

AT THE OUTER LIMITS OF LANGUAGE: MALLARMÉ'S *UN COUP DE DÉS* AND HUIDOBRO'S *ALTAZOR*¹

NANCY B. MANDLOVE
Westminster College

Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés*, published in 1897, and Vicente Huidobro's *Altazor*, begun in 1919 and completed in 1931, are two examples of language at the outer limits—that is to say, language that reaches beyond ordinary verbal and logical connections to create new meanings from the word as the only reality, in and of itself. *Un Coup de dés* fits this definition due to its fragmented structure, complicated syntax, major and minor themes conveyed in varying type sizes, the essential paradox at the heart of the poem and the resulting ambiguity; *Altazor* for its word games, neologisms, and the progressive disintegration of language which results in the final outburst of pure sound at the end of Canto VII.

While Mallarmé's poem is rooted in the Symbolist tradition, it stands at the outer limits of Symbolist poetics. In all his work, Mallarmé makes use of the Symbolist notion of the suggestive power of the word to create a reality behind appearances, but in *Un Coup de dés* he goes far beyond suggestion through semantic content to rely on syntax, sound, structure and typography—the raw materials of language as well as meaning to suggest another reality. The printed poem on the page suggests in itself (apart from semantic meaning) a greater creation: it is a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosm. Because Mallarmé has pushed language beyond its normal limitations in this poem, it would seem that *Un Coup de dés* paves the way for Huidobro's *ultraísta* and *creacionista* experiments with language. While it is very likely that Huidobro's work benefitted from his knowledge and admiration of the whole body of Mallarmé's poetry and that

echoes of the Symbolist tradition can be found in Huidobro's work, there is a more fundamental and powerful connection between *Un Coup de dés* and *Altazor* which sets them apart from other poems produced out of the same literary currents.² Both works represent attempts to make the poem a microcosmic re-creation of the macrocosm—a mirror of Creation itself. Both reflect a Swedenborgian concern for universal analogies and correspondences. Both push language to the outer limits in an effort to reveal the universal cosmic structure through the creative power of the word as the only concrete reality. In so doing, *Un Coup de dés* and *Altazor* incorporate all the linguistic innovations associated with both Symbolism and *ultraísmo*, but at the same time they transcend the literary currents of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and reach back to a mythical time when word and creation were one. They are as close to Genesis as they are to Symbolism. Their fundamental identity resides in the destruction of conventional language, the breaking up of normal relationships among words in an attempt to return the word to its original, primitive purity, to re-establish the identity of word and thing, to let the poetic word once again become Logos, to be one with the absolute. Thus, while it is quite possible that *Un Coup de dés* served Huidobro directly as a formal, thematic and linguistic model for *Altazor*, the essential connection between the two poems lies in a parallel effort to repeat the act of the original Creation. To that end then, Mallarmé and the Master serve as Adamic figures, creative models for Huidobro and Altazor. The basic pattern of both poems is the cosmic order. Huidobro, who saw the poet as "a little god," takes up the challenge of Mallarmé—to produce a work that attempts an Orphic (poetic) explanation of the earth.

In his analysis of *Un Coup de dés*, Robert Greer Cohn proposes that the poem represents Mallarmé's closest approximation to the Book, the Poem which would be that Orphic explanation.³ In a letter to Verlaine, Mallarmé indicates his desire to produce such a poem, remarking as well that no one poet can create the Work in its entirety, but that the creation of a fragment serves to prove the existence of the Book:

I have always dreamed and attempted something else . . . What? the Book, convinced that in the end there is only one, unwittingly attempted by anyone who has written, even the Geniuses. The Orphic explanation of the Earth, which is the sole duty of the poet and the literary game *par excellence*: because

even the rhythm of the book, impersonal and alive in that case, clear down to its pagination, lies side by side with the equations of this dream or Ode.⁴

The intent of this study is to illustrate that *Un Coup de dés* and *Altazor* are fragments of the same Work and, as such, are based on the same archetypal and linguistic patterns. In *Altazor*, Huidobro has taken up the challenge of Mallarmé to spin out of nothingness, the abyss, the primordial sea of potential in which all reality is dissolved, another constellation/poem, which is at once the same and unique, another configuration of the eternal Poem: a parallel Orphic explanation of the earth. While *Un Coup de dés* may have served as Huidobro's immediate linguistic model, and while many parallels are evident in the two poems, the greater model for both is the creative rhythm of the cosmic structure. The tradition that links them most closely together is that to which both Genesis and Orpheus belong.

Un Coup de dés and *Altazor* alike are attempts to return to the Edenic state of oneness where thought, word and act are inseparable. To this end, both rely on basic archetypal patterns to give simultaneous multiple meaning, resulting in parallel thematic development in the two works. In Mallarmé's poem the Master is both Man and Poet, father and son.⁵ He partakes of both Adam and Orpheus and, as such, he is also the creator—of his progeny and of the poem. The Master's fatal plunge into the sea is the fall of Adam from unity to multiplicity, time and mortality. The death of man in the regenerating waters of the sea is, however, also his purification and redemption, and the single constellation which issues from destruction signals a return to the world of the timeless and absolute. As Orpheus, the Master's confrontation with the primordial waters echoes the descent and subsequent fragmentation of the archetypal poet: the death of the poet and the survival of the poem. The single constellation which emerges from the poet's destruction is both poem and cosmos, the poem *as* cosmos. The two myths are joined together by the fall of the "plume," which, linked with the Master, signals his descent into the sea. It also symbolizes the act of creation as the pen which falls across the blank page to produce the poem/constellation. In both myths, the symbolic entry of the creator (male) into the sea (female) results in the fusion of male and female from which the creation issues.

Huidobro's *Altazor* is the embodiment of the same archetypal figures. Born on the equinox, dividing line of all realities, at the age of thirty-three on the day of Christ's death, he is both man and god; he

is "hombre, poeta, mago" ("man, poet, magician").⁶ Altazor's fall, through all time and space, through all opposites, is also the fall of Adam and Lucifer, the descent of Orpheus. Like that of the Master, Altazor's voyage through the cosmos ends in shipwreck and from that confrontation with destruction, from the bottom of the sea of all potential, issue the new creations, the new configurations of language which are Huidobro's "constellations."

It is not, however, simply the incorporation of these archetypal patterns into the thematic material of the poem that provides a common bond between them, nor would this alone set them apart from many other works in which these themes are prevalent. It is rather that the archetypal elements are created not only thematically, but also linguistically. The fall, destruction and resurrection of Adam and Orpheus, is simultaneously the fall, destruction and resurrection of language. Just as Adam falls into duality, multiplicity and finally returns transformed to the original Edenic world, so language itself dissolves in the sea of all potential and returns to the primordial chaos. From the sea, womb of creation, it is reborn and returns to the primeval language, the language of Orpheus and the creator in which thought, word, act and cosmos are one and the same. Language then, both in conjunction with and independently of the traditional thematic patterns, creates within itself the same archetypes. Language expresses directly, through the interrelationship of sounds, words, letters, syntax and grammar, the essential identity and oneness of all, toward which the thematic patterns also point. The uniqueness of these two poems rests on the fusion within each of language and myth which attempts to re-create the original language. As Mallarmé noted, "languages and myths are never so completely transformed, that two sciences, Language and Mythology, cannot by their recent effort, recover the original kinship of words and gods."⁷

Cohn sees in *Un Coup de dés*, inherent in the thematic, linguistic and structural aspects of the poem, a basic fourfold pattern which moves from unity to duality to multiplicity and back again to unity, a pattern which conforms to the descent and return of both Orpheus and Adam. This structure is, in turn, built upon a system or chain of what Cohn calls dual polarity, whereby everything is at once distinct and identical. The chain consists of a string of paradoxes, each of which is in some way different from and yet synonymous with all the others.⁸ This pattern allows individual words viewed in relationship to a particular context to assume multiple dimensions. Just as the Master may be Adam, Lucifer, Orpheus, father, son, Icarus and Hamlet

(male), so the sea may be the abyss, the womb and the primordial waters (female). The union of opposites (male and female, for example) expands to encompass the union of multiple polarities when each element of the pair is in itself a composite concept. It is this pattern of expansion and contraction of linguistic material which gives the poem a cosmic dimension, allowing it to encompass both the all and the abyss, and it is this pattern that provides the basis of the comparison for *Un Coup de dés* and *Altazor*.

Un Coup de dés begins with silence (the blank page) interrupted by the initial sound of creation, the throw of the dice which signals the beginning and the end of all. In parallel fashion, *Altazor* begins his journey listening to the voice of the Creator who is, simply, a hole in the abyss. His voice is pure sound without words from which the material world issues:

“Hice un gran ruido y este ruido formó el océano y las olas del océano.
.....

Después tejí un largo bramante de rayos luminosos para coser los días uno a uno.”⁹

The Creator laments the corruption of that pure language, sound divorced from speech, which contains in itself the power of creation:

“Creé la lengua de la boca que los hombres desviaron de su rol, haciéndola aprender a hablar . . . a ella, ella, la bella nadadora, desviada para siempre de su rol acuático y puramente acariciador.”¹⁰

It is the role of the Poet/Redeemer, *Altazor*, to return language to its primitive purity (“su rol acuático”), to restore its creative power, to redeem the word. It is not only man who has fallen into impurity, but language as well; as *Altazor* plunges into the sea in Canto I he carries with him the word. Poet, man and language must be sacrificed in order to be redeemed: “Abrid la boca para recibir la hostia de la palabra herida.”¹¹ Canto I ends with silence, shipwreck and the promise of creation.

Canto II is an ode to woman from the depths of the sea where the waters that are the origin of all life become fused with the creative power of woman; the male joins with the female in preparation for the new creation. The destruction of the old world continues in Canto III,

where old language patterns are destroyed in order to be regenerated:

Romper las ligaduras de las venas
Los lazos de la respiración y las cadenas
.....
Cadenas de miradas nos atan a la tierra
Romped romped tantas cadenas¹²

It is in Canto IV, however, where the sea becomes, as it does in *Un Coup de dés*, the paradoxical site of destruction and creation. From the wreckage come the new "constellations," Huidobro's word games, the regeneration of the word. The sea, whirled by waves, hurricane and wind becomes the womb, the matrix out of which language is born anew. In Mallarmé's poem, the throw of the dice paradoxically embodies both chaos and order, the arbitrary and the predetermined, reason and the irrational. It results in the single constellation, both unique and universal, which is the poem. In *Altazor*, that single throw of the dice is echoed in a series of constellations, spun out of the abyss of the sea:

El mar se abrirá para dejar salir los primeros náufragos
Que cumplieron su castigo
Después de tantos siglos y más siglos
Andarán por la tierra con miradas de vidrio
Escalarán los montes de sus frases proféticas
Y se convertirán en constelaciones¹³

By definition, a constellation is an arbitrary group of fixed stars, its position determined by the natural forces of attraction and repulsion of astral bodies. Its configuration is arbitrarily identified and named through the imaginative power of man and language. In *Un Coup de dés*, the throw of the dice, a combination of chance and determination, produces "l'unique nombre qui ne peut pas être un autre" (C, p. 4). From the depths of the sea, the undifferentiated source of creation, emerges the single constellation, the poem. Like a configuration of stars, it is held together by its own internal bonds: the mutual attraction and repulsion of words, linguistic rhythms and sounds. But if thought, word and act are identical, and as Mallarmé says, "toute pensée émet un coup de dés" (C, p. 11). then another cast of the dice will produce another constellation, a different configuration of the same material, part of "un compte total en formation" (C, p. 11). This

constellation too will be unique and yet identical with the first, as it is merely another arrangement of the original material spun out of the primordial waters. Every plunge into the sea of potential, every throw of the dice or creative act of will, yields a new constellation, and each is both unique and universal because of the fundamental identity of all.

One of the first new linguistic constellations to emerge from the shipwreck in *Altazor* is the *golondrina* series:

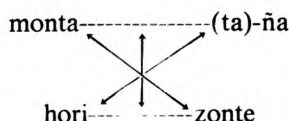
No hay tiempo que perder
Ya viene la golondrina monotémpora
Trae un acento antípoda de lejanías que se acercan
Viene gondoleando la golondrina¹⁴

This passage gives a premonition of the new poetic world which will emerge from the destruction of the fallen word. The “golondrina monotémpora,” the eternal, ideal *golondrina* is the first of the new poetic creatures to come forth from the shipwreck. She is re-cast now as the harbinger of the fusion of all previously distant realities. No longer merely a being of the air, she is equally at home in the water (“viene gondoleando la golondrina”). The return to the original source, the sea, results in the restoration of the full potential of the word, for there, physical and semantic disparities are transcended by the magic of language itself. In the Orphic world, linguistic identity takes precedence over physical reality. Disparate objects are drawn together into linguistic constellations by the mutual attraction of words: “palabras magnéticas” (*A*, p. 51), “palabras con imanes” (*A*, p. 36), “palabras estelares” (*A*, p. 49). Thus “gondoleando” becomes a natural property of the *golondrina*, not simply because she is a survivor of the shipwreck, but because her own linguistic identity shares a common bond with the phonemic elements of the participle “gondoleando,” forging a poetic link between them. The emergence of the *golondrina* is then followed by a whole series of linguistically related creatures:

Al horitaña de la montazonte
La violondrina y el goloncelo
Descolgada esta mañana de la lunala
Se acerca a todo galope
Ya viene la golondrina
Ya viene la golonfina

Ya viene la golontrina
 Ya viene la goloncima
 Viene la golonchina
 Viene la golonclima
 Ya viene la golonrima
 Ya viene la golonrisa¹⁵

Visual perception that identifies the mountain and the horizon as parts of one reality, the dividing line between earth, sea and sky is accommodated here by language which coincides with that perception ("al horitaña de la montazonte"). Through linguistic fusion, the name both conforms to and creates the reality. Here again, the concept of multiple polarity which Cohn sees as the basis of *Un Coup de dés* is evident as intrinsic to the structure of *Altazor*. *Montaña* and *horizonte* are separate realities and yet, in another sense, identical. The creation of two new linguistic realities expands the paradox to multiple polarity.



Where Mallarmé relies on syntax to create in each word what Michaud calls "a cross-roads, a center from which numerous spokes radiate," Huidobro makes such a center in the word itself.¹⁶ The fusion of fragments of words into new linguistic entities results in the expansion of semantic and conceptual possibilities and in the potential identity of all reality.

The constellation of creatures arising from the shipwreck is both arbitrary and fixed, determined by the linguistic logic of the attraction of rhyming words. It is the language of Adam, giving names to the emerging life of the new creation. It is also the language of Orpheus which links the concept of music with all reality through rhyme and fusion with the prefix *golon-*. The poet's human song and the music of nature, the song of the swallows ("la violondrina y el goloncelo") attracted by their natural and linguistic commonality, join together in the creation of the Orphic world.

The *golondrina* passage is immediately followed by another "constellation," the *rosiñol* series:

Pero el cielo prefiere el rodoñol
 Su niño querido el rorreñol
 Su flor de alegría el romiñol
 Su piel de lágrima el rofañol
 El rolañol
 El rosiñol¹⁷

Here Huidobro makes the song of the bird an inherent part of the name that represents it, thus fusing word, function and object. The notes of the musical scale that effect the metamorphosis of the syllables *ro* and *ol* culminating in *rosiñol* fuse the natural world of music with the human song. In *Un Coup de dés*, Mallarmé's concept of "subdivisions prismatiques de l'Idée" results in syntax fragmented into clusters or constellations of words around an idea.¹⁸ In *Altazor* this idea is translated into a prism of the word. Just as light is shattered in a prism to reflect a spectrum of harmonious color, so here one word is splintered to reveal a spectrum of analogous and harmonious linguistic creatures.

The equation of the name with the reality it signifies continues near the end of Canto IV, where the shipwreck and destruction of human beings returns them to the universal elements from which they and their names were born:

Aquí yace Marcelo mar y cielo en el mismo violoncelo

 Aquí yace Teresa ésa es la tierra que araron sus
 ojos hoy ocupada por su cuerpo

 Aquí yace Rosario río de rosas hasta el infinito
 Aquí yace Raimundo raíces del mundo son sus venas
 Aquí yace Clarisa clara risa enclaustrada en la luz
 Aquí yace Alejandro antro alejado ala adentro¹⁹

The destruction of the person is synonymous with the decomposition of the name and each individual becomes a part of the universal according to his or her linguistic identity. In most cases there is both semantic and phonemic identity between the name and the elemental destiny of each as earth (Teresa, Raimundo), fire (Clarisa) or water (Rosario, Marcelo). In the case of Alejandro's return to air and earth however, the transformation is purely linguistic. The sounds, letters and syllables which make up the name are the sole basis for the

metamorphosis. Immersion in the primordial sea has re-established the original significance of the names and allowed those whose identity they mark to become another "constellation" of the cosmos.

Canto IV, in which the new linguistic constellations begin to emerge from Altazor's aerial shipwreck, ends with the poet's having discovered the key to the Orphic world:

El pájaro tralalí canta en las ramas de mi cerebro
Porque encontró la clave del eterfinifrete
Rotundo como el unipacio y el espaverso²⁰

The key is both linguistic and musical, for it opens the door to the essential unity of poet, word and cosmos ("eterfinifrete"). The composite word fuses into one entity concepts previously scattered throughout the poem: *eter*, *fin*, *clarinete*, *infinito*. The key is circular, all encompassing, and one with the universe itself. The transposition of syllables which results in the neologisms "unipacio" and "espaverso" has the same effect as that of "horitaña" and "montazonte" described above: the multiple fusion of disparate realities, of space (nothing) and universe (all). However, since language has now been repeatedly regenerated throughout the poem, the reader perceives that linguistic similarity forms the basis of all comparisons and that endless recombinations of sounds and syllables are possible. Thus the individual components of these two words carry other resonances. "Uni-pacio" recalls *un* and *paz*; "espaverso" *espa* (*espanto*) and *verso*, expanding the area of possible meaning still further. This perception in turn alters the first reading and *universo* may be read as *un(i)-verso* (one poem, one language) and *espa(nte)-paz*. The effect is quite similar to that achieved by Mallarmé in the manipulation of sound resemblances and words within words. Cohn notes as examples of this process the phonemic identity of *mer* and *mère* in *Un Coup de dés* which expands the connotation of both words (*M*, p. 25), the incorporation of *bol* into *abolira* which fuses the bowl of the constellation with the verb (*M*, p. 23) and "le nombre," which encompasses not only name and number, but the negation of *ombre* as well (*M*, p. 88). In both works, the word, liberated from the confines of traditional meaning and context, acquires its own reality and forms its own network of relationships with other words, conforming to Mallarmé's notion that "in the poem, the words—which are already sufficiently themselves so as not to receive any further impression from outside—reflect on each other until they no longer seem to have

any color of their own, but rather become transitions on a scale.”²¹

Having discovered the linguistic key to the Orphic world, Huidobro begins in Canto V to open the door to still more possibilities, coming ever closer to the moment when language will become pure sound, at once the potential source of original creation and the destruction of the created world (“Aquí comienza el campo inexplorado,” *A*, p. 67). Poem and world being identical now, the attraction of opposites, male and female, must be a linguistic attraction. Where Mallarmé uses the typographical symbolism of the letters *i* and *o* in conjunction with their respective sounds to express the alternation of the male and female principle in and through the language, Huidobro relies on grammatical manipulation to unite the male and female in the regeneration of the poetic word:²²

La montaña y el montaña
Con su luno y con su luna
La flor florecida y el flor floreciendo²³

The “constellations” continue to spin out of the matrix of the sea. Each throw of the dice creates a new configuration and in each, language is progressively divested of rational meaning in favor of intrinsic linguistic relationships:

Nos lavamos los ojos y jugamos
El horizonte es un rinoceronte
El mar un azar
El cielo un pañuelo
La llaga una plaga²⁴

Everything is infinitely interchangeable, subject only to internal laws of language and chance, the phonemic similarity between one word and another. Semantic dissimilarity is irrelevant in a world based on the word itself, where metaphoric analogies are determined by sound alone. There is then as much similarity between “horizonte” and “rinoceronte” as there is between any two objects joined in a traditional metaphor based on other common properties. The same paradoxical concept of chance and fate that is the thematic, linguistic and structural base of Mallarmé’s poem (“Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard”) is echoed in Huidobro’s frequent use of the word *azar* in varied contexts.

Immediately, the game continues, picking up speed as *Altazor*

makes the final plunge from which there is no return. This is the definitive throw of the dice which will result in the final constellation, language returning to the one, to pure sound which is both the end and the beginning of the Orphic world. In Altazor's cosmic fall, sea and sky are only different names for the abyss. His shipwreck is both nautical and aerial. Thus, in this final cast of the dice, the windmill replaces the waves as the catalyst for the transformation of the word. Language is torn asunder by the centrifugal force of the spinning windmill and the word takes flight:

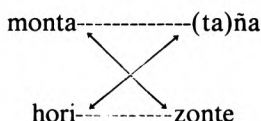
Jugamos fuera del tiempo
Y juega con nosotros el molino de viento
Molino de viento
Molino de aliento²⁵

Wind and breath, nature and the word are churned, whirled and fused by the huge blades of the windmill. As the definitive game, it is also the most sustained, extending over six pages. The windmill fuses all reality with the word in an implicitly infinite series of semantically unrelated words forged into harmony by rhyme: *-ento*, *-iento*. Sea and sky are one; the turbulent air, like the chaotic sea, is the womb of creation:

Así eres molino de viento
Molino de asiento
Molino de asiento del viento
Que teje las noches y las mañanas
Que hila las nieblas de ultratumba
Molino de aspaientos y del viento en aspas²⁶

A hurricane in the abyss of space is the site ("asiento") of destruction and creation. Like the "tourbillon d'hilarité et d'horreur" (C, p. 6) of Mallarmé's poem, the wind both destroys and regenerates the word in the depths of the abyss.²⁷ All oppositions are transcended, resulting again in multiple polarity. The storm created by the blades of the windmill incorporates both the principle of chance and that of order. The X configuration of the windmill cuts through air and language, breaking up old patterns and reorganizing them according to its own logic in which all opposites are one ("molino de aspaientos y del viento en aspas"). Cohn notes that "we may describe a dual-polar relationship . . . by fixing it in a 'cross' pattern (or a right-angle

pattern)" (*M*, p. 15), and that the **X**, found often in Mallarmé's work in the symbolism of the letter and in other contexts, "is the sign of dual-polarity" (*M*, p. 86). Huidobro's use of this symbolic form is extensive. In addition to the windmill configuration, the multiple polarity resulting from the fusion of words such as *horizonte* and *montaña* discussed above also produces the **X** pattern:



In the case of the "molino" image the pattern is further linked to the swastika, symbolic of opposites in motion.



Again, the regeneration of language will result in new configurations of the poetic word, new "constellations":

Profetiza profetiza
 Molino de las constelaciones
 Mientras bailamos sobre el azar de la risa²⁸

The laughter here in the face of the absurdity of paradox (*azar/hasard*) is the same laughter that resounds in *Un Coup de dés*. It is both a challenge and a defense against impending disaster ("hilarité" and "horreur"). It is, like Mallarmé's, "un esclaffement sombre" (*C*, p. 7).

Rhyme and rhythm, the phonemic rather than semantic attraction of words, serves as the organizing principle of the Orphic world and the poem becomes a cosmic dance:

Empiece ya
 La farandolina en la lejantaña de la montaña
 El horimento bajo el firmazonte
 Se embarca la luna
 Para dar la vuelta al mundo
 Empiece ya
 La faranmandó mandó liná
 Con su musiquí con su música

La carabantantina
La carabantantú
La farandosilina
La Farandú²⁹

It is both a dance of life and of death, based on the universal cyclical rhythm of creation and destruction. The linguistic world spun out of the “molino de constelaciones” fuses all opposites and all disparate realities into one harmonious movement which is both song and dance. The “farandolina” makes a single reality of the dance (*farándola*) and of music (*mandolina*), of the kinetic and static. The dance takes place in a world where oppositions no longer exist (“la lejantaña de la montaña / El horimento bajo el firmazonte”). Abstract and concrete, earth and sky, up and down are no longer antithetical concepts.

The windstorm has definitively altered the word now so that even the language which connects the word games or “constellations,” previously untouched by the cataclysm, becomes more and more disjointed and made up of composite words and syllables. After the final, aerial throw of the dice, the narrative passages of the poem are also composed of the new Orphic language which was formerly confined to the word games:

Yo hablo como mar y digo
De la firmeza hasta el horicielo
Soy todo montalas en la azulaya
Bailo en las volaguas con espurinas³⁰

Many of the new words incorporate not only the fusion of opposites symbolized by the **X** configuration of the windmill, but reflect as well the process by which such integration was achieved. The rhythmic and prolonged repetition of certain words throughout the poem allows the reader to identify echoes of these words in the new language. Thus “volaguas” incorporates not only sky and sea, flight and shipwreck, but *volcán* as well, the cataclysmic process which has changed the nature of language. “Espurinas” resonates with the sounds of *golondrinas* and *mandolinas*, with *espumas* and *molino*, incorporating the two catalytic agents, the process itself, into the word. Such examples abound at the end of Canto V: “hurafones” (*huracán, fon—fonema*), “naufundo” (*nauta, naufragio, fondo, fundir, fundar*).

The momentum established by the churning sea, the whirlwind

and the dance allows the continuous and rapid transformation of language to proceed in Canto VI without another cast of the dice. The cosmic game is now self-sustaining, requiring no further intervention by poet or man. All logical connections have disappeared and the poem proceeds according to its own pattern of rhyme, rhythm and sound. Words evolve, expand and contract based on their common linguistic elements. It is truly an Orphic world where there is no reality apart from the word, the poem:

Ala ola ole ala Aladino
El ladino Aladino Ah ladino dino la³¹

The transformation, expansion and contraction of the word "ala" is a linguistic game of rhythm and rhyme, a reverberation of the cosmic rhythm of attraction and repulsion. Self-generating, centrifugal motion allows the word to take wing, to fly out from the established philological and morphological center of the Spanish language into new linguistic constellations. At the same time, the reference to Aladdin incorporates once again the magical process by which the language is transformed. There is a further hint of the fusion of all language into one through the word "ladino," signifying a mixture of two very different languages, Spanish and Hebrew. The two words, "ala" and "ola," on which the whole series is based, are not only related by phonemic similarity, but by a whole system of relationships developed throughout the poem: Altazor, air, sea, flight, wave, shipwreck, creation and destruction.

The emphatic repetition of words like "cristal" (16 repetitions), "joya" (7) and "nudo" (5) throughout the canto points toward the alchemical transformation of language, from multiplicity to the one. Each of these words represents a kind of synthesis of multiple properties condensed and purified to form a single, tightly compacted whole: the Philosopher's Stone, the Gordian knot:

Alhaja apoteosis y molusco
Anudado
 noche
 nudo³²

Viewed in conjunction with "apoteosis," also repeated throughout the canto, the text reminds one again of Mallarmé's "original kinship of words and gods."

And finally, in Canto VII, the cycle is complete. Not a single conventional word remains. Canto VII is both the end of the poem and a new beginning. Language has been completely destroyed and reduced to a combination of pure sounds and composite words which recall the themes of the entire poem through common sounds and syllables:

Ai aia aia
ia ia aia ui
Tralalí
Lali lalá
Aruaru
 urulario
Lalilá.
Rimbibolam lam lam
Uiaya zollonario
 lalilá
Monlutrella monluztrella
 lalolú
Montresol y mandotrina³³

Huidobro/Altazor has returned language to its primitive purity, to pure sound, “su rol acuático.” It is the language of Adam and of Orpheus. The vowel sounds (“ai aia aia,” etc.) with which the canto begins and ends express the anguish of the dying poet/Altazor, but at the same time they are the matrix of a new language, a new poem. They are the sea of potential, the raw material of all language, awaiting another throw of the dice, another creative act of will to cast them into yet another constellation. The poem ends with the last recognizable constellations of words (“monlutrella monluztrella”) dissolving into the sea of pure sound, returning to the womb of linguistic creation which signals at once both death and rebirth. *Altazor* ends in a way that closely resembles that of *Un Coup de dés* as noted by Cohn, “with a single constellation as the last dying cluster of reality, multiplicity returning to the One from which it emerged” (*M*, p. 11). The final paradox is the same in both poems. Creation and destruction, all and nothing are inseparable. The stage is set for yet another throw of the dice by perhaps still another poet toward the creation of the Work, the complete (and impossible) Poem.

Despite the obvious differences between *Un Coup de dés* and *Altazor* in form, length and language, the underlying pattern is the same from beginning to end. Altazor, like the Master, perishes in the

shipwreck. But the poem survives in each case as evidence of the act of creation. The two poems, parallel Orphic explanations of the earth, remain as fragments of the Work, "proclaiming before the Nothingness that is the truth, these glorious illusions."³⁴

NOTES

1. This essay was conceived and written during a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship in Residence at New York University. Much credit goes to my colleagues and to Professor Anna Balakian, seminar director, for their support and suggestions.

2. George Yúdice discusses the possible influence of *Un Coup de dés* on Huidobro's *Poemas árticos* in *Vicente Huidobro y la motivación del lenguaje* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 1978), p. 85. See also pp. 134-35, Huidobro, Mallarmé and "la trascendencia vacua"; pp. 231-32, Huidobro, Mallarmé and concrete poetry. Gerardo Diego links Mallarmé and Huidobro in "Poesía y creacionismo de Vicente Huidobro" in *Vicente Huidobro y el creacionismo*, ed. René de Costa (Madrid: Taurus, 1975), p. 224. Henry Alfred Holmes quotes Huidobro in *Vicente Huidobro and Creationism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), p. 15: "I came to Paris—all the young writers were shouting: 'Vive Mallarmé et vive Laforgue!' I said at once: 'Non! Vive Mallarmé! A bas Laforgue!' When they began to recognize the merits of Apollinaire, I still said: 'Vive Mallarmé et vive Apollinaire, mais à bas Laforgue.'"

3. Robert Greer Cohn, *Mallarmé's Un Coup de dés: An Exegesis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 3. Further references to this work will be given in the text with the abbreviation *M* whenever practical.

4. Translated from the French quoted by Guy Michaud in *Mallarmé*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Hatier, 1958), p. 125.

5. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (Geneva: Albert Kundig, 1943), p. 5. Further references to the poem will be indicated in the text with the abbreviation *C*. The Master may also be viewed in terms of Hamlet and Icarus. The multi-dimensional nature of this figure allows Claude Roulet to see him in Christian terms as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. (*Version du poème* [Neuchâtel: Editions du Griffon, 1949]).

6. *Altazor* (Madrid: Visor, 1973), pp. 14-15. Occasional references to this work will be indicated in the text with the abbreviation *A*.

7. Translated from *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 1170.

8. Cohn, pp. 14-18. Cohn gives the following example to illustrate this chain. "A¹ :

A² = positive : negative = male : female = unity : multiplicity = One : Two = convexity : concavity, and so forth" (pp. 15-16).

9. *Altazor*, p. 10. "I made a great noise and the noise formed the ocean and the waves of the ocean. . . .

Afterwards I wove a huge ball of luminous thunderbolts to sew the days together." I have placed the original quotations in the text and the translations in the notes rather than *vice versa* due to the increasingly complex word games that Huidobro invents in the course of the poem. Because it is not possible in a translation to reproduce both the semantic and phonemic elements of these linguistic manipulations, the text of the paper must deal with the original sounds and meanings. In the translations, I have attempted to reproduce the most important aspects of each word game for the non-Spanish reader, recognizing that much of the original has been sacrificed in the process.

10. *Altazor*, p. 10: "I created the tongue in the mouth, whose role men turned aside, making her learn to speak, she, she, the beautiful swimmer, turned away forever from her aquatic and purely caressing role."

11. *Altazor*, p. 35: "Open your mouths to receive the host of the wounded word."

12. *Altazor*, p. 47:

Break the bonds of the veins
The ties of breathing and the chains
.....

Chains of looks tie us to the earth
Break break all those chains

13. *Altazor*, p. 86:

The sea will open up to release the first shipwrecks
Who have completed their punishment
After so many centuries and more centuries
They will walk over the earth with looks of glass
They will scale the mountains of their prophetic phrases
And they will be converted into constellations

14. *Altazor*, p. 60:

There is no time to lose
Here comes the one-time bobolink
Bringing an antipodal accent of approaching distances
Here she comes bobbling the bobolink

15. *Altazor*, p. 60:

On the horirange of the mountainzon
The violink and the bobolin
Taken down this morning from the moonwing
Coming at full gallop
Here comes the bobolink
Here comes the bobopink

Here comes the bobomink
Here comes the bobodrink
It's coming the bobowink
It's coming the bobosink
Here comes the bobochink
Here comes the boboshrink

16. Michaud, p. 92.

17. *Altazor*, p. 61:

But the heavens prefer the cardinal
Their beloved child the cardonal
Their flower of happiness the carrenal
Their skin of tears the carminal
The carfanal
The carsonal
The cardinal

18. Mallarmé, preface to *Un Coup de dés*.

19. *Altazor*, p. 64:

Here lies Alastair all star and air
Here lies Sean sea and shore in the same sad song
Here lies Raymond moon mound of rays
Here lies Blake block of blue on the infinite lake
Here lies Ruth rooted in a ruthless sky
Here lies Alexander exiled under alien sand

20. *Altazor*, p. 66:

The bird tralala sings in the branches of my brain
Because he found the key to the *eterfinifrete*
Round as the exverse of the unipanse

21. Letter to François Coppée, 1866 in *Correspondance 1862-1871*, ed. Henri Mondor (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), p. 234.

22. Cohn gives examples of this use of male-female symbolism throughout *Mallarmé's Un Coup de dés*. See pp. 36-37.

23. *Altazor*, p. 71:

The mountain and the mountainess
With their moonness and their moon
The flowered flower and the flowering flowerette

24. *Altazor*, p. 75:

We wash our eyes and play
The treeline is a feline
Dance a chance
The sky a pie
The carafe a giraffe

25. *Altazor*, p. 75:
We play outside of time
And the windmill plays with us
Windmill
Breathmill
26. *Altazor*, pp. 81-82:
And so you are windmill
Sitemill
Sitemill of the wind
That weaves the nights and the mornings
That spins the mists from beyond the grave
Wheelmill and wind in wheels
27. Robert Greer Cohn discusses the relationship between the “tourbillon” and the development of art in *Mallarmé’s Masterwork: New Findings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), p. 65: “The relation of the *tourbillon* with the development of art is supported by a passage in Baudelaire’s essay on Poe: ‘chez lui, toute entrée en matière est attirante sans violence, comme un tourbillon . . . peu à peu se déroule une histoire.’ ”
28. *Altazor*, p. 83:
Prophesy prophesy
Constellationmill
While we dance on the chance of the smile
29. *Altazor*, p. 83: The passage depends on the manipulation of the sound and rhythm of the names of two traditional dances, the farandole and the carabantina.
It’s beginning now
The farandolin in the distain of the mountance
The horiment under the firmazon
The moon sets sail
On a trip around the world
It’s beginning now
The faranmando mando lin
With its musica with its musiquin

The carabantantina
The carabantantu
The farandosilina
The farandu
30. *Altazor*, p. 85:
I speak like the sea and say
From the firmness to the horisky

I am all mountwings on the blushore

I dance on the volwaters with milwandolinks

The word *milwandolinks*, a composite of windmill, wave, mandolin and bobolink, represents an attempt to parallel the composite word *espurinas*—*molino*, *espumas*, *mandolinas*, *golondrinas*.

31. *Altazor*, p. 90. This passage is a play on the word *ala* (wing) and *ola* (wave), which expand and contract to produce *Aladino* (Aladdin) and *ladino* (Spanish-Hebrew).

32. *Altazor*, p. 89:

Jewel apotheosis and mollusk

Knotted

night

knot

33. *Altazor*, p. 95: Most of the passage consists of pure sound with an occasional composite word.

Ai aia aia

ia ia aia ui

Tralali

Lali lala

Aruaru

urulary

Lalila

Rimbibolam lam lam

Uiaya zollonary

lalila

Mounmourstar mounlightar

Mountisun and mandolink

34. Translated from the French, a letter from Mallarmé to Henri Cazalis, 1866, in *Correspondance 1862-1871*, p. 208.