopping, and briefly concluded by Gédémus' decision to alter their route. Or so it would seem. The scene is not charged with any of the emotion previously exhibited on sighting the 'object', in fact it is so coolly witnessed by characters and narrator alike, that it appears to be yet another variation on what is by now becoming a boring occurrence. But it is precisely the understated manner in which Giono executes this last episode, that conceals its significance.

A first reading leads the reader to believe that it is Gédémus who decides to change their directions. After all, he says in direct speech, "tournons un peu à droite alors." This misleading assumption underscores the importance of the sentence, and the reader remains ignorant of the momentous impact that it will have later in the novel, when Panturle and Arsule discover how they were brought together. At this stage, he merely imagines that something unusual will occur as a result of Gédémus' change of plans. One can appreciate the author's delight as he knowingly pulls the wool over the reader's eyes, simultaneously denying the characters knowledge of their destiny.

Within a frame of expectations -- misplaced, but intended -- Giono interweaves narration proper, and dialogue. Here the author's sense of artistry exploits the principle of using the concept to

reveal, as his device to conceal. With no further comment on the scene, the narrative meanders from "la bonne route,"(p.352) and winds its way through "des quartiers perdus "(p.362).

Je sais où on est, dit Gédémus, on est près d'Aubignane
ça va pas mal, Arsule. Après, c'est Vachères. Ça va
pas mal." (p.362)

A complacent smile can almost be detected on Gédémus' face as he observes that "ça va pas mal", and then repeats the phrase to express self-congratulatory relief at recognizing the vicinity. In close pursuit, the narrator echoes Gédémus' statement "ça va pas mal"(p.362), referring to Aubignane, the village rather than endorsing Gédémus satisfaction or confirming his obvious relief. The thrice-repeated phrase, having now assumed the value of a motif, does not escape the reader's notice. It would seem that the author deliberately focuses attention on it to elicit something more, perhaps another kind of response. He succeeds, because it is the second time -- although from another direction -- that the reader is approaching Aubignane. "Ça va pas mal" suggests a definite change in mood from the first approach to the village, when Mlle Delphine questioningly observes, "c'est là-bas, Aubignane, là où ça a l'air tout mort?"(p.329) There is no tragic element in the iterative phrase, on the contrary, it has an air of optimism, and what it seems to convey is an intimation of things to come.

Arsule tire comme un âne: avec tout le poids de ses
hanches et de ses reins.

Cette émotion de sa chair, ce travail du sang, ça
vient de revenir, à croire que c'est une malédiction.
Ses seins sont encore comme des bourgeons d'arbre.
Elle tire sur son corsage parce que le corsage
frotte le bout de ses seins et que ça l'énerve.
Elle renifle pour mieux sentir l'odeur de Gédémus

qui sue. Elle sue, elle aussi elle se penche
vers ses aisselles pour sentir son odeur à elle.
Elle geint en elle-même: maman, mamman, comme
pour la peur. (pp.362-363)

Giono senses the quick of Arsule's being in this passage. The intimate, earthy narrative underscores her need for a man. Some readers might balk at the references to "odeur" finding them repellent, but if the author's attitude is to be understood, one must appreciate that "this is the primitive mélange, a return to the purely natural state in which all creatures are united."²⁴ The author's appeal is not to the squeamish, his is a robust view of life embodying in the Baudelairian sense the harmony between man, animal and nature. Seen in this perspective, thematic images, like fertility and rebirth, constantly emerge from 'related' incidents throughout the novel, interweaving and shaping a complex meaningful whole, which is more than the sum of its parts.

The verb "renifle" links this passage to an earlier scene where the narrator identifies Panturle's need for a woman with the spring wind. He (Panturle) "renifle" its revitalizing breath which the narrator immediately associates with the smell of a new-born animal. Similarly here, it is Arsule's turn to "renifler" this sweat of their bodies. She reacts like an animal on heat, characterized by the excitement of her flesh, the labour of her blood, and the nipples of her breasts. But it is "le travail du sang" that significantly changes the fertility and rebirth symbols into an all-encompassing symbol, that of life. Introducing "sang" for the first time, in this manner, the narrator

²⁴ Alan Clayton, "Giono's Colline: Pantheism or Humanism?", Forum for Modern Languages Studies (Scottish Academic Press), Vol VII, No. 2, April, 1971, p.116.

consciously adds a new dimension to the thematic images. Representing the life principle, blood is also interchangeable with wine, which transports the reader back in time, where after the wind's sensual embrace, Arsule's body "est en travail comme du vin nouveau" (p.356). Also more recently during the repast in the barn, there were two gourds, "dans une, il y a le vin" (p.358), while in the other was water. They were meant to be mixed but Gédémus instructs Arsule: "Bois-en du pur" (p.358), throwing new light on the previous symbolic connotation.

Overwhelmed by the sensations of her body, Arsule experiences fear which manifests itself in a moan, "maman, maman". The reader does not 'hear' Arsule saying this, but observes that the narrator recalls her uttered words as he hears them. Realizing that she is unable to control her feelings, she anticipates something happening to her. Whereas "maman" could be a manifestation of her insecurity, it seems more likely that Giono especially allocates the narrator the privilege of reporting these two words in order to tie up with the thematic images, giving them coherence. In a veiled way, the author probably hints at the motherly image of Mamèche, to derive full significance from the words, "maman, maman."

Aubignane is finally reached. Gédémus recalls the names of people he knew who used to live there, but each name is followed by the narrator's explanation that either the door is nailed up, or that what remains of the doorless house is a shell. It is only when Gédémus mentions Panturle's house, that the narrator offers a different comment saying: "la porte est fermée" (p.363).

Pourtant, il y a un billot où on a fendu du bois à la hache. Il y a des entailles fraîches dans le billot et des copeaux frais dans l'herbe et un sentier qui entre droit sous la porte et qui est bien vivant encore. Pourtant, il y a une ceinture de laine bleue

pendue à une branche du cyprès et le vent la balance. Mais, à bien regarder, elle est vieille.

"Oh! l'homme", crie Gédémus.

Puis il dit:

"Celui-là, il n'y a pas longtemps qu'il est parti."

Devant la maison, il y a de l'herbe verte et douce. Il y a le cyprès et, comme un fait exprès, une voix bonne à entendre, douce à l'oreille. Et puis, il y a des abeilles qui ont niché sous une tuile et qui grondent là, dans le ciel. Et puis, comme un miracle, à n'y pas croire, à s'en frotter les yeux, il y a un tout petit lilas fleuri. (p.363)

If the narrator's present description of Panturle's house is compared with his initial observation,

il y a une maison qui s'est comme décollée, qui a coulé du haut en bas, toute seule, qui est venue s'arrêter, les quatre d'aplomb, au bord du ruisseau, à la fourche du ruisseau et de ce qu'ils appelaient la route, là, contre un cypres. C'est la maison de Panturle. (p.329)

it can be seen that the earlier account concentrates on its almost inhabitable appearance, having slid down the hill coming to rest, as it were, on all fours. This time, the narrator mentions nothing about the architectural aspect, but focuses his attention on the 'garden' outside Panturle's house. Buzzing with life, it also forms a poignant contrast with the recently observed decay, and the deserted "il n'y a plus que l'herbe" (p.363) where the church square once stood.

There is a sense of order about this narrative, initiated by "un billot où on a fendu du bois à la hache." Consciously or not, Giono casts Panturle in a Christ-image as a carpenter using "tools symbolic of the divine power of bringing order out of chaos."²⁵ The block of

²⁵ Cooper, p.194.

wood causes an immediate association of ideas, bringing to mind the image of Panturle standing in front of the fire so that Mamèche could assess him, and the event immediately prior to that, where Mamèche relates the story of the charcoal burner. It would seem that the author uses an analogy of film montage -- as he frequently does on other occasions -- to suggest something of the interplay between apparently isolated presentations of narration and dialogue. Juxtaposing different incidents, as one would splice them together on film, the author uses this technique to visualize a creation whereby each montage piece represents a particular aspect of the overall picture, and no longer exists as an autonomous unrelated element.²⁶

Giono interrupts the passage with Gédémus' call and subsequent observation that Panturle had not been gone long. Inserting this short piece of direct speech within the narration, the author keeps his eye on Arsule and Gédémus. But he also employs it to don his narrator's guise, and continue the narration which verges on the artificial with its over-abundance of images, real and affected. The wind is conspicuously absent, yet "le cyprès ... comme un fait exprès, [a] une voix bonne à entendre, douce à l'oreille." Harmonizing with the natural musical sounds, the humming bees complement the singing tree forming a duet as unexpected as the miracle of the lilac tree in full blossom. However, if viewed poetically and mythologically, this last section of narration conceives a sweet and gentle, verdant Spring airing its renewed voice after a Winter's sleep, while the bees' timeous reentry

²⁶ This idea originates from Alter's discussion of analogy of film montage in the Bible. See "The Art of Biblical Narrative, p.140.

alludes once more to the myth of Demeter, and to the point in the story where Arsule's association with the image of the bee relates to her rite de passage, symbolizing rebirth and purity.

Sensing that they are at last safe, Gédémus suggests that they rest, possibly sleep in front of Panturle's house and so saying he stretches himself out on the ground. But Arsule is unable to relax as her unsatisfied longings consume both her mind and her body,

comme une eau qui effondre tout. Son coeur est
une motte de terre qui fond. Elle est assise dans
l'herbe. Il y a des pâquerettes entre ses jambes.
Elle n'est plus qu'une peau toute vide; elle entend
chanter au fond d'elle cette eau aigre comme du feu.

Elle ouvre son corsage. Elle sort ses seins. Ils sont
durs et chauds et elle en a un dans chaque main...

C'est à ce moment-là qu'elle a vu sur le seuil blanc
de la porte une flaque de sang épaisse comme une
pivoine. (p.364)

This scene, the third in the series conveying Arsule's desire for a man, derives its significance from the gradual build-up which begins when she first rests her breasts against Gédémus' back, then senses the hardened tips of her breasts as she pulls the cart, and now, in an attempt to appease her sexual desires, holds her breasts in her hands. Seen symbolically, these three scenes culminate in the final stage of Arsule's purification ritual, progressively freeing her from the shackles of her past, and allowing her to emerge as a 'new' woman. For Giono, Arsule's bare breasts are a rejoicing that at last she is at one with nature, without the impediment of clothing to interrupt their communion. Embodying the image of a true Earth Mother waiting to nourish her children, Arsule sits in the grass in anticipation. The "pâquerettes entre ses jambes" symbolize innocence and purity, metaphorically concluding the ritual.

Changing his focus of direction from Arsule to the entrance of Panturle's house, the narrator draws the reader's attention to the threshold, instantly capturing his gaze with the visual impact of the red blood on the white doorstep. Significantly, Arsule notices it first, which suggests an immediate connection between her and the image of "une flaque de sang épaisse comme une pivoine". The peony with its red, silky texture, evokes a lovely spring picture, but hardly succeeds as a comparison with a pool of blood. Yet the author probably chooses the peony, because "it is the imperial flower, supposed to be untouched by any insect except the bee,"²⁷ and it relates to the mythological aspect of Arsule. Traditionally, the threshold symbolizes the entry to a new world, and as rites de passage "are often based on an initial separation, followed by transition to a final state of unity,"²⁸ it could be posited that Arsule's staring at the blood, "invokes the formula of rising up and going off to a different place, which is one of the prevalent biblical conventions for marking the end of a narrative segment."²⁹ Appropriately, this is Giono's final sentence in the chapter, and it would appear that he uses it in much the same way as did his biblical forebears, to suggest the end of the present and the advent of the future.

²⁷ Cooper, p.128.

²⁸ Cooper, p.126.

²⁹ Alter, p.65.

Arsule and Panturle

Choosing a Paradisal setting for Panturle's re-entry into the novel, Giono presents the reader with a second version of the garden -- described earlier in the novel -- in front of the protagonist's home. With minor variations on the first version, because the future preceded the present, the author regresses nature's growth, and changes the focus from Arsule and Gédémus, to Panturle.

Il est assis devant sa porte. Ça a fait du chemin depuis que la Mamèche est partie. Dans ce coin, un petit bout de lilas va fleurir et le vent de la plaine a porté jusqu'ici une grosse abeille toute folle et qui s'est mise à renifler les tuiles. Mais elle va mourir. C'est trop tôt de quelques jours. (p.364)

When Arsule and Gédémus arrive at this garden, "il y a des abeilles qui ont niché sous une tuile"(p.363), and "il y a un tout petit lilas fleuri"(p.363). Now, having turned the clock back, the narrator reintroduces Panturle at the point where the "lilas va fleurir", and there is only "une grosse abeille toute folle". The two perspectives complement each other, the significance of the present ironically being derived from the future in the past. Linking future to present in anti-chronological order, the reader can retrospectively appreciate the thematic pointers. The anticipated death of the bee, would have had no import within the immediate context had it preceded the former passage, but now the reader already anticipates an event in "quelques jours." Rich in symbolism, the bee, besides many of its aforementioned aspects, represents a winged messenger. The wind too, is a messenger of the gods, and together these symbols carry a sense of anticipation that is transferred from the one narration to the other, even though the wind is not actually mentioned in the former passage, and only the

singing cypress tree hints at its presence. But the prominence given to the wind in the interim makes its weight felt, so that by the time Arsule and Gédémus reach their destination, the wind has imparted its message. However, this is only realized with hind sight.

Giono again casts Panturle in the role of hunter. Initially out hunting, he spies Mamèche; now, ostensibly hunting a fox, Panturle subconsciously seeks a woman. With the narrator's help, the wind plays a vital part blowing Panturle's thoughts in the desired direction. Lying in the grass, he realizes that instead of looking for a fox, his thoughts have "a glissé vers autre chose au moral"(p.365).

Le vent s'appuie sur lui de tout son poids, par larges coups, longs et lourds, puis s'envole, et c'est un ron-ron comme de chat. Il est là à plat ventre sur la terre et le vent le presse comme une éponge. Cette chose de renard et du glapis qu'il faut guetter, ça coule de lui dans l'herbe et la terre le boit. Ces autres choses auxquelles il pensait, qui sont dans sa peau comme des vinaigres ou des eaux douces, elles coulent aussi de lui pressé de vent; et c'est aussi la terre et l'herbe qui les boivent.

Le voilà vide tout d'un coup.

Le vent toque du doigt contre lui comme contre un baril, pour voir s'il reste encore du jus. Non, Panturle sonne sous le doigt du vent comme un baril vide.

Il est revenu à la maison presque au soir. Il n'y avait jamais eu de renard sur la terre.

Il s'est aperçu que c'était presque le soir parce qu'en marchant la tête haute vers le vent, il a vu le soleil qui passait ses cornes par le fenestron du clocher. Il se sent tout lavé de haut en bas comme un drap avec une brosse. Il est tout blanc, il est tout neuf. Il va sur la terre avec un coeur propre. (pp.364-365)

In this passage, the author conveys the elemental force of the wind, which manoeuvres Panturle at will, by a series of interrelated images. Placing Panturle at the centre of the action, Giono attempts

to illustrate man's power to fuse himself with things, and reestablish a sense of unity with the cosmic forces around him. At first the wind is metaphorically pictured as a purring cat happily thumping its weight against Panturle, but immediately thereafter, its pressure on Panturle's body is likened to a sponge which cleanses his body of all its thoughts with each squeeze. In true harmony, earth and grass are receptive to the wind's movements, absorbing the flow of Panturle's thoughts as they are washed from his body. Following this, the wind raps its metaphorical finger against Panturle to check whether he has been thoroughly cleansed. Sounding "sous le doigt du vent comme un baril vide" not only confirms the wind's efficiency, but also echoes a thematically parallel narrative unit, when the narrator recently observes that Arsule "n'est plus qu'une peau toute vide" (p.364). It would seem that underlying the narrator's observations of the personified wind, Giono is telling the reader that Panturle has started his purification ritual. Having accompanied Arsule through her rites de passage, culminating in her purification, the author purposely creates a parallel situation to make the reader aware of what is taking place. The success of the ritual thus far is confirmed by "il n'y avait jamais eu de renard sur la terre" as Panturle returns home "tout blanc... tout neuf... avec un coeur propre."

Le jour d'après, il a quand même entendu le renard.
C'est la grosse habitude, la mécanique de la tête
qui tourne de son propre élan. (p.365)

In lieu of an apology for prematurely presuming that Panturle had been completely purified, the narrator offers an explanation, attributing the protagonist's hunting instincts to old habits. Diverting the reader's attention from the subject, he reports that Panturle on rising "voit l'aubépine du ruisseau. Elle est neuve, elle

aussi, et fleurie; elle écume"(p.365). Impressionistic in its visual concept, it is also reminiscent of "une force souple et parfumée [qui] court dans la nuit. ... Un peu comme l'aubépine"(p.346), which the narrator recalls immediately after Mamèche's last appearance on Resplandin Hill. Developing this image, he intensifies its initial evocation, and bridges the gap between the two distant scenes. In an indirect way, it also reinforces the recent memory of Mamèche commented upon when reintroducing Panturle sitting in front of his door. "Ça a fait du chemin depuis que la Mamèche est partie"(p.354). Still observing Panturle the narrator sparks off yet another memory with "une pelote de plumes et de cris [qui] lui [Panturle] vient frapper la poitrine, tombe à terre, se partage et rejaillit de l'herbe en deux moineaux"(p.365), reminding the reader of the point in Arsule's journey where "il fait jaillir des vols de moineaux qui nagent un moment entre les vagues du ciel, ivres, étourdis de cris, puis qui s'abattent comme des poignées de pierre"(p.361). For Panturle this is a unique event, but for the reader it partakes of the déjà vu. The similarity between the two incidents subtly links Arsule and Panturle, but as Gédémus was with Arsule to witness the first mentioned event, the reader cannot conclude anything definite at this stage. Returning once more to the image of the wind, the narrator observes that it assumes the metaphoric guise of a reassuring friend; "le vent le ceinture d'un bras tiède et l'emmène avec lui"(p.365) as it accompanies Panturle.

In this instance, Giono conveys the complex interplay of narrative technique through the many images of the wind. The omniscient narrator reminisces, evokes memories, draws parallels between events, and generates thematic pointers through this multifaceted image. At this point, Panturle is the character who renders these images meaningful, enabling the author to expand the reader's visionary horizon as

he provides links with past narrative events, while simultaneously using them as anticipatory images.

With the advent of Spring, the narrator, having enlisted the aid of the wind and earth to cleanse Panturle, realizes that they have drained him, while in another sense intensifying his emptiness. Recognizing that the character's pent-up emotions are from living alone, Giono shifts his attention to Panturle's need for a mate, evoking images of fertility in harmony with the rebirth of Spring.

Il y a Caroline qui bêle. Ce n'est plus sa voix de vieille bique, mais un petit tremblement doux d'enfant-chèvre. Elle se plaint comme ça aux quatre coins de l'air. Elle gémit devant le cyprès, devant l'aubépine. Elle a mangé la première fleur du lilas. Ce matin, il n'est sorti de ses mamelles que deux ou trois gouttes de lait jaune qui sont restées dans les poils. (pp.365-366)

...
"Et alors, Caroline, et alors, et alors, c'est déjà fini?" (p.366)

...
"Et alors, Caroline, et alors?" répète Panturle. (p.366)

...
"Il faudrait un bouc." (p.367)

The gentle bleating of the goat transforms her image from a "vieille bique" to an "enfant-chèvre," but the plaintive tone in her voice implies that in spite of her attempted rejuvenation, something is lacking. Significantly the narrator observes her moaning in front of "le cyprès" and "l'aubépine". The former, a phallic symbol, denotes life, while the flowery foam of the latter symbolizes the pure bridal state, synthesizing the respective needs of Caroline and Panturle. Linked to the concept of moaning when in need of fulfilling urgent physical desires, the reader is reminded of Arsule. "Elle geint en elle-même: maman, maman:..." (p.363), when overcome by the feelings of her body. Like Panturle, the goat too, is drained, stressing her

need for a mate if she is to supply life-giving milk. The narrative is interrupted by Panturle, who expresses his feelings. Not wanting to accept the goat's possible sterility, as the repetitive "et alors" indicates, he eventually stops questioning the animal. Symbols of fertility and rebirth fill the gap before Panturle concludes that the goat, like himself, needs a companion of the opposite sex.

Once again focusing his vision on the hawthorn bush, the narrator notices a nightingale in full song perched in its foliage. The auditory perspective flows into the visual, creating the effect of a warbling shrub, "on dirait que c'est elle [l'aubépine] qui chante" (p.366). Traditionally associated with love songs, Giono could be using the bird as a foreshadowing device, carefully placing it on the nuptial hawthorn, to anticipate a future event. From observing the bird, the narrator switches his attention to Panturle, watching him observe the moving grass. "... il ne faisait pas de vent; à cause de ça, Panturle a vu la couleuvre qui s'en allait sa route, toute frétilante, vêtue de neuf" (p.366). Universally a rejuvenator and an initiator, the snake symbolizes renewal of life, and "represents the passions vitalizing both the male and female principles."¹ It would seem that such is the feeling the author is attempting to convey, for immediately afterwards, the narrator focuses on "un petit essaim qui cherche un abri"(p.366), reinforcing the concept of a rebirth, and subtly spanning the time gap between Panturle's re-entry into the novel and the present.

Poetically the narrator summarizes:

On sent que la terre s'est passionnée pour un travail
qui éclate en gémissements d'herbes et passages de

¹ Cooper, p.150.

bêtes lourdes. (p.366)

Sensing the narrator's concept of a rebirth, Panturle reiterates his sentiments, c'est une passion qu'elle a, la terre!" (p.367), as he motionlessly watches the pregnant beasts deciding not to kill them, "parce qu'il est chasseur et que c'est sa provision à lui qu'elles ont dans le ventre"(p.367). But with it, comes the bitter realization of his own emptiness. He understands more than ever that he desperately needs a woman, and that Caroline needs a mate.

Avant de s'endormir, il a pensé à sa solitude... Puis il a pensé avec ardeur à la Mamèche elle-même. Si elle avait été plus jeune... Folie de ce dire ça, mais... Si la Mamèche était encore là... il irait lui dire:

"Puisque tu veux m'en chercher une de femme, va, puisque tu sais où elles sont celles qui veulent."(p.367)

Embedded in the narration proper, Panturle's articulated speech proposes what he thinks Mamèche should do since she wants to find him a woman, and seems to know where to find one. The narrator conveys Panturle's unspoken thoughts to the reader until he reaches a point where the character is about to make a resolution. At this moment in the narrative event, "il irait lui dire", he changes his pattern of narration, opting for interior monologue. The introductory "puisque tu veux", and then "puisque tu sais", dramatically points at Mamèche, intimating that she is now being held responsible for her earlier statement: "elle est partout si tu la forces"(p.342). Gaining even more direct access to Panturle's hidden thoughts, the narrator verbalizes the character's intended actions. What emerges is not a straightforward account of someone else's observation, but an inner vision which could be construed as Panturle's thoughts of his future, in perfect accord with nature's rebirth. Reinforcing this notion, the

narrator comments, "mais à y réfléchir c'est peut-être ça son départ. Elle était tenace dans ses idées"(p.367).

Suddenly a knock on the door sends Panturle's hopes soaring wildly. "Un bond; il va ouvrir: la nuit déserte le salue"(p.367). With one sentence containing a semi-colon and colon, Giono rapidly builds up to a climax, creating a sense of expectation in Panturle's spontaneous reaction. It is an anticlimax for reader and protagonist alike, to be greeted by the solitary night. But, realizing that the time of night is too good an opportunity to abandon all images of fertility, the author shifts his attention to concepts of sexuality. Returning to bed, Panturle falls into a fitful sleep. He twice dreams about love-making. In the first dream he possesses the woman he wants, in the second -- no doubt a real War memory for Giono -- he recalls going to "une maison ... derrière les abattoirs de la ville"(p.368). The narrator refrains from comment here, but takes pains to describe the grisly contents of the murky water lying under the bridge over which Panturle has to pass in order to reach the "maison". Perhaps the author indulges in this distasteful image because it does not conform to his idea of true love-making, or perhaps he uses it as a prelude to Panturle's forthcoming cruelty in his behaviour to the trapped fox. Whatever the case, the narrator notes that Panturle feels ill from the second dream, and observes him climbing out of bed, going to the window and looking outside. His vision falls on a pregnant she-badger lying on her back with an upturned stomach "velouté comme la nuit"(p.368). This beautiful image of fertility, juxtaposed with the previous one, forms a powerful contrast balancing the two concepts of love.

The morning finds a frustrated Panturle punching a sterile goat in the ribs.

Il a encore besoin de frapper. Ce ne serait pas Caroline -- la chèvre -- il frapperait encore. Si seulement c'était un homme il frapperait encore. Ça lui a fait du bien. Parce qu'autrement, il se sent amer et tout fleuri comme l'aubépine.(p.368)

The narrator constantly uses the verb "frapper" with the adverb "encore" to demonstrate Panturle's ongoing attempt to rid himself of his emotions. He even notes that the character feels good after the assault, but tries to excuse Panturle's attack on the innocent goat, explaining that, "il se sent amer et tout fleuri comme l'aubépine", and thereby evoking fertility images already associated with the odour and the hawthorn. However, the unpleasant picture remains in the reader's mind, as well as that of the abattoirial debris in the water, setting the tone for the narrator's description of a primitive Panturle eviscerating a still warm, newly-dead, trapped fox. Graphic in its descriptive quality, the narrator conveys Panturle deriving a kind of savage joy akin to sexual pleasure, from this act; "c'était si bon qu'il en a gémé"(p.369). The protagonist then proceeds home with "la bête crevée [qui] chauffait son poing comme une bouche"(p.369). Once again an image for the robust rather than the squeamish, Giono's appeal is directed at primordial man, illustrating his natural instincts and subsequent satisfaction. The more refined taste would balk at this image, because the attempted simile exceeds the limits of 'accepted' comparison, and renders it unpalatable. But, whether it succeeds or not, as a narrative technique, it has the effect of prolonging the reader's attention as he ponders over its function.

Il a pendu le renard sur son seuil pour l'écorcher.
Il a du sang jusqu'au poignet; il y en a même un filet qui coule, se sèche, puis coule le long de son bras, dans les poils. Il y a aussi du sang sur l'escalier de la porte.(p.369)

Immediately reminiscent of Arsule's gaze -- " ...elle a vu sur seuil blanc de la porte une flaque de sang épaisse comme une pivoine" (p.364) -- the narrator alerts the reader to a possible association between Panturle and the woman. Viewed symbolically, the fox could be regarded as a blood sacrifice. "As all creation implies sacrifice it is the death-life, birth and rebirth cycle, so that sacrifice is equated with creation, and identifies man with aspects of the cosmos."² As with Arsule, the fox's blood could also conceivably signify the final stage of Panturle's purification, uniting him with the sacrifice, and thus creation.

Seen in another perspective, this passage highlights Giono's deliberate intention to arrest the flow of time. Chronologically, Panturle would have appeared first, spilling the disembowelled fox's blood as he carried it over the threshold. Only afterwards, having arrived at the scene, would Arsule have noticed it. The displacement of time enables the author to trace the independent development of the two characters within the same time span, establishing an effect-cause relationship, which in turn provides the latter with a significance that it would not have had, if the sequence had flowed uninterrupted.

With the same incision that Panturle plunges the knife into the fox's skin, the narrator penetrates his thoughts. Not surprisingly, fertility predominates. "Ça aurait pu être une femelle"(p.369) is the first thought related. Enlarging the idea "avec des petits comme des noix blanches. Un chapelet de petits!"(p.369) leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that literally and symbolically -- walnuts represent fertility and they were also the nut served at Greek and Roman weddings

² Cooper, p.143.

-- the themes are fertility and rebirth. Still magnifying the already explicit image, "ça aurait pu être mère blaireau avec son ventre lourd qui flottait dans la fontaine de la lune"(p.369), the narrator adds another symbolic dimension with "la fontaine and "la lune", perceiving a sense of harmony between the moving waters of life and the rhythmic force of cyclic time. Finally reinforcing the fertility concept, before he brings Panturle back to earth with a thud, the narrator comments that "le vent est dans sa [Panturle's] chemise, contre sa peau, tout frétilant comme une couleuvre"(p.369), and that the inside of the fox "sent l'amer, ça sent l'aubépine"(p.369), reminding the reader of their past connotative associations.

On entend marcher sur le chemin du village. Il écoute, et c'est bien un pas qui bouge sur les pierres.

La Mamèche?

Non, une voix d'homme, et puis une autre voix en réponse qui lui fait tressaillir tout le coeur et lui jette à la figure toute la chaude honte d'avoir patouillé avec les mains dans le sang.

Il décroche la bête. Il entre dans la maison. Il ferme doucement la porte. Il pousse le gros verrou. (p.370)

This passage is framed by an introductory sentence informing Panturle that he is no longer alone, and concluded by four laconic sentences depicting the sequence of his actions in concealing himself, and evidence of his activities. Within the frame, the narrator dispels Panturle's thought of Mamèche with the sound of two voices, but cunningly does not disclose the gender of the responding voice. The reader is not told of Arsule's presence, the information being withheld until the fateful moment in the story when it becomes immediately relevant. However, judging from Panturle's reaction to the second

voice, the reader is alert to the possibility that it might belong to a woman. Giono takes the liberty of slowing down the rhythm of this narration in much the same way that he would, if he interrupted the text with direct speech. But limiting it to the narrator, he bridges the gap between first and third person, permitting him the freedom to make and confirm assertions without the disturbance of another's words. The narrator reports Panturle's imagined thought in the first person, "La Mamèche?", making it seem as if Panturle is talking, yet in response to the question, he tersely refutes the idea with a "Non", completing the sentence in his usual vein, by observing Panturle in the third person. Giono's attempt to efface the speech-act achieves its purpose, facilitating a flow to the passage that quotation marks would otherwise have impeded. At the same time, this narrative device also has the effect of dividing our attention between the authoritative narrator and Panturle. Encountering Panturle's supposed interior monologue in the form of indirect speech allows it to remain a thought which the narrator controls so that it does not take precedence over the event being related.

At this juncture, Panturle removes himself from view. In four short sentences, progressively ensuring his privacy, the narrator observes Panturle unhooking the fox, entering the house, and closing the door before finally locking it. Marking the end of Panturle's hunting, it suggests that he is on the point of completing his purification ritual. The withdrawal into his house signifies what Campbell might term, a "dying to the world."³

³ The Hero with a Thousand Faces, p.35.

Everywhere, no matter what the sphere of interest (whether religious, political or personal), the really creative acts are represented as those deriving from some sort of dying to the world; and what happens in the interval of the hero's non-entity, so that he comes back as one reborn, made great and filled with creative power....⁴

Panturle's retreat into obscurity implies just such a transitory stage, giving the narrator a chance to quicken the tempo. The scene is characterized by Panturle's impatience which the narrator conveys in short, brisk sentences as he follows the protagonist to the loft, "pour les voir? ..." (p.370).

Il les voit, Il la voit.
Il est dans l'ombre. Eux au soleil.
C'est la chasse. Elle est jeune! (p.370)

Giono rigorously economizes on the narrator's words in this excerpt, expressing much through little. The first sentence confirms the question, "pour les voir?", answering it in a general manner. However the second confirms the reader's suspicions, defining the sex, and accounting for Panturle's reaction. The third and fourth sentences neatly balance each other, contrasting the aspects of dark and light, while explaining their respective positions. The fifth indicates a hunt of a different kind. Reminiscent of the parallel hunting scene when Panturle was literally out hunting, and figuratively hunted Mamèche, it seems to be a synthesis of both, suggesting Panturle's intention to 'hunt' this woman. Finally, "elle est jeune!" contrasts with Mamèche's old age. Recalling Panturle's reported interior monologue, "puis il a pensé avec ardeur à la Mamèche. elle-même. Si

⁴ Campbell, pp.35-36.

elle avait été plus jeune ..." (p.367), suggests by comparison that the young woman is ideal.

The author quickens the pace of the action, using a string of verbs to convey Panturle's excitement on seeing Arsule's bare breasts. Il bute (p.370), "il roule" (p.370), "il se relève, cogne de la tête" (p.370), "il trébuche" (p.370), "saute, glisse" (p.370), "deux sauts, et il renverse son chaudron" (p.370). The narrator portrays Panturle grappling with his emotions, while the reader, encountering this dense concentration of verbs, focuses on the intensity and rapidity of the protagonist's actions in this moment of urgency. The narrator's comment: "On dirait que sa bouche est pleine de cette fleur de l'aubépine" (p.370) conjures up already familiar images of fertility, but "il bute dans un pétrin" (p.370) might be dismissed as simply bumping into a characteristic feature of rural life. At this stage the kneading-trough reveals nothing else, it is only later when Panturle and Arsule restore order to Aubignane, that its significance is discovered. Giono inserts this realistic motif into the structure of the narrative as a foreshadowing device, but its introduction is so bound up with Panturle's movements that even an alert reader might fail to perceive the inner meaning that informs his actions.

Recalling the incident when Panturle opens the door to greet the night, the narrator now observes him as "il arrache la porte qui hurle... Personne!" (p.370). However, no knock precedes this attempt only a breathlessness created by "le grand élan de toute sa chair" (p.370).

Mais, là, dans l'herbe, une tache ronde, un nid...
La femme était là. Ce n'est plus la nourriture
de vent comme cette nuit, ça. (p.371)

In a tenuous way, the narrator's observation of the grass revealing

the woman's presence, relates to the scene on the plateau where Gédémus recalls that, "l'herbe était toute couchée, comme sous un poids"(361). Seemingly disconnected, the fine thread joining these two observations, is yet another veiled comparison between Mamèche and Arsule. A complete reading discloses that the "poids" was "la Mamèche, cette vieille Piémontaise qui, seule sur la lande, barrera la route à Gédémus ... le détournant de son chemin" (p.994), while the reader, even on a first reading, already suspects the woman's identity. The essence of the comparison lies in the word, "nid". Whereas the grass on the plateau "était en train de se relever"(p.361), indicating transience, here, in spite of the woman having moved away, the grass remains flattened like a nest, foreshadowing a kind of permanence not hitherto suggested.

Closer scrutiny of implied narrative disclosure brings to light the subtle manner in which the author imperceptibly weaves comparison into the fabric of his story. The characters are never involved in direct comparison. Instead he chooses similar, parallel or analagous events to manifest differences, or dissimilar and different incidents to suggest similarity.

Considérons les deux formules: "seul ce qui se ressemble diffère," "seules les différences se ressemblent." Il s'agit de deux lectures du monde dans la mesure où l'une nous convie à penser la différence à partir d'une similitude ou d'une identité préalables, tandis que l'autre nous invite au contraire à penser la similitude et même l'identité comme le produit d'une disparité de fond. La première, définit le monde des simulacres. Elle pose le monde lui-même comme phantasme. 5

⁵ Gilles Deleuze, quoted by J. Hillis Miller, in "Fiction and Repetition: Tess of the d'Urbervilles," *Forms of Modern British Fiction*, ed. Alan Warren Friedman (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975)p.70.

A thematic pattern begins to develop, binding each disparate incident to the next until the reader becomes aware of comparisons that were not immediately apparent. Mamèche substitutes for fecund woman, while Arsule embodies the concept. Panturle 'hunts' Mamèche, he pursues Arsule. Mamèche's age contrasts with Arsule's youth, and finally, the older woman's ephemeral nature invites comparison with the younger's permanence. Either directly, or covertly through the narrator, Panturle emerges as the main narrative thread joining these comparisons together.

Adding another dimension to the concept of comparison, Giono alludes to the general myths of Demeter and Persephone, respectively referring to them as "crone"⁶ and "maiden."⁷ Suggesting not only the cyclic decline of winter (crone), and the revival of spring (maiden), but also the dual aspect of the same goddess manifested in the form of mother and daughter. J.G. Frazer asks:

And if the daughter goddess was not a personification of the young corn of the present year, may not the mother goddess be a personification of the old corn of last year which has given birth to the new crops? ⁸

and then decides,

... I have for the most part assumed an identity of nature between Demeter and Persephone, the divine mother and daughter personifying the corn in its double aspect of the seed corn of last year and the ripe ears of this, and this view of the substantial unity of mother and daughter is borne out by their portraits in Greek art, which are often so alike

⁶ Robert Graves, The Greek Myths: 1, p.14.

⁷ Graves, p.14.

⁸ J.G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, p.521.

as to be indistinguishable.⁹

Seen in this perspective, Mamèche's "dying to the world" ensures Arsule's creation of a new world, symbolizing the two-fold nature of the principle of life. Reminiscent also of Mamèche's lament to the Madonna, with her constant refrain "comme le blé"(p.338) when bewailing the latter's 'misdeed' towards herself, she could well be considered "the old corn of last year," while Arsule, still to sow the seed of 'this year', foreshadows the future of the novel.

Returning to the action of the novel, the narrator focuses his attention on the 'hunt'. He observes Panturle chuckling knowingly to himself as he determines to follow Arsule. "Il a un grand rire qui ne fait pas de bruit, son rire de chasseur. Il rit de savoir lire cette chose écrite dans l'air et dans la terre"(371). Sensing a 'kill', Panturle watches "la piste de la femme"(p.371) winding its way around the hill "comme la longe d'un fouet"(p.371). The narrator imagines Panturle to be holding the whip's handle, which in turn gives the author the opportunity to allude to mythology. Evoking a Hades-Persephone image -- "Avec un bon fouet et un lié sec du poignet on va cueillir une fleur à deux mètres, dans le pré, là-bas"(p.371) -- he suggests a similarity between Panturle's situation and that of the classical myth. From the reader's perspective, naming the "fouet" and the suggestion "on va cueillir une fleur", triggers off a pre-figurative pattern that unmistakably calls to mind the myth of Hades and Persephone. Choosing this point in the action for the allusion, Giono purposely uses the technique of prefiguration to tell

⁹ Frazer, p.523.

part of the tale before it is told, but in the context of the novel, and not in the sense of the myth proper. Unlike the real hunt, the reader anticipates that Panturle, like Hades, will capture his prey alive, and unlike the classical myth he realizes that no symbolic underworld awaits them. Although the mythological element does not provide the same direct commentary on the novel, it still functions as analogous description enriching the reader's experience.¹⁰

The narrator provides a detailed account, telling the reader how Panturle uses the knowledge of the area to spy on Arsule and Gédémus. Short circuiting their route, "Panturle s'est arrêté au débouché du ruisseau, juste au-dessus du saut du Gaudissart et il a pris l'affût sous un pin. ...Le pin est pendu sur l'eau"(p.373). Perceiving in Panturle only an animal-like desire to satisfy his sexual longings, the narrator notes that " ...son désir ... a écrasé tout ce qui était de l'homme. Il n'est plus resté là, dans l'herbe, que le grand mâle" (p.373). Confirming this assumption, he proceeds to watch Panturle climb the overhanging branch, "comme une bête"(p.373) to gain a better view of them. On sighting the couple, Panturle quivers excitably, but the branch, unable to bear his weight, cracks. "Il a donné un coup de rein dans son instinct d'animal et jeté les mains vers l'autre branche... mais... il tombe"(p.374). Perhaps Giono is yet again trying to persuade the reader that when it comes down to basics, the boundaries between man and animal disappear, and their needs are the same. As he expresses himself:

Je me suis véritablement senti sans frontières. Je suis mêlangé, d'arbres, de bêtes et d'éléments; et

¹⁰ See John White, Mythology in the Modern Novel, p.156.

les arbres, les bêtes et les éléments qui m'entourent
sont faits de moi-même autant que d'eux-mêmes. 11

Resorting once more to verb intensity to convey not only the increased pace of the narration, but also the single-minded purposefulness of the water's movements as it carries Panturle out of obscurity. Giono personifies the water in the shape of a powerful being from whom the protagonist has no escape. With "les longs doigts blancs... qui se ferment sur lui. ... l'eau... le ceinture, lui écrase le nez, lui fait toucher les deux épaules sur les pierres plates du fond...d'un coup, le ruisseau l'arrache, l'emporte, le lance par-dessus le rebord.... l'eau, elle, bouge ses bras et ses jambes avec de la double force et de la colère d'écume"(374). From a symbolic perspective, regarding water at "the source of all potentialities in existence,"¹² it would seem appropriate that the author chooses to immerse Panturle at this point in the novel. "All waters are symbolic of the Great Mother and associated with... the waters of fertility and refreshment and the fountain of life... they always dissolve, abolish, purify, 'wash away' and regenerate."¹³ Seen in this light, the timely intervention of the water would symbolize "death to the old life and rebirth into the new,"¹⁴ as Panturle unknowingly completes his purification ritual. In case the reader's attention is drawn only to this aspect of the water's strength and purificatory function, the author here inserts a grim reminder of his war recollections, illustrating the powerlessness of a soldier battling against an almighty enemy.

¹¹ Jean Giono, "Preface," Les Vraies Richesses, p.16.

¹² Cooper, p.188.

¹³ Cooper, p.188.

¹⁴ Cooper, p.188.

Il a roulé sans plus combattre sur la dernière pente. Il a roulé, mélangé avec de l'eau et de la mousse et la maison aux soldats, et la carne qui pourrissait à la porte comme des fleurs. Elle s'élargissent dans sa tête, ces fleurs de sang et de pus, pleine de mouches.

Des mouches d'or dans ses yeux.
Il semble que l'eau lui ferme la bouche avec un paquet de tripes froides. (p.374)

The themes of war and death -- in the sense of rotting corpses -- echo throughout this passage. Perhaps all that Giono wants to impart, is that Panturle's 'battle' is over, but the images he evokes do not harmonize with the theme of the novel. The distasteful simile, "la carne qui pourrissait à la porte comme des fleurs", extends beyond acceptable limits, and the reader is left wondering, why? Could it be the author contradicting his own idealistic thoughts of "mélange", recognizing to his sadness that man's senseless killing of man destroys his affinity with animal and nature? Alan Clayton suggests that,

from time to time we hear in his works a voice which denies the possibility of full communion with the natural world. It is Giono's voice and it speaks against his vision. As is so often the case in literary matters, the novelist's testimony clashes with the essayist's.¹⁵

But viewing the passage from the perspective of death before rebirth, even though the most recent image of death is inappropriate to the concept, the narrator keeps the swift movement of the narration, speeding up the final moments of Panturle's purification until he is catapulted into the pool below. From that moment the rebirth

¹⁵ Alan Clayton, "Giono's Colline: Pantheism or Humanism?," Forum for Modern Language Studies (Scottish Academic Press: Vol VII, No. 2, April 1971), p.118.

starts, and tone and pace both change.

Depuis un moment, il a recommencé à vivre, mais il a gardé les yeux fermés.
Il est venu un grand bruit doux et une fraîcheur: plusieurs voix d'arbres qui parlaient ensemble.
Il s'est dit: "C'est le vent." C'est de là qu'il a recommencé à vivre. (p.375)

Framing this extract with a twice repeated message to the reader that Panturle "a recommencé à vivre", conveys no action, but an inner condition indicating that the protagonist is about to embark on a 'new' life. The physical detail "il a gardé les yeux fermés" is used as an anticipatory device, giving the narrator a chance to delay the revelatory moment, while commenting on the protagonist's condition and the time of day. Symbolizing regeneration, the trees, in unison, bear witness to Panturle's new life, but the essence of this excerpt lies in the thematic element, "C'est le vent" which the narrator reports as direct interior monologue, suggesting not only its importance, but also its role of "guerisseur" so favoured by the author.

Finding himself lying face down on dry earth with his head in the grass, Panturle "a tout compris, d'autant qu'à petits pas le sens lui revient"(p.375).

Alors, il a ouvert les yeux mais il n'avait pas pensé à la lune et la grande lune entre dans ses yeux sensibles comme un couteau. Il a vite fermé les yeux ... un long soupir, et il entrouvre un peu l'oeil pour voir ... il a vu, dans la lune toute propre, l'ombre d'un peuplier. (p.375)

Underlying the narrator's seemingly straightforward account of Panturle opening and closing his eyes, first being blinded by the moon, and then observing the poplar's shadow in the moonlight, the author alerts the reader to the symbolism inherent in "la lune" and the "peuplier."

The moon is regarded as a feminine power, and "as all moon goddesses are controllers of destiny..."¹⁶ perhaps Giono is alluding to Panturle's fate. However, the motif of the poplar adds another dimension, conjuring up a Persephone-like image, because one of its aspects evokes Hades. Using these two motifs as a veiled foreshadowing device, the reader is not surprised when the narrator discloses:

Il a ouvert les yeux sans plus penser à la lune et
il a dressé la tête; on dirait la voix de la femme.

Et c'est elle.

...

Elle est dans la lune. ...C'est la plus belle! (p.376)

Just prior to this revelation, the narrator notes that, "la lune pose son doigt blanc sur ses paupières"(p.375), denoting a sort of symbolic, purificatory blessing with "blanc" representing purity, and the action -- a priestly benediction. It is also reminiscent of the gushing water which closed its "long doigts blancs"(p.374) around Panturle as it washed away his impurities.

A series of dialogues ensue between Arsule and Panturle, the former doing most of the talking, either explaining or asking questions. In the course of conversation, helped along by silences and narrative inserts, past motifs reappear, clarifying meanings or pointers from earlier contexts, and linking them structurally into a thematic unit. Arsule recalls in direct speech how she and Gédémus dragged Panturle's body from the water, and how she came to be next to him while Gédémus was lying asleep under some willows. With minimal authorial intrusion, Giono uses her explanation as an informative device, affording Panturle the opportunity to become acquainted with his immediate past.

In between this dialogue and the next, the reader learns that

¹⁶ Cooper, p.107.

Panturle feels "malhonnête d'être étendu tout du long devant cette femme"(p.377). Using this as a reason to create a break, and even lengthening it as Panturle's shoulder aches, the narrator watches him ease himself into a sitting position. Observing that "il y a beaucoup de lune"(p.377) shining on Arsule, he links her to the recent concepts of feminine power and destiny, and through association, to Panturle.

The next dialogue shows us an astonished Arsule discovering that Panturle hails from Aubignane, and that he was aware that she and Gédémus had been in front of his house. Her questioning response, "Ah! c'est celle-là du sang?"(p.377) instantly evokes recent memories of her staring at the blood "sur la porte"(p.377), while adding yet another link in the chain slowly binding her to Panturle. But it also reveals her fear -- "on a cru à un malheur" (p.377) -- as she simultaneously recoils from Panturle and conversation. At this moment, "il passe sur le silence un grand coup de vent plein de l'odeur des aubépines"(p.378), suggesting that the familiar image of the "aubépine", having restricted itself to Panturle, now welcomes Arsule to its fold. Initially, at Mamèche's 'farewell', "le vent du printemps!" (p.346) heralded the message symbolic in its image, here again it is the wind that unites Arsule with the "aubépine," and thus with Panturle.

Le vent a tout fait: il a mené la femme vers l'homme,
après avoir agacée, et avoir éveillé chez le mâle le
désarroi, avec son souffle printanier. 17

Dialogue and third person narrative constantly intercept each other, breaking down the barriers between Arsule and Panturle. Explaining

¹⁷ Michelfelder, p.68.

the blood on the threshold, Panturle attributes his flaying of the fox to loneliness and the curious effects of the hot weather. "Quand on est seul... on est méchant... ce temps de chaud ça m'a fait quelque chose. ...ce n'est pas mon naturel"(p.378). The moment Arsule appears to accept his explanation, the narrator changes the subject, focusing on Panturle's sodden condition; "Panturle a un long frisson qui le secoue"(p.378). This introduces a dialogue within a dialogue, substantially altering the situation between the protagonists in the interim, before reverting to the original thread of conversation. In a remarkably short space of time Panturle rids himself of his inhibitions, saying: "Je vais me mettre nu, ça sera mieux"(p.378). Choosing nakedness in preference to wet clothing, suggests a return to the innocent state of Paradise, which the author encourages as it enables him to portray man in true affinity with his natural surroundings. In yet another attempt to efface the boundaries between human and cosmic order, Giono tries to convey, through Panturle's act of undressing, a natural obedience to "un ordre contre lequel il est vain de lutter."¹⁸

The dialogue alternately features Panturle's cold skin, and by contrast, the warm, inviting grass, interspersed with explanatory pieces of narration. It culminates with Panturle taking Arsule's hand and placing it on his chest so that she can feel his real, inner warmth despite his cold skin. Withdrawing her hand "doucement"(p.378) implies that she does not object to touching him, and the narrator devises a moment's silence, separating the sensuous present from the following retrospective comment of the main dialogue. Although

¹⁸ See Alan Clayton, "Giono's Colline: Pantheism or Humanism?," p.117.

the two dialogues are distinct, they are juxtaposed in such a way that one hovers over the other. Panturle and his house feature prominently in the story just reviewed, comprising the outer body of the conversation, while Arsule and Panturle, the couple, embrace the core of the main concept building up to a "regain."

Panturle admits that he was inside when Arsule and Gédémus knocked on his door, but that he was too ashamed to open it. Misinterpreting his admission, Arsule asks if he was ashamed of them. Instead of waiting for an answer, the narrator intervenes.

C'est ça qui fait asseoir Panturle, et c'est de là qu'il est parti à parler. Il a pris la main de la femme dans sa main. Il parlait fort; la femme lui a dit: "Parlez doucement", en lui montrant, d'un geste de la tête, un coin d'ombre sous les saules où il semblait que quelqu'un était couché. Elle n'a pas retiré sa main. Au contraire, au bout d'un moment, il n'était plus besoin de la tenir; elle avait fermé ses doigts sur la main de Panturle comme sur un museau de bon chien. (p.379)

The passage opens with the narrator concentrating on the hand movements of the pair. He observes Panturle taking Arsule's hand, and beginning to speak. The reader never learns what Panturle says, he only imagines that the protagonist tries to vindicate his former anti-social behaviour. It is left to the realms of the imagination. His thoughts are not translated into direct speech, and this brings forth implications of the "narrated" event, keeping it in the background as part of the story, instead of encroaching on the central theme. In contrast to the withdrawal of her hand, Arsule now holds Panturle's hand, reciprocating his warmth and showing her affection. This gesture confirms the reader's imagination, for at that moment, Panturle says, "...je suis serviable plus qu'un autre ..." (P.379), before narration takes command over dialogue. Not surprisingly Giono chooses

their hands to do the 'talking'. Symbolic of many expressions, the hand "placed in another's [conveys a] pledge of service, [while] the right hand pledges the life principle."¹⁹ In Arsule's case we note that "elle porte sa main gauche à travers la nuit pour tâter le beau poignet qui attache sa droite"(p.380), corroborating the above.

Repeating, "elle a fermé ses doigts sur la main de Panturle" (p.379), the narrator reiterates Arsule's willingness to respond, and keeps the reader's attention on their hands. He also relates her reaction to touching his skin. "Elle touche la peau qui est comme une écorce avec des verrues et des entailles"(p.379), which reminds the reader of the narrator's initial observation of Panturle.

Le Panturle est un homme énorme. On dirait un
morceau de bois qui marche. ...et qu'il se
redresse, les bras écartés, pour regarder la
terre, c'est un arbre. (p.329)

Transferring his sentiments to Arsule, it would seem that her first acquaintance was with a 'dead tree' -- Mamèche -- symbolizing a past mode of existence, but having cast her eye over Panturle's blood-stained threshold, she embarks on a new phase of life, hence by contrast, Panturle embodies the image of a living tree. Giono depicts two separate yet cyclic stages of life, through symbolic narration, using the metaphor of a tree to represent death and rebirth.

Sprinkling the narration with a fresh handful of fertility symbols, "moissons"(p.379), "lune"(p.379), "fontaine"(p.379), "cuisses"(p.380), "poils"(p.380), "chèvre"(p.380) and "sang"(p.380),

¹⁹ Cooper, p.78.

the narrator pauses, allowing Panturle to express his emotions, before concluding the first part of the novel. Bursting with pent-up desire, Panturle attempts to articulate his thoughts: "je ne sais pas dire ... tous ils ont leurs femmes. Cette passion qui lui a pris à la terre... Cette passion! ..." (p.380) Evinced a kind of hesitancy with the first two half-sentences, the author meets with the reader's expectations of the peasant protagonist, but the next sentence and exclamation strike a rather odd note with the word "passion", and the way it is related to the earth. It would seem that the poet's voice in Panturle's guise emerges, throwing the reader a little off-balance as he finds the poetic expression inappropriate to the rustic character's usual manner of speaking.

Lessening the gap between the themes of fertility and desire, the narrator observes, "il la tire vers lui. Elle glisse dans l'herbe et la voilà" (p.380). Beautifully understated, yet abundantly clear, the reader witnesses Panturle fulfilling his promise to Mamèche -- "si je t'en mène une, tu la prends? ...Oui! je la prends!" (p.342). Freed from the constraints of society their consummation flows naturally. Nature's trumpets solemnize the union. The wind, the sky, a hooting owl and a cooing turtle-dove harmonize sonorously, announcing the 'marriage'. Without a word spoken by either protagonist, Giono evokes sensuous impressions through the symbolically rich texture of the narrative, causing the reader to react spontaneously to his sense of the living forces in nature. As de Pomerai remarks: "We may not share his implied 'animism' but we can surrender to the strength and variety of his imaginative vitality."²⁰

Umberto Eco, reflecting on his book, Il Nome Della Rose (trans. The Name of the Rose) writes:

²⁰ "Introduction", Regain, p.35.

In narrative, the breathing is derived not from the sentence but from the broader units, from the scansion of events.... Harmony lies not in the length of the breadth but in its regularity. And if, at a certain point... the breathing breaks off and a chapter (or a sequence) ends before the breath is completely drawn, this irregularity can play an important role in the economy of the story; it can mark a turning point, a surprise development. 21.

Applying this observation to *Regain*, the reader can see how Giono succeeds in regulating the breathing, breaking it off before it is drawn, to initiate a change. The narrator invokes the aid of natural forces to herald the union of Arsule and Panturle, simultaneously ending the 'death' cycle, and commencing the 'rebirth', which marks a turning point in the novel. Looking at the scene from a mythological perspective, could not the union between the protagonists be likened to the union of the sky-god, Zeus with the corn-goddess, Demeter, bearing in mind an earlier observation that Demeter and Persephone are one? The role of the elemental forces in 'the sacred marriage' tends to suggest that reminiscent of the Eleusinian mysteries, there seems to exist,

like a distant landscape through a sunlit haze,
a simple rustic festival designed to cover the
wide Eleusinian plain with a plenteous harvest
by wedding the goddess of the corn to the sky-
god, who fertilised the bare earth with genial
showers. 22

Also, in line with classical thought, and the author's belief in "mélange", "the marriage of tress and plants could not be fertile

²¹ Umberto Eco, *Reflections on The Name of the Rose*, trans. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984 (London: Martin Seker and Warburg Ltd., 1985) p.42.

²² Frazer, p.179.

without the real union of the human sexes,"²³ so it might just be considered that Giono consciously employs the protagonists' consummation to ensure the future growth of vegetation.

"Voilà l'aube."

Ils disent ça l'un après l'autre sans se regarder:
ils on maintenant de grands corps calmes, des
coeurs simples comme des coquelicots.(p.380)

This passage opens with Panturle and Arsule reiterating in verbatim fashion, the start of a new day. However,

il semble qu'il y ait dans ces dialogues une
conversation sous les phrases, et qui se continue
dans les silences, chaque mot éveillant une
réaction profonde. 24

"Voilà l'aube" are the first spoken words since Panturle's passionate outburst, and would seem to indicate more than just a fresh start to a new day. Authorial intention suggests its universal meaning, that of a new beginning, and to stress its importance, since both male and female are chosen to utter it, in rapid succession -- l'un après l'autre -- Giono isolates its strategically amidst solid narrative, drawing the reader's attention to the pronouncement. Following this, the passage ends with the simile, "des coeurs simples comme des coquelicots", evoking in the poppy's image the idea of a united beginning. The poppy symbolizes "the Great Mother as the One and the Many [representing] fertility [and] fecundity,"²⁵ while in Graeco-Roman symbolism it is the emblem of Demeter/Ceres and

²³ Frazer, p.188.

²⁴ J. Pugnet, quoted by Odile de Pomerai in "Introduction," Regain, p.30.

²⁵ Cooper, p.134.

Persephone, representing "the period of the sleep and death of vegetation".²⁶ Linking these symbols to the novel's context, it would seem that the "coquelicots" embrace the dual concepts of past and future, simultaneously ensuring a rebirth after death. Seen in Christian perspective, perhaps Panturle's twice repeated, "cette passion"(p.380), evocative of a suffering Christ, ties up with the image of the poppy which "depicts the passion of Christ and the sleep of death."²⁷ It denotes the end of suffering for man and earth, which in itself promises the fulfilment of desire.

The first part of the novel ends, anticipating a new beginning. Arsule watches Panturle as he picks up his wet clothes, while the narrator notes, "Elle sait ce qui va arriver: c'est tout simple." (p.381). With no more prompting than animal instinct, "Arsule knows at once that, whereas Gédémus was only exploiting her, Panturle is her mate, and she does not hesitate to follow him."²⁸ Once more the author uses his favoured device, that of foreshadowing, to predict the young couple's future.

"Viens, dit Panturle, on va à la maison."
Et elle a marché derrière lui dans le sentier.
(p.381)

²⁶ Cooper, p.134.

²⁷ Cooper, p.134.

²⁸ de Pomerai, p.20.

CONCLUSION

According to Mark Schorer, "Modern criticism, through its exacting scrutiny of literary texts, has demonstrated with finality that in art beauty and truth are indivisible and one."¹ He equates beauty with form, and truth with content, then narrows down the concepts still further, substituting technique for form, and subject matter for content. In the light of Schorer's postulations, this study has attempted to investigate Giono's technique and subject matter simultaneously, in order to define the themes as they are presented in the novel, without losing sight of the devices used in their development.

The dissertation has been confined to Part One of Regain, for it is felt that the many techniques employed in this section of the work, adequately demonstrate the author's artistry. The limits imposed by this restriction permit closer investigation of his techniques, lessening the risk of repetition that Part Two might reveal were it to be scrutinized as well. The novel's title, encompassing the subject matter, covers the passage of life from death to rebirth. Embracing the myths of Demeter and Pan -- "Les mythes nous donnent exactement nos limites, chaque fois que nous avons voulu en sortir,

¹ "Technique as Discovery", The Theory of the Novel, p.65.

ça a été de grandes catastrophes"²-- Giono observes the sequence of changing seasons, and the cyclic decay and growth of vegetation. He simultaneously explores the reconstruction of a ruined world, rendering a density to the content, and imparting its meaning without a sense of loss to the book as a whole.

Having discovered the vast nature of his subject matter, the author realized that he would have to keep his story simple if he were to succeed. So, choosing a rural setting, he selects what he considers the best tools to shape the content. The first instrument to emerge from the artist's bag, is language. Well aware of its importance, as his admission to Michelfelder reveals (see "Introduction" p. 7 of this study), Giono carefully creates the novel's texture and tone. Deciding who will tell the story, to what effect, and when, the author determines the narrative angle.

An anonymous, omniscient and reliable narrator is Giono's main choice for 'point of view'. This 'character' is responsible for setting the tone of dialogues, offering the reader illuminating pieces of information. His function is two-fold; to anticipate conversations, and to comment retrospectively on events. However, if the author dictates that the reader's attention be drawn to a specific character or event, he changes narrators, employing one of the characters to take over that role. Right at the beginning of the story, gaining the reader's sympathy, the narrator yields to l'Oncle Joseph when Giono singles Mamèche out for special attention.

² Jean Giono, quoted by Michelfelder, p.184.

Recalling the death of her husband, l'Oncle Joseph pauses, then exclaims "Elle était marquée cette femme!"(p.327), before describing the circumstances of her child's death. This dramatic statement becomes firmly imprinted on the reader's mind, drawing his attention to both narrator and character. In another instance, related in Chapter Two of the present study, the author creates an unconventional betrothal scene, using Mamèche to narrate the parable of the charcoal burner, which hints at the novel's main theme.

As the story traces the path from death to rebirth, it also progresses from past to future. Hence the most prominent narrative device at the author's disposal, is that of foreshadowing. From the preceding chapters it can be seen that Giono uses every available means to exploit this technique thematically. Adhering to his subject matter he chooses as motifs ordinary objects of rural life, such as "charrues"(p.331), "l'enclume"(p.331) and "pétrin"(p.370) pointing to future themes. Words like "lait"(p.333), "chèvre"(p.333), "fontaine" (p.336), "lune"(p.379), "sang"(p.380), and a host of others symbolize fertility, while specific objects such as "l'aubépine"(p.346) and the statue of the "Sainte Vierge"(p.336) also embody this concept, enriching the reader's anticipation of things to come. Elemental forces, especially the wind, have an important anticipatory role. Seemingly innocent verbs like "geler"(p.336), "partir"(p.327) and "venir"(p.346) alert the reader to their latent significance. Metaphors foretell happenings such as: "Tous les réseaux de son sang se sont mis a chanter comme la résille des ruisseaux et des rivières"(p.380), which forecasts Arsule's future happiness after her consummation with Panturle.

Another prominent narrative device throughout the novel, and commented on frequently in the course of this study, is that of repetition. Words, motifs, phrases, images, actions and ideas are repeated as separate entities or in structured series to reinforce one another, becoming "a focus of development in the narrative".³ Its function varies to provide dramatic effects, resonances, emphases, musical rhythms and crescendos of tension which enrich the texture of both form and content.

If antithetical balance can be seen as a structural device, Giono uses it to good effect. Mamèche's faith in religion is destroyed then restored; Aubignane dies and revives; fertility is balanced by sterility, departure by arrival and finally death by rebirth.

Myth forms an integral part of the author's technique, enriching the novel's characters with its prefigurative aspect, while narrowing the gap between the twentieth century and classical antiquity. From the beginning Mamèche is compared to Demeter. Her black clothes resemble those of the archetypal figure in her state of mourning. Mamèche's search for Arsule parallels Demeter's search for Persephone, and ends when she 'guides' Arsule to Panturle, as Demeter's ends the moment she finds Persephone. Presenting the reader with a realistic theme like "regain", Giono enhances the understanding of the reading through his chosen analogy. However, its success as a foreshadowing device depends upon the exact moment chosen for the analogy. Early in the novel a comparison between Mamèche and Demeter is invited but it remains veiled, for unlike her ancient counterpart Giono's

³ Alter, p.94.

character does not set out on her search immediately. But the instant Mamèche is seen standing on the rampart holding the flaming torch aloft, the reader associates her with the myth, realizing that her search has begun. Knowing Demeter found Persephone, the reader predicts that Mamèche will find a woman for Panturle. In this way, as already mentioned in the body of this study, myth creates expectations, telling the story before it is told.

The myth of Pan is not dealt with in the same manner. The deity's presence, primarily sensed through the force of the wind, influences the protagonists' moods and feelings. Giono uses Pan to play with the characters' emotions and sexual desires, inspiring fear or longings as the seasons alter his attitudes.

In his exploration of a ruined world reconstructed, the author features a situation in which two pawns, Panturle and Arsule, are manipulated by a dynamic figure in the person of Mamèche. She too was a static figure until Gaubert's departure makes her realize that action is needed to save Aubignane. From that moment she undertakes the revival of this village, eventually leaving to find Panturle a wife. The whimsical author establishes an analogy between the old woman and a dead tree, which brings a sense of fantasy and fun to the narrative. Only through her efforts are Panturle and Arsule brought together, and Aubignane restored.

Pertinent to the study of Giono's narrative techniques is the extent to which the author's personal views impinge on the novel. His zest for life and hatred of war, his hostility to urbanism and love of the countryside are not without influence on his writing. They appear as themes or metaphors, but are not so intrusive as to interfere

with the story. However, Giono's idea of "mélange" pervades the story. Panturle and Mamèche are part tree, part human; animals are compared to plants and vice versa; elements of nature have human attributes, while the elemental forces are personified more often than not. The dissolution of boundaries between these various realms, results in metaphorical density mentioned in the "Introduction" to this study. Ullman observes that

the peculiar structure of his imagery is the stylistic counterpart of this pantheistic communion with nature; the dense and homogenous network of metaphors overlies and supersedes all borderlines and interknits the spheres which are normally kept distinct. 4

Taking a synthetic view of the narrative techniques used by Giono in Regain, it is fitting to claim "that certain techniques are sharper tools than others, and will discover more; that the writer capable of the most exacting technical scrutiny of his subject matter will produce works with the most satisfying content, works with thickness and resonance, works which reverberate, works with maximum meaning."⁵

Alors, la voix de Pan l'immense,
sonore, souffle encore dans les aiguilles vertes
et la vie recommence. 6

⁴ Style in the French Novel, pp.225-226.

⁵ Mark Schorer, "Technique as Discovery", The Theory of the Novel, p.66.

⁶ Jean Giono, "Helios: Sous le pied chaud du soleil", quoted by Michelfelder, p.211. This was first printed in October 1921, nine years before Regain.

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APPENDIX

Unfortunately the following works were unobtainable, so if there is any idea expressed in this thesis that appears in the works below, it is coincidental and not intentional.

Catherine Clarke, Le lyrisme dans l'oeuvre de Giono, Université de Grenoble, 1938.

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