

**GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE, INNOVATOR:  
L'ENCHANTEUR POURRISSANT (THE ENCHANTER  
ROTTING) AS THE LITERATURE PROGRESS  
EMBODIMENT**

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**Abstract:** *This article aims to analyze the concept of progress introduced by G. Apollinaire, compare it with the main prevailing literary concepts existing in France in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and demonstrate on the example of the experimental parable L'Enchanteur pourrissant (The Enchanter Rotting, 1909) how the fiction principles of Apollinaire's theory are embodied in the structure of the work of art. The article considers the grammatical and lexical peculiarities of the parable L'Enchanteur pourrissant, as well as the features of the narrative. Apollinaire deliberately spoke about the formal search, i. e. the search associated with the update of literary forms. The formal search is what writers did, who had an obvious connection with Apollinaire, that is with his concept: Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor, Claude Simon, Georges Perec, Raymond Queneau, Jacques Roubaud. Talking about formal search, Apollinaire determined the function of the form as accustoming the thought to the reality. It means that the literature progress or novelty according to Apollinaire consists in a close consideration of the existing language systems, genre and forms, rather than invention of new languages or forms. An analysis of Apollinaire's treatise L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes (The New Spirit and the Poet), as well as his most experimental work L'Enchanteur pourrissant (The Enchanter Rotting), allowed summarizing what the progress in literature is and concluding that G. Apollinaire is the founder of the French avant-garde.*

**Keywords:** progress, theory, experiment, lexical peculiarities, grammar, narrative.

**Research relevance.** Guillaume Apollinaire's creative writing still leaves room for scientific research, especially fruitful in the field of stylistic and literary forms. It is here that the composer's continuity in relation to the stylistic models of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is clearly revealed, as well as the new concepts that the French maestro introduced into the tradition of literature. The growing interest in the structural patterns of French prose, observed in the literary criticism of recent decades, allows us to expand our understanding of Guillaume Apollinaire's literary forms. This necessitates the need for their systematic study from a modern perspective. **The methodological basis** of the article is a comprehensive approach that combines the historical-stylistic and fictional-axiological principles of understanding Apollinaire's prose in the context of European literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The guiding idea in mastering the material was the theory of progress, set forth by

Apollinaire in the treatise *L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes* (*The New Spirit and the Poet*). **The research methods** used in the article are based on the universal principle of linguistic-literary analysis; the role of analytical methods, namely, of the holistic, historical-style, system-complex, contrastive-comparative, literary-theoretical analysis, is of great importance. **The validity of the results obtained** is achieved through the use of literary and theoretical methods of research, supported by a solid linguistic background. **Result confirmation.** The article was discussed stage-by-stage at the Department of Romance Philology of St. Petersburg State University. The results of the research are used by the author in the courses of literary translation, taught at St. Petersburg State University. **In conclusion**, the results of the study are summarized.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Guillaume Apollinaire, a French poet, was considered one of the most progressive, bold, and promising figures of literature in France. Contemporaries respected thirty-year-old Apollinaire, treated him as a mentor, almost a poetic prophet. Since Apollinaire was interested not only in literature, but also in other forms of art, in particular painting (the collection of works by G. Apollinaire in the prestigious publication *Pleiades* includes dozens of essays and articles devoted to artists, exhibitions, vernissages), it can be argued that the writer influenced the art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the broadest sense. No wonder Pierre Reverdy said about Apollinaire: „*More than anyone else today, he has drawn new paths, opened new horizons. He deserves all our devotion; all our reverence*”.<sup>1</sup> Apollinaire was really revered, and not without reason: after all, he consciously assumed the role of a genius, able to determine what is „*novelty*” and how to make progress in literature. The treatise *L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes* (*The New Spirit and the Poet*, 1917) is dedicated to progress and novelty, being a kind of Apollinaire's program text. In most articles and notes about the works of Guillaume Apollinaire, both in French and in Russian, the great writer appears as a „poet.” In a few works devoted to Apollinaire's prose (criticism, stories, novels), he appears as a „*non-vanishing shadow*” of himself: a prose writer who was appreciated only thanks to his poetic heritage, a writer whose texts many (for example, the famous psychoanalyst and literary critic Anne Clancier)<sup>2</sup> consider raw and unfinished, far-fetched and overly concentrated, too private and completely indigestible. Meanwhile, few people in French literature can be confidently named a *universal* writer,

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<sup>1</sup> M. Yanov, „Following Orpheus”, in *Collection of Works in 3 Vol., Vol. 1*, Moscow, Book Club Bookwake, 2011, pp. 5-56.

<sup>2</sup> A. Clancier, *Guillaume Apollinaire: les incertitudes de l'identité*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2006.

such as Apollinaire was in every sense of the word. Like Pushkin in Russia, Apollinaire in France did everything for the language, and today, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, he remains the lawmaker. Syntactic „*falsifications*”, semantic „*mistakes*”, lexical incompatibility, use of own life and lives of surrounding people as the creative material, of historical reality into texts, self-citation, exploitation of texts of the world literature and their variations, representation of the world as a synthetic art, globalization of culture, mythology-from this and much more, many modern authors, following the example of Apollinaire, have created and continue to create their own „*bestiaries*”.

Since his early childhood, as a teenager, Apollinaire already tried himself in the novel genre and wrote short stories. His first characters were picturesque sinners, cheerful and eerie Jews, Roman clergymen, provincials breaking with the moral norms and dogmas, in other words, *heresiarchs*.

It seems that the author was amusing himself, mockingly describing the Eternal Jew, reshaping the legend of Salome, filling the Parisian sewer channels with baptismery water, and it is not surprising that *heresy* of the first Apollinaire's characters was perceived by many as a challenge that the writer threw out to society, supposedly violating moral, religious, and aesthetic norms. To some extent, Apollinaire's prose reproduced a double heresy: the heresy of content and the heresy of form. The majority of the French literary critics criticized him for that. Even today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the concepts such as immersion, confession, communion, incest are not something one can joke around with. Moreover, style, too, is not to be manipulated, because the public hardly perceives innovation.

Thanks to the research of the literary critic Michel Décaudin,<sup>3</sup> the body of Apollinaire's prosaic texts appears to the modern reader in its entirety: first, the collection of works in the Balland-Lecat publishing house; then, three volumes by the most reputable publisher, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* that cannot be categorized in any way, two collections of novellas, about twenty short stories, four historical texts, a chronicle novel, two erotic novels, unfinished things-everything was published. In this case, literary critics, Jean Burgos, Madeleine Boisson, and André Fontaine, analyzing

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<sup>3</sup> G. Apollinaire, *Œuvres en prose complètes. Édition établie sous la direction de Michel Décaudin, préface de Max-Pol Fouchet, introduction et notes de Michel Décaudin, iconographie établie par Pierre-Marcel Adéma; André Balland et Jacques Lecat, quatre volumes de textes*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, «Bibliothèque de la Pléiade», 1977-1993.

Apollinaire's works, usually emphasize the unity of prose and poetry and try to prove that the author remains true to himself in all genres. However, it is impossible to ignore the fact that in the Apollinaire's era, poetry was considered a „*par excellence*” art, and poets were treated as prophets. Sometimes poets also wrote prose, and Apollinaire as an active participant in literary life and an experimenter was not afraid of any genres and forms. He liked to write prose and used it to express what poetry cannot do. Apollinaire's prose is like an immense field for the game of mind. Choosing the form for a novel or story, Apollinaire seemed to undertake to conform to literary laws and norms, but instead, he shocked and broke the usual schemes. Ironically, externally prosaic texts written by Apollinaire impress with their brilliant finish, which confuses the reader. It seems that the author's genres are perfectly elaborated: here there is a parable, here there is a fairy tale, and here there is a historical chronicle. However, at a closer look, we can see that in fact, the genre is not the one it is pretended to be. „*This is not a pipe*”. This is a simulacrum of the genre that the author imagined implementing his ideas and images. Like imitating a novella, a novel, a historical chronicle, a parable, a fairy tale, Apollinaire in fact deals with phantom genres, because his world does not fit the real ones. Like Madame Muskad, who in *The Death Bride* wants to marry a young man to her late daughter, Apollinaire continually tries to entrust his original ideas to genres that are not entitled for them. The same can be said of the language that, in passing, seems to be non-existent, completely neutral, impersonalized, unlike the recognizable styles of, for example, Flaubert, Proust, Balzac. Apollinaire's language, at first glance, seems to be a language of *a certain good storyteller*, invariant, representing a whole class of storytellers, rather than someone specific. Nevertheless, this language, like Apollinaire's genres, is by no means an invariant, but rather an artistic trap. To create a novel genre text, it is not enough to use one single universal character, and to write in the proper classical French, it is not enough to ensure the normality in 85% of cases; the norm should extend to the entire text space, otherwise it is an anomaly. The more Apollinaire wrote in proper French, the more exceptions stand out as a fiction technique against the background of the rules, and the more strangely the main body of the deliberately normative text looks.

In the novel *La Femme assise (The Sitting Woman)*, Apollinaire described the era of masquerade balls and spoke of the charms of the „*travesty era*”. It seems that the writer aspired to a masquerade mood in the literature. This desire explains the combination, on the one hand, of

a detailed, almost maniacally meticulous description of reality, and, on the other hand, of the fiction, the imaginary world: nonexistent cities, dishes, historical facts, a universal universe that has a room for anything.

Apollinaire was not only a great inventor of stories, but also a great inventor of characters. Playing pseudonyms and puns, jokes and dexterous manipulation with the names of famous personalities make Apollinaire's prose heavy, confusing, historically interesting, and literary progressive.

Most often, the criticism of the 1910s used the word „*bizarrierie*” (strangeness, whimsicality) with respect to Apollinaire's prose. Many literary critics compare Apollinaire with the „*masters*” of the XIX century, Hoffmann, Edgar Poe, Villiers de l'Isle Adam. Critics accuse Apollinaire of not being diverse in genres (which actually is an advantage), but offering an abundance of associations, often made-up references to history and culture. After all, Apollinaire not only digested and recreated the world of art, war, literature, he saw and engineered it from scratch (if we proceed from what already existed in the writers' field of vision). Like Charles Ives in music, Apollinaire did not need reference points in the literature. Despite the endless citations, pseudo quotations and equivocation towards various works, the loyalty to traditions, proclaimed by Apollinaire, in fact is very ambiguous. If he really continued somebody's tradition (or even traditions), he will have to be called a follower of not only Edgar Poe, Hoffmann, and Villiers de l'Isle Adam, but also Rabelais, Jean de la Fontaine, Charles Perrault, Marquis de Sade, Pietro Aretino, Goethe, Heine, Rimbaud, Comte de Lautréamont, Marcel Schwob, Oscar Wilde, Jules Verne. The list can be continued to include not only writers, but also artists, film directors, actors, and musicians, because, without forgetting the tradition, Apollinaire created a culture of a new type, universal, the one that rules the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well, and in which everything belongs to everyone. Many critics, like Anne Clancier, considered Apollinaire's works from the perspective of his personal life, searched in the texts for traces of emotional traumas: complicated relations with his mother, vain search for his father, „*national unrest*” (life in France without citizenship), love failures. Given how Apollinaire's fiction is interwoven with reality, personal life in particular, such a biographical approach is noteworthy. Thus, Apollinaire's prose was discussed differently; his authorship was even disputed (in the case of the novels *Les Onze Mille Verges* (*Eleven Thousand Sticks*) and *Les Trois Don Juan* (*Three Don Juan*)), unfairly exposing the author's passion for rewriting and reshaping other people's

texts. However, an undeniable fact is that Apollinaire succeeded in his bold literary plan. The concepts of the new consciousness and of the surprise effect, proclaimed by the great writer, are still relevant after almost a hundred years. Today, just like in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Apollinaire's prose causes, first of all, amazement. Apollinaire is one of those writers whose publications are difficult to consider chronologically. Judging more or less objectively, it is almost impossible to say, which text was created earlier and which later. According to the researcher Pierre-Marcel Adéma, already when he was a teenager, in Monaco, Apollinaire sketched a draft of the novel with the bizarre name *Orindiculo*. The action was to take place first in France, and then in the American Savannah, that is, in structure, the text resembled *La Femme assise* (*The Sitting Woman*).

In 1899, after a trip to Stavlo, Apollinaire began to work on *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, the main story lines of which, according to Jean Burgos, had been drafted back in 1898. In Rhine travel, most of the poems for the *Alcools* (*Alcohols*) collection, and many stories for *L'Hérétique et Cie* (*The Heretic & Co.*) (in particular, Prague Passer, Rose of Hildesheim, or Gold of the Magi) were composed.

The prosaic texts appeared at the same time as the poetic texts. At the same time, during calm periods (for example, in 1905-1906), Apollinaire simultaneously stopped writing both prose and poetry, and at the times of his creative upsurge (for example, in 1918), he again decided to work on both. A clear time line can only be drawn when referring to a rather late theater of Apollinaire (1916–1918), although the writer claimed about *Les mamelles de Tirésias* (*The Breasts of Tiresias*) that only the prologue and the last scene of the second act are dated by 1916, the rest was created in 1903, that is, fourteen years before the work publication. Meanwhile, we should not forget that there are theatrical „interludes” in the *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* and in the *Le Poète assassiné* (*The Killed Poet*).

Apollinaire's short texts preceded the novels. However, many early things were lost, and the manuscript of the novel about the end of the world *La Gloire de l'olive* (*The Glory of the Olive*) was forgotten by Apollinaire on a train. In addition, it is assumed that Apollinaire composed two or three novels, in particular *Que faire?* (*What to do?*), published in the *Le Matin* journal from February to May 1900, in co-authorship, but there is no proof of it.

The exact dates of publications of erotic novels are not recorded; however, in any case most of the texts of *L'Hérèsiarque et Cie* (*The Heresiarch and Co.*) had appeared on the pages of journals before. The novel *Les Onze Mille Verges* (*Eleven Thousand Sticks*, 1907) was released approximately at the same time with a whole series of stories for the „Messidor” magazine. In the catalog of the National Library for 1906-1907, compiled by Louis Perso, the novel *Les Exploits d'un jeune Don Juan* (*Memoirs of a Young Don Juan*) by Guillaume Apollinaire was named the most recent arrival. However, officially the text appeared in the Briffio publishing house in 1911 only.

The novel *La Fin de Babylone* (*The End of Babylon*) was presented to readers in March 1914, the novel *Les Trois Don Juan* (*Three Don Juan*) in 1915. In 1918, according to the order of the Briffio publishing house, Apollinaire started writing the novel *Femme blanche des Hohenzollerns* (*The Ghost of the Hohenzollerns*) and sketched out the plan for the novel *Rasputine*. Death prevented Apollinaire from completing the novel *La Femme assise* (*The Sitting Woman*), the idea of which he most likely had been hatching since 1911-1912. *La Femme assise* was published posthumously in 1920, then in 1948.

Michel Decodén wrote that Apollinaire from the early age possessed the talent of a narrator and novelist, but it is impossible to ignore the fact that the novels by Apollinaire most closely resemble a compilation of historical texts, the *Holy Scripture* (*La Fin de Babylone*), other authors' novels, short stories, plays (*Les Trois Don Juan*), a traveler's notes (*La Femme assise*). Against the background of these works, *Le Poèteassassiné*, written during 1913–1914, looks at least much more independent, or at all unique.

Proceeding from a rather shaky, but still chronology, one can confidently assert that Apollinaire began his career of a prose writer with the short story genre. *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* (if we consider it a novel), started in 1898, was completed in 1903–1904, when readers were already acquainted with about a dozen of short stories, which later were included in the collection *L'Hérèsiarque et Cie*.

Apollinaire contributed to the development of all three main kinds of literature: epic, lyric, and drama. Based on the foundation of the epic, he developed amazing hybrid literary genres: a fairy tale parable (*Our Friend Tortumart*), chronicle novel (*La Femme assise*), a poetic tale (*Le Poèteassassiné*).

It is interesting that Apollinaire conducted his experiments just in the era when the antique classification of Plato and Aristotle, in the opinion of the French literary reformers (Stéphane Mallarmé, André Breton) was considered obsolete, and France was living through a period of strict delimitation of narrative and poetry. At the same time, as the literary critic Dominique Combe<sup>4</sup> noted, one of the main stylistic features of literature contemporary for Apollinaire is the opposition of the original language of poetry to the language of prose and the desire to exclude any narrative from poetry. The theory of „*poetry isolation*” was developed by Stéphane Mallarmé, whose theses were subsequently supplemented, systematized, and brought to the level of dogma by Paul Valéry, as well as by André Breton on the famous pages of *Manifeste du surréalisme* (*Surrealist Manifesto*).<sup>5</sup> Thus, the first twenty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century passed under the sign of the „*new poetry*”, and, of course, authors continued to work comfortably with different kinds of literature. However, they were forced to exclude narrative from poetry, preserving it for novels, novelets, short stories, novellas, and theater plays, otherwise their creative work could officially be considered outdated.

Apparently, prose and poetry are not opposed for Apollinaire, who never denied either his partial belonging to symbolism, nor the poetic authority of Mallarmé or Rimbaud.

**This article aims to** analyze the concept of progress introduced by G. Apollinaire and demonstrate on the example of the experimental parable *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* (1909) how the fiction principles of Apollinaire's *school of thought* are embodied.

First of all, it should be noted that Apollinaire understood „*new consciousness*” as the progressive way of creative thinking, through which literature develops and is updated.

### **The Concept of the Literary Progress Grammar and Lexical Peculiarities of the parable *L'Enchanteur Pourrissant***

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<sup>4</sup> D. Combe, *Poésie et récit. Une rhétorique des genres*, Paris, José Corti, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> A. Breton, *Manifest of Surrealism in 1924*, available at: [www.staratel.com](http://www.staratel.com).



Seemingly, the first keyword that determines, from the point of view of Apollinaire, the principle of the work of a new consciousness is research: „*Research and the search for truth, both in the ethical field and in the field of imagination, are the main features of this new consciousness*”.<sup>6</sup> Apollinaire’s use of the word „*explorer*” on the very first page of the treatise seems very important, because French literature of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, like modern French classical literature, is of an exploratory and experimental nature. In 2012, Annie Erno when talking to students of Paris IV Sorbonne University called her own books „*littérature scientifique*”, i. e. scientific, research literature. We believe the same term with some reservations would be suitable for a conditional classification of Pascal Quignard, Maylis De Kerangal, Michel Houellebecq, the authors of the ULIPO school, and all those who throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and nowadays have been creating an image of the progressive French literature.

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<sup>6</sup> G. Apollinaire, „L’Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes” (The New Spirit and the Poet), in *French Writers about Literature*, Moscow, Progress, 1978, pp. 53-62.

It is not a coincidence that Apollinaire mentioned formal search, i. e. a search related to updating literary forms: „*Formal search has now gained immense importance. And it is legit*”.<sup>7</sup> The formal search is what writers did, who had an obvious connection with Apollinaire, that is with his concept: Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor, Claude Simon, Georges Perec, Raymond Queneau, Jacques Roubaud. The articles *Pour un Nouveau Roman* (*For a New Novel*, 1963) by Alain Robbe-Grillet differ in many respects from Apollinaire’s manifesto, which, although customary regarded as poetic, extends to literature in general. However, there is an obvious relationship between the „*new consciousness*” and the „*new novel*”. For example, A. Robbe-Grillet, like Apollinaire, wrote about the importance of research and renounces the notion of a literary school: „*A new novel is not a theory, but a study. Consequently, it does not create any system of laws. So, it is not a literary school of thought in the narrow sense of the word*”.<sup>8</sup> Like Apollinaire, A. Robbe-Grillet was interested in the prospects of cinema: „*The origins of the steady fixation of new-Romanists on cinematography lie beyond its limits. They are not interested in the objectivism of a movie camera, but in its capabilities in the subjective, imaginary sphere. They do not regard cinema as a means of expression, but rather as a means of research; and their attention is mostly attracted by what had mostly been inaccessible to literature: that is, not so much the visual image as the sound series: voices, noises, furnishings, music, and in particular the possibility to impact simultaneously the two organs of perception: eyes and ears. Also, the ability to express both in images and in sounds with an almost undeniable obvious objectivity something, which is only a dream or a memory, in a word, the imagined*”.<sup>9</sup> This Robbe-Grillet’s passage coincides with Apollinaire’s idea of the synthesis of arts: music, painting, and literature (G. Apollinaire assumed that the synthesis of arts would be possible due to the development of the printing industry). It seems strange that Robbe-Grillet, while criticizing the Balzac novels, did not mention Apollinaire’s manifesto and his experiment called *L’Enchanteur pourrissant*. Moreover, the separate passages of Robbe-Grillet’s scenario for the Alain Rene’s movie *L’Annéedernière à Marienbad* (*Last Year at Marienbad*, 1961) are perceived as an echo of *L’Enchanteur pourrissant*.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>8</sup> A. Robbe-Grillet, „*Pour un nouveau roman*”, in *Collection of Works*, Moscow, Simposium, 2000, pp. 20-155.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

Robbe-Grillet in his script, just like Apollinaire in the fairy tale parable, used the refrain technique, which points to the place where the action takes place, and describes this place. Compare Apollinaire's: „*Merlin retired to a remote forest, gloomy and ancient*”.<sup>10</sup> Variations on the topic of forest, which will always be characterized by the narrator as „*gloomy and dense*”, permeate the entire text of *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*. In the script, Robbe-Grillet repeats the description of the place as a chorus: „*through these living rooms, galleries, in this building of another century, in this huge, luxurious, baroque, gloomy living-room, where endless corridors are followed by corridors*”.<sup>11</sup> The poetic intonation, which is characterized by a specific inverted word order, and even the choice of words (for example, the repetition of the word „*gloomy*”) brings together the texts written by Apollinaire and Robbe-Grillet.

Discussing the form search, Apollinaire determined the form function as making the thought used to the reality: „*When a modern poet uses many sounds to record the buzz of an airplane, one should first of all see in this the desire to accustom one's thought to reality*”.<sup>12</sup> It means that the literature progress or novelty according to Apollinaire consists in a close consideration of the existing language systems, genres and forms, rather than invention of new languages or forms. In this sense, for example, the members of the ULIPO group, although they have a fundamentally different opinion, trying to invent the language anew with the help of combinatorics, permutations, and other mathematical techniques, nevertheless, thanks to this conditionally new language „*accustom the idea to the reality*”, make the surrounding world more convex, more obvious, as, for example, in Georges Perec's novel *La Vie mode d'emploi* (*Life: the Way of Use*, 1978).

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<sup>10</sup>G. Apollinaire, „L'Enchanteur pourrissant”, in *Collection of Works in 3 Vol., Vol. 1*, Moscow, Book Club Bookwakeup, pp. 303-387.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant. Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Jean Burgos*, Paris, Lettresmodernesminard, 1972.

<sup>12</sup> Idem, „L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes”, pp. 53-62.

Unlike the members of the ULIPO group, undertaking titanic efforts to create an artificial language, Apollinaire convinces his readers that progress can be achieved through the original use of the resources of the already existing natural French language. The main idea of the treatise *L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes* (*The New Spirit and the Poet*), seems to consist in the following: „*There are thousands of natural combinations that have never been created. People imagine them in their minds and implement them, thus together with nature creating that higher art, which is life. These new combinations, these new products of the art of life, are called the progress*”.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to „*natural combinations*”, Apollinaire’s experimental prose consists of so-called „*supposed truths*”:<sup>14</sup> „*These truths, as a rule, cause amazement, because they contradict the generally accepted opinion. Many of them have not been studied. It is enough to reveal them to cause amazement*”.<sup>15</sup> By „*supposed truths*”, as well as by „*natural combinations*”, Apollinaire literally means any game of imagination, genres, forms, and language. The analysis of Apollinaire’s most experimental prosaic text, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, will lead us to the conclusion that we are dealing with progressive art according to Apollinaire’s understanding, which has opened up the incredible potential of prose that the classics of modern French literature, both elitist and popular, consciously or unwittingly took advantage of (universalization of the universe according to Apollinaire’s type is characteristic not only of the classics, but also of the authors of commercial, popular literature, for example, Frédéric Beigbeder or Serge Gainsbourg, if we regard the latter as a prose author).

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem.*

Even the first chapter of *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* astonishes with its special intonation, the bizarre use of grammatical tenses, and an exceptional, rather poetic than prosaic, word order. In the third sentence of the first chapter, one can note grammatically improper, that is, a nontrivial word order: „*La demoiselle était en âge de se marier, mais elle disait à son père et à sa mère qu'ils ne la mariaient pas et qu'elle était décidée à ne jamais voir d'homme, car son cœur ne le pourrait souffrir ni endurer*”.<sup>16</sup> With a grammatically correct, habitual word order, the pronoun *le* would stand after the verb *pouvoir* and before the infinitive: „*ne pourrait le souffrir ni endurer*”. However, the narrator, using a special word order, immediately creates a fluid song intonation, as if starting a ballad. In the Russian translation only the first sentence of the first chapter sounds like a poetic line, and then the narrative in most cases follows the laws of the prose language.<sup>17</sup>

Not all the text of *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* is written in a ballad syllable, but Apollinaire played with the word order and arranged words in a poetic way. Another example: „*et sa mère lui ayant demandé privément, commère, si elle voulait toujours d'hommes s'abstenir, elle répondit que non*”.<sup>18</sup> The rules of grammar imply that the indirect object *homme* should be placed after the verb *s'abstenir* („*s'abstenir d'homme*”); nevertheless, the verse intonation requires an inversion.

On the one hand, in his experimental fairy tale parable, Apollinaire compared prose, poetry, and drama, clearly separating one from another, following the principle of juxtaposition, while on the other hand, from the very beginning he „*accustoms the thought to the reality*”, that is, to the fact that the shape can be hybrid.

Rhythm as the driving force of Apollinaire's texts reminds of itself in almost every new paragraph: „*La demoiselle le tâta et sentit qu'il avait le corps très bien fait. Et elle l'aima extrêmement, accomplis sa volonté et cela tout cela à sa mère et à autrui*”.<sup>19</sup> The words *sentit*, *accomplit*, *autrui* do not rhyme, but due to the repetition of the same sound /i/ create an intonation of poetic prose. In the last sentence, rhythm creates another repetition: the pronouns *cela*. Jean Burgos in his commentaries to *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*<sup>20</sup> wrote that the repetition of the pronoun *cela* can be compared with Apollinaire's

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<sup>16</sup> Idem, *Oeuvres en prose complètes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1977.

<sup>17</sup> Idem, „*L'Enchanteur pourrissant*”, pp. 303-387.

<sup>18</sup> Idem, *Oeuvres en prose complètes*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> Idem, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*.

favorite method of homonymous game, examples of which are found in many of the poet's stories.

The unobvious example of inversion that goes last in the first chapter: „*Et lui, qui tant l'aimait que mortelcoeurainsi ne pourrait plus aimer*”.<sup>21</sup> In case of a natural word order, the adverb *tant* should be placed after the verb „*qui l'aimait*”, and in a prosaic text written in the proper French, an article would be used before the phrase *mortelcoeur*.

Besides inversions, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* is interesting due to how Apollinaire treats grammatical tense. Instead of the usual Imparfait, he uses Passé Simple (simple completed tense, not connected with the present): „*Il souffrirent et attendirent, espérant qu'elle changerait d'avis*”.<sup>22</sup> According to the grammar rules, Imparfait is used for descriptions. In the considered fragment it would also sound more naturally. However, for Apollinaire, unnaturalness is natural, because only unnaturalness, irregularity gives rise to amazement. In the treatise *L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes* (*The New Spirit and the Poet*), Apollinaire calls astonishment *The Mighty New Force*: „*It is through amazement, thanks to the significant role that it takes to amazement, that the new consciousness differs from all preceding fiction and literary movements*”.<sup>23</sup> In the last paragraph of the first chapter against the background of the past, the present time suddenly and similarly unnaturally appears: „*Merlin lui enseigne ce qu'elle lui demande*”.<sup>24</sup>

It is known that only the first sentence of the first chapter belongs to Apollinaire. In the first chapter, Apollinaire rewrites the legend of Lancelot; however, the text is part of the *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* project, so it cannot be perceived as a foreign element. In addition, not only the first chapter, but also the entire text of *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* determine the above stylistic tricks. The first chapter seems to disclose another type of „*natural combinations*” for us: a combination of a quote and the author's own text.

French researchers of Apollinaire's work write about his love for rare words, complex terms, and unknown names. Daniel Delbreil in the book *Apollinaire et ses récits* (1999) said that Apollinaire purposefully made up whole lists of complex incomprehensible words and terms for himself, in order to use them later when creating fiction texts. Consequently, Apollinaire's „*natural combinations*” are the conscious

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<sup>21</sup> Idem, *Oeuvres en prose complètes*.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>23</sup> Idem, „*L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes*”, pp. 53-62.

<sup>24</sup> Idem, *Oeuvres en prose complètes*.

combination of complex and simple, own and alien, known and incomprehensible, real and imaginary.

Combinations natural for Apollinaire, that is, almost oxymorons, are found regularly in *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*. The narrative is literally built on the confrontation of concepts. In the first chapter, the narrator uses the expression *l'espace d'un mois*,<sup>25</sup> that is, literally, *the space of the month*. The expression is given in the phrase: „*Quand elle eut mené cette vie l'espace d'un mois*”. Word for word, it means: „*When she had lived the space of the month in that way*”. Further, in the second chapter, the enchanter himself becomes the incarnation of the incongruous, turning literally into a living corpse: „*Being fully conscious, the enchanter descended into the grave and lay down there, as corpses lay in graves*”.<sup>26</sup> And Apollinaire called the enchanter *l'enchanteur décevant*, that is, an enchanter (the one who enchants, inspires) *décevant* (disappointing). And the voice of the enchanter is called: *voix inouïe*, an unheard-of voice.

The narrative itself also seems mixed, combining two narrative types. In the version of *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, published in *Le Festin de l'Esopo* (1904), the narrative was exclusively hetero-diegetic. The narrator was observing what was happening with Merlin from the side, expressed himself through the manner of writing and that is all: the narrator was not part of the fiction space. The connection between the enchanter and the author, Apollinaire, remained obvious, but Apollinaire did not use a mediator in the text, the lyrical „*I*”. The final version of the fairy tale parable, in terms of the narrative, is much more complicated. The first chapter starts with the question: „*Que deviendrait mon coeur parmi ceux qui s'entraiment?*”.<sup>27</sup> The emphasis made in the first sentence on the words *mon coeur* (my heart), changes the nature of the narrative. The narrative that follows the first sentence unfolds the drama of the textual „*I*” before the reader. All the characters are reflections of the lyrical „*I*”. Thus, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* can be called the only auto-diegetic work by Apollinaire, written, however, from a third person. Apollinaire's „*I*” does not just speak about itself from the person of other characters but speaks of itself as of another character. The only hetero-diegetic fragment of the text is the fourth chapter, from which Merlin is absent. This absence is compensated in the final *Oneirocritica*, where the lyrical „*I*” is released and sounds like in a poetic text.

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> Idem, „*L'Enchanteur pourrissant*”, pp. 303-387.

<sup>27</sup> Idem, *Oeuvres en prose complètes*.

## Oneirocritica. Conclusion

*Oneirocritica* is the quintessence of the experiment. First of all, it is worth paying attention to the date of the first publication of *Oneirocritica* in the *Phalange*. The text was published on February 15, 1908, that is, at a time when Apollinaire was torn between poetry and prose and two versions of *La maison des morts* (*The House of the Dead*). Thematically, *Oneirocritica* is close to *La maison des morts*; each text in its own way represents the picture of the Apocalypse. However, while *La maison des morts* is an example of a clash between two kinds of literature, the Apocalypse in *Oneirocritica*, on the contrary, symbolizes reconciliation, the penetration of poetry into prose and prose into poetry. In the opinion of Daniel Delbrey, „the integration of *Oneirocritica* as the final chapter in the text of *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* actually marked the birth of a new synthetic genre”.<sup>28</sup>

## Summary

In *Oneirocritica*, as in the text preceding it, poetry and prose are clearly separated (the song about the city of Orkeniz retains the form of a traditional poem and is made as an inset), and the prose fragment itself is more emotionally and stylistically reminiscent of prose than poetry. It contains the refrains characteristic of *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, the chapter is written on behalf of the lyrical „I”, and the filling of the text content is lyrical: a game of imagination, dreams, visions, but all this does not make *Oneirocritica* lyrical. On the contrary, Apollinaire returns virtuously the primordial canonical state to what was a synthetic form throughout the entire *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*. Every sentence of *Oneirocritica* is built according to the laws of French grammar. This chapter has no inversions, no exceptional word order, bizarre combinations of opposing concepts, or games with grammatical tense. And when the narrator repeats: „J'avais la conscience des éternités différentes de l'homme et de la femme”,<sup>29</sup>- he assumes the eternity of the poetic and prosaic languages. Thus, having untangled his own puzzle, Apollinaire achieves a progress, proves the ability of literature to synthesize itself, and creates an innovative text, one of the most significant among his works.

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.