

Women and Pleasure in Guillaume Apollinaire's Calligram Collection *Poèmes à Lou*

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ABSTRACT

This article attempted to examine the connections between poetry and the constructions of women and pleasure emphasized by the author. The works examined were those of Guillaume Apollinaire, a famous French poet whose calligramatic poetry collections specifically positioned women as objects of pleasure. Most interestingly, in Apollinaire's poetry, the depiction of women as objects of pleasure through connotative symbols that could only be given significance by decoding the highly cultural meanings contained in the connotative symbols. The theory of the male gaze was used here to examine how visual pleasure had been operated by the poet. Meanwhile, semiotics had been used to decode the calligrammatic aspects of Apollinaire's poems. This research found that symbols of exoticism, reproduction, and fantastic pleasures were utilized by Apollinaire in his poetry to emphasize his dominance of women by positioning them as objects of pleasure.

Keywords: Women, pleasure, apollinaire, calligrame, poeme

INTRODUCTION

Women and pleasure are frequently expressed in global literary works. Various works have equated women with pleasure, seen through the "male gaze" (Mulvey, 1999; Hein, 2006). Mulvey explains that the male gaze positions women as objects to be enjoyed. Works of literature, both prose and poetry, express men's sense of pleasure when gazing upon women, a sense that male authors translate into aesthetic language. In poems, as works of literature, women and pleasure are depicted implicitly through metaphors and figurative language. This depiction of pleasure in gazing upon women can be seen in numerous works of literature in many different places.

In French literature, the phenomenon of women as pleasure is apparent in the work of Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918). Apollinaire was an influential poet active in the early 20th century (Amadiou, 2004; Pia, 1954) writing several poems talking about women. Wilhelm Albert Włodzimiers Apollinary Kostrowicki, better known as Guillaume Apollinaire, was born in Rome, Italy, to a mother of Polish descent on 25 August 1880. In 1899, when he was 19 years old, Apollinaire arrived in Paris. He took the pseudonym Guillaume Apollinaire. Following his family history, Apollinaire chose his fifth given name, taken from his grandfather Apollinaris Kostrowicki. This selection of "Apollinaire" can also be linked to

the name "Apollon", the god of light and poetry in Greek mythology (Oster, 2001).

He is known as an *avant-garde* poet owing to his pioneering efforts in concrete poetry. Initially, he formulated the term "surrealism" in 1917 to replace the term "supernaturalism" that he had previously used. Inspired by the painter Pablo Picasso, he wrote what he termed "*des poèmes-peinture*" or "painting poems" (Oster, 2001; Pia, 1954). Drawing on his ability to visualize meaning in a concrete form, in 1918 he began using the term "*calligrammes*" (henceforth calligrams)—a neologism that combined the terms "*calligraphie*" (calligraphy) and "*ideogramme*" (ideogram) and was thus etymologically rooted in the Greek terms *kallos* (beauty) and *gramma* (letter)—to refer to a new, particularly French, literary style. In her dictionary of poetry, Michèle Aquien (1993) explains that calligrams was derived from the words "calligraphy" and "ideogram"; from the Greek language *kallos* "beauty" and *gramma* "letter") in a poetry collection published in 1918. Several poems presented, through combinations of letters and words, the poetic subject (which he previously termed "lyrical ideograms"). He tried to present a poetic subject for instant visual awareness, free of linearity and not directly visible.

Through his literary works, Apollinaire successfully visualized language through imagery and words

through his concrete poetry. These poems are frequently linked to Picasso's cubist art style. Apollinaire wrote several poetry collections, including *Alcools* (Alcohol, 1900–1913), *Calligrammes* (Calligrams, 1913–1916), and *Poèmes à Lou* (Poems for Lou, 1914–1916). *Poèmes à Lou* was dedicated to Louise de Coligny-Chatillon whom he met during the war of France and Germany in 1914. The collection *Poèmes à Lou* contains 74 poems, including three that take the form of lyrical ideograms (later known as calligrams).

Prevalent throughout *Poèmes à Lou* are love and eroticism, and the poems—inspired by Lou—depict women and pleasure in various forms. How are women and pleasure depicted as aesthetic objects in the concrete poems of Apollinaire? Furthermore, in what context did Apollinaire depict women and pleasure as aesthetic objects in his concrete poems? The goal of this article is to discover what aspects of pleasure are presented by Apollinaire, as seen in the connections between the texts and forms of the Apollinaire's poems collected in *Poèmes à Lou* (Djokosujatno, 2003).

METHOD

Two readings were used in this analysis; heuristic and hermeneutic (Riffaterre, 1978, Pradopo, 2011, 2007, 2005). First, the poems were read heuristically, in accordance with linguistic conventions (a first level semantic system) (Eco, 1976, Culler, 1981, Berger, 1989)). This heuristic reading of the poems presented their linguistic meaning. During this heuristic reading, poems were rewritten with words or synonyms inserted in parentheses. The sentence structure of the poem was brought into accordance with the normative linguistic standards used in formal language. If necessary, sentences were rearranged to convey better meaning.

Second, the poems were read retroactively or hermeneutically to find their significance in accordance with literary or poetic conventions (Guiraud, 1973). Poetry is a second level semantic system of signs that uses language, a first level semantic system. The literary conventions that indicated the significance of these poems included what Riffaterre (1978) termed indirect expression. During this hermeneutic reading, a decoding process involving reader reception was undertaken to reveal the poems' significance.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Women have long been positioned as objects of pleasure and desire (Black, 2000; Udasmoro, 2014, Hollows, 2010). In many works of art and literature, women are objectified as sources of men's pleasure.

The beauty is one aspect that is introduced by many different aspects in women social life (Wolf, 2002). The construction of pleasure, as provided by women, is presented through symbols of masculinity that represent women as sexual objects by subordinating women to male power (Mulvey, 1999; Prabasmoro, 2006: 320–322). The concrete poetry used as the material object of this research presents women as the object of pleasure. Lou becomes the woman who inspired Apollinaire to write his poems and symbolically represent women as an object.

In the concrete poems researched here, various calligrammatic forms show a connection between the work's significance and the text from which it is constructed. These poems were written by Apollinaire in the early 20th century, during World War I (Pia, 1954). In these works, women are presented through a male gaze and expressions of a man's romantic love for a woman.

MALE GAZE AND THE OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN

The first work analyzed here, titled "La mielleuse figure-C'est dans cette fleur-Et puis voici l'engin" ('A honeyed fig-Is in the flower-As is the gear'), is a single concrete poem consisting of three calligrams (a fig, a carnation, and an opium pipe). These three calligrams were written in Nice on 8 October 1914. This discussion will begin with a presentation of the concrete poems as included in *Poèmes à Lou*, as follows:

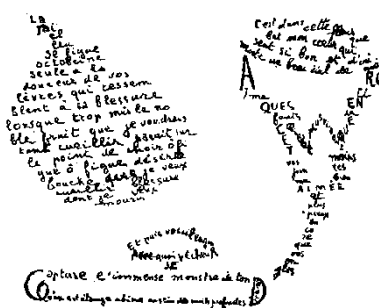


Figure 1. "La mielleuse figure-C'est dans cette fleur-Et puis voici l'engin"

Transcript

La mielleuse figure-C'est dans cette fleur-Et puis voici l'engin

*La mielleuse figure octobrine
seule a la douceur de vos lèvres
qui ressemble à sa blessure
lorsque trop mûr le noble fruit
que je voudrais tant cueillir
paraît sur le point de choir
ô figue ô figue désirée*

*bouche que je veux cueillir
blessure dont je veux mourir*

*C'est dans cette fleur qui sent si bon
et d'où monte un beau ciel de nuées
que bat mon cœur
AROMATIQUES ENFANTS de CET œillet plus vivant
QUE vos mains jointes ma bien AIMÉE
et plus pieux encore que vos ongles*

*Et puis voici l'engin avec quoi pêcheur
JE
Capture l'immense monstre de ton œil
Qu'un art étrange abîme au sein des nuits
profondes*

Translation in English:

*The Honey Fig-It's in this flower-And then here's the
gear*

*The honey fig octobrine
only the sweetness of your lips
who looks like his injury
when overripe the noble fruit
that I would like to pick so much
appears on the verge of falling
O fig ô desired fig
mouth I want to pick
injury I want to die*

*It's in this flower that smells so good
and from which rises a beautiful sky of clouds
my heart beats
AROMATIQUES CHILDREN of this carnation more
alive
THAT your joined hands my beloved
and even more pious than your nails*

*And then here is the gear with what fisherman
I
Capture the huge monster of your eye
That a strange art spoils within deep nights*

In the poem "La mielleuse figue-C'est dans cette fleur-Et puis voici l'engin", typography leads to the creating of meaning in this concrete poem as a whole structure. This typography is the dominant element of this calligramic poem, as the layout of these poems provides a visual stimulant to lead readers to the significance contained within the poem. Aside from the typographic aspect, also analyzed here is the displacing of meaning found within this concrete poem's three calligrams.

In this poem, three different calligrams are presented. Two of the calligrams are in the upper half of the poem, while one calligram is at the bottom of the poem. The first calligram ("La mielleuse figue") can be found in the upper left side of the poem and resembles the form of a ripe fig. "La mielleuse" that

opens this poem resembles the tip of the fig. The lines of this poem take up more and more spaces before ultimately rounding off with tighter and smaller text. The calligram takes the form of a round fruit body, an icon of a fig fruit. Also discussed here is the displacing of meaning in this concrete poem, through figurative language. An implicit metaphor indicates the comparison of the fig fruit and the lips, as indicated in the line "*La mielleuse figue octobrine seule a la douceur de vos lèvres*" (*the october honeyed fig alone has the sweetness of your lips*). The sweetness of the fig is associated with the smoothness of Lou's lips. The following line contains a metaphor that illustrates Apollinaire's sexual desire for Lou: "*ô figue ô figue désirée bouche que je veux cueillir*" (*o fig, o desired fig a mouth i would so like to pick*). The word *désirée*, an adjective, provides an erotic impression, and through this it is compared to Lou's body, or more specifically, her mouth (*bouche*).

The second calligram (*C'est dans cette fleur*) on the upper right side resembles a blossoming flower. The line "*C'est dans cette fleur que bat mon cœur qui sent si bon et d'où monte un beau ciel de nuées*" is typographically arranged in a curve, resembling the crown of a flower. The use of capitalization in the word *Aromatiques* (A R O Q U E S) and *enfants* (EN) is intended to emphasize the typographic shape of the crown. The word *CET* at the beginning of the line "*cet œillet plus vivant*" is also written in capital letters with a wavy typography, and thus resembles a flower petal. The following line begins with the word *QUE*, which is again written in capital letters. The word *AIMÉE* is written in capital letters to better resemble the base of the flower. The use of capital letters shows readers where to begin new lines when reading this concrete poem. These capital letters also indicate which words dominate the graphic form of the poem. The shape of the flower's stem consists of small text that is connected to the third calligram, an opium pipe, and thus gives the impression that the flower is smoke coming out of the pipe. The metaphor in the line "*aromatiques enfants de cet œillet plus vivant que vos mains jointes*" ('the fragrance of carnation wafts from this fragrant flower more alive within your grasp') compares the fragrance of the carnation and the human hand.

The third calligram (*Et puis voici l'engin*) is located on the bottom half of the poem and resembles an opium pipe. The text arranged in a circular shape, which resembles a place for smoking opium, underscores the understanding of this shape as an opium pipe. Furthermore, capital letters are used in the word "JE" and at the beginning of the following line. The letters C and Q are connected as one, serving to initiate two of the poem's lines. The use of capital letters in the word "JE" indicates that "JE" is the main

actor in dominating Lou, a woman. Two lines, one at the top and one at the bottom, extend to form the shape of the pipe. The word *œil* at the end of the first line is written at the very tip of the pipe and resembles a capital letter D. The figurative language in "*Qu'un art étrange abîme au sein des nuits profondes*" (as a strange destructive art within the abyss of the night) is a simile because it uses the word "*que*" ("as") to compare two different terms. This line refers to the previous one, "*JE Capture l'immense monstre de ton œil*" (*I capture the monster of your eye*), where the hyperbole "*l'immense monstre*" (enormous monster) refers to another part of a woman's body: her eye (*œil*).

Through hermeneutic reading, interpretation of the calligrams' form will be used to examine different aspects of the poems that show femininity. Apollinaire, as the subject "*Je*" is present in all three of the calligrams in this concrete poem. The word "*JE*" in the third calligram is written entirely in capital letters, thus showing that Apollinaire's self serves as the dominant subject in this poem. In other words, Apollinaire, the male figure and poet, dominates all three calligrams that represent the woman as an aesthetic object. In each of this concrete poem's three calligrams, icons associated with women's bodies are presented.

The first calligram, found in the upper left corner, is an icon of a fig or *figue*. Aside from representing figs as edible food, the word fig also indicates the vagina (owing to phonetic similarity between *fig* and *vag*). The woman, Lou, is presented as an object that can be physically used, similar to how a fruit can be eaten. In the first clause, "*La meilieuse figue octobrine*" refers to the sweet taste of the fig. The sweetness of the fig is then compared with the woman's body, i.e. the lips, in the following line: "*seule a la douceur de vos lèvres*" (*alone has the sweetness of your lips*). *Vos lèvres*, written in the plural form, refers denotatively to the lips, but may also refer to the vulva. The line "*lorsque trop mûr le noble fruit*" refers to a *figue* that is already overripe, while *Paraît sur le point de choir* indicates that this overripe *figue* will likely fall from its plant, ready to be consumed. In other words, the ripe fig or *figue* is associated with a woman who has come of age and is ready to be enjoyed. The lips of this woman are presented as sensual symbols. Sexual desire for the lips of this woman is revealed in the following clause, *le noble fruit que je voudrais tant cueillir* (the noble fruit that i would like so much to pick appears ready to fall) and *ô figue ô figue désirée boucheque je veux cueillir* (o fig, o desired fig a mouth i would so like to pick). Sexual desire is indicated by the combination of the word *figue* with *désirée*. The verb *cueillir* means "pick", but in this context the fig is connoted as a part of the body that

the male subject, "*Je*", desires to possess. The calligram is shaped like a fig fruit to symbolize Lou because of its sweet nature. The woman's lips as a sensual symbol are linked to this characteristic sweetness. According to the *Éncyclopédie des Symboles* (1996: 257–258), the fig or *la figue* is a literary symbol linked to the lingam and yoni and thus has erotic connotations. Here, the fig is a euphemism, one that uses figurative language to present fruit (food) as a metaphor for sex.

Examined from a historical perspective, the fig fruit is commonly used as a symbol, including as the forbidden fruit of knowledge picked by Eve in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. According to this story, the woman tempted the man to eat the forbidden fruit. Ultimately, as a result they are exiled from the Garden of Eden as punishment for eating the fruit. The fig is thus a symbol of forbidden fruit, but is also considered sacral. The "sin" committed by Eve was thus responsible, according to the story, for the loss of goodness. This "goodness" was redefined from a secular perspective during the Renaissance and used to portray women's "beautiful" faces and bodies. The symbolic meaning of the fig is fertility, which is always linked to the female reproductive system (Wolf, 2002).

The second calligram, located in the upper right corner, is an icon of a carnation. The woman is presented as a flower to be enjoyed, with a fragrance that brings pleasure. The feminine noun *œillet* can be literally defined as a fragrant flower. As a calligram, the *œillet* is a symbol of a woman with the pleasurable fragrance of a *œillet*. Two body parts are presented figuratively, namely the hands (*vos mains*) and fingers (*vos ongles*) in the lines "*que vos mains jointes ma bien AIMÉES*" and "*et plus pieux encore que vos ongles*". The characteristic fragrance of the *œillet* is associated with the woman's fingers. A man sniffing the fragrance of the *œillet* will enjoy the same sensation and provocation he would feel when kissing a woman's hands or fingers. The adjective *aromatiques* (fragrant) in the line "*Aromatiques enfants de cet œillet plus vivant*" explains that the fragrance of the *œillet* reflects femininity because, in general, fragrance is often linked to women. The characteristics of the flower are connected to those of Lou, who is presented as a woman with fingers as fragrant as the *œillet* flower. Meanwhile, as with the *œillet*-shaped calligram, the flower is frequently understood as a symbol of fertility.

The third calligram, on the bottom of the poem, is an icon for an opium pipe. Opium pipes are used for smoking opium, and as with cigarettes they are used with the mouth. However, in this poem the opium pipe also has poetic significance, as it is a tool through

which "JE" depicts himself in Lou's sight and through which "JE" hallucinates. By presenting the woman as an opium pipe, she is given the figurative meaning of a tool used to entrance or stimulate the user's senses and imagination. The erotic impression given by presenting the woman as an opium pipe is based in the link between the figurative and literal meaning of the opium pipe. It is more than a simple pipe for smoking opium. The opium pipe, with a long stem, resembles a stick and thus symbolizes the masculine symbol of the phallus. In other words, Lou as a woman is depicted figuratively as an object of pleasure for Apollinaire.

The matrix in the poem "La mielleuse figue-C'est dans cette fleur-Et puis voici l'engin" is Apollinaire's sexual desire for Lou. This can be seen in the poem's three calligrams, in which parts of women's bodies are associated with the human senses, including smell, taste, and sight. This matrix is transformed into graphical form, as a fig, a carnation, and an opium pipe. The model is transformed into different parts of a woman's body: lips, mouth, eyes, fingers, and hands.

EXOTICISM OF WOMAN

The next concrete poem to be analyzed is "À Lou Hommage", written in Nice between late October and November 1914. In this concrete poem, there is one main calligram, a coconut tree, as well as a form resembling a heart in the bottom right, the poet's signature in the bottom left, and the poet's name (written vertically) in the bottom right. This discussion of the concrete poem will begin by presenting the poem as included in *Poèmes à Lou*, as follows:

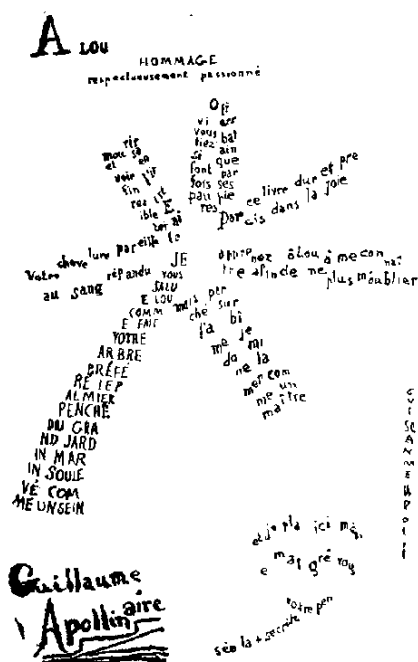


Figure 2. The Calligram "À Lou Hommage"

This concrete poem, read clockwise, produces the following transcript:

À LOU DE COLIGNY-CHÂTILLON
HOMMAGE
respectueusement passionné
Oliviers vous battiez ainsi que font parfois ses paupières
Par ce livre dur et précis dans la joie apprenez ô Lou à me connaître afin de ne plus m'oublier
mais perché sur l'abîme je domine la mer comme un maître
JE VOUS SALUE LOU
COMME FAIT VOTRE ARBRE PRÉFÉRÉ
LE PALMIER PENCHÉ
DU GRAND JARDIN MARIN
SOULEVÉ COMME UN SEIN
Votre chevelure pareil au sang répandu mourir et savoir enfin l'irrésistible Éternité
Guillaume Apollinaire
et je place ici même malgré vous votre pensée la + secrète
Guillaume Apolli

Translation in English:

TO LOU DE COLIGNY-CHÂTILLON
TRIBUTE
respectfully passionate
Olive trees beat you as well as sometimes make your eyelids
By this hard and accurate book in joy learn O Lou to know me so I will not forget myself but perched on the abyss I dominate the sea like a master
I WISH YOU LOU
HOW DOES YOUR FAVORITE TREE
THE LEAN PALM
THE GREAT MARINE GARDEN
RAISED AS A BREAST
Your hair like spilled blood
to die and finally to know the irresistible Eternity
Guillaume Apollinaire
and I place here even in spite of you your most secret thought
Guillaume Apolli

The concrete poem "À Lou Hommage", through the form of the calligram, creates meaning for the entire poetic structure. Typography is dominant in this poem owing to its calligrammatic form. The positioning of the writing in this poem serves as a visual aid to promote an understanding of the poem's significance. This analysis, aside from typography, will also examine the use of figurative language that creates a displacing of meaning.

The concrete poem "À Lou Hommage" consists of a main calligram, in the form of a coconut tree, as well as the poet's name in the bottom left, a calligram in the shape of a heart in the bottom right, and the poet's name (written horizontally) in the bottom right. The letter O in the word *Oliviers* in the top-most frond signifies the beginning of the poem's first line. A total of six lines forms the various fronds of the coconut tree. The lines that make up the stem of the tree, meanwhile, are written entirely in capital letters.

Several pieces of figurative language create a displacing of meaning in the concrete poem "À Lou Hommage". The line *le palmier penché du grand jardin marin soulevé comme un sein* (the slanted coconut tree in the vast sea garden raised as breasts) presents a simile using the word "comme" (a comparison meaning like, similar to, or as). This line can be found in the stem of the coconut tree, in which the icon of the coconut tree is compared to parts of the woman's body, namely her raised breasts.

This concrete poem was written in Nice from late October to November 1914, during World War I (Pia, 1954). This poem is dedicated to Lou. The form of the coconut tree represents the exotic impression of tropical regions and their climes, including coconut trees. Various words are used to depict an exotic Mediterranean situation; "palmier" (coconut tree), "mer" (sea), "oliviers" (olive tree). Feminine elements, meanwhile, can be found in this calligram in the words that refer to the woman's body, namely *un sein* (a breast) and *votre chevelure* (your hair). The figure of Lou is associated with the exotic atmosphere of the coastal regions.

Apollinaire, as a masculine figure, dominates the figure of Lou. This can be seen, for example, in the line "*Mais perché sur l'abîme je domine la mer comme un maître*" (but perched on a cliff I control the sea as a ruler). Lou's feminine aspects are described through metaphors and figurative language linked to the female body. This indicates that femininity is depicted as something that can bring sensual pleasure to men. The woman, Lou, is objectified through depiction in calligramic form as an object as the coconut tree. The concrete poem is realized through a calligram that not only resembles a coconut tree, but also resembles a stick, such as a firework that is ready to explode. This serves as a symbol of Apollinaire's masculinity, the same masculinity that symbolically represents the woman as an object. Masculinity is viewed as a means of control or power over femininity. In other words, it is defined as something dominant or superior.

The matrix in the poem "À Lou Hommage" is dedication, or homage. This matrix is transformed into a model, taking the visual form of a coconut tree. The variant in this poem is women's exoticism, as depicted through the calligramatic use of the coconut tree. In French culture, the coconut tree—as with the pineapple tree—is a symbol of exoticism as it grows in sunny coastal areas. These coastal areas allow Europeans to seek bronzed or tanned skin, a symbol of privilege given the difficulty and cost of holidaying in tropical areas. This indicates that the poem's significance presents an interesting woman as an exotic woman.

The depiction of Lou as an exotic object indicates that the woman is considered an object capable of increasing the libido. In this poem, exoticism is shown in the symbol of the coconut tree and the symbol of the female body (the breast). This shows that Lou's sexuality as a woman is represented through breast envy, referring to parts of the woman's body that are considered exotic (breasts, long hair, body fragrance). The hippogram for the concrete poem "À Lou Hommage" can be found in a conventional (linear) poem in Charles Baudelaire's poetry collection *Les Fleurs du Mal* (The Flowers of Evil).

WOMEN AS PLEASURE

The third and final concrete poem analyzed here is titled "À Madame La Comtesse" and was written in Nice on 2 November 1914. In this concrete poem there are two calligrams, namely *flacon d'eau de vie* (flask with the waters of life), located in the upper half, and the icon of the *croix* (cross) found in the lower right corner. This discussion of the poem will begin by presenting the work as it appeared in the poetry collection *Poèmes à Lou*, as below:

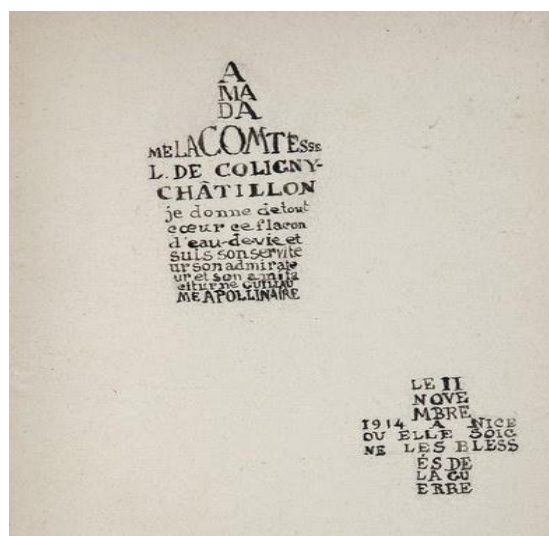


Figure 3. The Calligram "À Madame La Comtesse"

This concrete poem, read vertically, produces the following transcript:

À MADAME LA COMTESSE
L. DE COLIGNY_CHÂTILLON
je donne de tout cœur ce flacon d'eau-de-vie
et suis son serviteur
son admirateur
et son ami taciturne
GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE
LE II NOVEMBRE 1914 À NICE
OÙ ELLES SOIGNE LES BLESSÉS DE LA
GUERRE

Translation in English:

TO MADAME LA COMTESSE
L. DE COLIGNY_CHÂTILLON
I give this bottle of eau-de-vie with all my heart
and am his servant
his admirer
and his taciturn friend
GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE
II NOVEMBER 1914 IN NICE
WHERE THEY CARE THE WOUNDED OF
THE WAR

Typography plays an important role in creating meaning within this concrete poem as a whole. In the first calligram, which resembles a flask of alcohol, capital letters are used in the first sentence: À MADAME LA COMTESSE /L. DE COLIGNY-CHÂTILLON. Capital letters are also used at the end of the poem, to write the name of the poet: GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE. The use of capital letters indicates that the poem's sender—the poet—serves as the subject, while the poem's recipient serves as the object. The use of capital letters emphasizes the dominant role of Guillaume Apollinaire as the poet and Louise de Coligny-Châtillon as the object. The figurative language in the line "*je donne de tout cœur ce flacon d'eau-de-vie*" (I give you this bottle of alcohol with my whole heart) is a *totem pro parte* synecdoche (representing a whole with a part). This figurative language shows that Apollinaire is presenting all of his emotions through the flask-shaped bottle that he is giving to Lou.

The second calligram, an icon of a *croix* (cross), is written entirely in capital letters. This calligram consists only of two sentences. The first sentence clarifies the time when and place where this poem was written, namely on 2 November 1914 in Nice. The second sentence is the main content of this calligram. The shape of the calligram also clarifies the link between the poem, the *croix* icon, and the temporal background of World War I. In this second sentence, OÙ ELLE SOIGNE LES BLESSÉS DE

LA GUERRE, supports the meaning of the calligram's form. The words LA GUERRE refer to the place and time identified in the first sentence, while the word SOIGNE refers to the calligram's form.

The two forms of the calligrams, *le flacon* and *le croix*, are interconnected. There is a shared rhyme at the end of both calligrams, namely "aire" in the name Apollinaire and "erre" in the word *guerre*. This phonetic similarity indicates the meaning that links the words *guerre* and *Apollinaire*: it refers to the poem's background, Apollinaire's serving in an artillery regiment for World War I.

In the first calligram, it can be seen that the form of the calligram resembles that of a small flask of alcohol. *Le flacon*, or the small flask, refers denotatively to a small vessel used to store liquids such as alcohol and perfume. In this context, the flask-shape of the calligram can be interpreted as signifying that the flask is used as a vessel to store Apollinaire's feelings for Lou. This can be understood from the calligram's line *ce flacon d'eau de vie* (bottle of the waters of life), which refers to alcoholic beverages. More specifically, the phrase *eau de vie* refers to beverages with a high alcohol content, more than 40% that are capable of intoxicating their consumers. Alcohol's intoxicating nature gives this calligram's form a hidden meaning, particularly when directed to Lou. The initial L. here refers to Louise or Lou, as indicated by the dedication to L. de Coligny-Châtillon (Louise de Coligny-Châtillon). Meanwhile, the phrase *Madame La Comtesse* uses the term *Comtesse* (countess), a title for a woman married to a *Comte* (count); Thus it refers to a woman of noble heritage. In other words, Lou is a person with an aristocratic nature for Apollinaire. In the following line, Apollinaire refers to himself as Lou's servant (*serviteur*), admirer (*admirateur*), and secret friend (*ami taciturne*). The term "eau de vie" (alcohol) in the previous line thus serves as the key reason why Apollinaire describes himself as a servant (*serviteur*), admirer (*admirateur*), and secret friend (*ami taciturne*). The calligram's shape, a small flask (*le flacon*), has a masculine significance, because men are generally identified as consumers of liquor or alcohol.

This concrete poem was written on 2 November 1914 in Nice, during World War I. As such, World War I serves as the background to this poem's writing, as well as Apollinaire's own situation as a member of an active artillery regiment in the war. The form of the calligram resembles that of the *Croix Rouge* (Red Cross), the logo of an international medical and paramedic association. The shape of this poem is

associated women's ability to "treat" wounded casualties of war on the battlefield. The third-person pronoun *Elle* refers to Lou, who was serving as a volunteer nurse at the time. The words *soigne les blessés*, which mean "treated the casualties", are found within a calligram shaped like a cross. In other words, the calligram resembles the icon cross as a symbolic representation of the woman who cures.

Aside from being a symbol of paramedics and medical care, the icon of the *croix* is also a religious symbol, referring to the cross or crucifix. *Elle* does not only refer to the woman treating the physical wounds of the war victims, but also to the woman treating the spiritual wounds of the poet; in other words, the woman treating Apollinaire's longing for Lou (*Elle*) while serving on the battlefield. This poem was written at the very beginning of World War I, in 1914. The clarification of time and place in the first line of the second calligram serves to indicate the historical significance or background to the poem's writing—i.e., World War I. In this, the woman is considered shelter, a healer of wounds who provides a sense of security, one based in femininity's association with softness, love, and motherhood.

CONCLUSION

From the calligrams analyzed above, it can be concluded that the aspect of pleasure found in Apollinaire's poems in the significant meaning linking visual form and poetic text. Symbols of femininity are present in the three calligrams analyzed: the woman as a sexual object in "La mielleuse figure-C'est dans cette fleur-Et puis voici l'engin", the woman as a symbol of exoticism in "À Lou Hommage", and the sub-ordination of the woman in "À Madame La Comtesse". Lou's femininity in these concrete poems is depicted in various visual symbols, or icons, including a fig, a carnation, an opium pipe, a coconut tree, and a cross. By interpreting the denotative or functional meaning of these objects, as well as their figurative meanings, it can be concluded that Lou's femininity is implicitly depicted as an object to be "enjoyed" by a man. This indicates that femininity, as a social construct, positions women as objects to be dominated or subordinated by masculine figures.

The poems discussed in this article were written between October and November 1914, during World War I, when women were still more limited in their public self-expression. One of these women was Louise de Coligny Chatillon, who had been his lover as well as the inspiration for his poetry collection *Poèmes à Lou*. As a surrealist, Apollinaire depicted femininity symbolically through romantic visual

expressions and metaphorical linguistic ones, using his words to give readers a certain impression of how women were represented through a male gaze.

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