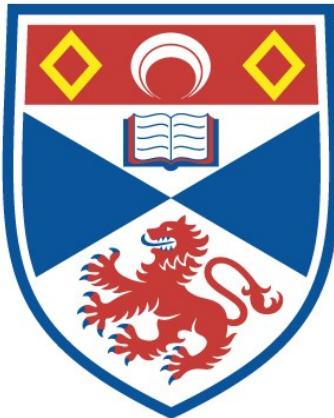


THE POETRY OF PIERRE SEGHERS

Mary B. Rigby

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St Andrews



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THE POETRY OF PIERRE SEGHERS

by

Mary B. Rigby



A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the University of St. Andrews.

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I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No.12 in October 1981 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in April 1982; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1981 and 1988.

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## ABSTRACT

Although Pierre Seghers is well-known as publisher and promoter of poetry, his own poetry, as a corpus, has never been the focus of academic attention.

This study approaches his poetry first through the themes. The picture which emerges, of the universe and the individual's position in this universe, is characterised by dynamism: nature, society and the individual are all in a state of becoming. So, too, are the individual's relationship with the outside world and the picture he has of himself. For the poet, these are realised in the language of his poetry.

Part II is a study of the poetic technique. The importance attached by Seghers to the oral quality of poetry has led to an emphasis on the rhythms of Seghers's verse. Features which are typical of his verse and which give rise to dynamism in the verse itself are studied in relation to the dynamism which is conveyed thematically. The poetry is divided into four main types. These are the early fixed-form poetry, and three later freer forms: freed alexandrine verse, verse in mixed line-lengths, and verse written in lines of sixteen syllables. The poetry written in a mixture of line-lengths is highlighted as the apogee of Seghers's production: it is here that the dynamic relationship between the self and the outside world is most successfully concretised. The four categories reflect a chronological development, but the poetry seen in each section is studied in a synthetic manner, and a number of features are seen to be common to poetry of different types and from different periods.

The synthetic character of the study is complemented by commentaries on three whole poems.

A comprehensive bibliography of Seghers's poetry and prose works is found at the end of the thesis.

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## INTRODUCTION

The name Seghers is more often associated with the Resistance and with the publishing of poetry than with the writing of poetry. Seghers's Resistance activities, and his Resistance poetry, have attracted some academic interest, but the largest part of his poetry remains little known. This thesis, the first study of Seghers's poetry as a corpus, is intended to help right this, and to illustrate that Seghers's poetry is worthy of greater attention.

Before I explain further the approach I have taken in my study of Seghers's poetry, it might be useful to the reader to have a short biographical and bibliographical introduction to Seghers. The fullest bibliographies of Seghers's works to date are to be found in Le Temps des merveilles (1978); in Colette Seghers's biography of her husband, Pierre Seghers: Un homme couvert de noms (1981), and in Poésie 88 (number 21), a special number, in tribute to Seghers. (Details of publication of these and all other works referred to in this introduction will be found in my bibliography.) These bibliographies are limited essentially to Seghers's books (of poetry, of prose, and those edited by him). They do not include references to the numerous poems published in periodicals and elsewhere, nor to the many articles, reviews, and other short prose pieces. An important feature of this thesis is, then, the bibliography of Seghers's works. Given the need for a comprehensive bibliography, this covers all aspects of Seghers's works and not just the poetry. It is, as far as I know, the first such comprehensive bibliography to be compiled for Seghers.

There are three principal published sources of biographical information. These are Pierre Seghers's autobiography in the 'Poètes d'aujourd'hui' series; his La Résistance et ses poètes (1974), and Colette Seghers's biography, which has already been mentioned.

Pierre Seghers was born in Paris on 5 January 1906. At the age of six, he moved with his family to Carpentras, in the Vaucluse, where he received his education, discovered a love of literature and of poetry in particular, and wrote his first poems. Before and after his national service, Seghers had a number of clerking jobs, and others as

a travelling salesman, before becoming a self-employed installer of bars, casinos and hotels. The early part of Seghers's life was, then, marked by constant change and risk-taking, but little which can be seen to foreshadow his importance in the literary domain.

In about 1932, Seghers met Louis Jou, master engraver, publisher and craftsman. The meeting was to prove decisive. Jou introduced Seghers not only to the poetry of Omar Khayyam (Seghers's life-long interest in Khayyam's poetry and that of other Persian poets is reflected in many later publications) but also to Jou's own craft and love of producing fine books. (In 1980, Seghers published a homage to Jou, Louis Jou: architecte du Livre et des Baux.) Paradoxically, Seghers's very love of fine books is in part to blame for the lack of recognition his own poetry has received. His poetry most frequently appeared in beautifully produced, but very limited, editions, which Seghers did little to promote to the general public, though the promotion of the poetry of others, through various means, occupied much of his time.

Seghers's own first work, Bonne-Espérance, appeared in 1938, at the poet's own expense (he had tired of waiting for a reply from Grasset), and marked the beginning of a career in publishing, though he did not suspect this at the time. It was a career fostered by the advent of the Second World War. The phoney war saw Seghers's founding of a poetry magazine for soldiers, Poètes casqués 1939, or P.C. 39. With this began, in November 1939, Seghers's unremitting service to the poetry of others, marked, particularly in the war years, by a sense of the social and historical value of such action. In La Résistance et ses poètes, Seghers's chronicle of the intellectual Resistance in France, and in particular the part played by poets and poetry, the author states

(...) je décide de me trouver, de me prouver à moi-même mes buts. Ainsi naîtra en septembre 1939, l'idée de fonder aux Armées une revue de poètes-soldats, lieu de rassemblement, tribune aussi pour nous défendre. (pp.30-31)

P.C. 39 was followed by P.C. 40, which, after the Armistice, became Poésie 40. From the start, the magazine was an organ of Resistance, a

means of defending France, her people and her language, against the Nazi threat, a defence which was carried out through the written word. As Poésie, and Poètes casqués before it, was published legally, much of what appeared in the review was contraband writing; writing, that is, which was an incitement to Resistance through veiled attacks on the collaborationist policies of Vichy. A historical review of Poètes casqués and Poésie (the latter continued existence until 1947) is to be found in Guy Morel's unpublished thesis, 'De la drôle de guerre à la guerre froide; une revue de résistance, "Poètes casqués 1939"- "Poésie 47"', a condensed version of which is found in 'Maintenir: "Poètes casqués 39-40", "Poésie 1940...1947"'. As does Seghers's own book, La Résistance et ses poètes, these works illustrate the importance of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, from where the review was published, as a meeting place for members of the intellectual resistance; notably Aragon and Elsa Triolet, Pierre Emmanuel, Loys Masson and Eluard.

In December 1942, Pour les quatre saisons was published, with a false censorship number. Seghers's 'Poèmes de l'été', a series of Resistance poems, appeared here together with poems by Loys Masson (spring), André de Richaud (autumn), and Pierre Emmanuel (winter). Pour les quatre saisons was followed in 1943 by the publication of Le Chien de pique (in Switzerland), and, in 1945, by Le Domaine public. Although its publication post-dates the Liberation of Paris, Le Domaine public, like Le Chien de pique, is a collection of wartime and Resistance poems. Le Futur antérieur (1947) bears a similar stamp. Throughout the war years, Seghers published many poems individually, in Poésie, and in other literary magazines. By no means all of these poems are to be found in Le Temps des merveilles (Seghers's collected poetry); details of these will be found in the bibliography.

As I stated at the outset, academic interest in Seghers has been limited almost exclusively to his part in the Resistance, and to his poetry from this period. Two publications in this field are due to Margarete Zimmermann. These are a series of interviews with Pierre Seghers published in Lendemains, and Occupation allemande et Résistance intellectuelle. Pierre Seghers se souvient.

1944 saw the publication, before the Liberation of Paris, of the first title, Paul Eluard, in the 'Poètes d'aujourd'hui' collection, the series for which the Seghers publishing company was no doubt best known. These pocket-sized books were important in realising Seghers's aim of widening the public for poetry through well-made but affordable books. The Seghers company specialised in poetry (and published poets from all over the world), but Seghers's own breadth of interest is reflected in other series of books on philosophers, musicians, and other topics of general cultural interest. Seghers remained at the head of the company until 1969, when he started gradually to hand over to Robert Laffont. Poetry books do still, however, appear with the Seghers imprint, and an edition of Seghers's own poetry is due to be published in early 1989.

Immediately after the Second World War, Seghers belonged (briefly), like many intellectuals of his generation, to the French Communist Party. Colette Seghers gives the following account:

En 1946, à son retour, Seghers a compris qu'il s'est trompé. Sa récente adhésion au Parti communiste, donnée par solidarité avec ses compagnons de la Résistance, est une erreur. En Tchécoslovaquie, le carcan imposé à la pensée libre est plus terrible et mieux ajusté encore que sous les régimes précédents.

(p.66)

Seghers's definitive break with Communism was expressed in 'Le mur du son', which he published anonymously in 1953. This is one of the few poems, apart from the Resistance poems, to reflect directly Seghers's reaction to external political realities.

Seghers's poetry of the post-war years is not among his most outstanding. The poems published in Jeune Fille (1948), Menaces de mort (1948), Six poèmes pour Véronique (1950), and Le Coeur-Volant (1954) are nearly all short pieces and are frequently personal in tone. They are varied in form as in subject matter, and, indeed, may suggest a groping towards a freer, or new, form of verse, but they seem to lack both the conviction of many of the wartime poems, and the depth of reflection found in the suites from Racines (1956) onwards.

With Racines, tone and form change, and from this date onwards the vast majority of Seghers's poetry was published as suites or long poems. An exception is found in Les Mots couverts (1970), which is a collection of individual poems. The themes of the suites (notably mortality, change and consciousness) are more universal than those of the earlier post-war poems. The themes themselves emerge from imagery which frequently takes its inspiration from the physical world. Each suite, at least up to Au seuil de l'oubli (1976), draws its inspiration from a particular realm, and it is this that confers individuality on each. Racines was inspired by a series of photographs, by Fina Gomez, of sea-washed wood, and dry sand and lush growth combined. Les Pierres (1958) drew its inspiration from another series of photographs by Fina Gomez, this time of the standing stones of Carnac and Quiberon. Piranèse (1960) is an evocation in verse of Piranesi's imaginary prisons. From Dialogue (1965) onwards, the imagery becomes less clearly rooted in the physical world. Dialogue is, moreover, the first of the suites not to take a series of pre-existing images as its starting point. The salient realms of imagery in Dialogue, may, however, be summarised as autumn, dereliction, and suggestions of ancient times. Dis-moi, ma vie (1972) is marked by theatre imagery and images of the cosmic dimension. The suites from Au seuil de l'oubli (1976) to Fortune Infortune Fort Une (1985) are less individualised. Images of dereliction and the cosmos combine in these suites, which are more desolate in tone, and include also Qui sommes-nous? (1977) and Fortune Infortune Fortune 1981). Comme diante (1984) stands apart from the other suites as a light-hearted work.

After the publishing concern had been handed over to Laffont, Seghers's energy was channelled into his own works. He produced a considerable number of books, of both poetry and prose, from the early 1970s onwards. Seghers also, in 1975, completed a doctoral thesis for the University of Paris (this has remained unpublished), entitled 'Culture/inculture ou création et action des poètes dans la société d'aujourd'hui'. The thesis reflects Seghers's concern to extend interest in poetry, highlighting areas for potential development, such as in the fields of marketing, the development of libraries, and the use of the media.

A number of other prose works date from recent years. These include Monsu Desiderio ou le théâtre de la fin du monde (1981) and Victor Hugo Visionnaire (1983). Both works reflect Seghers's interest in the visual arts. The book on Victor Hugo is an album of Hugo's paintings, with a selection of his poems. The chiaroscuro found in Hugo's and Desiderio's paintings, as well as these artists' depiction of fantastical architectural structures, invite a parallel with Piranesi. There are two further works by Seghers on individual artists. The earliest of these is L'Homme du commun (1944), on Jean Dubuffet, and the second is Clavé (1974).

The extent of Seghers's interest in the visual arts is perhaps surprising in so far as the imagery of the poetry is not particularly strongly visual. Yet the interest in art finds a further reflection in the fact that a number of suites appeared in luxurious illustrated editions. These include Au seuil de l'oubli, Qui sommes-nous? and Fortune Infortune Fortune. Unlike Racines, Les Pierres and Piranèse, which are interpretations of pre-existing visual works, the prints in the later three suites are illustrations of the poetry.<sup>1</sup>

Song-writing has also marked Seghers's career. The songs are of interest in relation to this thesis in that they show a concern with performance, and with music. Indeed Seghers himself wrote the melodies for a number of his songs. The musical qualities of poetry proper, as we shall see, were of particular importance to Seghers. Although the texts of many of Seghers's songs have been collected in Le Temps des merveilles, the songs will not be discussed in this thesis: they are distinct from the poetry in being inseparable from their music. (I use the term music here in the sense in which it is normally understood. My use of the term with reference to poetry will be defined in the introduction to Part II.) Seghers himself stated this in Le Temps des merveilles:

La chanson n'est pas le poème, mais un genre bien distinct. Elle naît d'une activité de l'homme plus directement sensuelle, où la parole, le chant, et la musique sont intimement liés. (p.223)

Seghers's concern in publishing adaptations of Persian and other oriental poets was again to bring the poets concerned to a wider

public. His method of preparing these adaptations is itself of interest in relation to the importance, to Seghers, of the oral/aural or musical qualities in verse. In preparing his adaptations, Seghers worked from recordings of the poetry in its original language, from literal translations which he requested, and from existing translations. Using his own system of notating the pitch and rhythm of the original texts, Seghers then adapted the translations in such a way as to reflect what he heard as the musical qualities of the original poetry. In his introduction to Omar Khayyâm: Sa vie et ses quatrains Rubâ'iyat (1987), Seghers explains his approach:

S'attacher à vouloir respecter en français la stricte forme des Rubâ'iyat, en s'astreignant à rechercher des rimes nécessairement artificielles, conduirait à un formalisme où l'esprit, le charme, la souple aisance du poème ne pourraient manquer d'être trahis. La re-création par le mouvement interne du langage, selon le pas, la respiration et la voix du poète, la houle de ses mots, semble bien préférable, même si l'auteur de la version est conduit parfois à s'autoriser quelques licences, tout en respectant scrupuleusement ce que le poète, à tous les niveaux, a voulu dire. (pp.45-46)

As we shall see, the use of words such as 'respiration' and 'houle' is characteristic. Such words witness the importance which Seghers accorded to the oral side of poetry. In 'D'un ardent', Seghers's introduction to Yunus Emre: Le livre de l'amour sublime (1987), Seghers states that he has tried to

réinventer une syntaxe respiratoire, un accord de voix et de souffle correspondant aux ghazels. D'où le vers de seize pieds dont l'aisance et le mouvement demandaient ici à être respectés. (p.27)<sup>2</sup>

Prosodically, the adaptations of Yunus Emre (also of Hâfiz and Saadi) can be related to Seghers's own poetry. We may speculate that part of the attraction for Seghers of the ghazels lay in the fact that their metre corresponded to his own favoured sixteen-syllable line.

The prosodic resemblance of some of the adaptations of Persian poetry to Seghers's own verse is striking, but I do not propose to discuss them in this thesis, for several reasons. First, while they do form part of Seghers's poetic works, they cannot be considered to be his original work. Second, to discuss the adaptations would introduce questions concerning the translation of poetry in general, and, in

particular, translations from languages of which I have no knowledge. Given the originality of Seghers's method of writing his adaptations, a close study of his notations and the translations from which he worked would, furthermore, be desirable.

In most recent years, Seghers's dual concern with the oral quality of poetry and with extending the audience for poetry, was reflected in the numerous readings and discussions which he initiated, and which took place throughout France. At these, Seghers, an accomplished reader of his own poetry, would present some of his own poems. The same concerns were also reflected in the 'Galaxies' which he produced at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris. These were multi-media shows, generally centring on one poet. The readings of poetry were accompanied by slides of works by associated artists and interspersed with musical interludes.

In 1984, Pierre Seghers founded a new poetry magazine, Poésie 84, which he directed until his death in November 1987. The magazine continues to reproduce the work of poets presented at the Maison de la Poésie in Paris, and so continues Seghers's life-long work in promoting poetry in general, and in particular that of new poets.

As a corpus, Seghers's own poetry has never been the object of academic study. The attention paid to the individual collections and suites is limited, almost without exception, to short critical reviews. Some of these, notably those by René Lacôte, show some sensitivity to the rhythms of the poetry, but being reviews do not go any further than to make general statements. The most closely analytical article on Seghers is by Marie-Claire Bancquart: 'Dedans/dehors: Racines, Piranèse'. This article is the published version of a paper presented at the Maison de la Poésie in tribute to Seghers in February 1988. As such, it is not a particularly detailed study, but it does highlight the dialectic central to Seghers of the inner and outer domains.

References to Seghers in general works on modern French poetry, such as Jean Rousselot's Dictionnaire de la poésie française contemporaine, are, because of the nature of such works, very brief, and tend to emphasise Seghers's role in the Resistance. Georges-

Emmanuel Clancier, in Dans l'aventure du langage, a more recent work, is sympathetic to Seghers's poetry, but again his comments remain generalisations, detached from any analysis of the poetry.

Seghers's poetry has not so far, then, received the attention it deserves.

Central to Seghers's poetry is the exploration of the individual's place in the universe. The roles of consciousness and language are particularly important in this respect. The individual is conscious of the outside world and conscious of himself in relation to the outside world: he is aware of his difference and individuality. Language is essential to the individual as the medium through which he formulates this relationship and so defines (however partially and provisionally) the picture he has of himself. Through the individual's consciousness of the outside world, and the existential importance of this to him, the universe can be said to centre on the individual, and so mankind, but the relationship between the individual and the universe is in a state of constant evolution or becoming.

Seghers was neither an original philosopher nor a theorist of poetry. The poetry is neither dogmatic nor didactic, nor, generally speaking, particularly discursive. The questions of consciousness, language and becoming which I have just outlined emerge from imagery rooted by and large in the physical world. The poetry is intuitive and questioning, but never sets out to explain the universe in any rigorously systematic way.

The particular sorts of ideas and imagery which are found in Seghers's poetry can be related to those of other poets. Before enlarging on the structure of the main body of this thesis, I shall suggest a few parallels between Seghers's poetry and that of a number of other poets. This will help to situate Seghers in a certain tradition, while it will also help to pinpoint features which are distinctive in Seghers's poetry.

In so far as Seghers's poetry is man-centred, and man is seen in relation to the universe, Seghers's poetry invites comparison with,

amongst others, that of Hugo. Seghers's book, and a 'Galaxie' on Hugo produced in 1983, witness Seghers's interest in the earlier poet, and Hugo may legitimately be seen as a precursor of Seghers. A similar dialectic to that of the self and non-self found in Seghers's poetry is found in Hugo's, notably in Les Contemplations, where it is expressed in terms of light and darkness. In Hugo, this same opposition also serves as a vehicle for expressing the opposition between knowledge and ignorance, and the search to understand that this implies. Whereas in Hugo, however, there is a strong discursive element, in Seghers, the questing nature of the poetry is not developed in this way. In Hugo, the search for an understanding of the universe implies a search for an understanding of the divine presence which informs both individual and universe.. This divine presence, which has its roots in a specifically Judaeo-Christian tradition, is quite absent from Seghers's poetry.

The intuition of a unified universe in Seghers remains just that: Seghers makes little or no attempt to explain this in a discursive fashion. In this, Seghers's poetry contrasts also with that of Claudel's Cinq Grandes Odes, though in other respects, as we shall see, Seghers's and Claudel's poetry can be related. For Claudel, too, the unity of creation is informed by a divine presence. For both Claudel and Hugo, personal evolution (or becoming) carries with it the idea of spiritual evolution; a search for knowledge of, and union with, the Creator.

Seghers is closer, in some respects, to Verhaeren. In La Multiple splendeur, a more orthodox presentation of the spiritual dimension of the universe is replaced by greater insistence on the forces at work in the universe which are responsible for death and decay, but also creation, including the emergence of Man (in 'Le monde') and utterance (in 'Le verbe'). In the latter poem, the forces which fashion creation are presented as being one with the dynamic character of the poet's own verse. We will see similar images in Seghers's poetry.

The theme of language (both as a means of ordering perception and understanding and as a creative medium, but also as an inadequate means of defining oneself and the outside world) is common to much

modern French poetry. Its inseparability from the question of consciousness, and from the expression of the dialectic between the inner world of the self and the outer world of external reality, is a legacy of surrealism. If Seghers clearly belongs to a post-surrealist generation, it is in that he voices these questions. Seghers's poetry is not, generally speaking, in other ways reminiscent of surrealist poetry: it does not typically make play of impossible composite images (impossible, that it, if they were to exist as concrete objects), nor is Seghers's poetry to be associated with automatic writing. While there is, in my opinion, some evidence of a certain spontaneity of composition in Seghers's poetry, this is combined with a careful and measured structuring of the verse.

The thematic importance of language and the dialectic between the inner and outer spheres is found in other poets of Seghers's generation. In contrast with Seghers's poetry, Frénaud's, to take another poet, lays greater emphasis on the inability of finding and expressing the unity of self and non-self. The tone which arises from such poems as 'Sans avancer' and 'Pour ne rien perdre de ma vie' (from Chemins du vain espoir, collected in Il n'y a pas de paradis) is bleak. While Frénaud's poetry is not one of despair, it is not, either, one of great hope. The sense of the self is painful, as is the struggle of becoming. While this sense of difficulty is not entirely absent from Seghers's poetry, it is more frequently tempered with a sense of wonder: the universe might be opaque, but this very opacity is a function of its wondrous quality.

The idea of a unified, if unexplained or inexplicable, universe, in which man is caught up, also finds expression in Frénaud's poetry. The tone may, as in La Sorcière de Rome, verge on the despairing. In this poem, Frénaud contemplates the possibility of a world in which the promise of rebirth in nature, and that of the continuity of existence after death, remain unfulfilled. The sense of hopelessness in such poems as this goes beyond that of Seghers's bleakest poems, which present a sense of smallness and solitude in face of the immensity of the cosmos.

Guillevic, like Seghers, uses images drawn from the concrete world to express such abstract concerns as becoming and consciousness. Whereas in Seghers, however, dynamism and change are conveyed by the words used, (that is, semantically), in Guillevic, dynamism frequently remains more implicit. This is the case in Carnac, for example, where the presence of the winds and sea tends to be stated more than their dynamism is depicted. Even when Guillevic is expressing dialectical relationships, which in Seghers's poetry are expressed through dynamic images, the effect of the poetry remains somewhat static. Motifs, a recent collection of Guillevic poems, contains a number of illustrations of this: 'Le rien', 'Le courant', and 'La sève', and in particular 'Le dehors-dedans', are cases in point. The static nature of Guillevic's poetry comes also from other, prosodic, features. The use of very short lines of verse, and generally sparse style, creates a lapidary quality which suggests (though falsely) a definitive and unquestioning character to the statements made in the poems. Guillevic's poetry, like that of all the poets mentioned so far, does question: each statement is, after all, superseded by another.

Prosodically, Seghers's poetry has more in common with Frénaud's than with Guillevic's. In the sense of dynamism it generates, Seghers's poetry can also be compared to that of Claudel. Claudel's versets create expansive, surging rhythms which translate, in, for example, the second of the Cinq Grandes Odes, 'L'esprit et l'eau', the dynamism of the universe in creation. Frénaud's and Bonnefoy's dynamism comes, like Seghers's, from a relatively freed form of verse: mixtures of lines of disparate lengths, some metrical, others not. Generally speaking, however, Frénaud and Bonnefoy use shorter lines than those found in Seghers's mature poetry.

In Bonnefoy, the dynamism of the verse is again analogous to the dynamism implicit in the themes. Bonnefoy's poetry, like Seghers's, centres on external tangible reality. The battle with words, for him, is again that fought in re-creating reality through the medium of language; a reality in which he is conscious of his own presence. Once again, then, an important function of the poetry is as an approach to defining both the outside world and the self. But for Bonnefoy, to an extent which is not true of Seghers, words themselves (or utterance, as

expressed in the word 'cri' in Dans le leurre du seuil) are presented as belonging with things which are exterior and other. Bonnefoy's work is, however, similar to Seghers's in presenting the dual character of language: language both reveals and conceals reality.

Bonnefoy's poetry leaves the reader with the impression of a private, almost hieratic world, which is less accessible than Seghers's. Seghers's own more expansive, and more accessible, lyricism is echoed in much of Bérimont's poetry. Indeed, the two poets have followed similar paths, both moving away from a poetry more obviously rooted in natural phenomena towards a poetry which is somewhat less so and in which an increasing sense of desolation makes itself felt. For both poets, however, abstract ideas continue to be presented through concrete imagery, and the poetry of both suggests an intuitive rather than a fully reasoned approach to, and expression of, each poet's relationship to the universe in which he lives. This more direct presentation is found throughout Bérimont's collections from Sur la Terre qui est au Ciel (1947) to his last one, Reprise du récit (1983).

The various questions outlined in the preceding pages will be seen in greater detail, as they emerge from Seghers's poetry, throughout this thesis. The thesis itself is divided into two parts: Part I, a thematic study, and Part II, a study of the poetic technique.

The aims of Part I are several. The discussion is designed to illustrate both what Seghers sees as the individual's position in the universe, and, because this is conveyed not so much in conceptual terms as through the imagery, to illustrate what is typical of Seghers's imagery. While the various themes interact, they have, for the sake of clarity of presentation, been divided and grouped into four chapters. Chapter 1 concentrates on the natural world, the presentation of man in terms of the natural world, and his participation in it. Chapter 2 is devoted to the portrayal of man as a social and political being, and to the sense of history which emerges from the poetry. Emerging from both these chapters is a sense of man as a mortal being who is in a state of constant becoming. This is the subject of Chapter 3. Chapter 4 looks at the themes of language and artistic creation and illustrates the ways in which they, too, imply a dynamic relationship between the

individual and the universe. Throughout Part I, attention is drawn to the relationship of the different themes to each other.

I stated above that the oral quality of poetry was important to Seghers. This fact emerges from his prose writings, and has influenced the direction I have taken in this thesis. Before I explain the structure of Part II of this thesis, which is on the poetic technique, this question of the oral nature of poetry needs further discussion. Seghers frequently spoke of poetry in terms of music, though just what he understood by these terms is hard to deduce from his use of them: Seghers, as I have already stated, was not a theoretician. A large part of this thesis will be concerned with bringing out the potential musical qualities of the poetry. Just what these qualities are will be enlarged upon further in the introduction to Part II.

The following quotation, from an article by Seghers on Guy Lévis Mano's poetry, 'Approche d'un poète: Guy Lévis Mano', are typical of Seghers's way of writing about poetry:

Poésie de chant profond, sang et respiration, vertige de la mort, palpitations, marées. ... Une sorte de largo, avec ses temps, et la profonde voix qui revient, se soutient et s'entend. Naturelle dans ses intonations, accords de l'oreille et du souffle, écriture devenue l'homme même, un pas, une démarche, qui ne ressemblent à aucun autre.

Such words as 'chant', 'largo' and 'temps' imply the importance of the oral quality of the poetry and suggest that, ideally, the poetry is to be read aloud, or heard, in such a way as to bring out these musical qualities. The lines also suggest that his poetry is a spontaneous expression of the individual poet; it is his 'chant profond', and its rhythm is as natural to him as his own heartbeat. But poetry is also a 'démarche', a conscious working of the spontaneous elements. This is a duality which runs throughout Seghers's own poetry, both as a theme, and concretised in the structure and rhythms of the verse.<sup>3</sup> It will be referred to frequently throughout the thesis.

The structure of this thesis reflects the importance accorded by Seghers to the oral nature of poetry. Part I, the thematic study, is relatively short in comparison with Part II, which is devoted to the

poetic technique, and relates the prosody of the verse to its thematic content. Throughout Part II, the discussion will bring out possible ways of performing, or reading out loud, the poetry, and of conveying the dynamism and musical qualities of the verse. I will explain in greater detail in the introduction to Part II what these qualities are. As well as from such published statements on poetry as those we have just seen, justification for concentrating on the oral qualities of the poetry comes from an interview I had with Seghers. Quotations from this will be found in the introduction to Part II and at other points in Part II.

The most fundamental of the musical elements of the poetry is its rhythm; that is, the particular combinations of stressed and unstressed syllables, and the different possible degrees of stress. Questions of intonation and tempo are to some extent a function of the pattern of stresses, which is itself a function of the particular shade of meaning one wishes to convey. I have chosen, therefore, in the notations of the verse found throughout Part II (these, too, will be explained fully in the introduction to Part II) to reflect only the basic rhythm of each line, that is the patterning of stressed and unstressed syllables, and two degrees of stress: primary and secondary. To reflect questions of pitch and tempo in the notation would lead to a high degree of complexity. A number of general statements concerning pitch and tempo will be found in the introduction to Part II. For the rest, these aspects of the verse are referred to at relevant points in the discussion of individual quotations.

While all utterance has rhythm, rhythm is particularly important in poetry as both a reflection and reinforcement of meaning. This aspect of Seghers's poetry has received even less attention than the rest. Rhythm is frequently, furthermore, a neglected area in studies of other poets' works, or it is discussed in isolation from the content of the poetry. The rhythm of Seghers's poetry receives particular attention in Part II, but always in relation to the thematic context.

Part II has two chapters. The first of these (Chapter 5) deals with the fixed-form poetry. Discussion here is limited, by and large, to the relatively early poetry (that is, the poetry which pre-dates

Racines). Chapter 6 deals with the later freed verse, and falls into three main sections. These are on, first, the freed alexandrine verse; second, the verse using mixtures of line-lengths, and, third, the sixteen-syllable verse. Virtually all Seghers's mature poetry belongs to one of these three types of verse.

The study of the poetry, in both Part I and Part II, is largely synthetic in character, and not chronological, for Seghers's poetry presents a high degree of consistency in the areas it explores, and, to some extent, in the forms of expression used. This is to say that I will illustrate many aspects of Seghers's poetry, both thematic and prosodic, with examples from different periods. Although the limited space available does not permit extensive discussion of long quotations or of many whole poems, the discussion of numerous short quotations is intended to build up a composite picture of what is most typical of Seghers's poetry. The synthetic nature of this picture is increased by two complementary approaches. In Chapter 5 and the first section of Chapter 6 (Freed alexandrine verse), attention is focussed on individual prosodic features (but in relation, always, to their thematic context). In the two remaining sections of Chapter 6, the reader's attention is focussed more directly on specific effects of the verse as a function of the combination of particular prosodic and thematic characteristics. As a further complement, three commentaries, each on a whole poem, will be found in the conclusion to the thesis.

#### Abbreviations

The only abbreviation used in this thesis is TM, followed by the page number, which refers to Le Temps des merveilles, Seghers's collected poetry.

Before we turn to Seghers's poetry itself, it remains for me to thank Colette Seghers for her continuing interest and support in allowing me access to books and documents, and finally, I thank Pierre

for the warmth and generosity of his welcome, for his vigilance in providing documents, and for his readiness to discuss openly and with spontaneity his poetry with me. For these things, and for his example of ardour, this thesis is dedicated with gratitude to his memory.

PART I

A THEMATIC STUDY

## CHAPTER ONE

NATURE, AND MAN AS PART OF NATURE

The presence of nature forms a constant in Seghers's poetry. Nature is rarely, if ever, however, portrayed purely for itself or as a backdrop for human activity. The individual, for Seghers, participates in the natural world. He is subject to its forces while yet remaining distinct from the rest of nature. Awareness of individuality is expressed in terms of things other than oneself. The natural world thus becomes a source of metaphors through which the individual attempts to define himself and understand human experience.

(i) The seasons

Images of the seasons are present in Seghers's poetry from his earliest collection, Bonne-Espérance (1938), onwards. In this collection, the seasons are felt through discreet touches which, in context, are of relatively little account. They do, however, foreshadow what later becomes an important theme. 'Perse', for example, introduces the motif of autumn in the lines

A quoi bon chanter  
Quand meurt une rose  
Les bruyères rousses  
Et leurs frais matins?

(TM 11)

The poem ends with

De tout ce qui passe  
Il ne reste rien...

As is illustrated by these lines, the seasons offer a visual manifestation in nature of the passage of time, and autumn imagery in particular may be used metaphorically for human mortality. The tone of

melancholic regret and the sense of loss in 'Perse' are similar to those found in the following lines from Dialogue (1965):

(...) Tu te regardais sans comprendre  
dans le ciel miroitant où le soleil distrait  
s'en allait dans la brume, avec toi, dans l'automne. (TM 128)

Here, the sky reflects the person addressed and is in a state of change, implying that the individual, too, is subject to change. A suggestion of death arises from the depiction of the addressee as disappearing into the autumn mists. The first of the lines quoted suggests, furthermore, that one's identity is as elusive to oneself as are the clouds.<sup>1</sup> (The notion of change in relation to the individual, and the search for identity, are two of the concerns of Chapter 3.)

Autumn is the individual season most frequently referred to or connoted in Seghers's poetry. It may be seen, as above, as the season of gradual decay which leads into winter. Alternatively, it may be seen as the culmination of summer, rich with the seeds of life for the following year. This ambivalence is found in the following lines from 'Un parmi d'autres..., III', a poem in Les Mots couverts (1970):

Ils s'étiolaient. Ils se desséchaient à l'automne,  
chaumes que le vent brise, éclats d'ors entrevus  
sur un talus, comme une armée de folle avoine  
qui avait frissonné jadis. (...) (TM 164)

Autumn dries and withers, but it is only when dry that the grain, here wild oats, is ripe. The rippling of the green grasses in the wind is replaced by a certain brittleness, but this brittleness is accompanied by splendour of colour. The sense of decay is further offset, in the same poem, by the emphasis placed on the continuity of the seasons:

(...) Une saison l'autre ravage  
Une saison l'autre renaît. Ils vivaient de ces changements  
imperceptibles, poussières de métamorphoses  
sur le bord des chemins à envahir plus tard,  
quand l'homme serait mort et renaîtrait. Une herbe. (TM 165)

The seasons resolve the passage of time into a cyclical pattern, marked by antithetical states of fullness and sterility. In this quotation, rebirth in the human sphere may be interpreted as a purely chemical one, decomposed matter passing into the soil and fertilising it, to

reappear as a blade of grass. Seghers elsewhere expresses rebirth in terms of artistic creation. This is one of the principal concerns to be discussed in Chapter 4.

Given the dialectical view of the universe which emerges from Seghers's poetry in general, the real significance of the seasonal imagery lies in its expressing this cyclical pattern. The greater place accorded to the autumn in particular may be explained by the fact that both poles of the cyclical pattern are implicit in this one season.<sup>2</sup>

The subsuming of the individual seasons into an overriding cyclical pattern is seen particularly clearly in Racines (1956). As in a tropical rain forest, all stages of the cycle of the seasons are present together, but with a pre-eminent impression of the presence of life:

Les millénaires qui se sont couchés n'ont point péri. L'instant suffit  
pour rassembler la vie passée dans un buisson toujours vivace  
(TM 98)

The lines are a clear expression of the idea of becoming (in the sense of the French term devenir): the present is the culmination of the past, while all that has preceded continues to be present in the present.<sup>3</sup> (See Chapter 3, section (i), for further discussion of becoming.)

The tension between change and permanence is again seen in the following lines from Les Pierres (1958):

(...) Je suis née de millions d'années  
travaillée par le seul Soleil, par les orages et leurs clans  
et dressée là par l'homme. Y suis-je un rêve? Mais j'existe  
au bout du monde, ici, où passent les saisons  
qui vont et se refont. (...) (TM 104)

Although subjected to the eroding forces of nature, the stones remain. The repeated pattern of the seasons serves to compound the sense of their permanence rather than draw attention to change. At the same time, the stones' great age and the fact that they were set in the

earth by people serve as an indication of the ancient origins of the human race.

A particular use of nature imagery is found in the poetry of the war years. In this body of poetry, nature imagery is important as a vehicle for expressing events in the human, political, sphere. The disruption of political, social and moral order, and the horror of war, are expressed in terms of disruption in nature, and in particular in a distortion of the normal sequence of the seasons. This distortion may be such as to suggest that the horror is permanent. In the first of the 'Deux poèmes de la vraie traque', we find the following line:

Il but l'hiver avec l'été

(TM 27)

The seasons are seen as being compressed into a dreadful uniformity, while the presence of winter in summer suggests the constant presence of death.<sup>4</sup> In 'Quarante-trois', similar ideas are found:

Les saisons défilaient comme de vieilles lunes  
Etais-ce là l'Eté, et l'Automne, et l'Hiver  
Le Printemps ajustait ses gantelets de fer

(TM 38)

Here, the seasons are indistinguishable from each other. The unnaturalness is compounded by the picture of spring itself as a party to the general destruction, spring being traditionally the season of rebirth and hope. The usual cyclical pattern of the seasons is again disrupted. The sense of the inimical is increased by the personification of the seasons through the use of capital letters.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the wartime poetry, the season most frequently referred to, or suggested by connotation, is again autumn. Used figuratively, images of autumn provide a vehicle for expressing bloodshed, in terms of the colour of fallen autumn leaves, grape harvests, and harvest time in general. The opening lines of 'Octobre 41' provide a good example of such imagery:

Le vent qui pousse les colonnes de feuilles mortes  
Octobre, quand la vendange est faite dans le sang  
Le vois-tu avec ses fumées, ses feux, qui emporte  
Le massacre des Innocents.

(TM 19)

The poem was written in reaction to the massacre of the hostages of Châteaubriant.<sup>6</sup> The dead are assimilated to the autumn landscape in the image of the wind-blown leaves. While there is a suggestion that the natural world is contaminated, in 'la vendange est faite dans le sang', the massacred are also being compared to the grape harvest, their blood flowing like juice from crushed fruit. The image of the vintage is itself inverted, becoming one of waste, rather than, in traditional vein, one of joyous celebration.

A similar association of blood and seasonal imagery is found in these lines from 'Carré blanc':

C'est l'été qui s'en va  
Sur le sang et la Seine  
C'est le cœur qui ne bat  
Qu'au delà de sa peine

(TM 23)

The juxtaposition of 'sang' and 'Seine' suggests that blood flows like water. Again, there is a further suggestion of the contamination of nature. The use of the definite article with 'sang' and 'coeur' has the effect of abstracting both heart and blood from any specific person, thus making the extent of the horror greater. This is similar to the way in which the massacre is carried on the wind in the lines from 'Octobre 41'. The image of blood is used literally: blood has actually been spilt. The heart, on the other hand, is being used figuratively. It beats in a realm beyond suffering, which perhaps suggests death. It is also possible that the heart is being referred to here as the seat of the emotions, and even of the conscience, beating on, in spite of suffering, for such values as freedom and national identity. (Such political aspects of Seghers's Resistance poetry are discussed in Chapter 2.)

There is a similar ambivalence between a sense of waste and a sense of hope in these lines from 'Le pain blanc':

(...) On les avait battus à mort, le grain, la paille,  
Et l'espoir demeurait vivace; leur sang coulait comme un soleil.  
(TM 24)

The dead are a metaphorical harvest, but there is hope that the bloodshed will be turned to good, that the horror will play its part in

strengthening the fight for a new France.<sup>7</sup> (For further discussion of this, see Chapter 2.) The ambivalence of the image of harvest (the cutting down of the old, in the knowledge that new life will spring from it) is matched by the ambivalence of the verb 'coulait'. The blood spills from cut veins, but hope runs as freely as the blood.<sup>8</sup>

### (ii) Water imagery

Tension between permanence and change has already been seen with regard to the imagery of the seasons. A similar tension, between fluidity and fixity, emerges from the water imagery. This is seen in particular in Racines. The continuous cyclical ebb and flow of the tides is used as a metaphor for the cycles of life and death in successive generations, as is suggested in these lines:

(...) Un voyageur  
des flux et des reflux, il rêve en lui de ses ancêtres

Il rêve en lui de ses enfants (...)

(TM 100)

His ancestors are contained in the individual, not simply metaphorically because he dreams of them, but because he is the culmination of the generations which have preceded him.<sup>9</sup>

In the context of the wartime poetry, the arrest of the tides is another image through which disruption in the human sphere is conveyed. In 'Tous les cent ans', the unnatural immobility of the sea is used as an image of death and political stalemate:

Mais la mer ne s'avance pas  
Mais le sable reste à sa place

(TM 45)

This recalls the image of the freezing of the seasons, as discussed on page 22, above.

The individual's personal becoming is also expressed in Racines in terms of water imagery. The tides and flooding river are images of constant movement, but they are also agents of change. In the

following lines, the first person is a river-tossed root or branch on its way to the sea:

Je rêvais de confins, de vastes embouchures  
D'écueils et de brisants, ils me furent donnés  
J'ai roulé vers la mer de cascades en chutes

(TM 98)

The piece of wood becomes a metaphor for the individual, and the river a metaphor for the individual's life as he experiences it in time. The river is dual, being limited in length and contained by its banks, while at the same time it opens on to the infinity of the sea. An individual life-span, likewise, has both beginning and end, while it is part of the continuum of time.

The force of water is both destructive and creative. While the might of the river is seen in 'des crues rongeuses de forêts' (TM 96), these same floodwaters are life-bearing:

Les crues m'ont déposée sur des plages d'épines  
(...)  
(...) et j'y deviens un peu de terre  
pour un arbre à venir. (...)

(TM 98)

As this example shows, water may assure the continuity of the cycles of life and death.<sup>10</sup>

The watery maze of the Sorgues is another motif found in Seghers's poetry. They frequently appear in wistful recollections. The following example is from Dialogue (1965):

(...) si tu  
réfléchis, c'est toi que reflètent les Sorgues  
du temps jadis. (...)

(TM 130)<sup>11</sup>

The lines suggest that all that remains of the past are memories, as insubstantial as reflections on the surface of the water. Yet the reflections are relatively fixed as compared with the continuous flow of the water. In so far as they reflect the individual, they suggest his identity. The lines imply the poet's search for his self. The theme of this search will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3, section (iv). In these particular lines from Dialogue, the labyrinthine Sorgues themselves suggest the complexity of the

individual. His diverse facets are resolved perhaps only in death like the branching arms of the Sorgues which finally join back up and flow on towards the sea. The individual is diverse, and his self elusive both to himself and others. This elusiveness and the impossibility of self-knowledge are brought out in another series of lines from Dialogue:

(...) Epris de Lui  
qui passe et flue et se rejoint dans ses méandres  
sans jamais se saisir. (...) (TM 129)

Once again, in the wartime poetry, a reversal of the more usual images of freely flowing water is found. In this poetry, water may be turned into an apparently viscous element, as in 'Le Vert-Galant', published in Le Chien de pique:

Des chalands descendaient sur l'eau grise et la brume  
Sur eux se refermait. Des sirènes, des cris  
Etouffés, l'odeur du soir humide et pauvre qui s'allume  
Aux feux les (sic) derniers ponts, comme des feux pourris

Nous entouraient, pris entre le flot des hommes et l'eau sale.  
(pp.38-9)

The proximity of 'l'eau grise' to the encroaching mist suggests that the water, too, might have a suffocating quality. In the last line, the construction suggests an equivalence between the human 'flot' and the polluted water. This leads to the further suggestion that mankind in general is contaminated. The contamination is moral and ideological.<sup>12</sup>

The human and natural worlds are presented directly in terms of each other in these lines from Racines:

Iles, qui dérivez sur des fleuves énormes  
Caillots de boues et d'arbres verts au fil des veines couleur  
d'argent (TM 95)

In this example, blood-filled veins are used as a metaphor for the mighty river, but change in nature, composed of cycles of life and death, is itself used throughout Racines as an image of the individual's becoming. The emphasis in the suite is on rebirth, such that blood, in the lines above, is not so much associated with death as

with the continuity of life. Although they use similar terms, the lines are thus in contrast with such lines as these from 'Carré blanc':

C'est l'été qui s'en va  
Sur le sang et la Seine

(TM 23)

In Racines, as elsewhere, blood coursing in veins is a sign of life and participation in the rhythms of the universe.<sup>13</sup> (For further discussion of the cosmic dimension, see section (v) below.)

An echo of these lines, and more strikingly of those from 'Le Vert-Galant' quoted on page 26, is found in the following quotation from Dialogue:

(...) Et qui n'avance plus s'enfonce  
lentement. On s'enlise en soi. Que cherches-tu  
entre ta lampe et ta bouée, sur tes eaux mortes, tes sentines

(TM 131)

The implication is that the self is like a morass, and full knowledge of it might not be desirable, even if it were possible. In tension with the idea of superficial self-knowledge is the idea of being sucked down into one's self: 'On s'enlise en soi'.<sup>14</sup> The image also conveys the stultifying effect of looking too much to the past rather than to the future, developing an earlier image in the same poem, 'Dans une moire de souvenirs, vas-tu te perdre'. The theme of memory will be seen in its own right in Chapter 3, section (ii). The question of the self will be seen notably in Chapter 3, section (iv), and throughout the second part of Chapter 4.

Flows of mud or lava are a further motif related to that of stagnating water. It is a motif found, notably, in the Resistance poetry. This example is from 'Le cavalier':

(...) déjà la mort nous emportait  
Comme la lave d'un volcan, pareille au fleuve de boue chaude

(TM 49)

In such instances, the images complement the sense of chaos in nature, as seen, for example, in the images of the seasons. They also suggest literal suffocation as a metaphor for moral stifling.<sup>15</sup>

Elsewhere, however, in the later poetry, mud is suggestive of a primordial, life-bearing element.<sup>16</sup> A similar element is suggested by 'moiteur originelle' in the following lines from 'Chasses, III', a poem in *Les Mots couverts*:

(...) Dans les biefs striés de roseaux  
Qui cherche, espérant toujours, dans la moiteur originelle  
Une rencontre, la réponse des longs détours (TM 169)

As in the quotations from Dialogue on pages 26 and 27, self-knowledge and knowledge of one's origins are presented as elusive. The hoped-for 'rencontre' would be a meeting with, and full recognition of, oneself. This will be seen further in Chapter 3.

(iii) The wind

Water has already been seen to be both a destructive and a creative force. The wind is presented in similar ways. Two quotations will illustrate this. Both are from Seghers's last suite, Fortune Infortune Fort Une. In the first, there is a sense of the individual as the victim of nature's forces:

(...) Brûlé, j'ai haleté dans le vent fou  
qui me portait et d'autres fois me plaquait à même la terre  
Il fallait être autre, partir, et s'extirper de l'épaisseur

This is reminiscent of the flood-tossed root in the quotation from Racines on page 25, above. In the present lines, the violence of the wind is coupled with its function as a catalyst in bringing about change. Change is here seen as something positive, if unforeseeable. As an expression of the need for a forward-looking attitude to effect personal evolution, the lines again recall those from Dialogue on page 27. They also portray the individual as being to some degree vulnerable. Similar images will be seen in the section on the cosmos, below.

In my second quotation from Fortune Infortune Fort Une, the poet sees himself as a seed:

Un grain qui se croyait perdu, le vent des carrefours l'a pris  
La terre l'attendait sans fin, son ventre est devenu farine (p.57)

While 'La terre l'attendait sans fin' suggests potential germination, this is to some extent negated by the next phase which suggests sterility. Flour would not be a suitable medium for growing grain, and it is, furthermore, crushed grain, hence grain which has not been allowed to grow. A further duality is implied, however, in that flour is the basic ingredient of bread. To this extent, it is life-sustaining. The function of the wind is itself ambivalent. In conjunction with the implication of sterility, it suggests a desolate world. Such a world is typical of the later suites, from Au seuil de l'oubli onwards.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, it is the wind which has saved the seed from remaining simply a seed with its potential for growth unfulfilled.

#### (iv) Mineral imagery

In general terms, the effect of the mineral imagery is to underscore the duality of durability and transience found in the natural world. This duality has already been seen in the images of the seasons. Before looking at these images as they appear in the suites, I would like to look briefly at one distinctive use of mineral imagery from the wartime poetry.

In 'Allemands beaux enfants', from Le Futur antérieur, the inhuman nature of Nazi ideology is conveyed by portraying the Germans as 'beaux enfants au masque de ferraille', living beneath 'un soleil minéral' (p.48).<sup>18</sup> This is a further expression of disruption in the human sphere. The images of hard crystalline fixity suggest emotional coldness and, in this sense, lack of humanity.<sup>19</sup>

Elsewhere, stone is shown to be subject to the eroding forces of nature, as in this example from Les Pierres:

(...) Je suis née de millions d'années  
travaillée par le seul Soleil, par les orages et leurs clans  
(TM 104)

(The first person of these lines is one of the standing stones of Carnac.)

There is a tension between the apparent immutability of the stones, which stems from their great age, and a certain vulnerability. When this tension is transferred to the human world, the historical dimension of the human race is implied, and its evolution over millenia. While the individual's existence is precarious, he is the culmination of a continuum leading from the ancient past.

Images of clay, like those of mud, are used in conflicting ways, notably in the Resistance poetry. This can be seen in a series of lines from '*Présences*':

Ils pesaient l'amour et l'envie  
 Leurs poids d'argile, de grand vent  
 Leurs poids de morts et de vivants

(TM 17)

The suggestion of a return to earth, in death, is conveyed through the proximity of the word 'argile' to 'morts', but clay is also, here, a metaphor for human physical reality. The antithesis in 'Leurs poids de morts et de vivants' is also important in negating, to some degree, the emphasis on death, for the second term, 'vivants', is given the greater weight by virtue of its position.<sup>20</sup>

Images of life-bearing mud have already been seen (see page 28 and note 16). Related to these are such images as this one, from Racines:

Voici que l'homme naît du sable et qu'il inscrit sur de l'écume  
 la longue trace de ses pas. (...) (TM 100)

The use of 'l'homme' here suggests both the human race and the individual. While the verb 'inscrire' would usually imply a degree of permanency, the fact that the steps are engraved on sea foam implies ephemerality, as do the images of the steps themselves. They will end with the individual's death.<sup>21</sup>

In the context of the wartime poetry, the traditional image of sand representing the passage of time may be distorted. This is the case in '*Grand Guignol*', a poem from Le Chien de pique.

Sablier d'où le sang s'égoutte

(p.60)

The normal flow of time has stopped, for the hourglass is broken. The sand has turned to blood, the dripping of which now marks the passage of time. The dripping, as opposed to flowing, suggests protracted suffering and a figurative lengthening of time.

Outside the wartime poetry, a more traditional use of the image of sand is found in Fortune Infortune Fort Une:

Moi, poussière d'un seuil perdu, sable et sablier de mon sang

(p.23)

There is a dual suggestion of awareness of the individual's limits, and perhaps of a fixity of identity, in 'sablier', while the fluidity of sand and blood suggests the individual's difficulty in pinning down his own identity. The images also suggest mortality. The sand in the hourglass will at some point all have run through. (The theme of mortality will be seen in its own right in section (iii) of Chapter 3.)

Grains of sand and rock are frequently used to suggest instability, with a possible further implication of sterility. The following lines, from 'Poussières, I', in Les Mots couverts, are typical from this point of view:

On parlait d'eux, schistes, rochers, mais ils n'étaient que des infiniment petits, une poussière imperceptible qui dévalait aux flancs du temps. (...)

(TM 170)

The minute bits of rock are insignificant in size in relation to the immensity of the universe, suggesting the individual's ephemerality. Their age, however, is great, suggesting a sense of history and becoming. The permanence of rock is a false impression, as is conveyed by the implicit contradiction introduced by 'mais'. Yet this fragility is what permits the rock, in the form of dust, to return to the cosmos.<sup>22</sup> (The theme of the cosmos will be seen in the next section.) From Les Mots couverts onwards, there is a build-up of such images which emphasise the sense of the individual's insignificance. My final example of mineral imagery comes from Au seuil de l'oubli:

Nous avons vu périr des villes dans des tempêtes de poussières  
Les ouragans griffer leurs flancs et le granit rouge des rois  
redevient faste d'épure. (...)

(TM 206)

Here, the stone is in a sense atomised by itself: sandstorms cause the disintegration of the buildings, and the demise of the royal palaces of Fatehpur-Sikri. As I will show in Chapter 3, such demise is itself an image of mortality.

(v) The cosmos

The images of the seasons and water, of wind and things mineral, all convey dialectical relationships, such as those between fluidity and fixity, or ephemerality and permanence. The images of the cosmos convey a further dialectic; that of the interior and exterior worlds. In the following quotation, from Dis-moi, ma vie, the universe is exterior to the individual, who is spoken of metaphorically as a grain of metal filing:

Ce n'est pas facile de vivre, grain de limaille parmi les autres  
De quel métal, tôt dispersé, poussière des flux et des vents.  
(TM 185)

While subject to the forces of the universe, the individual is conscious of his vulnerability, as expressed in 'Ce n'est pas facile de vivre'. This consciousness of vulnerability, and a sense of his own insignificance, make the individual distinct from the rest of creation. I will discuss the question of consciousness further in Chapter 3.

Elsewhere, in Fortune Infortune Fort Une, the same fragility is emphasised rather as witness to the individual's participation in the constant evolution of the universe. Consciousness of having a place in the scheme of the universe is a source of dignity, as expressed in:

Nous, de l'action, accidentels, une péripétie constante  
pulvérisée pour n'être rien, mais les atomes d'un grand Tout  
Serviteurs heureux de servir, une permanence innombrable (p.43)

Such a sense of human dignity offers a counterbalance to the otherwise bleak cosmic imagery which is typical of Seghers's later poetry.<sup>23</sup> The second form of cosmic imagery, in which the universe is present in the

individual, is typified by a series of lines from a considerably earlier poem, 'Le système du ciel, V':

Notre tête est pareille aux mouvantes étoiles  
Et nous sommes si grands que du centre à son bord  
L'Univers vit en nous ses vivants et ses morts.

(TM 56)

The emphasis here is on the sense of wonder which comes from awareness of the universe. The universe lives in us in so far as we participate in its rhythms.<sup>24</sup> The rhythms of the universe are seen in such things as the cycles of the seasons and the movement of the tides.<sup>25</sup> These have been seen, notably in relation to Racines on page 25 and in note 3, to be metaphors for the individual's life and death. An awareness of the fact that he shares in such rhythms, through his mortality, is perhaps the closest the individual can get to understanding what he intuits to be the place assigned to him in the universe.

My final quotation combines the cosmic dimension with a sense of one's physical existence. It is from 'Poussières, I', in Les Mots couverts:

(...) Né d'un instant, d'une réaction continue  
Par quelles cellules sécrété, dans le feu de quel mouvement  
Le plus fin matériau s'invente et se ravive  
Poussière qui se fait vertèbre et devient homme.

(TM 171)

The physical aspect is seen in 'Par quelles cellules sécrété' and in 'vertèbre'.<sup>26</sup> The lines bring together many of the points made throughout this chapter. The individual, as a flesh-and-blood creature, is part of the continuum of time which far outspans his life time. The material from which his body's cells are built is immemorial, and through the decomposition of his body will continue to be recycled. There is a tension between the dynamism of the universe as a whole and that of the human life which is born from it and is limited in time; a tension between the limitless material mass of the universe on the one hand, and, on the other, the individual as both a physical and a conscious being, aware of his limits.

### Conclusion

A picture has emerged of a universe in a state of constant change. Nature is seen in the motifs of the seasons, of water and wind, and in the mineral imagery. The natural world also includes the cosmos. Throughout the discussion, attention was drawn to the ways in which constant change is shown to be in tension with senses of permanence and fixity. The seasons, for example, are resolved into a cyclical pattern, while traditional images of the immutability of stone are countered by ones of stone being subject to eroding forces.

Man shares the material existence of the universe and is subject to the same rhythms as the universe. He has evolved from the same matter. While the individual, as an entity, will die, he will continue to be present in the matter of the universe and in the generations which will succeed him. To this extent, the individual has a cosmic dimension.

Because Man shares the physical existence of the universe and is conscious of this, the natural world is a source of metaphor for human existence. As we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, the individual defines himself in terms of the outside world.

The constant change found in the universe and in the individual, their becoming (in the sense of devenir), is the subject of Chapter 3, section (i).

We have seen that in the wartime poetry the usual order of the universe is frequently inverted: water may cease to be free-flowing and the cycles of the seasons may be distorted. Such distortions reflect the political and moral disorder of the time. By drawing attention to this discord, such images play their part in the Resistance fight for the creation of a new, free France. Various aspects of this struggle, and the individual's possibility to influence society and the course of history will be seen in Chapter 2, and will be further developed in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER TWO

MAN, THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BEING

The fact that man is a social and political being distinguishes him from other creatures. As a political being, the individual, through the exercise of power, participates in the legislative and executive organisation of society, and may influence the course of history. Political power and history will be seen as themes in their own right, while, as it was a response to a specific political situation, the Resistance poetry and that which was written immediately after the Second World War will be studied as a separate body of poetry, in section (i). Echoes of the political aspect of the Resistance poetry, are, however, found in later poetry, as can be seen in, for example, the quotations from Piranèse below, on page 39.

(i) Fraternity in the Resistance poetry

Resistance poetry expressed resistance to a foreign and hostile ideology, that of Nazi Germany. France was threatened with political and social submission to Nazi rule, and this submission would have implied a danger to French culture and the French language (see below, Chapter 4, notes 3, 5 and 6). A society, as a collection of individuals, is held together by a common language. Language is a means of self-expression for the individual, and that of the society as a whole. The threat to the French language was therefore dual, concerning the national identity of France, and the individual members of French society. Language is important as a social phenomenon. It is also, as we will see in Chapter 4, indispensable to the individual as the means through which he expresses his consciousness of himself. Implicitly or explicitly, therefore, French Resistance poetry (a poem being a linguistic object) is a defence of the French language and of the individual's right to express himself, and to do this through his own, native, tongue. In so far as language is a social phenomenon, such a defence is also, again not necessarily explicitly, an expression of, and a call for, fraternity.

In Seghers's Resistance poetry, a theme of fraternity emerges through the recurrence of such words as 'amis' and 'frères'. In 'Carré blanc', the word 'amis' refers to the unknown thousands of Jews, hostages and Resistance fighters assassinated by the Nazis:

Des amis que l'on tue  
Les corps abandonnés  
Sont terribles sans têtes

(TM 22)

The same poem also calls the dead 'Mes frères'.

'Le beau travail' refers not to the dead but to imprisoned fellow Resistance fighters:

Dans une tour on les a mis, par-ci, par-là,  
Des chiens quoi. Ils avaient la rage d'aimer leurs frères (TM 26)

Their sense of fraternity is subverted by Nazi authority into a crime. By implication, the poet, too, is guilty of the same crime by the act of writing.

A sense of kinship with the dead and suffering is accompanied by a like sentiment towards the French nation in general, and in particular towards that part of it which resists the Nazis. In 'Le pain blanc', the poet calls on his 'compagnons' with the words 'Tressez vos mains'. He invites them to demonstrate their solidarity:

Compagnons le sang qui s'écaille fait graine  
Ce n'est plus le temps des rêves, mais des moissons

(TM 25)

The expression of confidence in the future is itself an act of fraternity, being a means of rallying the spirits of others. The rallying call is made the more forceful by the use of the present tense: confidence in the future is here expressed as though that future were a present reality. (Further discussion of the poet's role in promoting hope and fraternity will be found in Chapter 4).

In other poems, it is the general tone and nature of what is said which convey feelings of gratitude towards, and fraternity with, the suffering or dead. 'Octobre 41' pays homage to the hostages of Châteaubriant, Nantes et Bordeaux who were shot by the Nazis. (See

Chapter 1, note 6.) The poem raises the hostages to the status of martyrs, referring to 'Le massacre des Innocents'. Their martyrdom for France suggests a parallel with Joan of Arc, as expressed here:

Alors ils renaîtront à la fin de ce calvaire  
 (...)  
 Aux côtés de la Jeanne au visage de fer

(TM 19)

They are national heroes as well as martyrs.

'25 août 1944 (Libération de Paris)' is a poem in similar vein. The poet's sense of brotherhood with those who died liberating Paris is expressed in the lines

Témoins aux fronts insaisissables  
 Si pareils à chacun de nous

(TM 61)

The living and the dead share a common humanity. Through their sacrifice, the dead confer dignity on mankind. They died, like martyrs, as witnesses to their beliefs. Although, or perhaps because, they are unknown to him, the poet celebrates their martyrdom with gratitude for the future which they have helped to create:

Graine anonyme des chaussées  
 Rue aux cent noms vous fleurissez  
 L'avenir avec le passé

(TL 61)

Seghers's wartime poetry is committed not so much in a party political sense as to such ideals as freedom and justice. In 'Libération de Paris', Seghers's sympathies lie with unarmed German soldiers shot down by French gunmen who were encouraged by former Collaborators:

J'ai vu rouler dans le ruisseau ceux qui n'avaient plus de fusils  
 Ils s'écroulaient les poings au ventre, leur vie coulait sur la  
 chaussée.

Seghers's position is underlined in the phrase 'ceux qui n'avaient plus de fusils' and in the emphasis on the bloodiness of the scene.

My final quotation expressing solidarity is taken from a slightly later poem, 'La gloire', a sarcastic address to the French military oppressors in Algeria:

Va dans tes bêtes mécaniques  
 Ecraser ceux qui sont chez eux  
 (...)  
 Va mon fils, va, tu civilises

(TM 81)<sup>2</sup>

Seghers's position here is the same as that seen in the wartime poetry. He sides with those whose freedom (here national and political) is threatened.

### (ii) Political power

A reaction against the abuse of political power underlies many of the poems seen in the preceding section. In the biography of Seghers in my introduction, Seghers's brief membership of the Communist Party was mentioned. 'Le mur du son', published in 1953, marks Seghers's break with Communism. He felt the break necessary precisely because he had become aware of the limitations placed by Communist regimes on individual freedom, and in particular the freedom of self-expression.<sup>3</sup> 'Le mur du son' is a protest against the political manipulation of the individual in general, but expressed in personal terms, as seen in these lines:

(...) En mon sang trop de mains à varlopes  
 ont raboté leur vie dans leur chair avant moi  
 pour que j'accepte un jeu de lampes dans ma tête  
 Rouge vert rouge qu'on manoeuvrerait pour moi

(TM 80)

'Le mur du son' is exceptional among Seghers's poems in having a specific political reference. Generally speaking, Seghers's commitment to humanity, and to the freedom of the individual, is apolitical. In the suites, from Racines onwards, a number of lines are found which use images reminiscent of the wartime poetry. My first example is from Racines:

Sur le tapis roulant du Temps, les os des charniers ne pèsent  
 guère  
 A l'homme, on prend ses légions qui se refont en une nuit (TM 95)

While, on a superficial level, this may seem complacent about the horror of the holocaust, the lines must be seen in the context of Racines. It is important to remember that the poems were inspired by a series of photographs which they may be said to illustrate. Some of the pieces of wood do resemble bits of bone. The echo of the atrocities of the War may be purely incidental, therefore. Alternatively, the lines may be seen as expressing a desire on the poet's part to set the past behind him and look to the future. Throughout the suite, as we have seen in Chapter 1, the emphasis is on the continuity of existence. Nonetheless, the image of the mass grave does convey a suggestion of some tyrannical power.<sup>4</sup>

Of the suites, Piranèse presents the most echoes of the Resistance. Seghers's suite was inspired by Piranesi's engravings of imaginary prisons. In the poems, the prisons are presented in terms suggestive of concentration camps:

(...) On voyait  
toutes les charnières et les instruments du système  
de la terreur, les dents plantées sur des épieus  
dans un ordre dément. (...)

(TM 117)

More insidious, however, is the psychological torture meted out by the 'bourreaux de l'âme':

(...) On les eût dit  
charitables, ils étaient froids comme une lame.  
Ils ne tuaient pas. Ils volaient la vie de chaque instant

(TM 118)

While such lines as these suggest that Piranèse might be read as a warning against the dangers of corrupt political power, the suite also affirms the freedom of the individual's creative imagination, even in the face of tyranny. In this, too, Piranèse is close to the Resistance poetry. In the suite, the terms used in presenting the power conferred upon the individual by artistic creation are ironically similar to ones suggesting tyrannical power. This is seen in the following lines which refer to those imprisoned as

architectes d'une folie où s'émerveillait la raison,  
bâtisseurs écrasés mais toujours redoutables,  
vénérés et craints. (...)

(TM 116)

The prisoners transcend the physical limitations placed upon them by living in their imagination. Their imagination transforms the prisons into palaces. We will see similar examples in Chapter 4.

One work in which reference to political power is prominent is Dialogue. The following lines oppose the (unspecified) powers of the individual, and a destructive despotic form of authority:

(...) Beaux visages  
du grave amour, vous étiez l'homme dans sa force  
et ses pouvoirs. Mais le Pouvoir vous hait (TM 135)

The lines hint at the repression of intellectual and artistic expression by totalitarian regimes, the 'force' and 'pouvoirs' being creative ones.<sup>5</sup>

Although it may be despotic, political power is of necessity transient because exercised by mortal individuals. This transience is brought out in these lines from another poem from Dialogue:

Quels sont ces rois de pacotille, de quelle paille leurs couronnes,  
Et quel tarot les a mêlés à l'impudent du devenir (TM 129)

While their direct influence dies with those who hold political power ('leurs édits n'atteignent plus personne', states another line of the poem), the exercise of this power does shape the future. This last point is suggested in the second of these lines.<sup>6</sup>

An extreme form of tyrannical power may bring about its own demise, along with the destruction of those subjected to the power:

(...) préparais-tu pour vaincre  
l'ignition définitive, le grand braséro de demain  
pour périr somptueusement de ton pouvoir? Ainsi s'éteignent les  
Barbares. (TM 136)

If it provokes revolution, for example, tyranny can bring about its own destruction.

(iii) History

The last two quotations are illustrative of a sense of history. A sense of history implies awareness of the past as shaped by man, and an awareness that the individual can also shape the future through political activity. Through such activity, the present can be transcended by the replacement of one political situation by another. At the same time, the continual becoming of history means that the present, and the future created from the present, will live on indefinitely. (The question of becoming in general will be seen in Chapter 3.) A parallel can be drawn with the images of the harvest, as seen, for example, in the second quotation from '25 août 1944 (Libération de Paris)' on page 37. The harvest produces grain to grow next year's crop, and so on, potentially ad infinitum.

An awareness of history (history as it is being lived through and as something to be created) is most in evidence in the Resistance poetry. An important motive for Resistance writing in general was a determination that the future, for France, should not be under Nazi rule, coupled with the belief that an alternative future could be shaped.

This combative aspect, in a non-military sense, is seen in such poems as 'Avenir', in Le Futur antérieur. In this poem, we read the affirmation

Ici germera le futur. (p.25)

The poem continues:

Nous y planterons autour du désert une barrière, on y lira:  
ici l'Histoire (p.26)

The lines bring out the ambivalence of the word history. In referring to the past, it applies to something immutable, but the course of history is continuous. There is possibly a further suggestion that the writing of history betrays the facts: words are inadequate to express the experience. (We will return to this apparent inadequacy of words, notably in the second part of Chapter 4.) There may, furthermore, be

an official history which makes it difficult to see events in any light but that of the official version.

A similar ambivalence is contained in the following lines from 'Le carrousel':

Une fille de feu d'un poète dira  
43, feutre étouffant, la préhistoire

(TM 39)

The poet imagines a viewpoint in the future from which 1943 seems like prehistory. The use of the term 'préhistoire' suggests several things. First, from the poet's viewpoint as he writes in 1943 and from that of the imagined future, history seems to stagnate. Second, if the War years, and 1943 in particular, are going to seem like prehistory, this supposes a confidence in a future which will become history, marked by political change and human events. The foundations for this future must, if imperceptibly, be being laid during the War period. The very fact of naming the year, 43 (and, moreover, in figures), draws attention, paradoxically in view of the term 'préhistoire', to the fact that 1943 does belong to history. Dates are used by man to define units of time. This implies an awareness of, here, 1943 as being distinct from, for example, 1942.

On an outwardly superficial level, the awareness of history is demonstrated by the use of dates for titles: 'Octobre 41', '25 août (Libération de Paris)', and so on. The use of a date as a title pinpoints a particular event, lifting it out of the indistinct, continuous passage of time, and out, even, of the general context of the War. The event becomes part of written history. The date-title is a signal to future readers of the poem, forming part of the poem's message: the hope that future generations will learn from history, and from this event in particular. 'Octobre 41' illustrates the point particularly well in alluding to future school history lessons in which the Châteaubriant hostages 'entendront (...) d'autres enfants dire leurs noms' (TM 19). We will return to the stanza from which this quotation is taken in Chapter 4, for the question of the theme and use of language in Resistance writing.

The historical function of the Resistance poems, both ones inspired by specific events and those inspired by the general climate of wartime France, is dual. The poems record the times, though not necessarily in a precise, historical manner, and address themselves to the future, which they hope to influence. This second point is implicit in 'Octobre 41'. It is made explicitly by Seghers in his epigraph to La Résistance et ses poètes:

Jeunes gens qui me lirez peut-être, pensez-y! les bûchers ne sont jamais éteints et le feu, pour vous, peut reprendre... (p.10)

History may repeat itself, and lessons may be learnt from a study of history.

Parallels may be drawn between contemporary events and past ones. This is seen notably in the reference to Joan of Arc in 'Octobre 41', through which the hostages are raised to the status of national heroes. (See page 37, above) The legend surrounding Joan of Arc is part of the popular cultural heritage of the French, but it is based on historical fact. The reference to Joan of Arc suggests a wish for the events of Châteaubriant to be perpetuated in a similar popular heritage. The effect of such a popularisation is curiously paradoxical. Hand in hand with the vulgarisation goes a certain fictionalisation as non-historical elements creep in. The historical event becomes legend, at one remove from reality, and becomes surrounded in a certain mystery. We saw, on page 41, the possible inadequacy of words to record history faithfully. In 'Octobre 41', a degree of fictionalisation, in the development of a legend, is seen to be something desirable. When the poet states 'ils renaîtront à la fin de ce calvaire', he implies that this resurrection will be in the words of the poem itself. The poem, however, is selective in what it presents of the events of October 1941, and, furthermore, presents them in a personal way. To this extent, it can be said to fictionalise the events.

It is in 'Allemagne 1945', a poem which dates from 1945, after the German defeat, that the advance of History is voiced most explicitly. The poem depicts the desolation of defeated Germany:

L'Histoire passe, entend ses chars, ses chenilles et ses  
lance-flammes  
Le Saint-Empire de l'Enfer s'enfonce dans les souterrains de la  
Nuit  
Les fleuves charrient déjà des rires énormes comme à la débâcle  
(TM 63)

The first of these lines suggest a classifying of the Nazi regime; it has become, or is in the process of becoming, written history. The 'déjà' of the last line conveys the impression of a sudden speeding up of time. The image is in contrast with those of frozen, featureless time, as seen on pages 22 (first quotation), 24 (second quotation) and 42. The reference to the 'débâcle' shows France's own defeat to belong, now, to history. In the use of the comparison introduced by 'comme', and in the literal meaning of 'débâcle' (the breaking up of ice to free previously frozen rivers or seas) there is a possible inference of a cyclical pattern to history. In this, the lines recall the epigraph to La Résistance et ses poètes, quoted on page 43.

Implicit in all Resistance writing is a desire to prevent the disappearance of French culture and national identity under Nazi domination. In later poetry, suggestions of dead civilisations and a sense of history are also found. The following example is from Piranèse:

Je vous écris au temps des plantes dans les ruines,  
au temps du lierre et du figuier parmi des dalles de safran  
où les colonnes sont éparses, brisées et couchées dans la boue.  
(TM 126)

The lines are from the last poem of the suite and so suggest that the ruins are those of the prisons. As we will see in Chapter 4, the prisons are also presented in terms of palaces. The images are, furthermore, suggestive of engravings by Piranesi which represent the ruins of Rome. Seghers's lines may, then, call to mind the fall of Rome.<sup>7</sup>

Much of Au seuil de l'oubli, as Seghers himself states in Le Temps des merveilles (p.209), was inspired by the palace city of Fatehpur-Sikri, which was abandoned when its water supply dried up. The city's fate is expressed in the following lines:

Nous avons vu périr des villes dans des tempêtes de poussières  
Les ouragans griffer leurs flancs et le granit rouge des rois  
redevenir faste d'épure. Un geai bleu, dans le bain des femmes  
se posait, quand il avait plu. Les princes étaient morts de soif.  
(TM 206)

The lines draw attention to the fragility of human life while also suggesting the ephemerality of political power. The empty buildings stand witness to a past human presence, but their own permanence is itself only relative for they are subject to the eroding force of wind-blown sand. Such lines offer another expression of the tension between fixity and instability which was seen throughout Chapter 1.

As is the case in the lines above, images of fallen civilisations are rarely dissociated from other themes, notably becoming, mortality and artistic creation. These themes are at the heart of Seghers's poetry. We will return to these particular lines from Au seuil de l'oubli in Chapter 4, section (iv), where they will be seen in relation to the theme of artistic creation. Other examples of the motif of fallen civilisations will be seen in the remaining chapters of Part I, in conjunction with the other themes.

### Conclusion

In the Resistance poetry in particular, history is seen to be inseparable from questions of language. The very act of writing Resistance poetry was itself an act of defiance in the face of Nazi authority. It was also an act in defence of the French language, the French language being essential both to French society as a whole and to the individuals who made up that society. For Resistance writers in general, words were weapons in the fight for the creation of a new France. These are questions to which we will return in Chapter 4. History is what is said or written about events. It is made of words.

As such, the writing of Resistance poetry was itself the writing of history, contributing to the way in which events, the general climate of Wartime France, and the phenomenon of Resistance itself would be seen by future generations.

In Seghers's later poetry, we find depictions of often corrupt political power together with images of the demise of civilisations. The Resistance poetry was part of a fight against the possible demise of French culture. It also expressed a belief that society could be altered and the course of history changed. The later poetry uses images of demise, which is one form of change, to convey, notably, the theme of mortality. In Chapter 3, we will see various forms of change, in particular as they affect the individual.

## CHAPTER THREE

CHANGE AND MORTALITY

In Chapter 1, the emphasis was placed on dynamism in nature and on certain tensions of fluidity and fixity. A number of aspects of man's physical reality to emerge from the poetry were also seen. In Chapter 2, the emphasis was on the dynamism of history, and the attention on man as a social being. In Chapter 3, the emphasis will be on change both in the outside world and in the individual. The way change is perceived and expressed by the individual will form an important part of the discussion. The question of consciousness, both of oneself and of the outside world, will appear throughout this chapter, and in particular in sections (iii) and (iv).

(i) Becoming

Throughout this section, the term 'becoming' is used with the sense of devenir, a word found in Seghers's poetry, as in the quotation from 'L'alibi, II', on page 50, below. Becoming is a form of evolution in which each state grows out of the preceding one, while all preceding states continue to be part of the whole. As a form of organic development, becoming applies to organic wholes, such as societies or individuals. The question of becoming in society, notably as it emerges from the Resistance poetry, has already been discussed in Chapter 2, section (iii). I will limit myself to one further quotation from this body of poetry. It illustrates the aim of Resistance writing to promote the growth of a new France out of the oppressed France of the war years. In 'Les lendemains', the poet pictures himself

Liant de mes mains  
D'autres lendemains  
Au grain que je sème.

(TM 46)

An organic form of development is suggested in the image of the sown seed.<sup>1</sup> Becoming in such instances is therefore potentially positive. The individual, as we have already seen, may help to influence this

growth. For the poet, as will be seen in Chapter 4, this is through writing a particular sort of committed poetry. In the lines above, the seed that the poet sows is that of hope, and also of a belief in the possibility of a free France.

The rest of this section will concentrate on images which use the term devenir, or which appear to define it. In anticipation of the section on memory, which implies consciousness, and that on consciousness and self, the discussion also brings out the attitudes to the process of becoming which emerge from the poetry. Throughout the rest of this section, then, the emphasis will be on becoming as it concerns the individual.

The question of becoming as it applies to the individual may be seen indirectly. Change in nature, for example, may be used metaphorically for the individual's becoming, or otherwise imply something about it. This is illustrated by the affirmation, in Racines, that 'tout revit dans la durée / d'une fleur d'un seul jour' (TM 101). The individual participates, as we have seen, in the organic nature of the universe. He is a physical being who has evolved from the original matter of the universe and who is subjected to the creative and destructive forces which traverse the universe. He is therefore included in the 'tout' in the quotation.<sup>2</sup>

Various attitudes to the process of becoming emerge from Seghers's poetry. The tone of the quotation from Racines is confident, if not defiant in the face of death. The emphasis is on the continuity of the past in the present, and it is implied that both past and present will continue in the future (that is, after death). A certain comfort is to be had from this for the individual: death marks not a definitive end of life but a change of state. A clear expression of this is found in the same suite. In an apostrophe to Death, the poet states:

Tu prends une carcasse et dans nos cages vides  
 le soleil ruisselant se caille sous tes doigts  
 Mais tu n'as rien, plus rien, car la sève et la voix  
 Ont rejoint nos forêts par des chemins liquides.

(TM 99)

Again, we find a mingling of the human and non-human in 'sang' and 'sève', which can be explained by the material existence shared by the individual and the forests. (The place of artistic creation, here suggested by 'la voix', in relation to the individual's continuing after death will be seen in Chapter 4.)

Becoming implies, then, a tension between the transience of the individual as a physical and conscious being, and the permanence of his presence in the universe. This ambivalence is illustrated by the following line from Dis-moi, ma vie:

Je suis celui d'un seul instant qui durera toute la vie      (TM 194)

The tone is life-affirming. The 'instant' seems to be being used in three different ways. First, conscious of his continual becoming, the poet attaches importance to each moment; each instant is unique and to be savoured. Second, also suggested is a metaphorical use of 'instant' for the poet's life-span, and 'vie' as a much longer time scale. Finally, the line illustrates the concept of becoming; the instant will last all life long, because it is assimilated to his being for the rest of his life.

In the following line, from Les Pierres, there is a suggestion that constant becoming is not simply a condition of existence to be undergone passively:

(...) Comme la vague sur la vague  
Sans cesse nous roulons et nous nous refaisons  
d'une écume où le ciel se mire et se divise      (TM 112)

The verb 'nous nous refaisons' is ambivalent. Are we remade, passively, or do we remake ourselves and each other, actively? Rather, becoming is a combination of the two. It is not possible to stop change, but it is possible to influence it.

The possibility of influencing one's becoming, or at least the desire to do so, is suggested in the following lines from 'L'alibi, II', a poem in Les Mots couverts:

Pour vivre en devenir, en vacance habitée  
 (...)  
 et pour se délester du plomb des souvenirs

(TM 172)

Although becoming is inevitable, the use of 'pour' here translates not only a willingness to accept the fact, but also a desire to participate actively in the process. This implies living in the present, 'en vacance habitée', accepting it fully with all it has to offer, and not living in one's memories. For the poet, as we will see in the next chapter, active participation also involves transforming reality, and himself as part of that reality, in the words of his poetry.

### (ii) Memory

Awareness of change and of the passage of time finds expression in the theme of memory, as in the last quotation. The following lines from 'L'alibi, II', develop the theme further:

Pour daller les tombeaux, les palais d'apparat  
 avec les pierres lithographiques de la mémoire  
 et n'avoir de regards que pour le temps qui vient

(TM 172)

Although, because of the nature of becoming, the past continues in the present, memories reproduced in the mind (as on lithographic stones) can no more bring the past back to life than tombstones commemorating the dead can bring them back to life. To dwell on memories is to live a form of death in life. It is better to accept that the past is dead, and turn in anticipation to the future.<sup>3</sup>

As a counterpart to these images of memories as a hindrance to becoming, memory is elsewhere seen as something desirable. We have already seen the role of the Resistance poetry in general as a reminder to future generations of the dangers of fascism. (See in particular pages 42-43.) The role of the poems may be to commemorate specific

events for future generations, as expressed in 'Octobre 41' (see page 42). In '25 août 1944', the poet addresses those who died in the Liberation of Paris as

(...) beaux enfants  
qui vivez parmi les vivants

(TM 61)

The implication is that the dead live on in the memory of the living.<sup>4</sup>

In both types of images of memory seen so far, remembering is seen to confer a degree of permanence on an event or person. Memory itself, however, is unstable. In the epigraph to Les Mots couverts, memory and becoming are again linked:

(...) pour la mémoire en mouvement  
et le parfum du devenir, LA POESIE.

(TM 160)

Perception of change and memory of change in the universe are themselves subject to change. One of the functions of poetry is to express, and so act as the memory of, the dynamism found in the universe. It records change.

In Au seuil de l'oubli, the now abandoned palace-city of Fatehpur-Sikri is presented as a ghost of its former glorious self:

Ce qui se lit dans les gravois: de ces demeures délabrées  
s'écaillle un mot, un souvenir effiloché (...) (TM 198)

As it now stands, the city is only a partial or inexact reminder of what it once was. Although this is not implied in this particular poem, we may surmise that the single most important difference, for Seghers, between the city as it now is and as it once was is the absence of human beings. As we will see below, (page 56), the same city is closely associated with death. Recollection of Fatehpur-Sikri is formulated in language; the language of the poem. Again, human consciousness is implied, both in the idea of memory and in the formulation of individual memories in language. The verb 's'écaille' suggests the insignificance of the memory, like an isolated fragment, in comparison with the original. It also suggests a further divorce between what is left and the original, on the one hand, and, on the

other hand, the formulation of them in language. This formulation does not 'stick' to the reality.

Implicit in the last quotation is the idea of the unreliability of memory and language in reproducing the past accurately. Other poems show the ephemerality of the faculty of memory itself as well as of the memories it holds. These images include some of the bleakest to be found in Seghers's poetry. In the following quotation from Au seuil de l'oubli, the shifting nature of individual recollections is combined with the unreliability or instability of individual faculties of memory. Together they contribute to the picture of general disintegration:

(...) Dans les mémoires alternantes  
les souvenirs se fragmentaient. (...)

(TM 199)

The loss of individual elements of recollections is implied here. Similarly, whole memories may disappear 'dans les cratères de la mémoire' (Au seuil de l'oubli, TM 203). Such images imply that the memories of ourselves which we will leave behind will also be liable to disappear. This is one possible interpretation of the following lines from Dis-moi, ma vie:

Quand la mémoire se taira dans les fosses criblées de boue  
(...)

Nous irons lentement vers une décomposition totale

(TM 182)

We will cease to be present in other people's consciousness, and, to this extent, we will no longer exist. Alternatively, 'la mémoire' may refer to the individual's own faculty of memory. To lose one's memory provokes the loss of one's sense of identity; a form of psychological disintegration which foreshadows physical decomposition.<sup>5</sup> The same ambivalence is implied in the very title, 'Au seuil de l'oubli', which suggests both being forgotten by others and the forgetting of one's own identity.

The function of memory verges on the paradoxical. While memory is necessary for our sense of identity, it is unreliable as a means of self-knowledge. This is suggested here:

Dans les méandres de la mémoire, les marigots de la tiédeur  
où se reflète un ciel plombé, à la poursuite dans le vide  
d'un miroir rond, dans la touffeur de l'intérieur  
auscultée en vain... (...)

(TM 168)

We are in a state of constant becoming and our memories themselves are subject to change. Because of this dynamism, our memory of the past can only ever afford us a partial revelation of ourselves.<sup>6</sup> The lines also suggest the poet's intuition of having once been one. Further such images, and the sense of duality which results from that of lost unity, will be seen in section (iv). As we will see in the second part of Chapter 4, it is in the writing of the poem itself that the poet comes closest to achieving unity, for the conscious and unconscious combine in the poem.

### (iii) Mortality

A further central concern emerges from much of what has preceded in this and earlier chapters, namely mortality. Images of minute particles, such as those found on pages 31-32, suggest the fragile nature of existence, while in the Resistance poetry, images of blood and physical death abound. A sense of mortality goes hand in hand with an awareness of becoming. The individual's becoming includes the moment of death, but does not stop at this point. This is suggested in such lines as the following one, from Racines:

L'homme est un arbre et l'arbre mort est un enfant.

(TM 101)

In Racines, the forces of nature are shown to be destructive, but at the same time re-creative. Death does not predominate. The tone is essentially life-affirming.<sup>7</sup> As we will see in Chapter 4, for the poet, it is in the poem that life can be said to continue after death.

As a counterpart to such images, in other poems, a sense of the untimeliness of death is uppermost. This is the case in many of the Resistance poems. The sense of waste is expressed in 'Le reliquaire':

Je dirai que le vent qui de si loin revient  
 Soulève à nouveau des colonnes  
 De poussières et de personnes  
 Pour rien.

(TM 33)

The waste seems futile and the dead are reduced to anonymous hordes. It is the poet's function to redeem the dead and convert the waste into something positive: in the last stanza, the poet compares himself to a figure of the suffering Christ.<sup>8</sup> We may conclude that the poet effects this conversion through the words of the poem. A very similar case was seen on page 43 with respect to 'Octobre 41'.

A sense of the untimeliness of death, and the consequent inability to accept death, pervades much of Seghers's poetry from Dialogue onwards. The epigraph to Dialogue suggests the importance of death, or of a dead person, as an inspiration in this suite:

Que donnerais-je? Un mort qui rêve dans ses roses entre ses yeux  
 et son sommeil. Mais que donner sinon le bruit d'un long voyage  
 solitaire, sinon le roulement d'un train parmi les souvenirs...

(TM 127)

The poetry itself, 'le bruit d'un long voyage solitaire', becomes an almost prayer-like offering to the dead person, a means of filling the absence which it also expresses.<sup>9</sup> Images of absence, which in the light of the epigraph suggest death, abound in Dialogue. The first poem of the suite contains one such image and sets the tone of the work:

Pour un parc à présent désert et pour la clairière du cœur  
 écartelée sur ses allées (...)

(TM 127)

A violence of emotion, provoked by absence, is suggested by 'écartelée' in what may otherwise seem pleasantly pastoral images. In such images as these, death is to be inferred only. Here, it is implied in the

emptiness within the heart. Death may be referred to in more explicit manner, however, as in:

(...) Un innocent  
se meurt pour s'être retranché dans une ville sans personne

(TM 131)

Again, the sense of waste is uppermost.

From the point of view of the presentation of death, Dialogue is characterised by regret and melancholy. In later suites, the tone is increasingly desolate as the possibility of the ultimate absurdity of existence is contemplated. In Dis-moi, ma vie, the sense of the absurdity is expressed, as we saw on page 32, in terms of specks of metal filings, blown by the winds. The complete stanza in question is:

Ce n'est pas facile d'être homme, entre des parois verticales  
qui montent indéfiniment et se renversent tout à coup  
Ce n'est pas facile de vivre, grain de limaille parmi les autres  
De quel métal, tôt dispersé, poussière des flux et des vents.

(TM 185)

During life, the individual is, as it were, contained within walls. Death is seen as a sudden falling away of these, or an opening on to infinity; an infinite space which seems empty but for wind and dust.<sup>10</sup> The individual may or may not be conscious of the surrounding emptiness. While 'Ce n'est pas facile de vivre' implies the individual's consciousness of existing, we do not (and cannot) know whether consciousness continues after death.

The question of consciousness or absence of consciousness in relation to death is important in Au seuil de l'oubli. Continuing consciousness of one's identity after death is implied in this extract from the suite:

Quand au sortir du jour je m'en irai, ne cherchant plus rien ni  
moi-même

Inscrivez mon titre et mon nom, qu'ils m'accompagnent au plus près  
(TM 208)

The lines perhaps imply that to keep our awareness of our own identity after death, we must continue to be present to the living, through, for example, the inscription on our tomb. That we may live on in the

memory (or consciousness) of others has already been suggested in relation to other poems (see page 51 on '25 août 1944' and note 4). It is further implied in the same poem from Au seuil de l'oubli, which states that

(...) Dans la mémoire multipliée  
des éclairs, des échos, des éclats de phosphore  
disent que des veilleurs se souviennent. (...) (TM 208-209)

The more usual idea of consciousness of oneself in the outside world is here inverted. In this instance, the universe echoes (as if conscious of) the living who remember the dead. Implicit in the lines is the dead person's awareness of the universe as reflecting the memory which the living people (the 'veilleurs') have of him. This amounts to the dead person being aware of himself in the memory of the living.

The implications of consciousness continuing after death may, however, be even bleaker than those of death as the end of consciousness. In Fortune Infortune Fort Une, the poet likens his dead self to an empty façade:

Quand tu te seras déserté, ouvert aux oiseaux et aux vents  
Une façade abandonnée (...)  
(...) Qui seras-tu? Rien qu'un soupir. S'appelant en vain, une absence  
Dans le théâtre de l'oubli, displaced person, un passant... (p.63)

The abandoning of oneself suggests the separation of one's consciousness from one's sense of identity. The question 'Qui seras-tu?' thus remains unanswered and unanswerable other than by phrases which suggest the negation of a sense of identity: 'un soupir', 'displaced person'.

Another series of lines from the same suite presents death as the separation of the shadow from the body:

(...) son ombre le quitte. Elle va vers des villes mortes  
là-bas, dans le palais de grès rouge où Akbar  
traçait les plans de sa grandeur. (...) (p.81)

Akbar's palace, or the site of Fatehpur-Sikri is now abandoned. The image conveys both splendour and desolation. The lines which follow on

from these suggest the shadow as a metaphor for the poet's voice. As we will see in section (iv) and in Chapter 4, the poet's voice may be equated with his unconscious self. Death thus becomes the release of the unconscious.

In the bleakest lines, the poet imagines the individual as having no existence other than in the imagination of some hypothetical creator. An example is found in these lines from Qui sommes-nous?:

Et si l'homme n'était au bout, ombre d'une ombre  
qu'une image de la persistance rétinienne dans l' œil d'un fou?  
(TM 214)

He appears doubly insubstantial as the shadow of something which is itself a projection of a madman's imagination. It follows from this that the individual can cease to exist at the will of the creator figure. Such a conjecture finds expression in Au seuil de l'oubli, where the poet imagines himself as 'un commutateur, qu'on tourne...' (TM 202). Through our consciousness, we are aware that we exist. If consciousness could be turned off, we would no longer know whether we existed or not. The first line of the poem states 'Je naïs, je meurs, je fais mon temps', suggesting that the image of the extinguishing of consciousness is being used figuratively for death. The deceptively objective nature of the technical terms used in such lines as these ('persistance', 'rétinienne', 'commutateur') takes the sense of desolation one step further. The bleakness of what the words signify is underlined by the sterile tone of the words themselves.<sup>11</sup>

#### (iv) Consciousness and self

Throughout the preceding sections of this chapter, I have drawn attention to consciousness of change, and the possible relationship between consciousness and death. This final section will look further at the individual's consciousness of himself.

As we have seen throughout Chapters 1 to 3, the natural world is a source of metaphor for the human sphere. This implies some degree of recognition of oneself in the outside world, or that creation can reveal to us something of what it means to be human. The following

lines from Racines, for example, suggest the individual's recognition of himself in the tides and sand:

(...) Et pourquoi s'en vient-il ainsi  
à la rencontre de lui-même sur cette plage où les marées  
rejettent en grondant un ossuaire de géants morts? (TM 100)

The answer to the question asked in the lines is perhaps that the tides and sands confirm the individual in the sense he has of his individuality. The movement of the tides is suggestive of cycles of life and death. Together with the sand and washed-up bones they serve as a reminder of the individual's physical existence, and of his mortality. Before he comes into being, physically, the material which will make up the individual's body is scattered. After his death, physical disintegration returns the matter to the earth. Throughout his life, such cycles continue the processes of the creation and destruction of the body's cells. As a physical being, the individual shares in the rhythms of the universe. Through his consciousness, he recognises similarities between his own existence and that of the universe; but they are similar only, and not identical. His consciousness is that through which the individual is aware of being different from the rest of the universe. It is through his consciousness that he has a sense of his individuality.

The awareness of similarities gives rise to metaphor. Yet the richness of metaphor lies in its ambivalence, for while it points to the similarities between things it also shows up their difference, or individuality. When metaphors are used for the individual, as in the lines from Racines, it is in the synthesis of his similarity to, and difference from, the other term of the metaphor that the poet's picture of the individual and of himself is found. In the first edition of Racines, the importance of the element of difference in metaphor is well illustrated from the pages of the work themselves. While some of the pieces of sea-worn wood in the photographs do indeed look like pieces of bone, the reader knows them to be pieces of wood, and all the more obviously knows them not to be human. In the lines from Racines quoted above, the metaphor has three, and not the usual two, terms: the individual, the pieces of wood and the bones.

Self-knowledge is approached through awareness of the difference between oneself and the outside world, but because this difference exists, self-knowledge can only ever be incomplete. Furthermore, because the individual cannot define himself in terms of all things at once, the picture he has of himself is also in a state of constant flux.<sup>12</sup> This is similar to the sense of fluidity already seen in relation to images of memory (see pages 50-53). The memory, as we saw, gropes in vain to remember the time when the individual was fully conscious of being a unity. Memory is not simply unsuccessful in providing confirmation of our being fixed unities: it brings evidence of our not being fixed, as expressed in the following lines from Dialogue:

(...) Dans une moire  
de souvenirs, vas-tu te perdre, là où l'enfance t'abandonne  
sur ses mille miroirs qui ne retiennent rien? (TM 131)

Although we can see ourselves in our memories of childhood, the memories are fragmentary and themselves possibly ephemeral. Furthermore, they confirm the impression of a divorce between childhood and adulthood: 'l'enfance t'abandonne'. The child and the man are not identical because the individual develops.

Implicit in the lines from Dialogue, as in the preceding quotation, is the search to understand one's self, the self being the conscious and the unconscious together. The idea of search is explicit in these lines from 'En transit', a poem from Les Mots couverts:

Ni pièges, ni lacets. Une avance précautionneuse  
et permanente, une quête à ne rien saisir  
qu'une absence éparsé, tout ce qui reste d'un passage (TM 177)

We leave behind no permanent record of ourselves; there are no traps or snares to fix who we are, or in which we may chance across ourselves. This image itself suggests the questionable desirability of full self-knowledge. If it were possible, this would deny the process of becoming, and the possibility of change for the better. The lines from 'En transit' suggest, however, that what we seem to be now is different from what we seem to have been in the past. One possible

approach to a definition of ourselves lies in the difference between the two; the 'passage'.

The role of consciousness is ambivalent. Without it, we would not know we existed, but with it comes a sense of dislocation.<sup>13</sup> The awareness of a difference between who we really are and who we see ourselves to be is expressed in images of separation and duality. The most striking expression of this sense of duality is found in Les Pierres:

(...) Un long trait d'encre  
me partage dès ma naissance où je fus une cépendant                    (TM 111)<sup>14</sup>

While we are aware of being individual entities, we cannot come face to face with what we are. The image suggests a symmetry between the conscious self and the unconscious self. As we will see in Chapter 4, poetry (here possibly suggested in the 'trait d'encre') is the mediator between the two. The words of the poem, as we shall see, both reveal and yet betray the unconscious.

Images of mirrors, as in the quotation from Dialogue on page 59, are one motif which conveys the sense of duality. The following lines are from Dis-moi, ma vie:

Rien qu'une image renvoyée entre les miroirs des banquises  
Rien qu'un reflet mal entrevu dans le labyrinthe des nuits  
Reflet, image, éclair, poussière, une limaille...                    (TM 190)

The reflections we see of ourselves are not necessarily even direct ones, but may have been bounced off a series of mirrors before we glimpse them, and then imprecisely. Again, the lines suggest the recognition, or partial recognition, of oneself in exterior things. Also suggested, however, is a further distance between the consciousness we have of ourselves and what we really are. Furthermore, mirror images can only ever be 'ombres inversées' (TM 191) of what they reflect.<sup>15</sup> There is an element of inexactitude.

Dis-moi, ma vie is particularly rich in images of duality, as might be inferred from the title itself. Throughout the suite, the poet addresses his life as something separate from himself, suggesting

that the direction his life has taken seems to have been at least partially outside his control. The opening lines of the suite are illustrative of this sense of dislocation:

*Dis-moi, ma vie, t'aurais-je traversée en songe comme un nuage survolé de haut, toujours trop pressé pour te voir* (TM 179)

The implications of this are far-reaching. In so far as the individual shapes himself through his actions, the lines suggest an awareness of unrealised potential; of aspects of the self which have remained unfulfilled. What might have been the poet's life and what it has been are irreconcilable:

*Une équation irrésolue, des inconnues toujours fuyardes* (TM 186)

Dis-moi, ma vie gives further expression to this sense of separation in images related to the theatre, as here:

(...) Dans le désert, c'est un théâtre  
où nous jouons, où nous improvisons nos rôles  
depuis toujours écrits. (...) (TM 186)

The tone here verges on the fatalistic. The verb 'nous improvisons' suggests a sense of the imperfection of our acts, while the lines also suggest that if we are actors only, then we are not expressing our true selves. The image we have of ourselves, like the one we project to the outside world, is imperfect, and even deceptive. The same poem states:

(...) Une répétition sans fin. On croit s'y voir en s'y cherchant  
(TM 186)

The search for one's self is renewed continually. The implication is that the impression we might have of recognising ourselves in what we do is a false one. Two more lines from the same suite speak of

(...) des visages sous les masques  
ignorés, pressentis et plus vrais que la peau  
(TM 188)

They bring out the fact that we can only intuit ('pressentir') that we, and others, have a self which is different from the image projected.

In Dis-moi, ma vie, there is a sense of dislocation between the conscious knowledge and image we have of ourselves, and the unconscious

self we intuit. For Seghers, the unconscious, or other self (*l'autre soi-même*', TM 191), is revealed in the words of the poetry themselves. Words, as we shall see in the next chapter, appear to the poet to emerge from a region of his unconscious self which he equates with an '*au-delà*'. Poetry is thus a means of bridging the gap between the conscious self and the unconscious self.

### Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, different forms of change have been discussed, in particular as they affect the individual. The process of becoming is found throughout the universe. While it must be accepted as a condition of existence, the poet suggests that the individual can influence what he himself is to become, just as he can help influence the course of history and shape society.

While they give a degree of permanence to events of the past, memories are themselves subject to change, and may be lost forever. Like the process of becoming, then, memory implies a certain tension between the transient and the permanent. Memory also implies consciousness.

Consciousness of change and an awareness of mortality are inseparable, the individual's becoming including the moment of his death, but not, in Seghers's view, ceasing with it. In the poet's picture of his own mortality, the sense of his frailty and insignificance is balanced by suggestions of hope; the hope that he will live on in the consciousness of others. As we will see at the end of Chapter 4, the poem is the medium through which permanence might be achieved.

Consciousness of oneself and of the outside world are closely linked. The individual defines himself in terms of the similarities he sees between himself and the outside world, and in terms of his differences from it. The picture he has of himself is ever-changing, being composed of successive re-definitions. The two poles of the self and the outside world find a parallel within the individual. His self

is made of both the conscious and unconscious selves. It seems from the poetry that complete self-knowledge, if it were possible, would be undesirable, as it would imply a stasis. As we have seen throughout these chapters, change, or change in tension with fixity (but not fixity alone), are at the heart of Seghers's poetry.

While full self-knowledge might be undesirable, the search for self-knowledge is present as a theme within the poetry. Yet it is also implied in the poetry that the split between the conscious and unconscious selves is unbridgeable in any complete and lasting manner: full self-knowledge would be impossible. Nonetheless, the search to understand one's self continues, notably in the poetry itself. As we will see in Chapter 4, it is in the language of the poetry that the conscious and unconscious meet. Words come from the unconscious and are fashioned, in part consciously, into discourse.

## CHAPTER FOUR

LANGUAGE AND CREATION

Chapter 4 falls into two parts. In the first, I will look at the function of language, and the actual theme of language, in relation to the wartime poetry. Most examples will be from Resistance poems. The use of language in the Resistance poetry, as distinct from the wartime poetry in general, represents a special case, determined by the particular political and historical context in which it was written. Alongside the Resistance poems proper are others, which, although written during or very shortly after the War, are without direct reference to the period. An example, 'Poète', will be seen on pages 68-69, and other non-Resistance wartime poems are listed in note 10. It is perhaps inevitable that the interpretation placed on such poems should be coloured by knowledge of their historical context, but the example has been chosen, rather, to illustrate a certain thematic continuity between the wartime poetry and the later poetry of the suites and Les Mots couverts. The second part of this chapter will concentrate almost exclusively on this later poetry.

## 1) IN THE WARTIME POETRY

(i) The historical function of language, and language as a human phenomenon

The historical function of language in respect of the Resistance poetry has already been touched on in Chapter 2. By commemorating events in his poetry, the poet contributes to the way in which posterity will view those events. The writing of such poetry becomes a form of writing history. This is the case with such poems as 'Octobre 41', as discussed in particular on pages 42-43.

While Resistance poetry provides some record of the Second World War for future generations, one of the main aims of the poetry of the Resistance was to help construct a new, free, French society (free,

that is, from Nazi influence and control) for those future generations, by encouraging hope and belief that France could be freed. We have seen an expression of this in 'Le pain blanc' (see pages 23-24). The precise nature of the society envisaged, however, remains ill-defined, politically, as far as it emerges from Seghers's poetry and prose of the War years. The following statements are typical of Seghers's prose writings of the period:

Le poète a pour devoir social de donner à l'homme la possibilité de reconquérir son domaine.<sup>1</sup>

The question of building for the future is expressed in another article by Seghers, 'Poésie à hauteur d'homme'.<sup>2</sup> The role of the poet (any poet of the time) is to

construire non pas une "architecture du vide" mais une voie où s'avancer, où s'engager dans l'avenir.

Seghers's central concern emerges as being the defence of the individual and the society to which he belongs. While in the context of the Second World War, this implies the need to throw off Nazi Germany's hold on France, for Seghers, an essential part of the defence of France is the defence of her language, and the right of the French people to their language. Man's 'domaine' (as in the first quotation above), and that of the Frenchman in particular, may be interpreted as being, at least in part, linguistic.<sup>3</sup>

The threat to the French language came not only from the possible annexation of France by Nazi Germany. The Vichy government itself used the French language, or certain words in it, in its own particular way and to its own ends. Pétain could, for example, talk of 'l'unité française', but he envisaged this unity as being maintained by means of collaborating.<sup>4</sup> For Vichy, patriotism embraced the necessity of collaboration. For the Resistance fighter, it meant the refusal of any such collaboration.

In a series of lines from Seghers's poem 'Octobre 41', Vichy's warped use of the French language, or 'fausse parole', is referred to:

Arrachés aux bras de leurs enfants ils entendront  
Avec la guerre, l'exil et la fausse parole  
D'autres enfants dire leurs noms

(TM 19)

As we have already seen with regard to these lines, the poet imagines a future when the events of the War will have become history. Alongside these events, consigned to the past, but remembered, will be Pétainism and its misuse of the French language. In opposition to Vichy's false word, the true word is that spread by the Resistance in general, and in particular it is the language of this poem. To this extent, then, 'Octobre 41' is a reflexive poem, more examples of which will be seen below.<sup>5</sup>

As language is a specifically human phenomenon, to use language is itself to assert one's humanity. Particular languages are also specific to particular societies or cultures. To deprive an individual of the use of his language is to deprive him of the means of expressing himself. As we shall see, the possibility to express oneself is necessary for one's sense of identity. Similarly, to deprive a country of its language is to attack its national identity. Language is the means by which the individual relates to society and through which he defines himself. The relationship between language and consciousness is explored more fully in the second part of this chapter, but it underlies the need to defend the French language as felt by Resistance writers.<sup>6</sup>

### (ii) The theme of language

The reflexive nature of some poems is one aspect of the theme of language in the Resistance poetry, although the statement in 'Avenir' (in Le Futur antérieur)

J'écris cela pour les hommes et pour les femmes de demain (p.26)

could be applied to any Resistance poem. Many of Seghers's Resistance poems are written in a reflexive mode; they draw attention to themselves as poems and to their function, namely to help re-establish

the dignity of man and country.<sup>7</sup> Full dignity can be restored to the French nation, and, by extension, to mankind in general, only by the overthrowing of Nazism. Yet to affirm hope in the future is itself a dignified act. In 'Dans la nuit', the ringing of the sheep's bells is a suggested metaphor for the poet's own message of hope for the future:

Sonnailles des vieux béliers, est-ce vous qui  
 Ressoulevez la houle immense là-bas  
 Dans la nuit? L'espoir ou le silence bat-  
 Il à votre cou? (...)

(TM 21)

This further suggests the poet's role as a leader of men; a leader through the messages of hope conveyed by his poetry.<sup>8</sup>

Resistance writing in general was seen as a tool for transforming society and influencing the course of history. Poetry also transforms the reality it expresses, in several ways. A poem which is a comment on a specific incident or phenomenon, such as 'Octobre 41', will be selective in what it relates of that event. At the same time, through the connotative power of language, this poem, as can any poem, can be said to be more than the sum of its parts. The poem's 'meaning' will vary to some extent from reader to reader. The poem may also transform the way in which we perceive reality or events. 'Octobre 41' may, for example, make us concentrate less on the atrocity of the massacre of Châteaubriant than on the examples of dignity and courage shown by the victims, 'aux yeux plus droits dans les yeux de la haine' (TM 19). Such an emphasis on the victims' dignity may be just as powerful as the depiction of barbarism as a means of reinforcing the conviction that Nazism had to be overthrown. The words of the poem commemorate the dignity of the victims. The dead, as we have seen, will be born again in the words of history lessons, and of the poem:

Ils ressusciteront vêtus de feu dans nos écoles

(TM 19)

Language is the vehicle through which consciousness of the dead continues. As we will see at the end of this chapter, it is also the vehicle through which the poet himself achieves some degree of permanence.

In 'Octobre 41' and 'Dans la nuit', reflexivity is implied only. Seghers's poetry of this period abounds, however, with such words as 'mots', 'voix', 'dire' and 'chanter'. The contexts in which they occur may be more personal in reference; that is, less explicitly concerned with the forward-looking, historical perspective than with the individual's consciousness, or his immediate situation.

'Chanson de celui qui changeait de noms' is one such poem and is illustrative of a number of points. The poem's title itself draws attention to the importance of one's name; one's name signifies oneself in a way similar to that in which a word signifies. One's name is also part of one's identity, in an objective sense. Resistance writers, however, had frequently to resort to pseudonyms in order to avoid arrest. Although perhaps intended to be a relatively light-hearted piece, the poem points out the poet's need to hear his own voice as an assurance to himself of his continuing existence:

Et la même voix  
 (...)  
 S'assure, en chantant  
 Je vis, je demeure...

(TM 30)

The poet's or the individual's voice is also that through which he expresses his self, as we will see in the pages which follow. At a time when it was often necessary for one's safety to remain publicly silent about one's opposition to Vichy and Nazi ideology, the written word became all the more vital.<sup>9</sup>

'Chanson de celui qui changeait de noms' illustrates that reflexivity in the Resistance poems is not confined to these poems' political function. Furthermore, many of Seghers's wartime poems, whether Resistance or not, are written in reflexive mode. Reflexivity and the theme of language may point to poetry as a tool in the search for the self. This becomes more central, thematically, in the later poetry, and is the subject of the second part of this chapter.

'Poète' is a wartime poem (not a Resistance poem) which illustrates the existential importance of language; that is, its

importance to the individual in formulating the perception he has of his self. The last line of this poem states that

Il n'est de réel que de dire

(TM 54)

The line suggests that it is in the formulation of them in language that the individual comes closest to pinning down both the outside world and his picture of his self. Language, and that of poetry in particular as far as the poet is concerned, is therefore of fundamental importance. This existential value of language will be seen in greater detail in the second part of this chapter. The affirmation that the only reality is in utterance is particularly striking given the fact that the poem was written either towards the end of, or shortly after, the War. In view of its approximate date, the line 'Il n'est de réel que de dire' may be seen as a comment on the way language was experienced by Resistance writers in general, and by the poet in particular. His own voice, in spite of the threats to the French language posed by Vichy and the Occupation, remains ultimately unassailable.<sup>10</sup>

## 2) IN THE SUITES AND LES MOTS COUVERTS

Language, and the language of poetry in particular, is the means through which the poet attempts to define his own position in the universe, and that of man in general. The related themes of language and poetic creation are a constant in Seghers's poetry. Various aspects of these themes will be seen in the rest of this chapter. Emphasis will be laid, throughout, on the importance of language and artistic creation to the individual as this emerges from the poetry itself.

### (i) 'L'au-delà des mots'

Many poems reflect upon where language comes from, and in particular where the language of poetry comes from. Les Mots couverts, as the title itself might suggest, contains many references to language

and poetry. The phrase 'l'au-delà des mots' is itself taken from a poem in this collection, 'Quand le soleil, III', in which the poet asks

(...) Qui donc parlait? et quel langage  
venu de l'au-delà des mots?

(TM 162)

The lines suggest that there is an 'au-delà' consisting of words. We may interpret this as being a level of the unconscious. As they emerge from the unconscious, words would seem already to be organised into recognisable discourse, or 'langage'. As I suggested in Chapter 3, section (iv), the poet has the impression of being dual. This is not simply because of the sense of a split between the conscious self and the unconscious self. For the poet, the inner voice may seem to be that of another person, perhaps because he hears snatches of discourse and not simply isolated words. This sense of duality is suggested in the question 'Qui donc parlait?'.

The idea that words come from an area beyond what is consciously known or knowable finds frequent expression. The following lines are from Dis-moi, ma vie:

Je sais, nous échangions des paroles obscures  
qui venaient d'autres expériences, nous auscultions un au-delà  
toujours plus proche qu'il fallait à tâtons connaître      (TM 184)

In these lines, as is frequently the case, a two-way movement is suggested. Words, which come from the 'au-delà', or the unconscious, refer to things, including things in the outside world. Language exists to express and organise human experience of the world. Furthermore, discourse is subject to conventions of grammar and syntax, and as such it is the product of something exterior to the poet or individual. For these reasons, language only makes sense in relation to the outside world. At the same time, however, words refer us to our unconscious, the existence of which we may intuit from the way in which words seem to appear, unsolicited. Words are also the means through which we formulate our tentative understanding of the self (that is, of the relationship between our conscious self and our unconscious self). As we will see, in so far as words, or snatches of discourse, emerge from the unconscious into the consciousness, and may, furthermore, themselves express this emergence, words themselves are a link between

the conscious and unconscious. Yet, because of the relationship between language and the outside world outlined above, language can only ever afford an approach to an understanding of the unconscious: actual words and structures of language are learnt initially from the outside world and will always refer to things in it. Furthermore, as we shall see expressed elsewhere in the poetry, the precise connotations of different words vary from individual to individual, and may also be influenced by the context of the words. This, too, means that words are, ultimately, inadequate as a means of pinning down the nature of the self.

The dialectic of the origins of words being both inside and outside the poet is presented in these lines from Fortune Infortune Fort Une:

La poésie, ce sont paroles d'envoûtés  
ce sont paroles du dedans qui viennent d'au-delà des pierres

(p.61)

The lines convey a further suggestion, namely of an equivalence between the mystery of poetry and that of existence, human or otherwise, in general. As we have seen elsewhere, notably in Chapter 1, the mystery of the universe is in the nature of its unity: a unity which can itself only be intuited. Language, as we have seen, embodies the dialectic between the individual and the outside world. The relationship between the two becomes crystallised in language. To this extent, language can be seen as something which unites the individual and the outside world. We will see in section (iii) below how Seghers uses similar terms in talking of the dynamism of the universe and that of artistic creation.

The concluding lines from the same poem from Fortune Infortune Fort Une again express the idea of reciprocity:

Mais tout à coup, le chant reprend et l'on décèle une autre voix  
répéter des signaux lancés d'on ne sait où par quelque augure  
qui, [comma sic] écoute, capte et renvoie des paroles venues  
d'ailleurs.

(p.61)

The poet acts as a kind of receiver-transmitter. Words or phrases of his poem may come unsolicited, like an inner voice. In these lines,

the relationship of the poet and this inner voice to the 'ailleurs' remains ambiguous. Although here it is the 'autre voix' which listens, and captures words come from elsewhere, for the poet to be conscious of this inner voice's activity, he must himself be hearing it. There is here, then, a possible inconsistency, for 'qui', in the last line, would more logically apply to the poet. What is important here, however, is the act of transmitting, or sending back, the words to the mysterious place from which they came. In so far as words, particularly as used in poetry, cannot be said to have a definitive meaning, they refer back to the 'ailleurs': words may have numerous associations and connotations which will vary according to the 'receiver'; that is, the listener or reader of the poetry.<sup>11</sup> This quality of language is a measure of its limitations while at the same time being part of its mysterious, and creative, power. We shall see this duality further in section (iii). The fact that the associations and connotations of the same words will vary from reader to reader is, furthermore, a measure of each reader's individuality.

Implicit in much of what has been said so far in this section is the ultimate impossibility of understanding where language comes from. This is stated in Fortune Infortune Fort Une, in terms reminiscent of those suggesting inside and outside realms:

Nul n'approche  
l'envers des mots, l'envers du temps. (...) (p.69)

If, in this quotation, there is some equivalence suggested between words (as they exist in consciously formulated discourse, and not as they seem to exist in the unconscious) and time, then this equivalence implies that the 'au-delà des mots' is related to duration, or durée (that is, time as something unmeasurable and continuous). A similar equivalence between duration and the 'au-delà des mots' is found in these lines from 'Quand le soleil, III', in Les Mots couverts:

(...) un mot surgi des profondeurs  
pour affleurer et disparaître, éclat furtif de la durée (TM 162)

The sudden appearance of the word gives a brief glimpse or intuition of a continuous realm from which it has sprung.<sup>12</sup>

(ii) Language and consciousness

In Chapter 3, section (iv), we saw a number of quotations expressing the idea of separation from oneself, or the consciousness that self-knowledge is incomplete. Language, notably that of the poetry itself, is the means through which the poet attempts to bridge this gap. Language is also the means through which the individual attempts to define himself, but in relation to the outside world. This, too, was seen in Chapter 3, section (iv) and in the last section. We have seen the poet's, or individual's, sense of a separation between his conscious self and his unconscious self, and may draw a parallel between this and the gap between language and the unknowable realm from which it springs. It is a parallel suggested in the poetry itself, notably in Dis-moi, ma vie. In this suite, as we have seen (see pages 60-61), the poet's sense of his own duality is expressed in terms of separation from his life.

In the following lines from Dis-moi, ma vie, language is used as a simile for the poet and his life:

Toi et moi, comme les lettres d'un seul livre  
 comme le mot d'un seul language, une grammaire en mouvement  
 qui naît, grandit et meurt pour renaître. Indicible  
 pressenti et fuyant (...) (TM 138)

The relationship between the poet and his life is like 'une grammaire en mouvement': there is some form of organic relationship between the two, but this is constantly shifting and developing, and is therefore ultimately unknowable. Similarly, the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious selves is constantly shifting. This itself is the result, as we have seen, of the dynamic nature of the relationship between the consciousness, the unconscious and language. The shifting nature of these relationships, together with the ultimately unknowable nature of the self (that is, of the conscious and unconscious selves combined) are offset by the intuition that there is a unity.

Elsewhere, the process of artistic creation, notably the creation of poetry, is presented specifically as a means through which

the search for one's self is carried out. These lines from Fortune Infortune Fort Une are fully reflexive:

(...) Accordeur  
d'un clavier de chambres d'échos, à feu doux je conciliabule  
sans m'atteindre presque jamais. (...) (p.39)

They refer to the poet in the act of creating, but they also refer to creating poetry in general, and the creation of these lines in particular, as a search for his self. It is specifically in the act of creating that the poet's sense of being split appears to him. At the same time, however, because of the dual origins of the poet's language both within and outside himself, the poem can be said to concretise the poet's self, or the relationship between his conscious and unconscious selves. The knowledge that this is so does not, however, help to define the precise nature of the self.

As is suggested by these lines from Les Pierres, while we formulate, verbally, our attempt to understand, the words themselves also become barriers to understanding:

(...) La nuit pareille au jour  
nous sépare et le mystère nous aveugle  
et les barrières et les mots. (...) (TM 112)

Les Pierres is a verbal picture of the stones of Carnac, which are a non-verbal creation. Their appeal to the poet's imagination is also non-verbal; something more akin to sensation, but which takes place in the unconscious. Words prove inadequate to convey the mystery of the stones just as they are inadequate in defining the unconscious or the intuited unity of the self.

Language necessarily implies consciousness, being born from the human need to order experience of the world and to express this experience. This ordering, as we will see in section (iii), is itself a re-creation, particularly when realised as a poem. All the quotations seen so far in this chapter have been to some degree reflexive: the lines draw attention to themselves as language. Through them, we see the poet's consciousness of the language he uses, whether in a historical perspective (as in the Resistance poetry), or

in a more personal one (the language of the poem as a means towards self-knowledge). In so far as the poem is consciously constructed, it expresses the poet's consciousness. Yet, as we have seen, the words also emerge from his unconscious, which together with his consciousness constitutes his self. The poem is thus the realisation of the multiple relations between the self, the outside world and language.

### (iii) The creative power of language

The poet's awareness of language combines an awareness of the shortcomings of language with one of its power. The two are seen to coincide in such quotations as the one from Fortune Infortune Fort Une on page 74. Language reveals some of what is in the unconscious, and yet the order which consciousness puts on language means that this language is no longer a true reflection of the unconscious. We saw in the last quotation that words may appear inadequate as a means of formulating something which we only partly apprehend. Language is equally inadequate as a means of expressing a reality of which we are more fully conscious. As I have already stated, on page 71, the nature of language is such that no translation of reality into words can accurately convey that reality. But this is also the source of the great richness of language. This duality is true in respect of the associations of individual words, and in respect of words combined with each other. Within a poem in particular, new associations between words may appear. A very early poem, 'Prière', from Bonne-Espérance, expresses the idea in these lines:

Nous qui vivons avec des mots éclatés  
Dont les couleurs changeantes  
Passent du noir au roux et du vert au violet

(TM 12)

Words to some extent take over, exploding with meanings and associations. If this is true for the poet in the act of writing, it is also true for the person reading the poem who brings his own sensitivity to bear on it. Words as used in the language of poetry are opposed by Seghers to the aridity of their dictionary definitions.

This finds expression in 'Aux liseurs de poèmes', a poem from Le Mur du son (1976):

Les dictionnaires sont des univers où la réalité des mondes  
se tait, chuchote, ou meurt. Pas de mots clés, pas de serrures  
Mais des racines de chaque mot poussent des forêts pour les vents  
(TM 211)

Words, particularly as used in poetry, have their own dynamism. Their creative power is in their independence from precise dictionary meanings and in their interdependence when used in discourse, and in the poem in particular. Words are given meaning by their use in conjunction with each other, while at the same time, grammar and syntax may be seen as limiting the ways in which words may be combined. Through the practice of his skill, the poet gives words new resonances. Within a poem, new associations are made between words, both on the level of their meanings and on that of their sound. Such associations are not definitive but depend on the sensitivity of the person reading the poem to make them. The dynamic process of creation does not stop with the completion of the poem.

Because language can be said to be creative in this way, it is true to say that it re-creates or transforms reality, in the sense of revealing it in a new light. The following lines from Dis-moi, ma vie refer specifically to the poet's role as a revealer, through his poetry, of reality:

Enraciné dans le réel, j'ai chanté le chant inaudible  
Un éclaireur de ce qui est, une écoute d'hôte accueillant  
dans la surprise et la rencontre (...) (TM 194)

The poet's 'chant' (the poem) is a concretisation of the 'chant inaudible'. This 'chant inaudible' may be interpreted variously as the non-verbal appeals made to the poet's imagination by things exterior to him, or as the 'inner voice' which expresses these. The poet's inner voice is revealed in the poem. At the same time, the exterior reality it expresses is transformed, or revealed in a different light. These revelations are made both to the poet and to others through the words of the poem. There is 'surprise'. Yet the poem is still a translation of reality. Exterior reality and the poet's consciousness of it meet in the poem. There is 'rencontre' of the two. Similarly, the poet's

conscious and unconscious selves meet in the poem, as we have already seen. At the same time, his awareness of his self may also be altered through what he writes. The words of his poem may reveal the poet to himself in a new light, suggesting, for example, something new to him about his own sensitivity. To this extent, the poet, too, might be transformed by the poem.

The poet may suggest alternative ways of seeing reality. He is, as it were, an eye on reality, as suggested in these lines from Fortune Infortune Fort Une:

Nous qui ne sommes pas sorciers mais un regard, un instant d'être,  
aperçu dans les faux-fuyants d'une perspective sans fin (p.43)<sup>13</sup>

These lines further suggest that the poet's eye on reality also encompasses himself. Once again, in these lines, we find that the picture the poet has of himself is ever elusive to him.

A central idea in Piranèse is the possibility of transforming reality in the imagination. Within the context of the suite, it is the prisoners themselves who transform their prisons, in their imaginations, into marvellous palaces and temples, as in the lines

(...) Le temple,  
par le ciel habité accueillait le soleil  
pour une dilection d'éclats et de ténèbres. (TM 119)<sup>14</sup>

Yet objectively (if one may use the term to refer to prisoners who are themselves the creation of the poet), the prisoners are still in their prison. Further levels of regression are present in that Seghers's suite was inspired by Piranesi's engravings of imaginary prisons. Piranèse celebrates the power of Piranesi's own imagination, as embodied in his Carceri.

The creating of the prisons may be seen as a metaphor for the creating of poetry. The association is made in the words of the suite itself:

(...) Ils surgissaient  
ici et là, carriers, maîtres tailleurs de pierres et de paroles,  
architectes d'une folie où s'émerveillait la raison (TM 116)

The lines suggest the way in which art, whether it be poetry, architecture, sculpture, or any other form, defies logic. The structure of a work of art has its own logic, unintended by the artist, which reason (conscious, logical analysis) marvels at. At the same time, these lines also suggest the work of art as a partly conscious ordering of what is without order: the words, or analogous elements, as they emerge from the unconscious. As is illustrated by these lines, within the context of Piranèse, it is the prisoners themselves who, paradoxically, are the builders of the prisons. This may be seen as an analogy for the way in which the poem is a concretisation of the poet's self. The poem is thus exterior to the poet, while it yet contains him, in so far as it is an expression of his self.

The analogy between poetry and sculpture, which is implied in the last quotation, is made in more explicit terms in this line from 'Poème à Maillol', in Les Mots couverts:

Je suis née d'un rythme intérieur, d'un chant profond      (TM 174)

(The words of the poem are in the mouth of one of the sculptor's statues.) Such phrases as 'rythme intérieur' and 'chant profond' have already been seen, in the introduction, to be used by Seghers in referring to the poet's inner voice.

The sculptor shapes a recognisable form out of an originally undifferentiated mass of material; or accidental features in his original material, such as veins in stone, might suggest forms. These become materialised in the work of art. It is one of the functions of art to give a form to what springs from the unconscious. The artist may provoke the release from his unconscious of elements which would otherwise remain there. The point finds expression in these lines from 'Poème à Maillol':

De ses mains qui fouillaient la nuit  
il m'a délivrée. Il m'a fait jaillir du néant.      (TM 174)

The artist also restructures himself in the work of art, for each work

of art reveals something of his self. Maillol is presented, in the same poem, as the

Roi d'un petit jardin où il se modelait sans cesse (TM 174)

The work of art, while restructuring the way we see the outside world, gives tangible reality to the inner reality of the unconscious.<sup>15</sup>

Piranèse further illustrates that his creative act confers grandeur on the individual, a grandeur suggested by the word 'Roi' in the last quotation. Through their creative acts, the prisoners participate in the creation of something which surpasses them:

(...) Ils venaient ajouter leur pierre,  
non pas esclaves, mais libérés. Leur place était dans leur maison,  
chantier toujours ouvert et plus vaste qu'eux-mêmes. (TM 124)

As literal prisoners, they transcend, in their imagination, the constraints placed upon them.<sup>16</sup> As the creators of their own prisons, the prisoners create something which surpasses any intention or design.

#### (iv) Artistic creation and permanence

Throughout Part I, we have seen many illustrations of the tension between fluidity and fixity, or transience and permanence. The nature of artistic creation is such that it reconciles such antithetical states.

The theme of the fall of civilisations is important more in relation to other concerns than in its own right. It is a theme which comes to prominence in Au seuil de l'oubli. As the title suggests, death and transience are major concerns in the suite. The demise of Fatehpur-Sikri becomes a metaphor for the individual's transience, for it went hand in hand with human death:

Nous avons vu périr des villes dans des tempêtes de poussières  
Les ouragans griffer leurs flancs et le granit rouge des rois  
redevient faste d'épure. Un geai bleu, dans le bain des femmes  
se posait, quand il avait plu. Les princes étaient morts de soif.  
(TM 206)

Although the city is now but a ghostly reminder of its former splendour, its very ruined state is, however, converted into something positive. The city is a 'faste d'épure'.

The fact that the empty shell of the city recalls the original architect's drawings suggests a cyclical pattern. But it is a cyclical pattern which is continued through the medium of the poetry itself. Through the words of the poetry, the picture of the abandoned city is transformed. The poet endows it with a chimerical quality, as seen here:

Quel architecte avait osé, devant ses façades tremblantes  
Miroirs sans tain, glaces noyées, l'infini fou  
des réfractions, des courbes mouvantes, des coups d'éponge  
sur les colonnes (...) (TM 199)

While the buildings seem to be insubstantial and to shift, the words of the poem themselves fix the structures. (We will see in a commentary on this poem at the end of the thesis how the structure of these lines reflects the nature of what the images themselves convey.) The fact of writing about them itself gives a degree of permanence to the structures, for the poem will perhaps outlast both the city itself and the poet.

We have already seen that the poem reflects the poet's self. Through the medium of his poetry, then, the poet will live on in the consciousness of others, as expressed in Dialogue:

(...) Qui passe renaîtra  
se fera mot, couleur, musique, sera pierre (TM 138)<sup>17</sup>

The poet's own becoming and dynamism will continue after death in each successive re-creation of the poetry. This, the re-creation of the poetry in reading and performance, is the subject of Part II. The words of the poetry, the poet's voice, become equated with the flux of the universe. Addressing Death, in Racines, the poet states:

Mais tu n'as rien, plus rien, car la sève et la voix  
Ont rejoints nos forêts par des chemins liquides. (TM 99)

### Conclusion

In the first part of this chapter, we saw the historical function of language in the context of the wartime poetry. The correct use of the French language, as opposed to Vichy's use of it, was a weapon both in the Resistance struggle to pave the way for a new France, and in the fight to protect the French language itself. This dual fight was reflected in the reflexive nature of many Resistance poems.

While the defence of the French language was important for the French as a nation, it was also important for the individual. The necessity of language to the individual as a means of defining himself is one thematic link between the wartime and the later poetry.

In the suites and other later poems in particular, the theme of language is inseparable from the question of consciousness. The language the poet uses itself has dual origins. While some elements of his language appear to spring from his unconscious, language is learnt originally from its use, in a social context, in the outside world. Language is the means through which the individual, or the poet, orders and expresses his experience of the outside world. In doing this, he defines himself in terms both of his similarity to the outside world, and of what makes him distinct from it. Language, which is learnt from the outside world, may re-emerge from the unconscious, unsolicited. Consciousness of this inner voice may result, for the poet, in the creation of a poem, which will be a conscious elaboration of elements from his unconscious. Because of the dual origins of the poem's language, and because the poem refers back to the poet's unconscious as well as to the outside world, the poem is the concretisation of the division between the conscious and unconscious selves, and of the split between the self and the outside world. Thematically, the poetry concentrates more on the split between the conscious and unconscious selves. The split appears to the poet in the act of creating a poem. At the same time, it is in the words of the poem that the poet comes closest to resolving this same division. Any attempt to define precisely the nature of the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious is bound to fail, however, because a definition of anything

can be approached only in terms of things other than itself. As such, any definition of the self must itself be subject to constant rewording, and the picture one has of the self must be fluid. Because the individual's definition of himself, in language, is in a state of constant change, and because this language actualises his self, the individual's becoming may be said to be in part linguistic.

Artistic creation, including the creation of a poem, may be seen as the creating of something with a form out of something initially lacking a coherent form. The words and elements of discourse which emerge from the unconscious are unlikely, without a conscious working of them, to present a coherent form. It is the work of the poet's consciousness to create the poem's structure. In so doing, he reveals, while at the same time he transforms, something of what was in his unconscious. In so far as the poem also refers to the outside world, the poet likewise reveals the outside world. After the poet, it is for the reader to re-create the poem. Bringing his own sensitivity, which will differ from the poet's, to bear on the poem, each reader's reaction to any poem will be different. At the same time, because the poem is the embodiment of the poet's self, the poet is to this extent re-created in each successive reading of his poems.

Language is inadequate as a means to convey anything with true precision, but its connotative power is also a strength. Likewise, the rules of grammar and syntax may be seen as constraints, but words are given fuller meaning by being used in conjunction with each other. It is part of the poet's task to make use of the connotative power of words, and to use, or bend, grammar and syntax in order to suggest possible pluralities of meaning. In Part II, the analysis will point to possible ways of re-creating the verse, bringing out the way in which the structures and rhythms are inseparable from the ideas they convey. The dynamic character of the verse, then, will be emphasised.

Throughout Chapter 4, the functions of language, of the language of poetry in particular, and the relationships between language, the self, and the outside world, may all be described as dynamic. As such, Seghers's view of language is in accordance with his view of the

universe in general; a view summed up below in the conclusion to Part I.

## CONCLUSION TO PART I

A picture has emerged from Part I of a universe which is in a state of constant evolution. This is true of the natural sphere as it is of the human. The human domain, as it is presented in the poetry, has four main aspects, all of which are interrelated. These four aspects are, first, man's physical being; second, the social and political nature of his existence; third, the individual's expression of his self through language, and, finally, the fact that the individual is a conscious being.

Through the first of these characteristics, his physical existence, the individual is related directly to the rest of the universe. They have a common material existence which unceasingly takes on new forms in a process of constant, cyclical, becoming.

Human society is also subject to change, while being held together by the language common to its members. The course of a society's development, as that of history, may be consciously influenced by the individual members of that society. History itself is the verbal record of such change.

Language is also the means through which the individual expresses consciousness of himself as well as of the outside world in general. The individual's consciousness of himself is the fourth element which characterises Seghers's portrayal of man. The dynamic nature of the multiple relationships between consciousness, the unconscious, language and the outside world, as seen in the poetry, is concordant with Seghers's picture of the universe at large, of human society and of the individual, all of which are subject to the processes of becoming.

The question of consciousness is important for a further reason. It is because the individual is conscious of the universe around him that the universe can be said to centre on him. The poem is a concretisation of the relationship between the poet and the outside

world. The language it uses comes both from outside and from within the poet, is both public and private. The completed poem, while reflecting the poet's self and his own, private, vision of the outside world, may reveal this vision in a new light to himself. In this sense, the poem may be said to be open on the universe. At the same time, if published, that is, made public, a poem will become open to differences of interpretation. In this way, it continues to be dynamic, transforming, perhaps, the reader's way of seeing the outside world. Because the individual defines himself in terms of the outside world, it is implied that his definition of himself may also alter.

It remains to be seen in Part II how the actual rhythms of the verse reflect the dynamism of this picture of the universe, of the individual in that universe, and the dynamic process of the creation of the poetry itself.

PART II

THE POETIC TECHNIQUE

INTRODUCTION

We have already seen that Seghers frequently uses such terms as 'chant' and 'orchestre' in referring to poetry. (See page 14.) A musical element is, for Seghers, essential to poetry, as he says here:

Je dis que la poésie est une incantation, et une incantation, c'est comme un chant: il n'y a pas de chant sans musique. La musique est indissoluble de la poésie. Ça va ensemble, absolument.<sup>1</sup>

This music is the result of the combined elements of the poetry's rhythm (the succession of stressed and unstressed syllables), its silences, tempo, intonation, and the actual sounds used, as, for example, in alliteration, or the repetition of a particular word or phrase.<sup>2</sup>

We saw in Chapter 4 how language, notably that of poetry, is presented by Seghers as coming both from outside and from within himself. Seghers uses similar terms in talking of the music of the poetry:

Les choses lui viennent de l'extérieur, mais il ne sait pas d'où. (...) Il reçoit, si vous voulez, les sons et la musique, les temps de ce qu'il articule, du langage. Et là, il écoute lui-même et il essaie de le dire avec son souffle à lui, son mouvement à lui, sa vie à lui.<sup>3</sup>

To paraphrase Seghers in the same interview, the music is present in the words as they come to the poet. As such, the music of the poetry is to some extent involuntary. As the quotation above suggests, however, the finished poem is the synthesis of spontaneous elements and more consciously worked ones. This, too, has already been seen in such lines as those from Fortune Infortune Fort Une quoted on page 56.

Throughout Part II, I will be looking at the poetry from the point of view of what we may call its music. I will illustrate various interactions of such elements of the music as those listed above, while, throughout, the structures and rhythms of the verse will be

related to the themes already seen in Part I. The dynamism and tensions of the verse will be seen to reflect the various tensions and dynamism present on the thematic level of the poetry.

For Seghers, poetry is preferably to be heard; that is, to be read aloud, or heard with one's inner voice, in order to bring out its music.<sup>4</sup> Chapters 5 and 6 will, therefore, emphasise the rhythm of the verse, rather than its purely metrical characteristics. Metre denotes potentially fixed features of verse, such as the number of syllables per line, and traditional places of caesura, as after the sixth syllable in an alexandrine. Rhythm, on the other hand, denotes the overall dynamism of the line: the varying degrees of stress on syllables in relation to each other, and the variations of tempo. Throughout Part II, I will suggest ways of reading the verse, out loud, or with one's inner voice, which will help to convey the rhythmic tensions of the verse, and the tensions between orthodox practice and a freer handling of verse forms.

Before consideration of the handling of various line-lengths in the context of the fixed-form poems, there are a number of points to be made. These concern my notations of the verse found throughout Part II, and Seghers's usual practice with regard to a number of prosodic features.

### 1) Prosodic terms, and symbols used in the notations

Throughout Part II, suggested readings of the verse are reflected in the notations found in the right-hand margin of the quotations. These notations reflect what seem to me to be the most expressive readings of the verse but are not intended to be taken as definitive. Other readings are possible. A poem elicits different reactions from different readers.

The notations show the basic elements of the rhythm: the primary and secondary stresses. Tertiary stress is not reflected in the notations as this would create an unnecessary degree of complexity for the reader of this thesis. The number and nature of stresses depend frequently on the rhetorical (subjective) emphasis one wishes to

convey. There will be times, then, when I have marked a secondary stress when another reader might consider that a tertiary stress only is present. Equally, there will be times when further potential stresses will be present.

Particularly within individual long lines of verse, such as some sixteen-syllable lines, the secondary stresses marked may be felt by the reader to include slightly different degrees of stress. I use the term secondary stress to denote stresses which, while they are clearly not primary in the context of the line, do impinge upon the ear.

The notations also show certain points of prosodic practice confirmed by Seghers, such as the use of the césure épique (see pages 90-91 and note 8 below.) Where appropriate, a line's total number of syllables is given in brackets at the end of the notation. Various other features are also shown in the notations, but it is the rhetorical function of these features and the rhythms, and not simply their presence itself, which is important. The notations represent, therefore, a necessary description of basic features, but as a preliminary to further analysis; the analysis, that is, of the relationship between the rhythms of the verse and its thematic content.

Most of the features of the notation system can be illustrated by the following lines from 'Le beau travail':

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| Elles se baladent quelque part, là-bas            | 5/4/2/ (=11)              |
| Dans un monde lointain et je ne sais plus d'elles | 3+3/5+1/ (=12)            |
| Rien. Il paraît qu'il pleut, qu'elles ont froid.  | 1/3+2/4/ (=10)<br>(TM 26) |

The presence of a primary stress is shown in the notation by the use of an oblique stroke (/) following the stressed syllable. The term caesura denotes the pause or apparent pause following a primary stress. A primary stress is always followed by a pause or an apparent pause. (The apparent pause is defined below on page 91.) A line may, therefore, have more than one caesura.<sup>5</sup> This is the case in lines 1 and 3 in the last quotation. Within any given line, one or more secondary stresses are likely to be found. This is shown in the notation by the use of a plus sign (+) following the syllable with a

secondary stress. The terms primary and secondary stress do not refer to any fixed or quantifiable degrees of stress but designate relative degrees of stress within each individual line. Degrees of stress are determined by the sense and various rhetorical effects one might wish to convey in a reading.

In the second line quoted on page 89 above, the first segment ends on the third syllable, and the second segment ends on the sixth syllable. A segment may therefore be defined as (a) a single syllable bearing a secondary stress (such as the syllable 'Mont' in the line 'Mont du soleil, mont de la lune': (1+3/1+3/)<sup>6</sup>; or (b) a group of syllables ending in a secondary stress, such as 'Dans un mon-' (3+) in the second line above; or (c) a group of syllables ending in a primary stress and preceded by a secondary stress, such as '-de lointain' (+3/) in the second line; or (d) a syllable or group of syllables preceded by, and ending with, a primary stress, such as 'là-bas' (2/) in line 1. The term phrase is used to denote a series of segments preceded by (unless the first segment is the first of the poem), and ending with, a primary stress. The second line above, for example, has two six-syllable phrases (3+3/ and 5+1/). The dotted oblique (/) denotes the presence of enjambement.

When a primary stress is followed by a syllable in unstable e, and this syllable is carried over into the next segment, we have a césure enjambante, as after the fifth syllable of line 1.<sup>7</sup> This is shown in the notation by an arrow over the oblique (7). In a césure lyrique, an unstable e following a primary stress is pronounced before any pause is made, and the notation (+1) is used, followed by the oblique, as in this line from 'Le carrousel':

Le temps blet, l'amour mort et l'attente, l'attente  
2+1/2+1/3(+1)/2/ (TM 39)

In the sixteen-syllable line in particular, discussed in section 3 of Chapter 6, a césure épique may be found; that is, a syllable in unstable e may be suppressed.<sup>8</sup> This is shown in the notation by an

asterisk. An example of a césure épique is found in this line from Au seuil de l'oubli:

Nous avons vu périr des villes dans des tempêtes de poussières  
 $4+2+2*/4+4/$  (TM 206)

An apocope, or the suppression of a syllable in unstable e, is sometimes found within a phrase. This, too, is shown by an asterisk, as in this line from Fortune Infortune Fort Une:

dans les étoiles et le poirier? Pourquoi vouloir toujours plus  
loin  $4*+4/4+2+2/$  (p.17)<sup>9</sup>

Throughout Part II, it will be important to keep in mind a number of points concerning the way the poetry may be read or performed, and the way it is heard. The presence of a primary stress implies the presence of a slight pause (or an apparent pause) immediately after the stressed syllable. An apparent pause, as opposed to an actual pause, will occur where a syllable in unstable e is withheld to the beginning of the next segment; that is, where a césure enjambante occurs. Where an apparent pause occurs, the stressed syllable is lengthened, and the effect may be one of a slight faltering in the rhythm, followed by a slight speeding up. Paradoxically, while there is an effect of instability, the fact that an unstable e passes into the next segment without an actual pause means that the two segments are closely linked, and the device can therefore be seen as creating continuity. In the case of the césure lyrique, the effect is again one of instability, resulting from the actual pause. There is a distinct separation of the segments from each other. The presence of a syllable in unstable e immediately after a secondary stress has an effect on the dynamism of the rhythm which is similar to that of the césure enjambante: there is a slight lengthening of the stressed syllable followed by a slight speeding up of the tempo, but there will be no apparent pause.

Where enjambement is present, I suggest that the voice's pitch be raised slightly at the end of the line, and the final syllable lengthened, marking an apparent pause. This type of suspension of the voice, while marking the end of the line, also conveys its incompleteness as far as the sense is concerned.<sup>10</sup> Whether enjambement

is present or not, there will be a primary stress at the end of the line, the line thus being respected as a unit.

## 2) Seghers's treatment of certain prosodic conventions

Before Seghers's treatment of various line-lengths as such is discussed, there are a number of points to be made concerning his general practice in regard to certain conventions, in fixed-form poems in particular. There are four questions: the question of the unstable e; that of synaeresis and diaeresis; the conventions of gender and number at the line-ending; and the use of rhyme. The last two points will be seen together.

### (i) The unstable e

The unstable e is, with very few exceptions, counted prosodically according to orthodox practice.<sup>11</sup> The following line is the first of the poem 'Comme une flotte désarmée':

Comme une flotte désarmée

(TM 47)

The final e of 'Comme' is elided with the following initial vowel, but 'une' and 'flotte' both count as two syllables. An unstable e at the end of a line (a feminine ending) is not counted as a syllable. In the vast majority of cases, an unstable e in the middle of a word, as in 'bracelet' or 'mateLOT', counts, prosodically, as a full syllable. These general remarks apply also, on the whole, to Seghers's later freed verse.

Because Seghers's verse respects syllabic conventions (see also (ii) below), I suggest that any reading of the poetry should pronounce syllables in unstable e. Furthermore, maintaining the unstable e also creates the rhythmic effects proper to the césure enjambante and the césure lyrique, as defined above. These rhythmical peculiarities will be seen to have various rhetorical functions, according to their context.

(ii) Synaeresis and diaeresis

In his fixed-form poems, Seghers generally respects the traditional rules concerning synaeresis and diaeresis.<sup>12</sup> This prosodic conservatism extends to the respect of fine points of practice. Thus, in the following lines from 'Tous les cent ans', the first -ier group is disyllabic, which is normal after an [l], while in 'clavier' the same group counts as one syllable:

En tablier de chevillard  
Les doigts sur le clavier des côtes

(TM 45)

This conservatism does not normally go so far as to maintain the diaeresis in the suffixes -ion and -tion. Any further anomalies will be referred to only if they occur in lines which are being quoted as illustrations of other points.

(iii) Conventions of gender and number, and rhyme

In fixed-form poems, there is no overall consistency in the use or not of alternating, or otherwise regularly patterned, masculine and feminine line-endings.<sup>13</sup> In orthodox prosody, feminine can rhyme only with feminine, and masculine only with masculine. Singular must rhyme with singular, and a plural in s only with another such plural. Feminine rhymes must alternate with masculine ones.

Throughout the fixed-form poetry, the convention of number is frequently ignored. The rhyming of like genders is, however, common, but this no doubt stems at least in part from the nature of the French language. For a final consonant to be sounded it must almost invariably be followed by an unstable e. Hence almost all rhyming words ending in a sounded consonant will be feminine. Furthermore, many poems use a regular gender pattern, though not necessarily a regular rhyme pattern.

## CHAPTER FIVE

THE PROSODY IN THE FIXED-FORM POEMS

In this chapter, I will illustrate Seghers's conformity to, and divergence from, traditional prosody in poems written in fixed form. By poems of fixed form I understand poems in which lines of equal, or near equal length are arranged in stanzas. It does not mean only those poems written in identifiable forms, such as sonnet or ballade form. Within any one poem, the stanzas will normally be of equal length. The stanzaic form, in many cases, is one which appears from the printed page; that is, a stanza is not necessarily defined by its adherence to a particular rhyme scheme, or by being a syntactic unit within a poem.<sup>1</sup>

The vast majority of fixed-form poems show some divergence from strict regularity, whether by the presence of occasional inconsistent line-lengths, the use of an approximate rhyme, or an inconsistent number of lines grouped as a stanza.<sup>2</sup> Many poems, therefore, illustrate a feature which we will see throughout Part II; that is, a tension between orthodox and freer verse forms.

While individual poems in the suites from Racines onwards demonstrate many of the features of orthodox verse, and do have some degree of autonomy, such poems were nonetheless conceived of by Seghers as elements of their respective suites, which he called long poems.<sup>3</sup> Discussion of these will be found in Chapter 6. An important feature of the fixed-form poems is, therefore, their individual autonomy.

Virtually all fixed-form autonomous poems by Seghers pre-date Racines.<sup>4</sup> They are mostly poems of circumstance of the Resistance and immediately after the Second World War, concerning a specific historical and political climate. A concise form seems suited to such poetry, lending it a certain memorability, particularly when rhyme is present and the lines are short.<sup>5</sup> The collections concerned are Le Chien de pique, Le Domaine public and Le Futur antérieur. Many poems in Seghers's first collection, Bonne-Espérance, also fall into the

category of fixed-form poems, though they are not poems of circumstance. So, too, do a number of poems from Jeune Fille (1948) and Six poèmes pour Véronique (1950). The tone in these, as in Bonne-Espérance, is relatively light, but also more personal. Most of my examples will be taken from wartime poems.

The chapter is divided into five sections, which deal with poems written in 1) short lines, of five, six or seven syllables; 2) the octosyllable; 3) the decasyllable; 4) the alexandrine; and 5) lines of eleven and thirteen syllables.<sup>6</sup> The discussion will suggest rhythmic characteristics which seem proper to the different line-lengths, but will also illustrate Seghers's particular handling of them in relation to the themes, and, in the case of wartime poems, in relation to their historical context.

### 1) POEMS WRITTEN IN SHORT LINES

The poems to be discussed in this section have lines of five, seven, or six syllables, and are mostly wartime poems.

In the wartime poems, and the Resistance poems in particular, the use of rhyme, as a traditional feature of verse, was a concretisation of the Resistance fight to defend French language and culture.<sup>7</sup> Rhyme also has the more general effect of drawing attention to the lines of verse as such by emphasising the line-endings.

#### (i) The five-syllable line

In the case of the five-syllable line, the use of rhyme may increase a certain sense of heaviness in the rhythm. Historically speaking, and as used by Seghers, the five-syllable line generally has two stressed syllables: the final one plus one other, the place of which is not fixed.<sup>8</sup> Two stresses per five syllables represents a fairly high ratio of stressed to unstressed syllables.

The potential heaviness is apparent in 'Novembre 42'. The short lines, which use rhyme or half-rhyme, present a succession of images, as in the first stanza:

|                       |      |
|-----------------------|------|
| Un filet de sang      | 3+2/ |
| Aux lèvres de l'aube  | 2+3/ |
| Le temps qui se sauve | 2+3/ |
| La nuit qui descend   | 2+3/ |

(TM 30)

The effect is of a distorted and grotesque world, the unnaturalness of which is emphasised by the high proportion of stresses. The asymmetrical division of the lines causes a limping effect which further underlines the grotesqueness. The delaying of the completion of the first image to the second line has a similar effect because of the unexpectedness of the transference of the image of blood from the human sphere to the natural. Although these lines are end-stopped, they are illustrative of a tendency towards the pairing of short lines. (The pairing of lines is a feature which we will see frequently in this chapter.) The first two lines belong together, syntactically, while the second two are a type of couplet, by virtue of their parallel structures. There is thus a certain rhythmic tension. On the one hand, each line is to some extent independent, which is underlined by the rhyme. This leads to an effect of constraint. On the other hand, each line combines with another to create a larger unit, or type of couplet, and to this extent there is a form of expansion. These couplets themselves combine to complete the pattern of rimes croisées. In these particular lines, the tensions complement that found in the imagery between the natural and human spheres.

The 'Chanson de celui qui changeait de noms' is characterised by its lightness of tone, as seen in the following lines:

|                        |          |
|------------------------|----------|
| Je, pour aujourd'hui   | 1/4/     |
| Pierre, je suis Pierre | 1(+1)/3/ |
| C'était Paul hier      | 3+2/     |
| Louis pour la nuit     | 2+3/     |

(TM 29-30)

The lightness of tone is at odds with the high proportion of stressed syllables, a number of which are underlined by types of internal rhyme: the repetition of 'Pierre' in line 2, and the assonance in 'Louis' and 'nuit' in line 4. The disjointed syntax and enjambement, coupled with

the unexpected primary stress on the first syllable of lines 1 and 2, causes a humorous limping effect. While being humorous, the syntactic dislocation, which isolates 'Je' and 'Pierre', is also suggestive of a loss of identity similar to that discussed in Chapter 3, section (iv). The enjambement, meanwhile, creates a parallel dislocation between metre and syntax in lines 1 to 2.

In 'Un prisonnier chantait', the use of parallel phrases, which create identical rhythms, produces an innocent, nursery-rhyme-like quality. It is this quality, and not a limping effect similar to that seen in 'Novembre 42', which is uppermost in the lines

|                             |      |         |
|-----------------------------|------|---------|
| Les yeux pleins de feuilles | 2+3/ |         |
| Les yeux pleins de grilles  | 2+3/ | (TM 60) |

This apparent innocence belies the more serious nature of the poem's subject: the restriction of freedom, and the individual's ability to transcend that constraint through his imagination. The parallelism of the lines suggests that the prisoner 'sees' leaves in the place of the prison bars, though the fact that the bars come second in the sequence also highlights the reality of his situation.

In the same poem, rhyme may be used to underline points of thematic importance. This is the case in the following stanza:

|                       |      |         |
|-----------------------|------|---------|
| Qui dit l'étandard    | 2+3/ |         |
| sanglant et la France | 2/3/ |         |
| Une voix immense      | 3+2/ |         |
| Qui tout recommence   | 2+3/ | (TM 60) |

The thematic importance of such words as 'France' in Resistance writing in general has already been seen in Chapter 2. 'France' is emphasised by its presence at the end of the line and by its being recalled in the rhyming words 'immense' and 'recommence'. The rhyme on [ãs] is a sonorous one and contributes to the sense of dignity. The one non-rhyming word at the end of a line, 'étandard', is to some extent passed over in favour of 'sanglant' because of the enjambement. The word 'sanglant' itself permutes the sounds of the rhyme. Furthermore, 'étandard sanglant' is a quotation from the Marseillaise.<sup>9</sup>

(ii) The seven-syllable line

The seven-syllable line traditionally divides 4+3 or 3+4, or may have a total of three stressed syllables. The line is thus potentially relatively supple.<sup>10</sup> This is reflected in the variety of rhythms found in Seghers's handling of the line.

A tendency towards the pairing of lines of five syllables has already been seen. A similar feature is found in poems written in seven-syllable lines. The following lines are taken from 'La sauvage, I':

|                              |                  |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Un oiseau vêtu d'orages      | 3/2+2/           |
| A fait son nid dans la pluie | 4+3/             |
| Un homme dans son village    | 2 <sup>7</sup> / |
| Allume le feu chez lui       | 2+3+2/           |

(TM 68)

As is seen here, the lines are paired, both syntactically and visually. These couplets are themselves paired in rimes croisées. The seven-syllable line, being slightly longer than the five-syllable one, is better suited to the narrative aspect of this poem. The pairing of the lines further enhances this. Although syntactically the couplets are quite independent of each other, the effect of the rhyme is to suggest some sort of link between them, but a link subject to the strange logic of a dream. The simplicity of the language (both the images and the syntax) belies the uneasiness caused by this disjointed logic. The poem is rounded off by a rhyming couplet which takes on the aspect of an (impenetrable) moral, as at the end of a fable, and to which the repetition of 'l'on entend' gives more moment:

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Et l'on entend l'on entend     | 4/3/   |
| Le choeur des crapauds au vent | 2+3+2/ |

(TM 68)

The lines of 'Les dons, III', from Le Domaine public, are again arranged in couplets. Here is the whole poem:

|   |   |                              |
|---|---|------------------------------|
|   | Pour toi seule je te donne<br>Le silence, la patience   | 2+1 <sup>1</sup> /4;<br>3/4/ |
| 4 | La roue, le feu du charron<br>Le charron et son espoir  | 2/2+3/<br>3/4/               |
|   | Tout se forge; ton attente<br>Comme la roue, ton visage | 1+2(+1)/3/<br>4/3/           |
| 8 | A le servir tu te fais<br>Ton langage et ta raison      | 4/3/<br>3/4/                 |

(p.74)

The syntactic autonomy of the couplets is, however, eroded. The second couplet occupies an ambivalent position. It may be understood as the completion of a list starting with 'silence' and 'patience', or the list of nouns in this second couplet may, rather, be seen as examples of what has to be forged. The ambivalence stems from the absence of end punctuation. Furthermore, the absence of rhyme precludes any automatic, though possibly erroneous, association of the second couplet with either the earlier lines or the third couplet. The syntactic ambiguity continues. In the third couplet, 'attente', 'roue' and 'visage' all seem to be possible further examples of what must be forged, or to be the subjects anticipating a new verb. Of the three, only 'visage' turns out to have any clear syntactic function, as the object of 'servir'. These ambiguities in the structure of the verse are a realisation of the idea that everything, including language, must be fashioned. It is as if the structure of the poem were that of the poet's language emerging from his subconscious. It is in this language that the poet glimpses his self, and that the reader, too, glimpses the poet's self. Similar ambiguities in the actual structures of the verse are a feature also of the later poetry, written in longer lines. In the poetry written in short lines, the tensions are ones between a certain autonomy of the individual end-stopped lines, and a certain dynamism in their relationship to each other, occasioned by their ambiguous syntax.

(iii) The six-syllable line

A handful of poems use a six-syllable line. Again, traditionally, there is no fixed place for a stress within the line. While normally the line has just one internal stress, it may, on occasion, have two, giving a ternary structure.<sup>11</sup>

'*Carré blanc*' is written in lines of six syllables. Despite the shortness of the line, and the rhyme which draws attention to the line-endings, the rhythmic possibilities are quite complex. This is seen in the first stanza. In this case, I have indicated the rhyme pattern, in the traditional manner:

|                                 |        |   |
|---------------------------------|--------|---|
| L'été couleur de pêche          | 2/2+2/ | a |
| Ou couleur d'abricot            | 3+3/   | b |
| Les noyés qu'on repêche         | 3+3/   | a |
| 4      Ont des coquelicots      | 3+3/   | b |
| Ou des étoiles d'or             | 4+2/   | c |
| Cousus sur la poitrine          | 2+4/   | d |
| L'été qu'on assassine           | 2+4/   | d |
| 8      est-il vif, est-il mort? | 3/3/   | c |

(TM 22)

The arrangement of the poem on the printed page creates two couplets, one at the beginning, and one at the end of the stanza. This arrangement is related to the sense: the couplets have '*été*' for subject, while the middle four lines concern the '*noyés*'. Superimposed on these typographical and syntactic divisions are the relationships resulting from the rhyme pattern. Lines 1 to 4 belong together as a system of rimes croisées, while lines 5 to 8 form a pattern of rimes embrassées. In terms of rhyme, then, the middle four lines separate into two two-line groups. This, however, is at odds with the syntax of the same four lines. The two middle lines, that is lines 4 and 5, are linked by 'Ou' and are parallel to each other in that they both present images of the yellow star worn by the Jews. The overlapping of the various pairs of lines causes a sense of irregularity, of disjointedness or uncertainty, which reflects the disruption of the political and moral values while also suggesting the uncertainty of existence. The poet asks whether the summer is dead or alive, but the question equally applies to thousands of Jews. The rhythms of the lines are not themselves jerky but resemble those of regular alexandrine hemistichs. The rhyme pattern, by drawing attention to the

line-endings, is responsible for underlining the shortness of the lines. This combines with the change in rhyme scheme to increase the sense of disjointedness.<sup>12</sup>

In 'L'étranger, III', a poem in Le Chien de pique, every line but one has a stress on the third syllable. In the last stanza, the regularity of the rhythm creates an impression of the inevitability of the order of things:

|                             |      |
|-----------------------------|------|
| C'est la nuit qui l'emporte | 3+3/ |
| Il te laisse un poignard    | 3+3/ |
| Un regard sur ta porte      | 3+3/ |
| Une morte qui part...       | 3/3/ |

(p.35)

Yet at the same time, there is a sinister atmosphere resulting from the mysterious nature of 'Il' and the night, and the unexplained and potentially threatening dagger. The regularity of the rhythm does not engender a sense of calm, or it is a calm with sinister undertones. In the last line, a primary stress on 'mor-' helps to underline the internal rhyme, while the césure enjambante, linking the two segments, creates a continuity which is analogous to the sense, and which is also suggested by the suspension points. Where these occur, I suggest that the voice be allowed to trail off, lengthening the last syllable, with a possible rise in intonation.

The treatment of the non-rhyming six-syllable lines is similar to that of those with rhyme. Lines are frequently paired, and the majority have a stress on the third syllable.<sup>13</sup> Where these two characteristics combine, the rhythm is particularly close to that of a classical alexandrine. A stanza from 'Du miroir', in Le Domaine public, illustrates this:

|                             |      |
|-----------------------------|------|
| J'ai connu les courants     | 3+3/ |
| Et les chiens de nuages     | 3+3/ |
| Des méduses en moi          | 3+3/ |
| Se gonflaient jusqu'au ciel | 3+3/ |

(p.83)

While there is no rhyme, the semantic link between 'nuages' and 'ciel', words which occupy the ends of their respective lines, may be seen as fulfilling a similar function, thus underlining the alexandrine-like quality.<sup>14</sup>

Rhyme is frequently present in poems written in short lines. Furthermore, the lines are frequently used with their traditional structures in terms of the number and place of stresses. The treatment of the lines is, on the whole, traditional. The pairing of lines, which creates larger rhythmical units, is found in many poems. This will be seen again later in the case of the octosyllable, where the feature seems particularly significant.<sup>15</sup>

## 2) POEMS WRITTEN IN OCTOSYLLABLES

The octosyllable is the line most frequently used by Seghers in the fixed-form poems. This is not without significance when one takes into account the nature of Seghers's later much-used sixteen-syllable line. This longer line frequently resembles two octosyllables in having a caesura after the eighth syllable. Throughout this section, furthermore, we will see various ways in which two octosyllables are frequently linked, thus forming a unit closely related to the sixteen-syllable line.<sup>16</sup>

The octosyllable itself has no fixed place for an internal stress, either primary or secondary, and as such has a potential for rhythmic variety and flexibility. The line's relative length means that it may have up to three stressed syllables, including the final one.<sup>17</sup> When rhyme is present, the ear's attention will be drawn to the lines as such. In a series of lines showing great rhythmic variety, the use of rhyme introduces an element of stability. This stabilising function will be particularly in evidence when enjambement is present. Throughout this section, various rhythmic possibilities of the line as such and in company with other octosyllables will be seen, and the rhetorical functions of these rhythms in context will be discussed.

### (i) Octosyllables grouped in quatrains

Most of Seghers's octosyllabic verse is arranged in four-line stanzas. Rhyme is common in these poems, the most common rhyme scheme being rimes embrassées.<sup>18</sup> I will look first at poems written in quatrains and using rhyme. Quatrains of blank octosyllables will be seen in section (ii), where the use of parallel phrases is discussed.

'La nuit de mai', from Le Chien de pique, uses a regular pattern of rimes embrassées throughout. Such is the richness of the poem in other, unorthodox, features, including the way in which some of the rhymes are formed, that the poem merits an extended discussion.

One feature of the poem which breaks the strict regularity is obvious from the printed page. The last line of the poem stands apart from the stanza to which, by its rhyme, it belongs. Here, then, are the last four lines of the poem:

|                               |        |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| La grande forme a disparu     | 2+2/4/ |
| Le dernier mot ne fut pas dit | 2+2/4/ |
| Il est minuit, il est midi    | 4/4/   |

La nuit de Mai brûle nos rues.      2+2/1+3/

(p.19)

The form echoes the idea expressed in the first line of the stanza, but also reflects the general disorder suggested: the breakdown of communication (line 2), and the disruption of the normal passage of time (line 3).<sup>19</sup> Yet the internal structure of the lines is fairly regular in so far as a primary stress falls on the fourth syllable of each line. As was the case in the lines from 'L'étranger, III', quoted on page 101, this regularity creates a sense of lassitude and inevitability.

Throughout the poem, the disruption in the human world is reflected in the formal disruption, most frequently some form of enjambement. Although it does not use true enjambement, the transition from stanza 2 to stanza 3 uses a related form of disruption:

Et quelle sainte ou quelle gueuse      2+2/2+2/

Droite et ne se retournant pas      1/4+3/  
Les emportait (...)      4/(...)

(p.18)

The verb 'emportait' is separated from its subject over the stanza break, and by an intervening qualifying phrase. Although the line-endings coincide with syntactic breaks, the withholding of 'emportait' creates a dynamism which emphasises the verb and is suggestive of movement off into the distance.

In the transition from stanza 4 to stanza 5, however, true enjambement is found:

|                                     |        |        |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| (...) Une main lance                | 3+1/   |        |
| Les dés aux fronts comme des balles | 2+2/4/ | (p.18) |

Enjambement over the stanza break is particularly unorthodox. The voice's suspension on 'lance' is suggestive of the verb's meaning, but a pause disrupts the natural order of the language, which calls for the object to follow immediately after the verb. Alternatively, one could choose not to respect the line-ending, and not mark an apparent pause on 'lance'. Although this would follow the syntax, awareness of the rhyme would be lessened, thus undermining the definition of the line as a unit. Reading the transition without a pause or apparent pause would convey speed of action. A reading with a pause or apparent pause, together with the suspension of the voice's pitch, would create a rise and fall in the intonation suggestive of the arched movement of the thrown dice. Whichever reading is adopted, the effect of the enjambement is one of disruption. A reading which did not mark a pause would create a slight disruption of the hearer's sense of the line as a metrical unit. A reading which did mark a pause would disrupt the flow of the syntax. The sense of disruption is further heightened by the presence of stresses on two consecutive syllables, 'main' and 'lance'. The resulting slowing down of the tempo at this point is in tension with the idea of throwing. The accumulation of stresses continues in the following phrase (2+2/), the heaviness suggesting lead bullets.

Enjambement over the stanza break is again used effectively in

|                           |                   |        |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--------|
| (...) ici leur bal        | 2+2/              |        |
| Se déchire comme une soie | 3 <sup>7</sup> /5 | (p.18) |

The verb receives emphasis by being delayed. Here, the 'gaps' in form and content coincide: the literal gap (the blank between the stanzas, and the pause which this normally implies), the gap between expectation ('bal' implying joy) and the reality (something which is destroyed), and finally the image of the torn flag.<sup>20</sup>

Other forms of enjambement are found in the poem. Here is the first stanza:

|                                  |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Ils ont coupé l'eau claire et bu | 4+1+1/2/ |
| Leur avenir et leur mensonge     | 4/4/     |
| En partageant le pain de son     | 4+2+2/   |
| Jeté jadis aux chiens perdus.    | 2+2/2+2/ |

(p.18)

The enjambement between the first two lines is noteworthy precisely because it occurs at the very beginning of the poem, before an octosyllabic metre has been established. While to the reader of the poem this will not present any problem, anyone hearing the poem might be aware of a sense of instability, and be uncertain as to where the line-ending falls. This instability might be felt to be carried over into the rest of the stanza because of the presence of the rime enjambante. In rime enjambante, the actual phonemes which make up the rhyme are spread over the line-ending. Thus, in these lines, 'mensonge' is answered by 'son/Je-'.<sup>21</sup> Again, the effect is one of disruption; the disruption of the line as a unit, as defined by its rhyme (though not by the number of its syllables). These types of formal disruption (that of the rhyme and of the line-ending) are analogous to the moral disorder which is implicit in 'mensonge'. If the presence of the rime enjambante is to be heard, it seems likely that a slight lengthening of 'son' will be necessary here, but with little or no pause, keeping the line-ending relatively weak. The effect of this is similar to that described with regard to 'lance / les dés'. The idea of throwing is again important, and the absence of a pause after 'son' will convey the brusqueness of the gesture.

The third stanza of the poem serves as a good illustration of the way in which enjambement can be exploited in order to create a sense of expansion:

|                                    |          |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| Droite et ne se retournant pas     | 1/4+3/   |
| Les emportait coupant l'eau claire | 4/1+2+1/ |
| Du souvenir et quelle amère        | 4/2+2/   |
| Nuit survivait à leurs combats?    | 1/3+4/   |

(p.18)

We have already seen, on page 103, the transition to this stanza from the preceding one. The first half of the second line belongs more closely, syntactically speaking, with the first line of the stanza and

the last line of the preceding stanza. This, as we have already seen, creates a sense of expansion analogous to the implication of 'emportait'. The second half of line 2, on the other hand, belongs with the next line. The caesura in line 2 divides the second hemistich, syntactically and rhythmically, from the preceding two and half lines ('Et quelle sainte...' quoted on page 103). This caesura therefore serves to underline the idea of a break contained in the next phrase, 'couplant l'eau claire'. Line 3 is similarly unstable, despite its basic 4/4 division, because of the enjambement with the next line. The enjambement in two successive lines creates particularly complex rhythms. While the enjambement between lines 2 and 3 creates a new eight-syllable phrase, this is not the case between lines 3 and 4, where the stress on 'Nuit', following that on '-mère', finally halts the sense of an inexorable movement forwards caused by the enjambement. 'Nuit' is thus thrown particularly into relief, highlighting its contrast with 'l'eau claire' (line 2) and emphasising the apparent futility of the combat.<sup>22</sup>

The third stanza of 'La gloire', the sarcastic poem addressed to the French army in Algeria in 1953, offers one of the relatively few examples of end-stopped rhyming octosyllables, arranged, syntactically speaking, in pairs:

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Va dans tes bêtes mécaniques   | 1/3+4/   |
| Ecraser ceux qui sont chez eux | 1+2/1+4/ |
| Va de l'Equateur aux Tropiques | 1/2+2+3/ |
| 4 Arracher le bonheur des yeux | 1+2+3+2/ |

(TM 81)

The end-stopping and resulting emphasis on the rhymes underline the vehemence expressed here. This vehemence can be translated by marking a higher than average number of stresses within the lines, as suggested in the notations, notably by the secondary stress on the first syllable of 'Equateur'. It is also reflected in a degree of imbalance caused by the primary stress on the first syllable of lines 1 and 3. The vehement tone is further reflected in the repetition of [k], in 'mécaniques', 'écraser', 'Equateur' and 'Tropiques'. The lines also illustrate the use of parallel structures, more examples of which will be seen below.

The lines below, from 'Les oiseaux' in Le Chien de pique, are arranged, syntactically speaking, in pairs:

|                                     |                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| La roue rouge du sang qui tourne    | 2+1 <sup>7</sup> 3+2/ |
| A marqué nos mêmes atouts!          | 3+2+3/                |
| En toi, en moi, nous avions tout    | 2/2/4/                |
| 4 Des couples d'ours ou de vautours | 2+2/4/                |
|                                     | (p.31)                |

The accumulation of stresses in the first line has the effect of suggesting relentless movement, an effect obtained also by the insistence with which the vowel [u] recurs. The pairing, particularly in the case of lines 1 and 2, generates a sense of impetus which translates the movement of the 'roue rouge du sang qui tourne'. The combination of end-stopping and pairing creates a rhythm analogous to the turning wheel. We may see an individual line as a complete revolution, but the wheel keeps on turning: line 1 is continuous, to some extent, with line 2, just as line 3 is with line 4. This cyclical aspect is enhanced by the similarity of the rhymes to each other.<sup>23</sup>

In poems using a regular rhyme pattern, such as rimes croisées or rimes embrassées, the function of the rhyme is dual. Rhyme draws attention to the line-endings and so to the lines as metrical units. At the same time, rhyme patterns imply larger structures, of which individual lines are only parts. As such, the presence of a rhyme scheme may also be considered as creating an impetus which overrides the individual lines.<sup>24</sup>

### (ii) The use of parallel phrases

A small number of poems written in rhyming octosyllables make extensive use of parallel phrases in successive lines. This is the case in 'Comme une flotte désarmée':

|                                 |         |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| Comme une flotte désarmée       | 4+4/    |
| Comme une usine sans son bruit  | 4+4/    |
| Comme un jardin sans un oeillet | 4+4/    |
| Comme une banaste sans fruits   | 5+3/    |
|                                 | (TM 47) |

The function of the repeated elements is similar to that of the rhyme in drawing attention to each line as a unit. The identical rhythms of the first three lines underline the suggestion that the parallel images are all different ways of saying the same thing. The use of identical rhythms creates an impression of jadedness, similar to that seen in 'La nuit de mai' on page 103.

Parallel structures are not restricted to individual lines. In 'Automne', there is a degree of parallelism between the first two couplets as wholes:

|                                    |        |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Pour caresser l'odeur des bois     | 4+2+2/ |
| Une main au cent mille doigts      | 3/2+3/ |
| Pour aller dans l'enfance ancienne | 3+3+2/ |
| Une main pour tenir la tienne      | 3/3+2/ |

(TM 90)

The truly parallel structures, however, extend less far into each line than those of the lines from 'Comme une flotte désarmée'. The phrases 'aux cent mille doigts' and 'pour tenir la tienne' are parallel in so far as they both qualify 'Une main', and occupy equivalent positions within their respective couplets. The actual structures of the two phrases are, however, quite different. The absence of a primary stress in the interior of either line 1 or line 3 creates a certain expansion in the rhythm and brings 'Une main' more into evidence.<sup>25</sup>

Parallel structures are far more common in the blank octosyllabic verse. As we will see, they help to define the lines as units in a way similar to rhyme.

One poem in blank verse where parallel structures, in combination with binary divisions, are exploited to good effect is 'Poète'. Here is the first stanza:

|                               |        |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| Je passe et je repasse en moi | 2/3+3/ |
| Je me retrouve et me reprends | 4/4/   |
| Je me refais et je repars     | 4/4/   |
| Je me remâche je rumine       | 4/4/   |

(TM 76)

The lines present the dialectical relationship between the poet's consciousness and his self. The first three lines in particular all

imply the poet's awareness of his self, while the re-definition of that self is implied in 'me reprends' (line 2) and 'Je me refais' (line 3). This re-definition, as we saw in Chapter 4, is done in terms of the outside world, such that introspection and looking outwards are both implied. While the lines are somewhat static in structure, in that they are all composed of two verbs, these verbs imply change: most of them are formed with the prefix 're'. Furthermore, the very accumulation of these verbs, which are active and often reflexive, itself creates an impression of almost frenzied activity.

In the lines from 'Poète', parallel structures are found within each line, and the lines are also parallel to each other. An early poem, 'Portrait', presents similar structures. Here are the opening lines:

|                                  |        |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| N'était faite que pour se perdre | 3/5/   |
| Ne marchait que pour s'en aller  | 3/3+2/ |
| Ne venait que pour tout donner   | 3/3+2/ |
| N'avait que soi, c'était le vide | 4/4/   |

(TM 10)

The lines are binary, divided by an internal primary stress. At the same time, each line expresses a certain contradiction. In the first line, 'faite', which connotes physical wholeness, is countered by the notion of being dispersed in 'se perdre'. A parallel to this is found in 's'en aller' and 'tout donner', while 'c'était le vide' implies a complete dispersal. The final line also underlines the sense of the individual's duality.<sup>26</sup>

The parallel structures seen so far have been on the level of hemistichs or individual lines (as in 'Poète'), or on the level of successive couplets (as in the stanzas from 'La gloire' and 'Automne', discussed on pages 106 and 108 respectively). In 'Le grand bœuf', the first three stanzas as wholes are parallel to each other. Each four-line stanza divides into two couplets, the second couplet being in answer to the question asked in the first. Again, we see a tendency towards the pairing of octosyllables. Here is the first stanza:

|  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Où sont les monstres désarmés<br>qui chevauchaien à mes oreilles<br>- Dans des armadas englouties<br>Sabots de feutre et sable noir. | 1+3+4/<br>4+4/<br>3+2+3/<br>2+2/2+2/ |
|--|--------------------------------------|

(TM 85)

This structure is closely echoed by the second stanza:

|                                  |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Mais où es-tu, toi qui me parles | 2+2/1+3/ |
| Toi qui reviens et qui t'en vas? | 1+3/4/   |
| - Tu regarderas dans ton verre   | 5+3/     |
| J'y serai quand tu seras seul.   | 3/5/     |

The syntactic pairing of the lines, in the absence of rhyme, creates an almost prose-like structure which is particularly noticeable in the first couplet of the first stanza, and the second of the second stanza. (The other couplets convey an impression of a more conscious use of language.) The relatively relaxed, prose-like tone is enhanced by the presentation in dialogue form. In the second stanza, the basic 4/4 binary division of the first two lines underlines the relationship between the poem's 'je' and 'tu'. The question in the first hemistich, 'Mais où es-tu', suggests that the 'tu' is far off, implying a movement outwards from the 'je' who is asking the question. The next clause, on the other hand, suggests an inward movement from 'tu' to 'je' in 'toi qui me parles'. The beginning of line 2 restates this inward movement in 'Toi qui reviens', which is immediately countered by 'et qui t'en vas'. As in 'Poète', discussed on pages 108-109, and 'Portrait', discussed on page 109, binary and parallel structures are used in expressing various dialectical relationships. This is a feature of later poetry likewise, as we shall see in Chapter 6.

In 'Paris se libère', from Le Domaine public, the use of parallel phrases and enjambement in conjunction with each other creates more complex rhythms.<sup>27</sup> This can be seen in the lines

|                                  |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Alors du fond du sol, du fond    | 2/2+2/2/ |
| Du ciel qu'on voyait des prisons | 2/3+3/   |
| (...)                            |          |

(p.25)

The parallelism of the phrases, the second of which overruns the line-ending, and the alliterative relationship between 'sol' and 'ciel', serve to draw attention away from the line-ending as such. The rhyme 'fond : prisons' will consequently tend not to be noticed, and furthermore cannot be anticipated, because up to this point the rhyme has been only approximate. The poem has the particularity of being constructed of a single sentence. This itself creates an impulse which

runs right through the poem. This impulse is particularly in evidence where enjambement occurs, as in the lines above.

The last two stanzas of the poem use an extended but loose form of parallelism:

(...)

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Que l'homme portera son nom<br>Sa vie, ses armes, son attente   | 2 <sup>7</sup> /4+2/<br>2/2 <sup>7</sup> /4/ |
| Et qu'aux placards de nos drapeaux<br>L'honneur d'un sang dira son mot<br>La Liberté, la Mort, la France. | 4+4/<br>2+2/2+2/<br>4/2/2/                   |

(p.26)

The two key words, 'l'homme' and 'l'honneur', appear in roughly equivalent positions. The similarity, both structural and semantic, between the remainder of lines 1 and 2, and lines 4 and 5, suggests an intended relationship between 'homme' and 'honneur'. Much Resistance writing indeed emphasised that Man's honour was to fight against the degrading influence of Nazism. (See Chapter 4, pages 64-68.) While from 'son nom' and 'son mot' (which are related semantically) onwards, the two sets of lines appear parallel, their syntax is not so. In the first case, the nouns listed are all objects of the verb 'portera', while in the second case, the three nouns elucidate the word 'mot'.<sup>28</sup> The second line quoted above has a ternary division while, at the same time, the third segment occupies a complete hemistich. Similarly, in the fifth line, the first segment, 'La Liberté', is also a hemistich, while the line has a ternary division. The lines in question are thus both binary and ternary. While this feature, here, in itself has no clear rhetorical function, it is a feature which we will see again in relation to the alexandrine and other longer lines.

### (iii) Rhyming couplets

One poem in rhyming couplets, 'Automne', has already been seen, from the point of view of parallel structures, on page 108. Despite a degree of parallelism between the couplets, the couplets were independent of each other. In the following lines from the same poem,

however, a case could be made for enjambement between the couplets, which would undermine their stability and autonomy:

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| T'en souvient-il? Un grand ciel blanc<br>dans l'étang luisant et le vent | 2+2/2+1+1/<br>3+2/3/ |
| passant sur un château détruit   | 2+3+3/ (TM 90)       |

Normally, following enjambement, a primary stress falls early in the second of the two lines. In this example, however, the absence of a primary stress in the interior of the third lines heightens the sense of dynamism, and the long phrase is in marked contrast with the accumulated stresses of the first line. This dynamism is analogous to the wind. A sense of unity to the lines results from the recurrence of the vowel [ɛ]. The whining effect of the vowel's nasal quality, and the vowel's length, are also suggestive of the wind.

The effect achieved in rhyming couplets may be one of monotony. This is the case in these lines from 'Le temps...' in Le Chien de pique:

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| A la main droite il serre il serre<br>Pour à la gauche fuir en terre   | 4/2/2/<br>4/2+2/      |
| 4 Le temps vous passe dans les yeux<br>Le temps d'une aile du bon Dieu | 2+2/4/<br>2+2/4/      |
| Entre vos doigts il coule il coule<br>Mais à vos jambes il s'enroule   | 4/2/2/<br>4/4/ (p.29) |

Many of the segments have just two syllables. The alternation of unstressed and stressed syllables, like the ticking of a clock, underlines the relentless and monotonous passage of time. The sense of monotony stems also from the repetition of individual words: the verbs in lines 1 and 5, and 'Le temps' at the beginning of lines 3 and 4. Such repetition is most effective when it is the rhyme word which is repeated, as in the first and third couplets, and if a primary stress is marked each time the repeated word occurs. In comparison with rimes embrassées or rimes croisées, the effect of rhyme in rhyming couplets is one of constraint. In this example, such constraint underlines the sense of being a prisoner of time (line 1) while time yet goes monotonously by.

In 'D'une prison', the effect of the rhyming couplets is quite different. In this poem, most lines are syntactically independent of each other, as here:

|                                   |          |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Touche l'air et l'eau et le feu   | 1+2/2/3/ |
| Touche la peau si tu la veux      | 4/4/     |
| Touche l'herbe la feuille l'aulne | 3/3/2/   |

(TM 36)

The repetition of 'Touche', even though it does not receive a primary stress, draws attention away from the rhyme and to 'Touche' itself, and the strings of objects. The result is a kind of rhyme in initial position. Furthermore, the two lines of the poem which are linked most closely syntactically speaking are not linked by rhyme:

|                                   |        |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| Toutes les Sorgues de la nuit     | 1+3+4/ |
| Les perdirent dans leurs méandres | 3/5/   |

In the second of these two lines, the césure enjambante followed by a relatively long segment is suggestive of the smooth-flowing nature of the Sorgues, and also their length.

In the first of the 'Deux poèmes de la vraie traque', the rhyming couplet is found as part of a three-line stanza. In the third stanza, the two lines forming the couplet belong fairly closely together syntactically, heightening the impression that the third, blank, line, which marks an abrupt change of subject, has been 'added on':

|                             |        |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| Il but l'hiver avec l'été   | 2+2/4/ |
| Le chien de peur à son côté | 2+2/4/ |
| Le ciel a rongé son visage. | 2/2+4/ |

(TM 27)

This collage-like effect is itself suggestive of the distorted view of the world brought on by fear, but also of the types of social, moral and temporal distortion discussed in Part I.

#### (iv) The end-stopping of blank octosyllables

Rhyming octosyllables, as we saw on pages 105-106 and in note 22, are frequently linked to each other by enjambement. In contrast, blank octosyllables are almost always end-stopped. In both types of

octosyllables, then, the integrity of the line is respected, though in different ways. In rhyming octosyllables, the rhyme itself helps to define the individual lines as units, even where enjambement and rime enjambante are present. In the end-stopped blank octosyllables, it is the end-stopping itself which emphasises the autonomy of the individual lines. These different ways of respecting the integrity of individual lines suggest the importance of defining the boundaries of the lines for the hearer (as opposed to the reader, for whom they are obvious).<sup>29</sup>

In 'Le système du ciel, I', the simplicity of the language and the absence of rhyme create an impression of spontaneity, as in the first stanza:

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Une journée toujours la même   | 4/2+2/   |
| Ouvre ses yeux, lave ses mains | 1+3/1+3/ |
| Dans ton visage se regarde     | 4/4/     |

(TM 55)

This simplicity of language and structure reinforces the idea expressed in the poem that the universe is really immensely simple. (See in particular 'Le système du ciel, V', discussed on page 33.) The effect of simplicity is increased by the internal structures of the lines, all of which have a stress on the fourth syllable. The effect of balance is most noticeable in the second line. Here, the identical rhythms found in the two hemistichs underline their parallelism. In the following lines, the césure enjambante in line 1, and the presence of a primary stress on the fifth syllable in line 3, introduce more varied rhythms:

|                                   |        |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| Toujours pareille, toujours nue   | 4/4/   |
| Elle te dit le bruit des mondes   | 4/2+2/ |
| Et tu n'entends rien que ton cœur | 5/3/   |

(TM 55)

The asymmetry of the rhythm in the third line suggests a discordance between the rhythm of 'ton cœur' and that of the universe. In both stanzas, in spite of the end-stopping, the three lines fall loosely into two-line groups followed by a single line.<sup>30</sup>

The now familiar tension between fixity and expansion is seen at work in several ways in the poetry written in octosyllables. Many lines, as we have seen, are end-stopped, but the autonomy of single lines is frequently in tension with the presence of larger structures. Lines are often paired, either syntactically, or through the use of parallel structures, or through the presence of rhyme. Rhyme, as we have seen, embodies the ambivalence between fixity and expansion. It helps to define the lines as metrical units, while implying the presence of larger structures, for rhyme exists between a minimum of two lines. The close syntactical relationship between two lines may be seen in the presence of enjambement. Throughout the verse in octosyllables, we find a tendency towards the pairing of lines which creates units reminiscent of lines of sixteen syllables. Even in poems in which the octosyllable is handled in an orthodox manner, being end-stopped, there is frequently, therefore, a sense of expansion suggestive of Seghers's later, freer, verse.

In many instances in which a certain tension is found between constraint and expansion, or between respect and disregard for the metre, this tension has a rhetorical function. Frequently, the tension leads to the emphasis of a particular word, for example after enjambement. More importantly, however, the tension may embody the nature of the ideas which are being expressed. In the wartime poetry, the idea of stasis is frequently in tension with that of turmoil, as we saw in Part I, while the pairing of lines may also be done in such a way as to convey, rhythmically, the dynamism found in the natural world.

### 3) POEMS WRITTEN IN DECASYLLABLES

The usual division for the decasyllable is 4/6, or more rarely 6/4, with 5/5 as a further possibility. In the case of the first two divisions, the six-syllable phrase will normally contain a secondary stress.<sup>31</sup> Seghers's handling of the decasyllable respects the usual practice of not mixing lines dividing 6/4 or 4/6 with ones dividing 5/5.

Poems written in decasyllables are few in number. They generally use rhyme.<sup>32</sup> In terms of the treatment of the line, the most traditional of these poems is 'Le bon vin de la bouteille rousse'. In this poem, the lines generally have a primary stress on the fourth syllable, whereas in the other poems, the majority of lines have a stress, often a primary stress, on the fifth syllable. Here, then, is a stanza from 'Le bon vin de la bouteille rousse':

|  |                              |                  |
|--|------------------------------|------------------|
| Ah le bon vin!                             | c'est la torche et la flamme | 4/3+3/           |
| Si haut montées que la peur les saisit     |                              | 2+2/3+3/         |
| Si haut domptées que la mort les choisit   |                              | 2+2/3+3/         |
| Folie se meurt et se meurent leurs âmes... |                              | 2+2/3+3/ (TM 35) |

There are a number of elements here which are typical of Seghers's poetry: the binary structure in the second part of line 1, the two parallel lines (lines 2 and 3), which form a more extended type of binary structure, and finally the binary division in the last line. In this line, the inversion of two otherwise parallel phrases creates a sense of balance which overrides the asymmetry of the line division (4/6).

In 'Grand Guignol' (in Le Chien de pique), the decasyllables, almost without exception, divide 5/5, and there is frequently a secondary stress within the five-syllable hemistich. The poem is a satirical attack on Hitler.<sup>33</sup> The repetitive 5/5 division serves to hammer home the attack, as in

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| Il buvait le feu, la foudre et la bière, | 2+3/2+3/          |
| Il buvait aussi tout son poids de plomb  | 2+3/1+2+2/ (p.60) |

The repetitive rhythm is in part the result of the repeated phrase, 'Il buvait'. The high frequency of stresses (four or five per ten-syllable line) slows down the tempo of the lines. This is particularly effective in the case of the second line where it underlines the sense of 'poids de plomb'. A further factor contributing to the insistent quality of the lines is the alliteration found in 'feu' and 'foudre',

and in 'poids' and 'plomb'. In the following stanza from the same poem, insistence is again a keynote:

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Quitez à présent le masque des fables,    | 2+3/2+3/ |
| Comme des dîneurs s'arrachant le cou      | 5/3+2/   |
| Retrouvez vos yeux derrière les trous     | 3+2/2+3/ |
| Retrouvez vos voix, renversez les tables! | 3+2/3+2/ |

The 3+2/ phrases become particularly intrusive in lines 3 and 4, where they coincide with the repeated imperatives. The rhythm thus underlines the poet's urgent call for an awareness of the need for renewed moral values.

A feature of 'Prière pour les vivants', another poem in Le Chien de pique, is again the frequency with which the fifth syllable is stressed. There is only one exception to this, and this is in a line which is led into by enjambement:

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| Ils riront de vous et de vos paroles       | 3+2/5/            |
| D'amour: Les Rois déchaux aiment les loups | 2/2+2/1+3/ (p.23) |

The isolation of 'D'amour' suggests the irony and derision with which the word will be loaded by 'Ils'. In the following lines from the same poem, the enjambement serves a quite different function:

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| Comme un Roi déchaux le dénuement garde | 3+2/2+3/        |
| Pour vous sa colère et pour eux ses lys | 2/3/3+2/ (p.22) |

The two lines are a unit linked initially by the enjambement. This link is reinforced by the structure of the second line; the second term of the opposition is still dependent on the verb 'garde' in the previous line.

Virtually all the decasyllables I have quoted so far have four stresses in all; that is, one more than the norm. This is true even of 'Le bon vin de la bouteille rousse', quoted on page 116, the most traditional of the poems in decasyllables. The presence of four stresses is frequently the reflection of the binary structure of the lines, as in the last line quoted above, or in this one from 'Guillaume':

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| Cette attente vaine et ce bruit de chaînes | 3+2/3+2/ (TM 36) |
|--|------------------|

Here the binary structure is not the result of an antithesis but simply of the presentation of two different propositions. Seghers's treatment of the decasyllable, then, shows a number of features which have already been seen elsewhere: the pairing of lines through parallel structures, or through their syntactical relationship to each other; and the binary division of individual lines.

When divided 5/5, the decasyllable is similar, rhythmically, to a pair of five-syllable lines. The effect is all the more marked when the five-syllable hemistichs are themselves divided into segments of two and three syllables. The effect of series of decasyllables with these divisions combines a certain rigidity (resulting from the regular succession of five-syllable phrases), and a certain brokenness (resulting from the limping 2+3/ or 3+2/ phrases). By contrast, in lines dividing 4/6, there is a potential sense of expansion in the presence of a longer second phrase.

#### 4) THE ALEXANDRINE

The traditional alexandrine is based on one of two models. First, the classical alexandrine, such as this one from Racine's Andromaque:

La victoire et la nuit, plus cruelles que nous      3+3/3+3/      (I,2)

The line has a clearly marked medial caesura and is end-stopped. One secondary stress is found in each hemistich; here, on the third and ninth syllables. The second model is the ternary or Romantic alexandrine, in which the medial caesura disappears in favour of two internal primary stresses. These frequently fall on the fourth and eighth syllables, as in this line from Hugo's poem 'Sagesse, III':

Et mes oiseaux étaient partis pour les bocages      4/4/4/<sup>34</sup>

Alternatively, the ternary alexandrine may be divided asymmetrically, as in this line from 'Sagesse, V':

Ils tiennent, quelques-uns de Caïn, et tous d'Eve. 2/4+3/2+1/<sup>35</sup>

In Seghers's fixed-form poetry, the use of the alexandrine, compared with that of the octosyllable, is relatively infrequent. Poems written entirely in alexandrines are also relatively few in number.<sup>36</sup>

Seghers's first use of the alexandrine as the predominant, but not necessarily exclusive, line-length in an individual poem dates from 1940.<sup>37</sup> This is no doubt not purely coincidental but linked to the aims of the intellectual Resistance such as those we have already seen, notably in Chapter 4. The use of the French language in its traditional forms was itself a means of defending French culture and language.

In the poems composed exclusively of alexandrines, many lines follow the basic classical model.<sup>38</sup> Others, however, show more complex rhythms, and it is on these that the discussion will centre.

#### (i) Binary-cum-ternary alexandrines

A number of alexandrines combine elements of both the binary and the ternary alexandrine. For the illustration of this type of line, I will limit myself to one poem, 'Le carrousel'. Further similar lines will, however, be seen in other sections, and in Chapter 6. Here, then, is the first stanza of 'Le carrousel':

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| Sans souci des amours où mon rêve s'englue          | 3+3/3+3/         |
| Je m'en vais dans le ciel vivre d'autres chansons   | 3+3/1+2+3/       |
| Dansons à cloche-pied. La vie passe, passons        | 2+2+2/2+1(+1)/2/ |
| 4 L'inconnue de l'amour s'est perdue dans les rues. | 3+3/3+3/         |

(TM 39)<sup>39</sup>

The lines are all end-stopped, and each has a medial caesura. This superficial regularity is reinforced by the rhyme scheme. The regularity is superficial only, however. The second line, though orthodox in its basic 6/6 division, is unorthodox in its juxtaposition of two stresses, on 'ciel' and 'vi-'. The density caused by the proximity of these two stresses is countered by an effect of expansion

resulting from the progressive spacing of stresses in the rest of the line: 1+2+3/. This expansion accompanies the sense of the first hemistich, 'Je m'en vais dans le ciel'. The third line continues the breakdown of orthodoxy by accumulating six stresses. In the first hemistich, the alternation of unstressed and stressed syllables conveys the sense of 'à cloche-pied', as does the relatively slow tempo which results from this accumulation of stresses. In so far as the line has a first, regular, hemistich, it recalls a classical, binary, alexandrine. The rest of the line, however, presents a further internal primary stress, thus creating a ternary structure in terms of primary stresses. The césure lyrique after 'passe' underlines the meaning by creating an actual break between this phrase and the final 'passons', and also slows down the tempo, creating a feeling of lassitude. In contrast with this is the quicker, almost peremptory, 'passons'. The structure of the line as a whole, then, is both binary and ternary. The alternation of unstressed and stressed syllables creates a rhythmic parallel to 'à cloche-pied'. A similar limping effect is felt throughout the stanza in the alternation of regular lines and hemistiches (the first line and a half) and irregular ones (the second hemistich of line 2, and line 3). This is compounded by effects of repetition and echo. As well as a regular rhyme pattern, an echo is found in the rhyming of 'Dansons' with the word which precedes it, 'chansons', while 'passe' is followed by the related 'passons'. Further echoes are found in 'amours' and 'amour' (lines 1 and 4); in 'vais', 'vivre' and 'vie' (lines 2 and 3); and in 'inconnue', 'perdue' and 'rues' (line 4). Throughout the stanza, the mixing of rhythms and the use of irregularly recurring echoes create formal analogies for the disorientating effect of the carrousel's movement. The roundabout is itself an image of the disorientating effects, both moral and temporal, of the War.<sup>40</sup>

(ii) Lines with enjambement

Where enjambement is present, further rhythmic possibilities emerge. The following lines are from 'Invocation aux planètes, I', in Le Futur antérieur:

(...)

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Du feu mystérieux de la lumière, quand          | 2+4+4(+1)/1/ |
| L'autre nuit vit dans l'homme environné de nuit | 1+2/1+2/4+2/ |

(p.22)

The first line is not a classical alexandrine, although the initial two segments are suggestive of such a line, and there is a stress (but secondary only) on the sixth syllable. The primary stress falls unusually late in the line; on the tenth syllable. In the second line, a marked rise in intonation on 'homme' will help to avoid, to the hearer at least, a possible ambiguity: 'environné' refers to 'l'homme' and not 'l'autre nuit'. The enjambement results in a lengthening of 'quand' and an apparent pause. This is unusual on a grammatical word such as 'quand' (which is, furthermore, a rhyme word). Throughout the lines, the heavy accentuation emphasises the mysterious quality of the light while also suggesting the dense unyielding nature of the darkness. The effect is further increased by the disruption of the metre: in the context of this poem, the first line is unusual in having neither a typical binary nor a ternary division. The enjambement introduces a further element of disruption, while, in line 2, this is followed by an 'extra' primary stress on the third syllable. These factors combine in such a way that the lines' metre becomes obscured, this amorphousness suggesting the obscurity of the night.

In the following lines from 'Allemands beaux enfants', another poem in Le Futur antérieur, the enjambement occasions the presence of a primary stress early in the second line:

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| L'horloge humaine en vous ne bat plus vous étiez | 2+2+2/3/3/ |
| Une pâte liée de grandeur et de bière            | 3/3+3+3/   |

(p.49)

The regular iambic rhythm in the first hemistich of the first line suggests the regular ticking of a clock. The isolation of 'ne bat plus', after which there is a strongly marked pause, creates a rhythmic

parallel to the metaphorical stopping of the heartbeat. The first line is another example of an alexandrine which is both binary and ternary, having a first caesura after the sixth syllable, and a further one after the ninth. As in all lines where enjambement occurs, there is a tension between the rhythm suggested by the sense and syntax, and that suggested by the metre, which calls for the line-endings to be marked by a stress and a pause. The ambivalence of the rhythm continues, for the enjambement creates a six-syllable phrase, 'vous étiez une pâte liée', straddling the line-ending. The absence of a rhyme word from the first line (as from the first line of all earlier stanzas) means that the interference between metre and syntax is less in evidence in this case than it might be. By this stage in the poem, however, a certain expectation on the level of the metre has been established, as all lines up to now have been end-stopped.

Another example of a ternary alexandrine ending with enjambement is found in these lines from 'Le carrousel', a poem which has already been discussed in (i) above. The first of the two lines which follow has a symmetrical ternary division:

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| O brouillard, le soleil se déchire, on dirait<br>Que sa laine s'envole aux quatre draps des rêves | 3/3+3/3;<br>3+3/2+2+2/ |
|---|------------------------|

(TM 39)

In having a middle phrase of six syllables, the equivalent of an orthodox hemistich, the line also recalls a binary alexandrine. The symmetry of this line, and its adherence to a rhyme scheme which continues in the second half of the stanza, combine in promoting the perception of this line as an alexandrine. In tension with the rhythm of the line as a unit, however, is the rhythm created by the syntax, which runs over the line-ending. This expansion echoes the movement into infinite space suggested by the words themselves. The sense of dynamism is enhanced in line 2 by the liaison over the caesura, which ensures a degree of continuity through the line as a whole. The presence of an unstable e at the end of both 'laine' and 'quatre' introduces an element of slight instability, such that the rhythm of the line as a whole further conveys the idea of dynamism present in the suggestion of the wind, and in the image of dispersal.

(iii) The regular patterning of the alexandrine with another line-length

A small number of poems use the alexandrine as one of two alternating line-lengths.<sup>41</sup> In 'Poète', the rhythmical effects gained from alternating alexandrines and octosyllables are quite complex. As can be seen in the following quotation, the lines are paired, syntactically:

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 4 | Au monstre des secrets je plie sans jamais rompre<br>Jusqu'à l'existence et la voix,<br>Je me lie à mon temps qui roule entre mes doigts<br>Comme un bracelet d'or ou d'ambre. | 2+4/2+4/<br>3+2/3/<br>3+3/2+4/<br>3+3/2/ |
|---|--|--|

(TM 54)

The true rhyme ('voix : doigts'), and the approximate rhyme ('rompre : ambre') further unify these lines. The effect is one of fluidity, and perhaps one of uncertainty for the reader as to the metre. This ambiguity is suited to the subject of the poem, which concerns the poet's work of giving form to the fluidity of language and ideas. The sense of fluidity is enhanced by the variety of rhythms within individual lines, as in the third. Furthermore, in the second hemistich of this line, the slight suspension on 'entre' caused by the presence of the unstable e, followed by a dropping of the pitch on 'doigts', will suggest a downwards sliding movement. In the remaining stanzas of the poem, the rhythms are equally varied, as in the last stanza:

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 4 | Sur mes chariots la vie balance ses navires<br>De foin, de mers et de parfums<br>Et je feins d'oublier le début et la fin<br>Il n'est de réel que de dire. | 4/2+2 <sup>7</sup> /4/<br>2/2/4/<br>3+3/3+3/<br>5/3/ |
|---|--|--|

The regular ternary division of the first line produces a rocking effect. This is enhanced by the césure enjambante and by the enjambement, which call for a slight pause and suspension in pitch on both 'balance' and 'navires'. This lilting rhythm conveys the meaning of 'balance'. The effect is continued in the second line. Here, rather than a fall in intonation on 'foin', resolving the suspension caused by the enjambement, the intonation is again a rising one as 'foin' is but the first element of a list of three. The sense of

impulse running throughout these two lines is countered by the classical regularity of the third line, and finally, in the last line, by the presence of a final short segment. Following as it does the five-syllable segment, this short segment gives an impression of finality. It also gives emphasis to the statement 'Il n'est de réel que de dire', thereby underlining the significance of language to the poet. The poem's central theme is that of the creation of poetry, and the concretisation of the self in the language of poetry.

Another poem using the same basic pattern of line-lengths and rhyme as 'Poète' is 'Regards', from Le Domaine public. As in 'Poète', the form is exploited in such a way as to express fluidity:

|   |  |               |
|---|--|---------------|
|   | Aurore de mes yeux en vous mêmes (sic) bânts   | 2+4/3+3/      |
|   | Ouverts au ciel insaisissable,                 | 2+2+4/        |
|   | Fuyards comme le temps dans son moule de sable | 2/4/3+3/      |
| 4 | Qui se coule et va s'écoutant                  | 3/2+3/ (p.84) |

Here, the fluidity is that between the outside world and that of the poet's consciousness. The poet's eyes are open on themselves (line 1) and on the outside world (line 2). (The dialectical relationships implied here have been discussed in Chapter 4.) The sense of fluidity in these lines stems as much from the syntax as from the actual rhythms. To the hearer of the verse, there must be some ambiguity. First, in the first line, 'vous mêmes' (sic) refers to 'mes yeux' and not to 'Aurore'. Second, 'Fuyards' (line 3) also refers to 'mes yeux', and not to 'ciel'. In the second line, the liaison in 'ouverts au' and in 'ciel insaisissable' has a similar binding function. In lines 3 and 4, the feeling of continuity stems from the rhyme (involving the liquid consonant [l]) and assonance in 'moule', 'coule' and 's'écoutant'. Finally, alliteration on [s] and [z] further binds the lines.

In 'D'une maison', every fourth line is a six-syllable line, and is thus related metrically to the other lines. In the second stanza, for example, the six-syllable line, metrically speaking, represents a return to regularity:

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Un bateau de grand ciel au-dessus des forêts | 3+3/3+3/     |
| Une brume qui se dissipe et disparaît        | 3+5/4/       |
| Comme au jeu des images                      | 3+3/ (TM 49) |

The second line, as a ternary alexandrine, is in contrast with both the first line and the third. The long, eight-syllable, phrase is suggestive of the nebulous quality of the mists. This is further enhanced by the liaison between the second and third segments. The liaison gives rise to an apparent pause while ensuring a certain continuity. The frontiers between segments and phrases are in this way marked, and yet also masked in so far as they do not correspond precisely to word endings. The line ends, however, with a four-syllable segment, recalling an orthodox ternary alexandrine. The overall progression of the line towards more orthodox structure may be seen as reflecting the sense: the dissolving away of mist. This resolution continues into the third line, a six-syllable line, which has the structure of a classical hemistich.

In the same poem, the use of enjambement gives rise to further variety of rhythm, as here:

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| La maison, ce qui fuit, qu'on aimeraït ensemble | 3/3/4+2/  |
| Il y faudrait une voix plus forte et l'encens   | 4/3+2/3/  |
| Bleu du cœur et des mots                        | 1/2+3/    |
| Brûlerait là (...)                              | 1+3/(...) |

The first of these three lines is another binary-cum-ternary alexandrine by virtue of the distribution of the primary stresses. The asymmetry of the second line, a ternary alexandrine, is compounded by the rime enjambante between this and the third line. The instability this occasions is not, in this case, resolved by the return of a regular metrical line, although it is to some extent compensated for by the binary structure of the final phrase, 'du cœur et des mots'. On the whole, in this stanza, the sense of a lack of definition on the level of the metre remains uppermost. This is analogous to the meaning of 'ce qui fuit' and 'encens'. Dislocation and ambiguity continue, moreover, for 'l'encens' is not the object of 'Il y faudrait' but the subject of the verb 'Brûlerait', which is found only at the beginning of the next stanza. In this instance, the syntax, too, has a shifting quality, analogous to the visual image of the smoke of incense.

(iv) The use of occasional short lines amidst alexandrines

There are a number of poems which use an occasional short line amidst alexandrines. This feature anticipates the use of mixtures of line-lengths found in later freed verse, discussed in the second part of Chapter 6, below.

The last line of 'L'étranger, III' from Le Chien de pique, has only ten syllables. In the context of the whole of the last stanza, the effects are various:

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| Il tendra ses mains d'herbe et de saint homme, ermite | 3+2+1/3+1/2,           |
| A la porte laissant le passé, l'avenir,               | 3/3+3/3/               |
| Tel un voeu de silence à sa bouche fleurir            | 3+3/3+3/               |
| Pour vous, et pour le mal que vous lui fîtes.         | 2/4+4/ (=10)<br>(p.37) |

The first line, an alexandrine, is freely structured in accumulating stresses, and it ends, furthermore, with enjambement. The second line, too, is relatively unorthodox in having two internal primary stresses, on the third and ninth syllables. The third line, however, marks a return to regularity, suggesting the calm order of the future as promised by the prophet-like figure of the hermit. The fourth line again creates an impression of regularity, thanks to the symmetrically divided final phrase. The fact that the line is short (just ten syllables, rather than twelve) and concludes the rhyme pattern adds a further note of finality, suggesting that the past is being left behind to make way for the future.

In a poem from Le Domaine public, 'Paris-Pentecôte', a shorter final line serves more obviously as a concluding line, and in this case stands out as being considerably shorter:

|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Ce qu'on y voit, ce sont ses plaies et ses tortures | 4/4+4/                      |
| Ce qu'on y lit, ce sont les crimes de Juda (sic)    | 4/4+4/                      |
| Les chevaux dans le ciel se cabrent. Pas et pas     | 3+3+2(+1)/1+2/              |
| Lourds, pesants, du fer et des armures...           | 1/2/2+4/ (=9)<br>(pp.15-16) |

After two regular ternary alexandrines, the second half of the stanza is rhythmically more varied. In the third line, the caesura, a césure lyrique, falls late in the line. The rhythm of the phrase 'dans le ciel se cabrent' is ambivalent.<sup>42</sup> The segment 'dans le ciel' can be associated with either of the two segments which surround it, though I prefer to read the phrase with a slightly stronger pause after 'chevaux' than after 'ciel'. This throws 'dans le ciel' into relief, preventing it from being passed over as something quite unexceptional. The heavy accentuation of the line (five stresses in all) and the strong pause and faltering rhythm of the césure lyrique are suggestive of the violent movement of the horses. The further slowing down of the tempo by the juxtaposition of two stresses in 'pas / Lourds' echoes the sense of these words. The first three segments of line 4 are short: the accumulation of stresses continues. The heaviness is complemented by the classicism of the end of the line, which has the form of an orthodox hemistich, and uses vocabulary reminiscent of that of classical drama.

(v) The alexandrine in stanzaic poems of mixed line-lengths

A number of poems, though not written exclusively in any one metre, or with any regular patterning of different line-lengths, have the appearance of regular fixed-form poems.<sup>43</sup> These poems are written in what I term freed verse. They illustrate a type of verse in which orthodox prosody and free verse are in tension with each other. Freed verse will be further defined and discussed in Chapter 6.

One poem which falls into this category is 'Le beau travail', a poem which mixes lines of eight, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen and fifteen syllables, grouped into three stanzas of four, three, and four lines, respectively. In the second part of Chapter 6, we will see in detail the rhythmic interplay between lines of different lengths. With regard to 'Le beau travail', it is, rather, the function of the alexandrines as such which I would like to pinpoint. The groups of lines are separated from each other by a refrain-like line which stands alone. These lines are alexandrines, as is the first line of the poem:

In being distinguished from the other lines, both on the printed page and by their metre (there are, however, other alexandrines in the poem amongst the grouped lines), and also by their syntactic independence, the lines are given great importance. Indeed, in their use of the verb 'chanter' they can be interpreted as expanding on the poem's title: the 'beau travail' is that of the poet. The use of alexandrines for these lines is therefore significant. In a poem written during the war, their very presence suggests an affirmation of the value of what is traditional.

In other poems using a mixture of line-lengths, there is a predominance of alexandrines.<sup>44</sup> One of these poems is 'Le Vert-Galant', from Le Chien de pique. I shall limit myself to one stanza from this poem to illustrate the creation of rhythmic tensions:

|   |                    |  |
|---|--------------------|--|
| Des chalands descendaient sur l'eau grise et la brume   |                    |  |
|   | 3+3+3/3/           |  |
| Sur eux se refermait. Des sirènes, des cris             | 2+4/3/3/           |  |
| Etouffés, l'odeur du soir humide et pauvre qui s'allume |                    |  |
|   | 3/2+2/2+2/4/ (=15) |  |
| 4 Aux feux des derniers ponts, comme des feux pourris   |                    |  |
|   | 2+2+2/4+2/ (p.38)  |  |

The tension arises from the overlapping of the metre, which calls for the accentuation of the line-ending, and the syntax, calling for accentuation at the end of a syntactic unit. The first of these four lines is apparently an orthodox classical alexandrine, and may at first seem complete in itself, syntax and metre coinciding. The second line makes it clear, however, that 'la brume' is actually a new subject. Consequently, 'grise' has a primary stress, because it is at the end of a clause, and an apparent pause is marked. Although enjambement is possible between lines 2 and 3, an actual pause after 'cris' is effective in throwing 'Etouffés' into relief. The remainder of the third line has the structure of a ternary alexandrine. Whether this structure will be perceived by the hearer of the poem will depend on the degree to which 'Etouffés' is separated from both 'cris', which it qualifies, and the rest of the line to which it belongs. The result of the enjambement in this series of lines, and of the potential enjambement between lines 2 and 3, is to create a number of phrases of

nine or approximately nine syllables, ending with 'grise' (nine syllables), 'refermaît' (nine syllables), 'Etouffés' (nine syllables), 'Pau(vre)' (eight syllables) and 'ponts' (ten syllables). This itself creates a lulling effect in the rhythm which is perhaps suggestive of lapping water. Here, as in all lines with rhyme where enjambement occurs, the perception of the rhyme as such, and so to some extent of the lines as units, will depend for the hearer on the rhyme words being emphasised by a suspension of the voice. At the same time, awareness of the presence of the near-regular phrases, which span the line-endings, will depend on precisely the opposite; that is, the line-endings will have to be smoothed over, or read without a pause or apparent pause. Throughout these lines, the effect of the overlapping rhythms of syntax and metre is to create a sense of fluidity and uncertainty; a formal analogy to the shifting water and mist depicted in the lines, which also suggests the moral climate of the times. At the same time as it suggests fluidity, the rhythm also suggests stifling. This is the case in line 3, where the pause following 'Etouffés' creates an effect analogous to the stifling of a scream.

##### 5) LINES OF ELEVEN AND THIRTEEN SYLLABLES

The eleven-syllable line is considered by some as a curtailed alexandrine.<sup>45</sup> My discussion of Seghers's treatment of the line draws attention to a number of echoes of the alexandrine. Yet if Seghers's eleven-syllable lines create a sense of uncertainty, this is due as much to the use of many different stress patterns as to any frustration of the expectation of an alexandrine. In the context of an autonomous poem, written in eleven-syllable lines, no such expectation is established. Echoes of alexandrines, in the structure of the lines, do occasionally suggest tentative alexandrines, but this effect may itself be undermined by the presence of enjambement.

There are just three poems which use the eleven-syllable line as their norm. These are 'Dans la nuit' (TM 21-22), 'Août 41' (TM 23-24), and 'Automne' (TM 52).<sup>46</sup> The clearest echoes of alexandrines will be found in those lines which have a basic 5/6 or 6/5 division; that is, which contain the equivalent of the hemistich of an alexandrine. Such

lines are, however, infrequent. The following line comes from 'Août 41':

Le pôle était hanté. Là-bas, la Pologne 2+4/2/3/

Mourait. (...) (TM 23-24)

Syntactically speaking, the most important break in the line is after the sixth syllable, but the rhythmic effect of the line as a whole is not simply that of a truncated alexandrine, or of a line which falls short of some expectation, for there is a further primary stress on 'bas'. Furthermore, the enjambement precludes the line from being heard unambiguously as a truncated alexandrine. The voice does not fall on 'Pologne', marking a break in the sense, but rather the intonation rises here, and the last syllable is lengthened, implying a continuation of the sense, while the rhyme marks the line-ending.

In 'Dans la nuit', the line which comes nearest to a classical alexandrine is this one:

Et pouvez-vous toujours chanter l'avenir 2+4/2+3/ (TM 21)

Although, as in a classical alexandrine, the sixth syllable is stressed, the rhythm of the line as a whole is ambivalent. It does not indubitably fall into a 6/5 division. As an auxiliary, 'pouvoir', needs another infinitive to follow, and the intervening 'toujours' belongs to both verbs at once. It receives a primary stress for rhetorical rather than syntactical reasons.<sup>47</sup>

Before leaving the subject of 'truncated alexandrines', it is worth mentioning the effect of lines dividing 5/6. These are very rare. The following example is from 'Automne':

Le vert des feuilles, les feuilles des bouleaux 2+2(+1)/2+4/ (TM 52)

Here, the repetition of 'feuilles' serves as a link between the hemistichs, to which it gives something of a classical balance. The

context of the line must, however, be kept in mind. The line is led into by enjambement:

Ah! c'est peut-être celui-là qui retire                    1/3+4/3/  
Le vert des feuilles, les feuilles des bouleaux            2+2(+1)/2+4/

The rather uneven rhythm of the line and a half preceding the final six-syllable phrase is countered by this phrase's classical familiarity. This is not to say, however, that the reaction to these six syllables will necessarily be as to a classical hemistich. Both these lines do, however, also recall the classical alexandrine in having four stresses.

A number of other lines, while not breaking 6/5, have some degree of stress on the sixth syllable. A primary stress may fall before the sixth syllable in these lines, resulting in a rhythm even more remote from that of a classical alexandrine, particularly when enjambement is present. In 'Dans la nuit', the effect achieved is one of meandering, of being lost in the night, or of a restless and erratic movement, as here:

Est-ce toi ce troupeau de nuit, la colère                    3/2+3/3/  
Contenue, avec des airs d'airs défendus                    3/4/1+3/  
Dans la nuit, est-ce toi grondant et tendu                    3/3/2+3/  
Vers le jour et vers le ciel à nouveau clairs?              3+4/4/     (TM 21)

The enjambement between lines 1 and 2 has the added effect of suggesting the repression of anger; or, rather, it is suddenly that we realise that the anger cannot be given free rein. By contrast with this, in the last line, the absence of a primary stress before the seventh syllable combines with the enjambement from the previous line to heighten the sense of a long nomadic trek whose goal is but distant and vague.

Many eleven-syllable lines, particularly in 'Dans la nuit', are characterised not by the near-symmetry of their structure, but by their asymmetry. The second of the lines quoted above is an example. Here, the asymmetry is linked with the enjambement: as we have seen, enjambement frequently leads to a primary stress falling early in the second of the lines involved. The phrase 'Dans la nuit' is isolated at

the beginning of the third line of each stanza, thereby creating a caesura at the third syllable, as in the lines above, and likewise here:

|  |                               |         |
|--|-------------------------------|---------|
| Et pouvez-vous toujours chanter l'avenir<br>Dans la nuit? O mon pays qui sait tenir<br>Son drapeau (...) | 2+4/2+3/<br>3/4/4'<br>3/(...) | (TM 21) |
|--|-------------------------------|---------|

This example also illustrates the use of a ternary division (line 2). While a ternary structure can be seen as a form of rhythmic symmetry (or near symmetry, in this case, the first segment being only slightly shorter than the others), syntactically speaking, the line is asymmetrical. The second primary stress coincides with a lesser syntactic break than the first.

'Automne' opens with a series of ternary lines:

|   |                  |       |
|---|------------------|-------|
| Les chemins qui se perdaient dans la colline<br>On eût dit qu'ils s'en allaient jusqu'au ciel | 3/4/4/<br>3/4/3/ | (=10) |
|---|------------------|-------|

(TM 52)

While the ternary structure of an eleven-syllable line is suggestive of that of a ternary alexandrine, decasyllables also frequently have three stresses.<sup>48</sup> The second line from 'Automne' is itself a ternary decasyllable. The overriding effect of these two lines together seems to me to be one of regularity, arising from the exclusive use of three- and four-syllable segments. In the case of a ternary eleven-syllable line using three- and four-syllable segments, it can be argued that the line is as close an approximation to a decasyllable as to an alexandrine.

In 'Août 41', the presence of enjambement is again linked with asymmetrical structures:

|  |                                    |         |
|--|------------------------------------|---------|
| (...)  |                                    |         |
| Qui lisaien l'avenir vert dans la tripaille<br>Des boeufs ouverts. Les poissons entre les mailles<br>Filaient dans les villes bleu sang. C'était comme | 3+3+1/4/<br>2+2/3/4'<br>2/3+2+1/3' |         |
| Un grand crachat. (...)  | 2+2/(...)                          |         |
|  |                                    | (TM 24) |

The most effective reading of these lines would be to pause at the end of lines 1 and 3, with perhaps a slight rise in intonation. The words withheld would thus receive all the more emphasis. The sense of the sentence running over lines 2 and 3 suggests that here no pause, either apparent or actual, should be marked, so as not to slow down the tempo and contradict the sense of 'Filaient'. Paradoxically, the two ways of reading the enjambement both contribute to a sense of being caught up in a nightmarish world. In the first case, this is done by the dislocation of the sense and the rhythm, and in the second, by a degree of disregard for the line-ending in favour of the sense.

It is possible to see the eleven-syllable line as a disintegrated alexandrine, and so its use may be seen as a further expression of wartime disorder. Yet to define the line, as used by Seghers, as an 'alexandrine manqué' seems inadequate.<sup>49</sup> Seghers's treatment of the eleven-syllable line suggests characteristics both of the alexandrine and of the decasyllable. It may, on the one hand, have two roughly equal hemistichs, or it may, on the other hand, present a ternary structure similar to that of the decasyllable as well as to that of a ternary alexandrine. The ambivalent nature of the line is frequently further compounded by the presence of enjambement, which creates a further distance between the eleven-syllable line and the orthodox classical alexandrine.

In only one poem, 'Octobre 41', is the thirteen-syllable line used as the standard line. If only because its use is exceptional, the line merits attention, but 'Octobre 41' is also a poem to which I have frequently referred in Part I. The line's length and the absence of a fixed caesura make the thirteen-syllable line very flexible.<sup>50</sup>

Like the eleven-syllable line, the thirteen-syllable line may recall an alexandrine if its basic division is 6/7 or 7/6. The following line, with its total of four stresses, and its 6/7 division does have a certain classicism:

Cinquante sans méfaits, ils étaient fils de chez nous 2+4/4+3/  
(TM 19)

This classicism is heightened by the apposition between the two hemistichs.

By contrast, the first two lines of the poem illustrate the potential distinctness of the thirteen-syllable line from the alexandrine:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Le vent qui pousse les colonnes de feuilles mortes<br>Octobre, quand la vendange est faite dans le sang | 2/2+4+3+2/<br>2(+1)/4+2 <sup>7</sup> /4 |
|---|---|

Neither of these lines resembles an alexandrine. The first is noteworthy for the number of stresses. Whereas it is quite rare to find alexandrines with five stresses, such lines occur quite frequently in 'Octobre 41'. In the first line above, the long series of secondary stresses leads to a sense of restlessness. The sequence of short segments is suggestive of the wind blowing endlessly in successive gusts, the leaves only settling with the word 'mortes'. The suggestion is heightened by the presence of an unstable e at the end of 'pousse', 'colonnes' and 'feuilles', which creates a buoyancy in the rhythm.

In the absence of any fixed caesura, rhyme is important in this poem in preventing an impression of amorphousness.<sup>51</sup> This is particularly true where enjambement is present, as at the beginning of the second stanza:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Dans la neige du monde, dans l'hiver blanc, il porte<br>Des taches rouges où la colère s'élargit | 3+3(+1)/2+2/2/<br>2+2 <sup>7</sup> 5+4/ |
|--|---|

The word 'porte' will be echoed in 'portes' at the end of the third line of the stanza. The enjambement here helps to create a certain continuity, and thus a rhythmic parallel to the sense of 's'élargit'. The presence of an unstable e, in the second line, on each of 'taches' and 'colère', as well as at the césure enjambante, again has an effect on the sense of expansion by resulting in a slight lengthening of 'ta-', 'rou-' and '-lè-'.<sup>52</sup>

The poems written in eleven- and thirteen-syllable lines are all wartime poems. This fact might suggest that the use of approximate

alexandrines was a deliberate undermining of the more traditional line-length as a reflection of the undermining of political and moral order. While this is certainly a possibility, Seghers's handling of both line-lengths gives rise to a great variety of rhythms. As such, it seems unlikely that the hearer of these poems will have any sense of the lines being 'imperfect' alexandrines.

### Conclusion

Most of Seghers's fixed-form poems date from the early collections, and include many of the wartime poems. The use of traditional forms during this period was a concretisation of one of the aims of the intellectual Resistance: the defence of the French linguistic heritage. The formal conservatism had a place in a forward-looking movement, playing its part in the drive towards the creation of a new, free France.

This tension is seen at work in Seghers's handling of the verse. Many poems, or individual stanzas, are, as we have seen, superficially regular. They use end-stopped lines of equal length and a regular rhyme scheme. There is, however, a tendency towards the creation of larger, particularly two-line, units. This may be done syntactically, with or without enjambement, or through the use of parallel structures. Parallel structures themselves have a paradoxical effect. In consecutive lines, they define each line (a definition which is syntactic) while at the same time creating a bond between the lines concerned, for they may suggest a degree of equivalence of synonymity between the parallel elements.

The presence of enjambement in rhymed verse embodies particularly clearly this tension between, on the one hand, the line as a unit, and, on the other, larger structures. The rhyme word may be seen as having a constraining effect, defining the line, pinpointing its end, while the syntax overflows, creating an opposite effect; one of expansion. Rime enjambante is a particular form of enjambement. Where enjambement is present in conjunction with rhyme, the metre is

respected in so far as the rhyme is present and marks the line-ending. In rime enjambante, however, the metre itself undergoes a degree of undermining. The line-ending, as defined by the rhyme, becomes indistinct, for the phonemes which make up the rhyme are spread over the line-ending. Rime enjambante is thus another embodiment of the tension between prosodic conservatism (seen in the presence of rhyme) and a greater freedom.

The creation of units larger than the line, particularly when rhyme is absent, leads to a degree of rhythmic fluidity and expansion which often reflects the dynamism of the themes of the verse. The dynamism of the verse, and the use of mixtures of line-lengths in fixed-form poems, anticipate the later, freer, verse, which is the subject of Chapter 6.

Also implicit in many of the features analysed in Chapter 5 is a tension, in the reader's experience of the verse, between what the eye sees (a certain regularity), and the dictates of sense and syntax. Sense and syntax frequently reveal different units, and result in emphasis at points other than the line-endings. For the hearer of the verse, this tension between metrical regularity (of which he may possibly not be aware) and syntax seems likely to result in a general impression of dynamism.

We have seen that Seghers appears to have a possibly instinctive predilection for eight-syllable phrases. At the same time, however, the sense of dynamism in the verse, seen in enjambement and the presence of syntactic units which are longer than one line, suggests that the finished poem to some extent directly reflects the dynamism of its creation: the words, as they emerge from the poet's subconscious, do not yield to purely metrical constraints, and spill over into further lines. The rhythms of the poet's language, as well as the language itself, thus themselves embody the dialectical relationship between the poet's self and the outside world. Analogies may be drawn between the rhythms of the verse and the dynamism of the universe which the verse depicts, but these same rhythms may also reflect the poet's language as it sprang from his subconscious.

## CHAPTER SIX

FREED VERSE

At the opposite extreme from regular, fixed-form poetry is free verse. Between the two is freed verse.

Free verse is distinguished from freed verse in presenting an almost arbitrary aspect in regard to the length of the lines (that is, in terms of their number of syllables). A line of free verse may resemble, in Morier's words, a 'simple bout de phrase mis à la ligne',<sup>1</sup> generally ending, then, at a break, however slight, in the syntax. Lines of free verse do not usually use regular rhyme, nor are they normally arranged in stanzas of equal or near equal numbers of lines.

In freed verse, on the other hand, we find an approximation to a norm. The lines of a poem might, for example, all hover between eleven, twelve and thirteen syllables, approximating to the alexandrine. Alternatively, a poem might use an arbitrary mixture of two different precise or approximate line-lengths. The lines may be grouped to form stanzas of equal or disparate lengths, and may use some rhyme. Some of the poems seen in Chapter 5 may be defined as freed verse, notably those using a variety of line-lengths, such as 'Le Vert-Galant' (see pages 128-129). Freed verse also admits the possibility of a disregard of certain rules, or the use of replacement rules.<sup>2</sup> Between strictly regular fixed-form poems and free verse, then, many degrees of relative freedom are possible.<sup>3</sup>

From the first of the suites, Racines, onwards, virtually all individual poems (that is, sections of a suite) fall into the category of freed verse.<sup>4</sup> Before concentrating on the freed verse, I will look first at two poems which may be considered to be free verse.

The earliest and most readily perceptible example of a poem in free verse is 'Septembre 1939', which I will quote in full:

|   |   |              |         |
|---|---|--------------|---------|
|   | Au delà des limites de la vie, il y a toujours une vie nouvelle | 3+3+4/4/3+2/ | (=19)   |
|   | Dont les frontières sont inconnues.                             | 4/3+2/       | (=9)    |
|   | Au delà des jours sans souvenirs                                | 3+2/4/       | (=9)    |
| 4 | Il y a toujours une condition d'un autre domaine                | 4/5/2+3/     | (=14)   |
|   | Il y a toujours un air plus vif, un ciel plus clair             | 4/2+2/2+2/   | (=12)   |
|   | Une aspiration immense dont tu ne te savais pas capable,        | 2+3+2/6+2+2/ | (=17)   |
|   | Une rupture   | 4/           | (=4)    |
| 8 | Elle engendre une naissance émerveillée.                        | 3/4/4/       | (=11)   |
|   |   |              | (TM 14) |

The notation helps to highlight the degree to which the lines diverge from traditional fixed-form verse. There are, however, elements which are reminiscent of fixed-form verse. The first line, though very long, is conventional in being divided, at least syntactically, into two almost equal hemistichs. In context, line 5 also stands out for the binary structure, and iambic rhythm, of 'un air plus vif, un ciel plus clair'. The regularity of the rhythm of these phrases, and of the line as a whole (the line is a ternary alexandrine), suggests order and harmony in nature, though the dynamism of existence is the poem's central theme. Lines 2 and 3, which are both nine-syllable lines, likewise both have near-equal hemistichs, dividing, the one, 4/5, and the other, 5/4. Although these are not the most orthodox divisions of the nine-syllable line, the near-regularity does add to the sense of balance.<sup>5</sup> Other structuring devices are present, notably identical and parallel phrases. A repeated element at the beginning of successive lines (as in lines 4 and 5) helps to define these lines as units. Here, the 'Il y a' also recalls the second hemistich of the first line. The oscillation between identical elements which are separated by phrases that are rhythmically different from each other creates a dynamism in the rhythm of the poem as a whole, a tension between like and unlike elements. Similar remarks can be made of 'Au delà' which is complemented first by 'des limites de la vie' (3+4/), and in the second instance by 'des jours sans souvenirs' (2/4/). There is, however, a degree of semantic similarity between 'des limites de la vie' and 'des

*jours sans souvenirs'* which is enhanced by their each being introduced in an identical way. As a result, the two propositions seem virtually synonymous with each other. There is a similar relationship between '*il y a toujours une vie nouvelle / Dont les frontières sont inconnues'* (lines 1-2) and '*Il y a toujours une condition d'un autre domaine'* (line 4). The phrase '*il y a toujours*' is common to both, while there is a semantic similarity between the remainder of each. In lines 1-2, the very length of the phrase '*une vie ... inconnues*' (the complement of '*il y a*') is suggestive of infinite spatial or temporal expansion. In line 4, on the other hand, the suggestion of limitation in '*condition*' and '*domaine*' is reflected rhythmically in so far as the whole phrase (that is, the complement of '*Il y a*') occupies just this one line.

The interweaving of similar elements in different positions of their respective lines sets up a kind of counterpointing between the lines as metrical units on the one hand, and that of the parallel syntactic elements on the other. The tension between the two is similar to that created by enjambement. (Other examples of counterpointing will be seen in this chapter.) This counterpointing, and the variety of line-lengths present, reflect the dynamism of existence which forms the central theme of '*Septembre 1939*'.

A sense of dynamism is present notably in line 6. This is the result of its length, the infrequency of primary stresses in the line (which results in a relatively quick tempo), and the césure enjambante. This third feature lengthens the second syllable of '*immense*', while at the same time carrying the impetus through into the second hemistich. Both effects heighten awareness of the immensity. Furthermore, the long, six-syllable segment increases the sense of impetus by increasing the tempo.<sup>6</sup> In contrast with the sense of dynamism in line 6 is the abruptness of line 7. At this point, the poem's structure is closely analogous to the meaning, thanks to the separation of the line '*Une rupture*' from the others. The line is even harsh, phonetically, with its repetition of [y].

The one example of free verse found in the suites comes from Racines. Here is the whole poem:

|   |  |                    |                  |
|---|--|--------------------|------------------|
|   | Ce n'est pas un appel des mondes morts qui monte ici de ces débris               | 3+3+2+2/2+2+4/     | (=18)            |
|   | Et les théorbes des arbres foudroyés ne résonnent pas comme des jarres           | 4/3+4/3+2/4/       | (=20)            |
|   | mortuaires. Le temps qui murmure ou siffle selon les vents,<br>la soie des nuits | 3(+1)/2+3/2/5/2+2/ | (=20)            |
| 4 | bruissent ou se déchirent pour des amours toujours pareilles.                    | 1/5(+1)/4+4/       | (=15)            |
|   | Les millénaires qui se sont couchés n'ont point péri.<br>L'instant suffit        | 4/6/2+2/2+2/       | (=18)            |
|   | pour rassembler la vie passée dans un buisson toujours vivace                    | 4+2+2/4+2+2/       | (=16)            |
|   | Et la balle traçante du martin-pêcheur qui jaillit                               | 3+3/3+3/3/         | (=15)            |
| 8 | Bleue<br>dit à la forêt que la forêt demeure.                                    | 1/<br>1+4/4+2/     | (=11)<br>(TM 98) |

The very length of the lines again suggests dynamism by creating a sense of restlessness. A peculiarity of this poem is the tension created by, on the one hand, the very length of the longest lines (lines 2 and 3), and, on the other hand, the presence of enjambement. Whereas this length, in the absolute, suggests uncounted, free verse, the presence of the enjambement at the end of line 2 may suggest that the line has been cut off at this point because it has reached some required, or metrical, length.<sup>7</sup> The enjambement does, however, throw 'mortuaires' into relief in a way which would not be possible if the word were simply at the end of the line. The césure lyrique which follows 'mortuaires' further throws the word into evidence by isolating it, the pause underlining the meaning. Lines 2 and 3 are exceptionally long. The first three lines are, furthermore, of approximately equal length. Given this combination of factors (similarity of line-lengths and enjambement), the implication is, perhaps, that these lines are not to be considered as free verse, but as a particularly free form of freed verse. The use of enjambement between lines of approximately equal length is a relatively frequent feature in Seghers's poetry from Racines onwards. The device can be related to the counterpointing seen in 'Septembre 1939', where phrases which parallel each other syntactically are found in different positions in their respective lines. Both devices result in a sense of slight dislocation, or

non-fixity. In the case of lines with enjambement, the dislocation is that between the lines as units, and, counter to them, the syntax.

In lines 1 and 2, there is again a tension between a certain orthodoxy and the very length of the lines. Both lines have a binary division in terms of syntax. In line 1, the binary division is seen also in the distribution of the primary stresses. Line 1, moreover, ends with a regular eight-syllable phrase, reminiscent of the hemistich of a sixteen-syllable line, and other eight-syllable phrases are found in lines 4 and 6. Line 6 is, furthermore, a typical sixteen-syllable line. Although in the context of this poem it stands out for its regularity, many such lines are to be found throughout Racines. The third line, while it has the same number of stresses as line 1 (seven in all), has a more broken rhythm. This is due to the césure lyrique after 'mortuaires', and the presence of three further primary stresses within the line. The relative irregularity of the line in comparison with the preceding two lines is the result also of the presence of the long five-syllable segment.

The isolation of 'Bleue' (line 8) gives an appearance of free verse. The structure imitates the sudden flash of blue of a darting kingfisher.<sup>8</sup> Although it may be tempting to see this one-syllable line as combining with the preceding line to form a (broken) sixteen-syllable line, the rhythm of these sixteen syllables is not that of a typical sixteen-syllable line. It is not only the break after 'jaillit' which causes this: the eighth syllable is the unstressed 'du'. Line 9, on the other hand, is reminiscent of an alexandrine, minus a syllable in its first hemistich.

Seghers's poems written in free verse are very few in number, and, as can be seen from 'Septembre 1939' and the poem from Racines, they are not without features which are found in both the fixed-form poetry and the freed verse.

Seghers's freed verse poems fall into three main categories: those which use the alexandrine, or lines of approximately twelve

syllables, as their norm; those which use lines of sixteen syllables or thereabouts, and those which use a mixture of line-lengths. In all the suites except one, there is a predominance of one or other of the two basic line-lengths. In the suites which pre-date Dis-moi, ma vie, the alexandrine or near-alexandrine is uppermost. In those suites which post-date Dis-moi, ma vie, lines of sixteen, or approximately sixteen, syllables predominate. Dis-moi, ma vie thus marks a turning-point. In this suite itself, the two basic line-lengths are found in almost exactly equal numbers. Among the post-Dis-moi, ma vie suites, Commediante is exceptional, being written almost exclusively in regularly rhyming alexandrines. Nor, unlike the other suites, does this one include any poem using a mixture of the two basic line-lengths.

The structure of the remainder of this chapter is designed to reflect the development in the poetry away from the use of the alexandrine to an almost exclusive use of the sixteen-syllable line in Fortune Infortune Fortune and Fortune Infortune Fort Une. The chapter comprises three sections. In section 1), I will look at the treatment of the alexandrine and near-alexandrine, concentrating on series of such lines. Section 1) will focus on the suites up to and including Dis-moi, ma vie. It is divided into a number of sub-sections each of which presents a different stylistic feature. These stylistic features are common to all the poetry discussed in this chapter. Consequently, in the remaining two sections, attention will fall more on specific effects than on the stylistic features in themselves, and the quotations will be grouped accordingly. Section 2) will deal with poems in which alexandrines and sixteen-syllable lines are used extensively in combination with each other and with other line-lengths. Particular attention will again be given to the suites up to and including Dis-moi, ma vie at this point. Finally, in section 3), I will survey the sixteen-syllable line through from the early wartime poetry to Seghers's last suite, Fortune Infortune Fort Une. In this third section, it is those suites which post-date Dis-moi, ma vie which will receive the most extensive study.

## 1) FREED ALEXANDRINE VERSE

The term freed alexandrine verse is applied to lines which are of approximately twelve syllables (that is, lines which unequivocally have eleven or thirteen syllables, or in which there is a potential case for a césure épique or apocope). The term also applies to lines of twelve syllables whose structure is that neither of the classical binary alexandrine, nor of the ternary alexandrine.

(i) Series of end-stopped lines

Comme diante, as I have already stated, is written, almost without exception, in rhyming alexandrines.<sup>9</sup> Of the suites, it is Comme diante which is the most traditional in its handling of the alexandrine, approximately half the lines having a classical structure. The first two lines are typical of the suite:

|  |                      |       |
|--|----------------------|-------|
| Ma tante a un cheval, ma tante a une auto<br>Avez-vous entendu sa voix de contralto? | 2+4/2+4/<br>3+3/2+4/ | (p.1) |
|--|----------------------|-------|

The frivolous nature of the subject requires a lightness of tone. The jocularity is brought out by the banality of the opposition in the first line, and by the use of the classical alexandrine which creates a mock solemnity.

Of the other suites, Racines presents the most classical handling of the alexandrine, although there is no rhyme. This classicism can be seen in the following lines:

|  |                                    |         |
|--|------------------------------------|---------|
| - Je ne regrette rien, ni le douçain ni l'arbre<br>Ni le limon mouvant que les crues emportaient<br>Ni les cris des oiseaux, leurs nids, les fleurs étranges | 3+3/4/2/<br>3+3/3+3/<br>3+3/2/2+2/ | (TM 97) |
|--|------------------------------------|---------|

Each of the three lines has a perfectly regular first hemistich which itself has a binary structure. In lines 1 and 3, however, a second internal primary stress is present, and to this extent, the lines may be seen as presenting a divergence from strictly classical prosody. The binary structure present in the first line ('ni le douçain ni l'arbre') creates a sense of balance which is itself typical of the

classical alexandrine. There is thus a tension between a classical handling of the alexandrine and a slightly freer one.

Lines 1 and 3 may also be defined as binary-cum-ternary alexandrines. This type of alexandrine will be discussed further in section (iv) below. Line 1 is reminiscent of a binary alexandrine in having a caesura after the sixth syllable, but the second hemistich itself contains a further primary stress: the line is binary-cum-ternary in terms of primary stresses. Similar remarks may be made of line 3, although this line has a further ambivalence. In the second hemistich, 'leurs nids' belongs more closely with 'Ni les cris des oiseaux' than it does with 'les fleurs étranges'. Such ambivalences as this seem to reflect a certain spontaneity, similar to that suggested on page 136. While they may reflect the patterns of the poet's language as it emerged from his subconscious, they do present an analogy, conscious or otherwise on the poet's part, for the world in creation. In these particular lines, this is suggested specifically by 'limon'. This world in creation is in a state between chaos and order, amorphousness and something more structured. Other lines which create effects similar to these will be seen throughout this chapter.<sup>10</sup>

The following lines, from Dis-moi, ma vie, are all related to the ternary alexandrine, rather than to the classical model. Such a long sequence of lines, each of which has a primary stress on the fourth syllable, is unusual for Seghers:

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Tu viens ici, c'est pour parfaire le beau temps         | 4/4+4/     |
| C'est pour l'éclair, c'est pour l'éclat dans la mémoire | 4/4+4/     |
| L'or de l'instant, le scintillement d'une étoile        | 1+3/2+3+3/ |
| 4 C'est pour la nuit. Ecouter se lever le vent          | 4/3+2+3/   |
| dans les ajoncs, fendre le bois vif de tes veines       | 4/1+3+1/3/ |
|   | (TM 188)   |

The consistency with which four- and eight-syllable phrases alternate leads to an impression of regular constraint and expansion in the rhythm. The sense of expansion is in tension with the implicit brevity of 'éclat', 'éclair' and 'instant'. In lines 2 and 3, there is, however, a sense of abruptness which emphasises the sudden brightness. The abruptness results from the concision of the syntax, and is

reinforced on the phonetic level by the repeated [ekl] of 'éclair' and 'éclat', and the further repetition of [e] in 'mémoire' and 'étoile'. In lines 4-5, it is the sense of expansion which is uppermost, for the sentence starting 'Ecouter' straddles the line-ending, as if in imitation of a long gust of wind.

The regular alternation of short and long phrases in the last quotation created a sense of flux. In the following series of lines from the same suite, the sense of flux is even greater:

|   |   |              |
|---|---|--------------|
|   | Rien ne me justifie, sinon d'être. Je passe       | 1+5/3(+1)/2/ |
|   | je reviens et m'efface et je réapparaïs           | 3+3/3+3/     |
|   | toujours le même, un blé venu des sarcophages     | 4/2/4+2/     |
| 4 | né pour ensemercer et faire d'autres grains       | 1/2+3/4+2/   |
|   | du secret qui n'est rien, un homme, une misère... | 3+3/2/4/     |
|   |   | (TM 194)     |

The impression of fluidity in lines 1 and 2 (from 'Je passe' onwards) stems from a combination of features on the levels of both the phonetic and the syntactic structure. Each verb is in opposition to the next, creating an oscillation on an intellectual level, while the transition from one verb to the next, on the level of the sound, is effected through the liaisons in 'reviens et' and 'm'efface et'. These liaisons create apparent pauses and so assure a continuity in the line while also creating a certain buoyancy in the rhythm. The sibilant ending of line 1, [s], on the other hand, suggests a fading away. In line 2, I have opted for a secondary stress on 'reviens', but a primary one on 'm'efface'. This heightens the sense of ephemerality, emphasising the second verb. It also draws attention to the internal rhyme 'passe : m'efface'. Line 2 is thus binary in having a primary stress on the sixth syllable, but ternary on the level of the syntax. Meanwhile, the binary division is smoothed over by the liaison, again suggesting the continuity between the three actions. The third line, too, is metrically ambiguous, having two internal primary stresses. The first of these suggests an orthodox ternary structure, while another on the sixth syllable leaves a classical hemistich. This ambiguity is in contrast with the regular lilting rhythm of the previous line, occasioned by the succession of three-syllable segments. Line 4 creates an impression of rhythmic looseness through the variety of the lengths of its segments. This is accompanied by a certain syntactic

ambivalence. In line 4, 'né' refers both to the wheat of line 3, and to the 'je' of line 2, for 'un blé' is in apposition to 'je'. The transitions from 'je' (line 2) to 'un blé' (line 3), and to 'un homme' (line 5) convey the dynamic nature of the relationship between the individual and the outside world. There is, in lines 4-5, a degree of ambiguity in the syntax: is the wheat 'né ... du secret', or, rather, are the seeds to be made of the 'secret qui n'est rien'? As these images are an expression of cycles of regeneration, both are true at once. Rhythmically, lines 4 and 5 reflect the ideas of dynamism and regeneration. The less rigorously metrical element (the first hemistich of line 4, which has an 'extra' primary stress on the first syllable) is countered by the other, classical, hemistiches which follow it. This classicism is itself suggestive of an order or plan in the process of regeneration.<sup>11</sup>

The following lines from Piranèse, while being end-stopped, again create an impression of tension between fixity and more elusive form:

|       |  |                          |          |
|-------|--|--------------------------|----------|
| (...) | On y apprend   | 4/                       |          |
|       | le sens du labyrinthe et à toucher les pierres         | 2+4/3+3/                 | (=12)    |
|       | qui faisaient peur. Mais dans un silence habité        | 4/5+3/                   | (=12)    |
| 4     | une odeur de soleil s'installe. Chacun s'élève         | 3+3/2(+1)/2+2/           | (=13)    |
|       | lentement et va de palier en palier                    | 1+2/2+3+3/               | (=11)    |
|       | toujours plus haut, là où les salles sont plus vastes, | 1+3/1+3 <sup>7</sup> /4/ | (=12)    |
|       | On y apprend encore. (...)                             | 4+2(+1)/(...)            |          |
|       |  |                          | (TM 125) |

The presence of approximate alexandrines enhances the sense of non-fixity by introducing non-metrical elements.<sup>12</sup> The sense of shifting arises also from the fact that the major breaks in syntax fall mid-line. There is consequently a certain tension between the lines as units and the syntax. This is most noticeable in lines 4-7. In this particular sentence ('Chacun s'élève...') there could potentially be full stops at the ends of lines 4, 5 and 6, and after 'haut' (line 7). The line-endings thus mark pauses rather than halts in a movement, echoing the meaning of 'de palier en palier' (line 5); any impression of having arrived at the summit is a false one. This halting movement is also suggestive of the groping advance implied in lines 1-3, and is

reflected in the possible expectation of a full stop at the end of line 2; an expectation which is subsequently countered.

(ii) Lines with enjambement

In Piranèse, certain complexities of structure may be seen as a linguistic analogy for the complexity of Piranesi's prisons. This is the case notably in the last quotation. It is also seen where enjambement is present, as here:

|   |  |   |                        |
|---|--|---|------------------------|
| 4 | (...) Ce sont les signes<br>d'un trésor, ou bien les chiffres d'un langage<br>secret. N'entre pas ici qui le veut. On y apprend<br>à lire, à déchiffrer, à pénétrer. On entre<br>dans un monde lourd et trapu. On y apprend<br>à voir. (...) | 4;<br>3/4+4; (=11)<br>2/3+2+3/4; (=14)<br>2/4/4/2; (=12)<br>3+2+3/4; (=12)<br>2/(...) | (TM 125) <sup>13</sup> |
|---|--|---|------------------------|

The use of enjambement at the end of five consecutive lines is unusual, and results in a total dislocation of syntax and metre; a dislocation compounded by the presence of an approximate alexandrine and a fourteen-syllable line. In the first two cases, the words withheld both point to the mysterious nature of the language of artistic creation, a theme which has already been seen in relation to Piranèse in Chapter 4. The words withheld imply rarity or something secret. They are themselves withheld, as it were, from immediate view by the enjambement. Enjambement, as we have seen elsewhere, has the characteristic of creating a tension between rhythmic expansion and constraint. The feeling of expansion stems from the running of the syntax over the line-ending. The feeling of constraint results from the checking of the flow of the syntax at the end of the line, and also, frequently, from the presence of a primary stress and pause early in the next line. The effect of expansion and constraint is particularly appropriate in the transition from line 4 to line 5, where the opening implied by the verb 'entrer' is then countered by the oppressive heaviness of the 'monde lourd et trapu'.

Neither line 2 nor line 3 is an orthodox alexandrine. In line 2, the eight-syllable phrase, which is composed of two equal segments, and in line 3, the final four-syllable segment, are elements of

stability and regularity. On the other hand, the eight-syllable phrases in the middle of line 3 and at the beginning of line 5 embody the tension between stability and a greater dynamism. Eight-syllable phrases are, as we have seen, typical of Seghers's poetry. They are a rhythmic constant, or, particularly in the case of the sixteen-syllable lines, a metrical one. In the context of these lines from Piranèse, the effect of the eight-syllable phrases in question is primarily rhythmic. Being composed, in lines 3 and 5, of two- and three-syllable segments, they introduce a degree of variety, and each has a ternary rhythm.

The overall effect of the lines is one of a tension between a certain fluidity (resulting from the enjambement, the presence of the different line-lengths, and the presence of ternary rhythms) and something more fixed. As was the case in the lines from Dis-moi, ma vie discussed on pages 144-145, this dynamism, which suggests both form and elusiveness, presents an analogy for the themes. Here, the tension on the thematic level is between language as something ordered, by rules of grammar and syntax, and as something penetrable only by degrees. On one level, language is here being used as a metaphor applied to the prisons. It also refers to the language of poetry, and of this poem in particular. Finally, language is, as we have seen, that through which the self is approached; but the self is penetrable only by degrees.

In Piranèse, the alexandrine is frequently modulated in such a way as to create an impression of fluidity or instability. The rhythmic fluidity is a counterbalance to the oppressive massiveness of the prisons which we find on the thematic level. In so far as the prisons are both inside the prisoners' imagination and yet contain the prisoners, the fluidity also translates the shifting relationship between the interior and exterior worlds. The relationship between the self and the outside world is sensed in the act of artistic creation, while it is also a subject of artistic creation. The deciphering of the outside world (the prison structures) is one with the deciphering of the inner world of the imagination and of the self.

In so far as the vast majority of alexandrines in Dialogue have a traditional binary or ternary structure, the treatment of the line in this suite retains a certain orthodoxy. Yet, as in Piranèse, the handling of the alexandrine is such as to convey fluidity. In Dialogue, this fluidity corresponds to the impermanence which is characteristic of the world depicted in the suite.

One of the poems written in near-alexandrines, and which is typified by the sense of ephemerality, is 'Ce n'est que le souci'. Here are the opening lines of the poem:

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Ce n'est que le souci d'un cœur toujours le même<br>qui s'éraille à changer selon les vents, ce n'est<br>qu'une attente à demi déserte, quand le ciel<br>roule bas ses marées, ce n'est sur la maison<br>qu'un emblème criard où les pluies luisent. Rien<br>que le morne écheveau des affûts (...) | $2+4+2/2+2/$<br>$3/3+4/2/$<br>$3/2+3/4/$<br>$1+2+3/2/4/$<br>$3+3/3+1(+1)/1/$<br>$3+3+3/(\dots)$ | (=12)<br>(=12)<br>(=12)<br>(=12)<br>(=12)<br>(=12) |
|---|---|--|

4 (TM 128)

The enjambement in lines 2-3 and 3-4 translates the idea of rushing winds and rolling clouds. The fluidity of the enjambement itself is enhanced by a number of other features. In line 4, the absence of a primary stress before the sixth syllable creates a sense of impetuosity, analogous to the rolling movement of the skies. Throughout these lines, there is a lack of coincidence between full stops and line-endings, further increasing the tension between metre and syntax set up by the enjambement proper. The repetition of the phrase 'ce n'est que' at different points of the various lines creates a type of counterpointing similar to that seen in 'Septembre 1939' (see pages 138-139). Throughout these lines, furthermore, the sense of instability is enhanced by the relative unorthodoxy of the lines; they are neither classical binary nor orthodox ternary alexandrines. They may, for this reason, be defined as freed alexandrines.

In Au seuil de l'oubli, on the other hand, we find a poem written in lines which are freed alexandrines by virtue of their approximation to the twelve-syllable norm, or by the presence of a

césure épique.<sup>14</sup> Enjambement is a frequent feature of this poem, as in these lines:

|  |                |          |
|--|----------------|----------|
| Nous vivons entre des dominos qu'un mal aimante          | 3+4+2/2+2/     | (=13)    |
| à nous chercher en vain, des chutes, des parcours        | 4+2/2/4/       | (=12)    |
| mal définis, dans la poussière des histoires             | 1+3/4+4/       | (=12)    |
| 4 sans queue ni tête, sur les cadrans des yeux lointains | 2+2(+1)/4+2+2/ | (=13)    |
| aveugles à notre temps d'horloge, aiguilles noires       | 2*/4+2/2+2/    | (=12)    |
| dans l'épaisseur, dans les grumeaux et le béton          | 4/4/4/         | (=12)    |
|  |                | (TM 200) |

The metrical ambiguity created by enjambement is well illustrated here, translating the tension between form and formlessness. In all three instances, the enjambement occurs at a point at which meaninglessness, or difficulty in perceiving form, is being expressed. The lines run on, losing their sharp edges as it were, and the very words which express the obscurity are those held over to the beginning of lines 3, 4 and 6. The enjambement creates a halting and restarting which echoes the shifts in meaning: the 'parcours' are not clearly marked but 'mal définis', the histories not clearly linear but 'sans queue ni tête', and the fingers of the clock, though black, do not stand out sharply on the clock face but are obscured.

The sense of being lost finds a further counterpart in the syntax. Up to 'en vain' (line 2), the syntax is clear, but from this point onwards, the relationship of the different phrases to each other is unclear. While presumably the 'nous' of the poem suffer the 'chutes' and take the 'parcours mal définis', these same 'chutes' and 'parcours' could also be in apposition to 'nous', identifying 'nous' completely with the vicissitudes of existence. Alternatively, the 'chutes' and 'parcours' can be understood as being quite detached images, or impressionistic references. Similarly, it is unclear whether it is 'nous' who are 'dans la poussière' (line 3) or 'sur les cadrans' (line 4). The latter image anticipates 'aiguilles noires' (line 5), which, again, is either in apposition to 'nous', or is another unrelated impressionistic image. The effect of all these ambiguities is to create a chimera-like picture in which the

relationships between things, and in particular between 'nous' and the rest, are constantly shifting. Part of this shifting picture is the reader's definition of 'nous' in terms of the rest, but the reader's inclusion in the 'nous' is also implied. The reader is involved in the ever-changing relationships between things.<sup>15</sup>

The passage of time, which is one of the subjects of the last quotation, is a central idea in the following series of lines. These, too, are from Au seuil de l'oubli:

|   |   |                |          |
|---|---|----------------|----------|
|   | Nous vivons les moments de la mémoire ancienne      | 3+3/4+2/       | (=12)    |
|   | Nous, des blocs détachés du pôle, dérivant          | 1/2+3+2(+1)/3/ | (=12)    |
|   | sur l'océan du temps où notre temps ne dure         | 4+2/4+2/       | (=12)    |
| 4 | qu'un instant de miroirs, un miracle fuyant         | 3+3/3+3/       | (=12)    |
|   | et basculant. La vie s'en va pour se dissoudre      | 4/2+2/4/       | (=12)    |
|   | dans ce que nous étions. Au passé, nous vivions     | 6/3/3/         | (=12)    |
|   | pour des oiseaux criards qui tournoyaient, nos îles | 4+2/4/2/       | (=12)    |
| 8 | se posaient, s'envolaient, les paraphes du vent     | 3/3/3+3/       | (=12)    |
|   |   |                | (TM 205) |

The enjambement in these lines creates various parallels to the sense. In lines 2-3, the dislocation of syntax and metre reinforces the unorthodox internal structure of line 2 to suggest erratic drifting. In lines 3-4, I suggest that the phrase 'où notre temps ... miroirs' be read with a relatively fast tempo, minimising the apparent pause on 'dure', to convey the ephemerality and counter the very length of the six-syllable phrase before the primary stress on 'miroirs'. In lines 4-5, the suspension of the voice and a pause on 'fuyant' convey, in the intonation and rhythmically, the idea of toppling seen in 'basculant'.<sup>16</sup> In lines 5-6, the syntactic merging of the lines is analogous to the sense, while in lines 6-7 and 7-8, the instability of the metre reflects that of the shifting world, implied in 'tournoyaient', 'se posaient' and 's'envolaient'. The general effect of these lines, rhythmically, is to create a sense of insubstantiality. The absence of a primary stress before the sixth syllable in lines 3, 4 and 6 (that is, relatively late on, given the enjambement) has various effects. The case of the fourth line has already been seen. In line 3, it is suggestive of the expanse of the ocean and of time. Another effect again is achieved in line 6. The absence of any stress at all before the sixth syllable again speeds up the tempo, throwing the verb

'étions' all the more into relief and thus underlining the implication of futility and insignificance. These lines, then, are characterised by metrical instability, which conveys the instability of existence; the individual's own lifespan is insignificant when viewed against the perenniability of creation. The instability also translates the individual's consciousness of his self, as suggested in the image of mirrors. His picture of his self is fugitive in the extreme, for the self, as we saw in Chapter 4, is always changing.

### (iii) The binary-cum-ternary alexandrine

A number of binary-cum-ternary alexandrines were seen in Chapter 5. The last three lines of the last quotation afford other examples. All three, in terms of their primary stresses, have a ternary structure. At the same time, each presents a hemistich unbroken by a further internal primary stress.

In Les Pierres, the binary-cum-ternary alexandrine frequently has a binary structure in one of the hemistichs, while the other hemistich is more or less independent syntactically. This is the case in the second complete line of the following quotation:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| (...) Je crée<br>plus loin, les océans, les îles et leurs plages,<br>les dieux à cheveux d'or, le vent et ses chevaux | 2/4/2+4/ (=12)<br>2+4/2+4/ (=12)<br>(TM 110) |
|---|--|

The line presents a variation on the binary-cum-ternary structure in so far as I have given 'vent' a secondary, and not a primary stress. This seems better suited to conveying an impression of a rush of creation.<sup>17</sup> The line has, nonetheless, three elements of equal value, syntactically, in 'les dieux', 'le vent', and 'ses chevaux'. The accumulation of nouns throughout the two lines is suggestive of restless activity, although the binary structures themselves create a lilting effect in the rhythm, and suggest a certain order, even though, rhythmically, they are asymmetrical.

In Racines, too, we find a similar lilting rhythm, in a binary-cum-ternary alexandrine, translating the idea of cyclical re-creation:

(...) Le fleuve épais comme un Dieu-fleuve  
qui jetait à la mer sa semence et son flux      3+3/3+3/      (TM 96)

Again, the second hemistich is composed of a binary structure. Here, the liquid element is translated also by the repeated [s], which is suggestive of the slight hissing of retreating waves. The liaison between the two halves of the binary structure, 'sa semence et son flux', is itself effected through the final [s] of 'semence'. Together with the regular succession of three-syllable segments in this line, this binary structure is responsible for the lilting effect. The final [s] of 'semence' is literally, on the phonetic level, responsible for the continuity between the two elements, 'semence' and 'flux', while these elements themselves imply cyclical continuity in nature.

In Piranèse, a binary-cum-ternary structure is frequently related to enjambement, as here:

La nuit tombe. On dirait que des fanaux s'allument      2+1/3+4+2/      (=12)  
dans les plombs des vitraux où saigne un feu. Ni l'or      3+3/2+2/2/      (=12)  
du jour naissant, ni la lumière verticale      2+2/4+4/      (=12)  
4 de midi, ne composent un tel orchestre. (...)      3/3+3+2/(...)      (TM 115)

In the first line, the primary stress on the third syllable lends gravity to the verb and creates an asymmetrical binary line-division. At the same time, syntactically, the line has three main elements: 'La nuit tombe', 'On dirait' and 'que des fanaux s'allument'. The rhythm of the line translates the idea of death (the initial short phrase) and re-birth (the longer second phrase, creating a sense of expansion). The second line is another binary-cum-ternary line, having a first regular hemistich but an overall ternary division in terms of primary stresses. The structure of the third line, too, is a further modulation of the binary-cum-ternary structure. While, in terms of the stress pattern, the line may be seen as an orthodox ternary alexandrine, syntactically, the line is clearly binary. The structure

of this particular alexandrine, with its eight-syllable phrase, is characteristic of Seghers's freed alexandrine verse. Further examples of such alexandrines will be seen in section 2). In this instance, the enjambement at the ends of lines 2 and 3 adds to the rhythmic complexities. Its presence creates a sense of expansion suggestive of the glorious height of the midday sun, and of the prisons. This sense of expansion results also from the relative infrequency of stresses in 'ni la lumière verticale' (4+4/).<sup>18</sup>

#### (iv) Binary structures within freed alexandrines

Binary structures, such as the pairing of like syntactical elements, have already been seen as a feature of fixed-form poetry. They continue to be a feature of the freed verse, as can be seen, for example, from the quotation from Les Pierres on page 152. I will limit the discussion to three examples in freed alexandrine verse.

The following lines from Les Pierres offer a good illustration of the use of binary structures:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Sans cesse nous roulons et nous nous refaisons<br>d'une écume où le ciel se mire et se divise.<br>Est-ce la mer ou nous, dispersés et mouvants<br>4 qui déferlons sur les rochers? (...) | 2/4/4+2/<br>3/3+2/4/<br>4+2/3+3/<br>4+4/(...) |
| (TM 112)   |   |

The lines well exemplify the sense of ebb and flow resulting from the binary structures. In the first line, the division of the two verbs between the two hemistichs creates a sense of balance and a lilting rhythm. These verbs imply dynamism; a dynamism translated rhythmically by the enjambement between lines 1 and 2. The run-on creates a particular sense of breadth, underlining the continuity of the process. In line 2, the opposition between sea (as represented by 'écume') and sky is implicit, and is echoed by the opposition, in line 3, of 'la mer' and 'nous'. Again, in both these lines, the verbs, and the participles, are ones of movement, or, in the case of 'se mire', imply a dialectical relationship. In line 3 in particular, the lilting effect is enhanced by the presence of the two stresses per hemistich, the stresses falling on the opposed words.<sup>19</sup>

Whereas in the last quotation a certain sense of balance resulted, in the following lines from Racines uncertainty is uppermost:

|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Etait-ce le silence ou le sang des limons<br>qui bruissaient sur le fil insensible des fleuves<br>jaunes et lents, ou bien le battement d'un coeur? | 2+4/3+3/<br>3/3+3/3/<br>1+3/4+4/ |
|---|----------------------------------|

(TM 96)

The binary structures work on two levels which are in tension with each other. Their presence creates a sense of order and regularity, but they are part of a question. As such, they express the search for an order rather than the order itself. This tension is heightened by several other features. First, there is a possible contradiction implied in the pairing of 'silence' and the noise-making 'limons'. Second, the 'sang des limons' is itself paradoxical, because of the linking of blood and silt. Blood suggests life, however, and the silt fertility. Third, the second and third lines are linked by enjambement. The proximity to each other of the stresses on 'fleuves' and 'jaunes' slows down the tempo and is thereby suggestive of the thickly flowing river. Fourth, to the hearer at least, the subject of 'bruissaient' will be ambiguous. Finally, while 'le silence' and 'le sang des limons' are opposed to each other, 'le battement d'un coeur' is opposed to both of these. There is thus an extended structure, which is both binary and ternary, running through the three lines.

In these lines from Dialogue, the binary structures convey antitheses:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Dans ma réalité, je vis en songe. Moi,<br>Poussière et vin, sang et fumées, mer et montagnes<br>par un rêve accordés, qui m'a fait? (...) | 3+3/2+2/2/<br>2+2/1+3/1+3/<br>3+3/1+2/(...) |
|---|---|

(TM 128)

Here, the paired words bring out the paradoxical nature of existence. We saw in Chapter 4 how the individual defines his picture of his self in terms of the outside world. This duality is suggested in these lines first in the countering of 'réalité' by 'songe', and is seen more specifically in the series of metaphors in the second line. The accumulated pairs of words in this line suggest the paradoxical nature of existence: the combination of physical being ('vin' and 'sang') and

something ephemeral and elusive ('poussière' and 'fumées'). While the physical being is itself ephemeral, the picture we have of our self is also elusive. At the same time, as the 'poussière', 'vin', and other things have themselves been granted by a dream, they all take on a degree of uncertainty. This chimerical quality is reflected in the oscillation between the different elements. The resulting broken rhythm, composed of a multiplicity of short segments, is compounded by the final question.

### Conclusion

Like that of the fixed-form poems, the prosody of the freed alexandrine verse combines orthodox features and a freer handling of form. Many individual lines have a classical structure, but lines are frequently combined in such a way as to create a tension between a degree of fixity and a certain fluidity. In end-stopped lines, the end-stopping itself may be responsible for a degree of fixity. In cases in which the end-stopping does not correspond to full stops, however, there is a tension between metre and syntax similar to that occasioned by enjambement or counterpointing. While one might expect the presence of a binary structure (that is, in the syntax) to create a certain rigidity through the suggestion of fixed order, such structures frequently translate dynamic relationships between things. Lines which combine both binary and ternary characteristics, in terms of stresses and syntax, are themselves a realisation of the tension between relative fixity and a greater dynamism.

In the sections which follow, the now familiar stylistic features are set aside as the subjects of the various sub-sections in favour of the common effects achieved by these devices. This approach will help to create a more synthetic picture of the poetic technique, a technique which itself reflects the dynamism of the universe.

## 2) VERSE IN MIXED LINE-LENGTHS

The effects of a regular alternation of different line-lengths in fixed-form poems have already been seen (see pages 123-124 above). Alongside these poems are others which use an irregular mixture of lines of different lengths. This form of free verse is found almost exclusively in the suites, where it reflects the theme of the dynamism in nature; a dynamism in which man participates. The lines are frequently recognisable, metrically speaking, but are often interspersed with unmetrical lines.<sup>20</sup> The high proportion of metrical lines distinguishes this type of verse from truly free verse. Furthermore, those lines which are unmetrical, in terms of their length, frequently bear a resemblance to metrical lines. For example, a fifteen-syllable line divided 7/8 or 8/7 is very close to Seghers's usual sixteen-syllable line, which divides 8/8, and lines of fourteen syllables which divide 6/8 or 8/6 are related to both the sixteen-syllable line (through the eight-syllable phrase) and the classical alexandrine (through the six-syllable phrase). Fourteen-syllable lines with such structures are frequent in Seghers's poetry, and may be considered as metrical. Through features such as these, there is often a high degree of rhythmic and metrical integration of lines of disparate lengths.

One extract, from Dis-moi, ma vie, will serve to illustrate this form of integration, though many other examples will be seen throughout this section. With regard to this quotation, then, the discussion will concentrate largely on the prosody:

Une enfance longtemps maintenue, le temps n'existe pas pour elle  
 3+3+3/2+4+2/ (=17)  
 Même dans les maisons dévastées, quand l'été 1+5+3/3/ (=12)  
 suspendait son silence absolu sur la pierrière des collines  
 3+3+3/4+4/ (=17)  
 et dans l'ombre portée d'un vieux fort. Les nuits mêlées aux jours  
 3+3+3/2+4/ (=15)  
 ne faisaient qu'un, nul ne se savait de passage 4/1+4+3/ (=12)  
 mais immortel. On s'enivrait de l'air du temps 4/4+2+2/ (=12)  
 (TM 189)

The seventeen-syllable lines (lines 1 and 3) closely resemble typical sixteen-syllable lines in having a basic 9/8 division.<sup>21</sup> The nine-

syllable phrases in these lines are characteristically ambiguous, being close in length to the hemistich of a sixteen-syllable line while also recalling one possible structure of a classical alexandrine (3+3/3+3). This is the case in line 3, where the nine-syllable phrase is led into by the last three syllables of the preceding line, thus forming the equivalent of an alexandrine. The nine-syllable phrase itself, whether structured 3+3+3/ or otherwise, is in these lines a rhythmic constant, occurring at the beginning of each of the first four lines.

Although the 'extra' syllables present in lines 1 and 3 can thus be incorporated into some sort of system, it would be wrong to imply that such syllables are to be seen as problematic, or that they should, wherever possible, be fitted into some such perhaps arbitrary system. The reason for pointing out features of this sort is to draw attention to the rhythmic and metrical richness of the lines, and to try and explain why certain series of lines may leave one with an impression of metrical vagueness. Line 5 again combines features of both the alexandrine (this time the ternary alexandrine) and the sixteen-syllable line (through the eight-syllable phrase), while line 6 is a ternary alexandrine.

The technique of using different lengths for successive lines, and relating these lines rhythmically and metrically to each other, has the effect of varying the rhythmic tensions of the verse. We now need to look more closely at the various effects which result from the rhythmic tensions. The remainder of section 2) is devoted to this, and to the relationship between the effects and the themes.

#### (i) Tension between order and disorder

Throughout the preceding chapters, frequent mention has been made of the tension between a certain order and disorder, both on the thematic level and on that of the prosody and rhythms of the verse. This type of tension is typical of the verse written in mixed line-lengths. It is well illustrated by the following quotation, taken from

Racines, where tension between order and chaos is also expressed in the images:

|   |   |                               |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
|   | Forêts, forêts crêpues, hautes cascades du déluge                         | 2/2+2/1+3+4/ (=14)            |
|   | Chairs molles mêlées d'eaux qui deviendrez des continents                 | 1+1/2+2/4+4/ (=14)            |
|   | Iles, qui dérivez sur des fleuves énormes                                 | 1(+1)/4+3+3/ (=12)            |
| 4 | Caillots de boues et d'arbres verts au fil des veines couleur<br>d'argent | 2+2+2+2/4/3+2/ (=17)          |
|   | Quelles forces vous ont fixées et quelles forces vous arrachent           | 1+2+5/2+2+4/ (=16)            |
|   | Qui vous construit et vous divise, quel architecte fou d'oiseaux          | 1+3+4*/1+3/2+2/ (=16)         |
|   | délire et crée, avec de la vase et des germes                             | 2/2/5+3/ (=12)                |
| 8 | un univers où les forêts par pans entiers tombent dans l'eau?             | 4/4+2+2/1/3/ (=16)<br>(TM 95) |

Although, in line 1, there is a primary stress on the first 'forêts', the phrase 'forêts crêpues' is more closely linked with the initial 'forêts' than with the 'hautes cascades', creating, then, a binary division in the sense of the line. Such a hybrid binary-cum-ternary structure is present also in the second line, where, although there is a primary stress on 'molles', a more important syntactic division is found after the sixth syllable. Alexandrines of a similarly hybrid form were seen in section 1) of this chapter. As an alexandrine, line 3 is unusual in having a heavily asymmetric division (though there is a secondary stress on the sixth syllable) creating a long, expansive phrase which is analogous to the meaning of 'des fleuves énormes'. The long syllable of 'fleuves' enhances this sense of expansion. The first three lines, in alternating short and long phrases, all (individually as well as together) illustrate the varying tension possible within longer lines. The same is true also of line 7, where a long phrase follows two initial short segments.

Following the long second phrase of the third line, the staccato effect of the series of two-syllable segments in line 4 is all the more striking. While this conveys the violence of nature's destructive forces, the shortness of the individual segments is in tension with the length of the phrase in which they are found, for this length itself conveys the broad-sweeping nature of the changes.

The second stanza, too, makes play of various forms of tension. The most obvious of these is that created by the relative shortness of line 7, an alexandrine, in comparison with the surrounding lines. The rhythm of the first part of line 7 is halting, due to the proximity to each other of the primary stresses on 'délire' and 'crée'. The repeated [e] heightens this effect. Although the line is an alexandrine, the fact that it is not classical in structure results in the alexandrine as such being lost amidst the longer lines. Yet this line is integrated with the longer lines through its eight-syllable phrase. This echoes the hemistichs of the sixteen-syllable lines (lines 5 and 6), and the eight-syllable phrase in the middle of line 8, while creating a contrast with the more broken rhythm of the earlier part of line 7. There is also a sense of ebb and flow, stemming from the mixture of binary and non-binary elements. In line 5, the division into two eight-syllable phrases is a metrical division: it is the normal one, in terms of primary stresses, of a Seghersian sixteen-syllable line. The division is also a syntactical one: the structures of the two hemistichs are parallel. Their rhythms, however, are quite different. In line 6, the binary structure in the first hemistich is syntactical. The two halves of the structure are further related rhythmically, each occupying four syllables, and the parallel verbs both have two syllables. The second hemistich has a further binary division, though this is not concomitant with a binary syntactical structure.

The sense of ebb and flow in line 6, then, stems from, first, the binary structure in the first hemistich; second, the overall binary metrical division of the line; and third, the further subdivision of the second hemistich into two four-syllable phrases. This last feature is coupled with a sense of slackening resulting from the relatively free syntactical structure of the second hemistich in comparison with the first. The relative looseness of the second hemistich of line 6 also contrasts with the binary structures, 'délire et crée' and 'avec de la vase et des germes', in line 7. The rhythm of the eighth line is ambiguous. While I have opted for a primary stress on 'univers', an alternative reading might be 4+4/2+2/1<sup>7</sup>/3/; but an eight-syllable phrase is still present. The uncertainty of this line is itself a counterpart to the instability of the universe, while the 'asymmetrical' reading

opted for in the notation given on page 159 also conveys instability. The sense of expansion which results from the eight-syllable phrase is suddenly countered by the isolated 'tom-', which is suggestive of the sudden crashing fall of the sections of forest.

The sense of ebb and flow present throughout these lines reflects the state of flux in the natural world. This state of flux is reflected, notably, in the oscillation, in lines 1 and 2, between things which are concrete and relatively stable (the 'forêts' and 'continents'), and things which are unfixed, or quicksilver-like (the 'cascades du déluge' and 'chairs molles mêlées d'eaux'). Likewise, in line 3, the islands, which one would expect to be stable, are floating islands, while being composed of both mud (an unstable element) and trees (relatively concrete). This tension between the relatively concrete and the relatively unstable is echoed in the verbs: 'fixer' and 'arracher' (line 5) and 'construire' and 'diviser' (line 6). In line 7, 'délier' suggests a chaotic creation, in contrast with 'créer', which suggests more conscious construction.

In my next quotation, from Piranèse, the tensions within the lines again reflect the tension between disorder (seen here in images of dereliction) and conscious reconstruction:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Dans les gravois et les décombres, dans les dépôts de matériaux<br>de démolition, dans un cimetière de vestiges<br>Ce qu'il faut: Des blocs bien jointoyés pour dresser les piliers<br>4 d'une demeure éblouissante, verticale. | 4+4*/4+4/ (=16)<br>2+3/5+4/ (=14)<br>3/2+4/3+3/ (=15)<br>4+4/4/ (=12)<br><u>(IM 122)</u> |
|---|--|

The enjambement in these lines is used in such a way as to create particularly long phrases. Although the verse has a clear syntactic structure, in the repeated 'dans' phrases, it appears metrically ill-defined. This is the result of a number of features. Line 2 is unusual as a fourteen-syllable line in dividing 5/9. Line 3, in terms of total length, is unmetrical, though it is composed of an isolated three-syllable segment followed by the equivalent of a classical alexandrine. The internal alexandrine links this line, metrically, with the fourth, although the presence of enjambement masks this to

some extent. Throughout these lines, the very length of the sentence, the phrases of which it is composed, and of the rhythmic and metrical units, reflects the sense of chaos. Yet at the same time, the regular division of the first line into four four-syllable segments is itself suggestive of order. The same effect is found in the presence of an alexandrine in line 3, and of the regular ternary alexandrine which closes the stanza. In the case of line 3, this return to regularity is significant, for it is precisely in this line, with 'Des blocs...', that the rubble is shown to be material for perfectly ordered reconstruction.

In the last two quotations, a sense of precarious balance between order and chaos was the result of the presence of certain constant features within lines of different lengths. The use of constants is again striking in the following extract, from Racines, where the overriding sense is one of order:

|  |            |          |
|--|------------|----------|
| Il ne se perd pas l'homme de la nuit frappant les choses |            |          |
|  | 5/1+4/2+2/ | (=14)    |
| L'aveugle tâtonnant dans le chaos et dans son coeur      | 2/4+4/4/   | (=14)    |
| Il y retrouve en s'écorchant à sa pierraille             | 4/4+4/     | (=12)    |
| 4 Le poids du monde et les secrets de la douceur.        | 2+2/4+4/   | (=12)    |
|  |            | (TM 101) |

A metrical constant is found in the fact that the alexandrines (and this is true throughout the poem) are ternary alexandrines. Both, in this quotation, have a primary stress on the fourth syllable and so have a basic 4/8 division. Even more striking is the prevalence of four-syllable phrases and segments throughout the lines. These constants both create a sense of regularity on the level of the rhythm, and underline the implication that there is an underlying order in the universe, an implication seen in the statement 'Il ne se perd pas' (line 1). The apparent chaos reveals 'Le poids du monde' (lines 2-4). While this phrase by itself might be negative in connotation, it forms a pair with 'les secrets de la douceur'. The latter phrase suggests an underlying principle, and acceptance of the inability to understand fully what this principle might be. The binary structure of line 4, then, creates a sense of balance which helps to convey the idea of there being a determined order.

Elsewhere, series of lines of different lengths, even when these lines are end-stopped, convey an impression of breakdown. Although most of 'Quarante-trois', an early poem, is written for the rest largely in alexandrines, the first stanza offers a good example of an effect of breakdown in end-stopped lines of different lengths:

|  |              |         |
|--|--------------|---------|
| Tous les amours qui chantaient cette saison-là chantaien faux.     |              |         |
|  | 1+3/3+3+2/3/ | (=15)   |
| Les chiens pleuraient dans les maisons abandonnées,                | 2+2/4+4/     | (=12)   |
| On cardait l'avenir, la laine des années                           | 3+3/2+4/     | (=12)   |
| 4 Sur de mauvais chardons, les fils cassaient, rien n'allait bien. | 3+3/2+2/1+3/ | (=14)   |
|  |              | (TM 38) |

Because the lines are of different lengths, the end-stopping creates the effect of something erratic. This brokenness is analogous to the breaking of the thread, and to the breakdown of the normal, regular passage of time. This particular form of breakdown, that of time, itself implies an element of stasis or apparent stasis. (We saw in Chapter 1 a number of images which presented time as frozen.) Although these lines are written in the past tense, they refer to the present (the poem's title is 'Quarante-trois' and it was published in 1943<sup>22</sup>). The rhyme at the end of lines 2 and 3 draws attention to their shortness relative to line 1. This, together with the broken rhythm of line 4 (three phrases, each composed of two short segments), contributes to the jerkiness of the stanza, while the end-stopping, particularly in lines 1, 2 and 4, followed by the changes of subject, adds a note of finality to the statements.

The tension between order and disorder, on both the thematic and the structural levels, is typified by 'Les surpris, II', from Les Mots couverts, from which I quote the first four lines:

|  |                 |          |
|--|-----------------|----------|
| Celui qui croyait vivre en continu, il existait comme un collage | 2+4+4/4+4/      | (=18)    |
| dans le juxtaposé, baroque, flamboyant                           | 3+3/2/4/        | (=12)    |
| Un feu de flammes rouge cerise qui dévorait la vieille trame     | 2+2/2+3*/4+2+2/ | (=17)    |
| 4 des faits divers, papiers froissés, journaux de rien.          | 2+2/2+2/2+2/    | (=12)    |
|  |                 | (TM 161) |

The first line of the poem sums up, both in its imagery and in its structure, the tensions between order and disorder, between the linear and disjointed. While the line's rhythm creates an impression of regularity through the presence of two near-equal hemistichs, the very division of the line after 'continu' is a concretisation of the meaning of 'comme un collage'. In the first hemistich is the underlying idea that the individual's experience of his life as a continuity is false; existence is, rather, a series of disjointed events, or so it is posited in the second hemistich. The discrepancy between the two views, and the contiguity as opposed to continuity of events, are underlined by the hiatus at the caesura.

Contiguity or juxtaposition is again concretised in the second line by the presence of the two adjectives. Disjointedness is the hallmark of the syntax. A certain ambiguity exists: the two adjectives, 'baroque' and 'flamboyant', could qualify any of 'il', 'un collage' and 'le juxtaposé', though they seem most likely to qualify 'il', and so create an opposition to the static characteristics implied in 'collage' and 'juxtaposé'. At the same time, the structure of line 2 is again binary and ternary, and so further reflects the ambivalent, and paradoxical, nature of existence. The individual is separate from the world around him, like an element in a collage, and yet to be aware of this separation implies a dynamic relationship between the individual and his surroundings. The individual is aware of his individuality through his consciousness of the outside world: he is conscious of his similarities to, and differences from, other things. The paradoxical nature of becoming is also implied here, though the emphasis is not on the continuity of becoming but on the series of apparently separate events of which the individual is conscious.

The relationship of 'Un feu de flammes' (line 3) to what has preceded is ambiguous, but the phrase is most likely in apposition to the individual (line 1). The individual is not fixed in his relationship to other things, and refuses to be pinned down. This is, at least, a possible interpretation of the consuming in flames of the 'vieille trame' (which is linear, fixed and predictable) and of the 'faits divers, papiers froissés, journaux de rien' (which suggest verbal, printed, definitions).

The structure of these four lines taken together encapsulates the idea of the weft (the 'trame') in so far as there is a degree of syntactic continuity between the lines. At the same time, it also encapsulates the idea of disjointedness, for as well as the stringing together, or juxtaposition, of like grammatical elements, the very alternation of longer lines and alexandrines is itself a form of juxtaposition.

The last quotation conveyed a sense of dislocation between two views of life: life as a continuity, and as a series of individual events. Also implied is the individual's awareness of a gap (or dislocation) between his knowledge of himself (a knowledge which is incomplete) and the totality of his self. Further examples which convey a sense of dislocation will be seen in section (iii) below.

### (ii) Instability

In Racines, the universe's state of flux is seen, overall, as something positive. This is illustrated by the quotations on pages 159 and 162, above. Elsewhere, the associations are more negative, and the term 'instability' seems more suitable to describe the effect of the verse. The effect of instability is the key feature of the quotations which follow. First, a quotation from Dialogue:

Que reste-t-il de toi qui te regardes en cet instant?  
1+3+2/4/5/ (=15)

Le faucon, l'entends-tu déchirer le ciel de ses ailes,  
3/3+3+2/3/ (=14)

Et dans la pièce de soie brochée d'or fin, ni le soleil  
4+3/1+2+1/4/ (=15)

4 ni toi ne retrouverez le bref crissement 2/5+2+3/ (=12)

Nulle trace. Tu passeras, pareil à ces oiseaux de sang  
1+2(+1)/4/2+4+2/ (=14)

qui n'en font point histoire et fondent sur leur proies  
4+2/2/4/ (=12)

ou construisent des nids. A chaque instant tu pars,  
3+3/2+2/2/ (=12)

8 ton image se lève, aussi fidèle que ton ombre  
3+3/4+4/ (=14)

et disparaît. (...) 4/(...) (=14)

(TM 132)

The effect of instability stems from a number of factors. First, the fact that only two consecutive lines (lines 6 and 7) are the same

length means that no metrical expectation is created. This is matched by the fact that the internal treatment of these lines is also unmetrical in so far as the second hemistich of each has an 'extra' primary stress. On the level of the syntax, the questions denote uncertainty. This is compounded by the images of ephemerality, while rhythmically it is reflected in a number of features. First, in line 1, the initial series of monosyllables and the repetition of [t] create a staccato effect, while the isolation of 'Nulle trace' at the beginning of line 5 underlines the sense. In line 7, the isolation of the short verb, 'tu pars', at the end of the line, draws attention to the suddenness of the departure. A similar effect is achieved by the positioning of 'et disparaît' at the beginning of line 9. While there is no enjambement, there is an element of surprise in 'et disparaît', which contradicts the implication of permanence in 'aussi fidèle que ton ombre'; a phrase which could, furthermore, acceptably complete the sentence. Although 'et disparaît' forms a pair with 'se lève', their distance from each other distracts from this. Line 6 closely resembles a classical alexandrine in structure, while the second hemistich is introduced by 'et': the second phrase is an explanation of the first rather than a counterbalance to it, though with an echo of 'font' in 'fondent'. The latter phrase, 'et fondent sur leurs proies', does, however, find a possible answering phrase in 'ou construisent des nids'. The two phrases complement each other in that the first suggests a downwards movement and destruction, while the second concerns construction. The presence of a primary stress on 'fon-', followed by a césure enjambante, suggests the plunging of a bird of prey, while the regularity of the phrase at the beginning of line 7 (3+3/) is a rhythmic counterpart to the idea of construction. The relatively natural syntax of these lines creates a prose-like impression which complements the sense of instability which arises from other rhythmic features.

In the following quotation, from Les Pierres, the verse is half-way between suggesting something static and suggesting something more fluid:

|   |   |  |          |
|---|---|--|----------|
|   | Les pluies, les pleurs et l'à quoi bon des renommées,   |  |          |
|   |   | 2/2/4+4/   | (=12)    |
|   | Que portent-elles dans leurs fichus, sous leurs châles et sous<br>leurs robes,  | 2+2 <sup>7</sup> /3 <sup>7</sup> /5                  | (=17)    |
|   | Un espoir chuchoteur, un vain frémissement d'épis?  | 3+3/2+4+2/   | (=14)    |
| 4 | Le vent, le sang, le temps qui change et le temps passe,  | 2/2/2+2/4/   | (=12)    |
|   | Que disent-elles dans leur silence et quelle prière à deux mains<br>presse contre elles la longue attente dans son germe? | 2+2 <sup>7</sup> /5/2+2+3/                           | (=16)    |
|   |   | 1 <sup>7</sup> /3 <sup>7</sup> /3+2 <sup>7</sup> /4/ | (=13)    |
|   |   |  | (TM 109) |

The effects of fluidity and fixity stem from the alternation of short phrases and longer ones, and also from the syntax itself. This can be seen in line 1. The structure of this line resembles that of a ternary alexandrine with an additional primary stress on the second syllable. The line is built around the contrast between the two short initial phrases and the relatively long eight-syllable one, which is itself composed of relatively long segments. In line 1, as in lines 2 and 4, the presence of a list to some extent impedes the sense of development. The second line, which is long, presents what is virtually the converse of the first line's pattern: a long phrase followed by two shorter ones. The alternation of longer and shorter elements is reflected on the level of the line-lengths, and is itself to some extent responsible for a sense of flux. A high proportion of the lines are non-metrical: line 2 has seventeen syllables, and line 6 has thirteen.<sup>23</sup> Line 5, while having two internal primary stresses, has its most important syntactical break after the ninth syllable, resulting in an asymmetrical line. As a sixteen-syllable line, its internal structure is unmetrical. The lines are, however, all end-stopped, and the commas at the ends of lines 1, 2 and 4 could all be replaced by full stops. The sense of flux here, therefore, could not be related to that resulting from enjambement. There is a degree of syntactic and rhythmic similarity in the structures of lines 1 and 4, such that there is a sense of flux in the repetition. The two longer phrases of line 4 themselves combine to form a binary structure, the halves of which are

linked by the repetition of the subject, and through the liaison between 'change' and 'et'. The first hemistich of each of lines 2 and 5 again resemble each other. Syntactically, they are parallel to each other, and their rhythms are identical. The frequent césures enjambantes in this series of lines create, alternately, a drawing out and slight acceleration in the rhythm. This is particularly effective in the last line, where there is also a fairly high incidence of stresses. The slowed tempo of this line suggests 'la longue attente'.

Throughout these lines, the tension between fluidity and a degree of relative fixity is analogous to suggestions found on the level of the imagery. Images of the weather suggest seasonal change as well as the movement inherent in the wind itself, but there is also an implication of sameness, a suggestion of ceaseless rain and wind. It must also be remembered that Les Pierres is an interpretation of a series of photographs (fixed images) of the stones of Carnac; stones which are rooted in the earth as in the depths of time. Although they present an immutable aspect, the stones are subject to the eroding forces of the weather, a tension which finds its counterpart in the tensions of the prosody.

In the following quotation, from Qui sommes-nous?, the use of a mixture of line-lengths helps to convey the sense of being lost, and the doubt about the nature of human existence:

Et si l'homme n'était au bout, ombre d'une ombre 3+5/1+3/ (=12)  
qu'une image de la persistance rétinienne dans l'oeil d'un fou?

$$3+4+2+4/3+2/ \ (=18)$$

Sperme et salive, une supposition? S'il n'avait d'autre existence  
1+3/3+3/4+3/ (=17)

4 que celle d'un acteur dans un théâtre fait de trous

$$2+4/4+4/ \quad (=14)$$

où des armées furent conduites par des borgnes 4+4/4 (=12)  
Soldats énucléés, et des paniers d'yeux aux égouts?

$$2+4/3+2/3/ \quad (=14)$$

(TM 214)

A sense of the near static comes in particular, and paradoxically almost, from the very length of the first sentence. Here, the anticipated complement, 'qu'*'une image*', is delayed by the presence of the intervening phrase, 'ombre d'*'une ombre*'. Whereas the sentence could quite feasibly end at '*rétinienne*', creating a second line of

thirteen syllables, the further phrase, 'dans l'oeil d'un fou', creates an impression of stoppage, frustrating the expectation of a change of subject, and thus drawing attention to the image 'dans l'oeil d'un fou'. At the same time, the very length of the line and whole sentence reflects the idea of 'persistance'. The list of three elements at the beginning of line 3 also impedes a sense of progress by referring back to 'l'homme' and 'image', to which the three things are in apposition. The introduction of a new image, that of an actor, though it is parallel to the images of the first few lines, does create a sense of advance. Although the sentences are long, the coupling of end-stopping throughout with the rhyme on [u] further contains any sense of expansion. The horror of the imagery is underlined by the rather harsh-sounding nature of the last line, which is the result of the repetition of [e] (which, if a liaison between 'énucléés' and 'et' is avoided, is all the more harsh) and the repeated [j] in 'paniers d'yeux'. The effect of horror is heightened by marking a pause on 'yeux'.

Instability in these lines is the result of a sense of expansion, and the halting and frustrating of this. This tension is present also in the imagery. While ephemerality is a keynote to the poet's portrayal of the individual, the poet posits the notion that the individual is an after-image (and so something which persists) in the eye of some god-like figure.

The effect of instability already seen in the quotation from Dialogue on page 165 is similarly characteristic of the following two quotations from the same suite. In both cases, the disintegration of the metre, through the mixing of line-lengths and the use of enjambement, translates a sense of desolation or annihilation. In the

first of the two quotations, the sense of annihilation is conveyed to a large extent by the use of negatives:

|   |   |                      |                |
|---|---|----------------------|----------------|
|   | Le devenir s'en va dans ses péripéties<br>sans éclat, le reflet des eaux n'est plus le même | 4+2/3+3/<br>3/3+2/4/ | (=12)<br>(=12) |
|   | aux fontaines. Tout est devenu noir. Au plus profond  | 3(+1)/1+5/2+2;       | (=14)          |
| 4 | des vieux bassins, que cherches-tu? Dans une moire  | 2+2/4/4/;            | (=12)          |
|   | de souvenirs, vas-tu te perdre, là où l'enfance t'abandonne                                 | 4/4*/1+3+4/          | (=16)          |
|   | sur ses mille miroirs qui ne retiennent rien? 3+3/4+2/                                      | (=12)                |                |
|   | Si difficile est le passage. On reste pris dans les ornières,                               | 4+4/4+4/             | (=16)          |
| 8 | on perd ses traces dans le temps et la torpeur. (...)                                       | 2+2/4/<br>4/(...)    | (=8)           |
|   |   |                      | (TM 131)       |

Here, the overall sense is one of annihilation or stagnation. 'Le devenir' and 'le reflet', and the images of which they are the grammatical subjects, are to some degree parallel, but in their relationship to each other, given their positions within their respective lines, there is a slight dislocation. The use of enjambement also occasions a slight readjustment of the sense. This is suggestive of the way in which reflections (notably of clouds) slip out of the reflecting surface. The dislocation between metre and syntax is accompanied by questions (lines 4 and 6) which are themselves an expression of uncertainty. In contrast with such elements of instability is the terseness of 'Tout est devenu noir'. Although negative in connotation, it has the appearance of a positive and definitive statement. Furthermore, it recalls a recognisable metrical group, the hemistich of an alexandrine. The phrase is thus a stable element, metrically and syntactically, in the middle of otherwise shifting lines. Whereas the majority of fourteen-syllable lines are integrated with their context of twelve- and sixteen-syllable lines by having a 6/8 or 8/6 division, line 3 of this extract is integrated, syntactically, through the enjambement, with line 4. The six-syllable phrase, in the middle of line 3, is precisely the one which is isolated, and it is thereby given further emphasis.

In this context of lines which have a degree of fluidity, the orthodox structure of line 7 (4+4/4+4/) conveys an impression of

rigidity, reflecting the sense of 'On reste pris'. This effect is continued in line 8, which has a similar syntactic and rhythmic structure, but is curtailed, as it were, again reflecting the sense. Overall, however, the extract illustrates the way in which lines may create an impression of fluidity while yet remaining true, metrically.

In my second quotation from Dialogue, the tone verges on the prose-like:

|   |  |                            |       |
|---|--|----------------------------|-------|
|   | Il y a longtemps, entre 37° centigrades et la parole,            |                            |       |
|   |  | 4/3+4+3*/4/                | (=18) |
|   | On parlait d'un accord. Quel accord? Et quels chants             | 3+3/1+2/3/                 | (=12) |
|   | dont vous gardez le souvenir, dans le silence                    | 4+4/4/                     | (=12) |
| 4 | d'un monde déserté? Il n'y a rien que des éclairs,               | 2+4/3+4/                   | (=13) |
|   | Borborygmes de molécules, on a désintégré les hommes             | 3+3+2*/3+3+2/              | (=16) |
|   | et les voici, de-ci, de-là, séparés d'eux-mêmes, dans le désert. | 4/2/2/3+2(+1)/4/           | (=18) |
|   |  | (TM 136-137) <sup>24</sup> |       |

The prose-like quality is the result of a number of features which are also responsible for the sense of non-fixity. First, the first and last lines of the extract are particularly long and not obviously related, in any metrical way, to the lines of twelve, fourteen and sixteen syllables most frequently found in Seghers's verse. Second, a césure épique after 'centigrades' in line 1 will enhance this prose-like quality, creating a rhythm close to that of everyday speech. Third, the sentences themselves are varied in length, and, with the possible exception of line 4, which could end with a full stop, the full stops all fall mid-line. Line 4 is itself an unmetrical line, though it is reminiscent of a classical alexandrine. Finally, the tone is lightened by the brief question, 'Quel accord?', which sounds almost insolent. Similarly light in tone is 'de-ci, de-là'. A 2/2/ reading, however, rather than a more tripping 2+2/ one, underlines the idea of separation, as does the césure lyrique after 'eux-mêmes'. These elements of apparent flippancy are at variance with the desolation suggested in the lines, and so take on a certain bitterness. While some lines, taken individually, may have a degree of metrical orthodoxy, in context they are part of a more prose-like structure.

While line 3 is a ternary alexandrine, the enjambement links it closely with line 4. The effect is similar to that created in lines 2-3. Although line 2 is end-stopped, the last phrase, 'Et quels chants', belongs to a sentence which continues in line 3. Likewise, 'On parlait d'un accord' (line 2) completes the sentence started in the first line.

The sense of flux occasioned by a combination of lines of different lengths and enjambement is illustrated particularly well in the following lines from Dis-moi, ma vie:

Entre le ciel et l'eau, sur leurs pilotis, des paillotes  
irréelles. On entendait le grondement  
des rapides. La terre était insaisissable  
promise aux crues, vouée aux chutes. Quels sommeilleux dans ces  
saisons?

4+2/5/3; (=14)  
3(+1)/4+4; (=12)  
3/3+3+3/ (=12)  
2+2/2+2\*/1+3+4/ (=16)  
(TM 192)

The enjambement at the end of the first line and the withholding of the adjective 'irréelles' are suggestive of the chimera-like quality of the 'paillotes', which, being on stilts, seem suspended between water and sky. The césure lyrique after 'irréelles' is suggestive almost of dissolution into nothingness, while the syntax itself is suggestive of insubstantiality: there is no verb in either the first or the last sentence of the extract. In the second line, although another secondary stress on the first syllable of 'grondement' would be possible, the reading suggested makes for a quicker tempo, in keeping with the sense of 'rapides', but also suggestive of a duller, more distant, roar. A césure enjambante after 'rapides' maintains the impetus and ensures the link between the two propositions, the suggestion being that the earth will be washed away by the flood of the same rapids. Equally possible, however, would be a césure lyrique to emphasise the sense of distance. In contrast with the longer phrases of the earlier lines, the rhythmic regularity of the first hemistich of the fourth line appears abrupt. The staccato effect is suggestive of the suddenness of the engulfing.

Les Pierres is particularly rich in short passages of mixed line-lengths. When enjambement is present, the effect is to create a particularly free form of freed verse. This freedom in the verse is

again an expression of dynamism. The following lines illustrate this:

Ils sont venus d'Est et d'Ouest, par voie de mer et par les routes  
 $4+1+2/2+2/4'$  (=15)  
 empierrées du sang des idoles, ils sont venus avec le flux  
 $3+2+3*/4+4/$  (=16)  
 pour quels offices rassemblés dans leur cœur secret comme un livre  
 $2+2/4+3+2/3'$  (=16)  
 4 jamais ouvert, réfractaires de la parole       $2+2/3+5/$  (=12)  
 qu'il fallait taire, et déguisés en voyageurs.       $4/4+4/$  (=12)  
(TM 108)

Important in the first two lines in creating a sense of fluidity are, again, a number of binary structures. While 'd'Est et d'Ouest' is a straightforward binary opposition, it falls within another extended structure, the two halves of which are formed on the repeated verb 'Ils sont venus'. The counterpointing which arises from the repetition of this verb in different line-positions enhances the sense of fluidity. Also significant here is the use of another binary structure, 'par voie de mer et par les routes', the latter half of which is completed by a phrase at the beginning of line 2. The enjambement creates a sinuosity which may be seen as reflecting the tortuousness of the routes. At the same time, it detracts to some extent from the orthodox Seghersian structure of this sixteen-syllable line (line 2). Line 3 presents a further degree of ambiguity. Here, it is unclear whether 'rassemblés' agrees with 'ils' or 'offices', but my notation reflects Seghers's explanation that 'rassemblés' refers to 'ils'.<sup>25</sup> Also problematic is whether to mark a primary stress on 'coeur', or not until 'secret'. The marking of a secondary stress, rather than a primary one, on 'coeur' helps to avoid a further ambiguity. For the hearer, 'secret' could be understood as referring to 'ils'. There is, then, a degree of looseness, both on the level of the syntax and on that of the metre. This is carried over into line 4 through the enjambement. A similar tension is created in the last two lines. Both are end-stopped alexandrines, but the first phrase of line 4 belongs more closely with the end of line 3, just as the first phrase of line 5 belongs more closely, syntactically, with line 4. These tensions and ambiguities heighten the sense of the arcane. The exact meaning of the lines is hidden by the ambiguity of the syntax, just as the significance and origin of the druid-like people and their rites are lost in time, or remain unknown to all but the initiated.

In the following extract, from the last poem of Les Pierres, the form again reflects the dynamism in nature:

|   |   |                  |
|---|---|------------------|
|   | Et nous autres, que dirons-nous? Comme la vague sur la vague      |                  |
|   |   | 3/2+3/4+4/ (=16) |
|   | Sans cesse nous roulons et nous nous refaisons                    | 2+4/4+2/ (=12)   |
|   | d'une écume où le ciel se mire et se divise.                      | 3/3+2/4/ (=12)   |
| 4 | Est-ce la mer ou nous, dispersés et mouvants                      | 4+2/3+3/ (=12)   |
|   | qui déferlons sur les rochers? Est-ce nous qui levons les pierres | 4+4/3+2+3/ (=16) |
|   | (...)   | (TM 112)         |

In these lines, binary structures operate on various levels: the levels of syntax, metre, and rhythm. The first line is divided metrically into two hemistichs by the main syntactical break after 'nous?'. The 4+4 division of the second hemistich is, in its regularity, a rhythmic reflection of the image itself. The binary division of the second line, and the parallelism between the two halves, reflect a similar repeated movement, as do the accumulated binary structures, 'se mire et se divise', 'la mer ou nous' and 'dispersés et mouvants'. While such an accumulation of binary structures might lead to a monotonous sense of balance, the variety of the rhythms in the lines avoids this. Lines 1 and 3, notably, are ternary in terms of primary stresses. The enjambement of lines 2-3 creates a sense of breadth, underlining the continuity of the process of becoming, or of change in nature, while the use of questions maximises the sense of uncertainty, further underlining the lack of fixity in the relationship between the individual and the outside world.

### (iii) Dislocation and expansion

The sense of dislocation seen in the last quotation might be reinterpreted as a sense of expansion, already implied in my term 'breadth', and implied, in the lines themselves, in the confusion between the sea and 'nous'. This mingling of self and non-self may be seen, that is, as the extension, or expansion, of the consciousness to include things in the outside world.

Again, in the following quotation from Piranèse, senses of instability and expansion are in tension with each other:

Sur le fond noir luisent des taches de lumière,  
   4/1~~7~~<sup>3</sup>+4/       (=12)

Une poursuite ou un ballet. Il y a aussi un homme en croix  
   4/4/4+2+2/       (=16)

qu'on ne voit pas, ses genoux s'affaissent et il se tourne  
   4/3+2\*/4/       (=13)

4 vers l'ange devenu guerrier. Ses bras n'implorent pas, ils  
   2/4+2/2+2+2/2/   (=16)

donnent,  
   Il chancelle et s'envole, il tombe et il s'en va.  
   3+3/2+4/       (=12)

Dans la clarté qui le délivre, il est plus grand que les ténèbres  
   4+4/4+4/       (=16)

  (TM 123)

The sense of tension here stems from a degree of dislocation between syntax and metre, though this dislocation is of a lesser degree than that occasioned by enjambement. A certain breadth is created in the rhythm of the first line: the césure enjambante leads into a long phrase, thereby giving rise to the anticipation of a degree of emphasis on the end noun or noun phrase. The line could be a perfectly autonomous sentence. For this reason, and because the link with line 1 is not explicit, 'Une poursuite ou un ballet' (line 2) comes as a surprise, and a sense of abruptness arises, despite the fact that the two segments of 'Une poursuite ou un ballet' (4+4/) are relatively long, and also identical in length. Similarly, 'qu'on ne voit pas' comes as a slight surprise, the negative syntax almost invalidating the image at the end of the previous line. In line 3, the sense of instability can be heightened by the practice of césure épique or a césure lyrique. Even without the suppression of the unstable e at this juncture, the line would, as a fourteen-syllable line, be irregular in its internal structure. I suggest that the césure épique be accompanied by an actual pause, even though a liaison between the final [s] of 's'affaissent' and 'et' might be expected. The actual pause will underline the idea of collapse. The isolated, two-syllable segment, 'ils donnent', at the end of line 4, rather than appearing abrupt, is given weight by virtue of its end position, and because it is without an object. In line 5, the two binary structures each reflect within themselves opposite movements. The continuity of movement between 'chanceler' and 's'envoler' on the one hand, and

between 'tomber' and 's'en aller' on the other, is reflected phonetically in the liaison between the two elements of each pair, and between the two pairs at the caesura, where 's'envoler' and 'tomber' themselves form an antithetical pair. At the same time, the regularity of the verse in the last two lines itself suggests order. (These are not, however, the final lines of the poem.) While line 5 may be open to a negative interpretation, line 6 connotes, rather, an apotheosis. The dynamism to which the individual is subject is also an ordering principle of the universe.

The following lines, from 'Paysage pour un enfant à venir', an early poem, are also illustrative of a sense of expansion:

|        |   |  |
|--------|---|--|
| (...). | Toutes les herbes sous tes pas                                | (...)/1+3 <sup>7</sup> /4                    |
|        | courberaient leurs têtes couronnées de perles pour ta venue   | 3+2 <sup>7</sup> /4+2 <sup>7</sup> /5/ (=16) |
|        | Le ciel t'offrirait ses diamants comme à son Roi              | 2+3+3/4/ (=12)                               |
| 4      | Les grands bois s'ouvriraient pour qu'à travers l'ombre velue | 3+3/5+3/ (=14)                               |
|        | Toutes les bêtes inconnues s'en aillent en cortège avec toi.  | 1+3+4/2+4+3/ (=17)<br><u>(TM 78)</u>         |

A sense of expansion comes from the gradual increasing of the line-lengths in lines 3 to 5; lines which culminate in the image of departure (or expansion into space) in the last line. The presence of a regular rhyme scheme draws attention to the lengthening of the lines. The lengthening is all the more noticeable because of the presence, in line 2, of a sixteen-syllable line, by contrast with which line 3 appears short. In line 5, the marking of secondary stresses only, other than on 'inconnues', creates the longest phrase (nine syllables) found in these lines. (A primary stress on 'cortège' would, however, also be possible.) It is in this phrase that the idea of departure is expressed. The sense of impetus in this phrase is enhanced by the liaisons between 'aillent' and 'en', and between 'cortège' and 'avec'. While this is the longest phrase of the extract, primary stresses are relatively infrequent throughout the lines. This is particularly effective from 'Les grands bois' (line 4) to the end, suggesting both the expanse of the woods and their opening out. The long phrases

create a certain majesty, a loftiness of tone, which complements the fairy-tale grandeur of the imagery.

In the following extract from Au seuil de l'oubli, rhythm and imagery again combine to create a sense of expansion:

Quand au sortir du jour je m'en irai, ne cherchant plus rien ni  
moi-même 3+3+4/5/3/ (=18)  
Inscrivez mon titre et mon nom, qu'ils m'accompagnent au plus près  
3+2+3/4+4/ (=16)  
dans la nuit millénaire où les paroles se poursuivent  
3+3/4+4/ (=14)  
4 dites d'un juste souffle. Dans la mémoire multipliée  
1+3+2(+1)/4+5/ (=16)  
des éclairs, des échos, des éclats de phosphore  
3/3/3+3/ (=12)  
disent que les veilleurs se souviennent. (...) 1+5+3(+1)(...)  
(TM 208-209)

The sense of expansion, found in particular in the first four lines up to 'souffle', translates the cosmic imagery of the later lines, and is suggestive of the movement outwards into indefinite space implied in 'Quand au sortir du jour je m'en irai' (line 1). As an image of death, this implies ephemerality, but also implied is a prolongation of existence under a different form. While line 1 has two internal primary stresses, which are virtually a necessity given the line's length, a sense of impetus is present, for the initial two phrases are long. Lines 2, 3 and 4 maintain a sense of impetus by again having long phrases, and also by being constructed, up to 'souffle', of just one sentence. The fifth line, though a classical alexandrine, is, syntactically, characteristically ambiguous, at least in appearance. While 'des éclairs', and also 'des échos', could be complements of 'la mémoire multipliée', they are, in fact, alongside 'des éclats de phosphore', the subjects of 'disent'.<sup>26</sup> The rhythm of the verse also changes at this point, becoming more staccato. This reflects the smallness and suddenness of the lightning flashes. The effect is heightened by the assonance on [e] and the alliteration on [k] and [l], and is in contrast with the sense of breadth in the earlier lines.

Conclusion

The following poem, from Dis-moi, ma vie, is in many ways a key one. First, it uses a mixture of metrical and non-metrical line-lengths, which is typical in particular of this suite. Second, it illustrates especially well the potential fluidity of mixtures of line-lengths. Third, it is a poem which explores the nature of poetry itself. One phrase in particular, 'les architectures du devenir', could be used as a definition of Seghers's poetry in general. Although the limited space available will not permit an exhaustive commentary of the poem, here is the poem in extenso. The discussion on it which follows will bring together many of the points made so far in this chapter, and will, therefore, serve to conclude this section:

|  |                                   |                         |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ni pièges, ni lacets, une avance prudente<br>et permanente, une quête à ne rien saisir<br>qu'une présence éparsé, tout ce qui reste d'un passage | 2/4/3+3/<br>4/3+3+2/<br>4+2*/4+4/ | (=12)<br>(=12)<br>(=14) |
| 4 s'il y en eut un, mais émerveillant. Les mains d'un<br>dilapideur<br>brûlées dans les marchés, parmi les victuailles                           | 4/2+3/2+3+3/<br>2+4/4+2/          | (=17)<br>(=12)          |
| les tables et les lits. Toujours seul. Appelant<br>avec des mots enchevêtrés comme les chiffres des serrures                                     | 2+4/3/3/<br>4/4+4+4/              | (=12)<br>(=16)          |
| 8 par la rouille et l'oubli bloquées. Avare des parcours<br>inscrits dans les journées, on les découvrait en filigrane                           | 3+3+2/2+4/<br>2+4/3+2+4/          | (=14)<br>(=15)          |
| sous les portées. Aussi parfois<br>dans des cadastres resurgis compulsés en vain pour des<br>parcelles   | 4/2+2/<br>4+4/3+2+4/              | (=8)<br>(=17)           |
| 12 dans les biens-fonds perdus où ressuscitait un pays.<br>Il ne se fuyait pas. Le tain des eaux anciennes                                       | 4+2/2+3+3/<br>4+2/2+2+2/          | (=14)<br>(=12)          |
| le repoussait toujours plus loin. Il n'aimait plus que les<br>couleurs   | 4+2+2/4+4/                        | (=16)                   |
| Le choeur violent des sèves et les architectures   | 2+2+2*/3+3/                       | (=12)                   |
| 16 du devenir. Passager des aubes, en transit.   | 4/3+2*/3/                         | (=12)                   |
|  |                                   | (TM 193) <sup>27</sup>  |

The oscillation between shorter lines (here, generally alexandrines, but also an eight-syllable line; line 10) and longer lines (up to seventeen syllables; lines 4 and 11) is used in such a way as to underline the meaning, and creates a certain sinuosity. No metrical

expectation is established, and so, as in free verse, each line has, theoretically, a degree of autonomy, particularly when end-stopped. As can be seen from a sample series of end-stopped lines from this poem, 'tout ce qui reste' (line 3) to 'bloquées' (line 8), this autonomy is undermined, for the major breaks in syntax (full stops or potential full stops, as after 'éparse' in line 3) frequently fall in mid-line. This, however, adds to, rather than detracts from, the effect of sinuosity, by helping, in a way similar to enjambement, to carry the impulse over the line-ending, the impulse then being halted at the full stops: after 'émerveillant' (line 4), 'lits' (line 6) and 'bloquées' (line 8). Such sinuosity is a counterpart to the implication of movement found in such words as 'passage' and 'passager' (lines 3 and 16), 'avance' (line 1) and in the phrase, 'le repoussait toujours plus loin' (line 14).

The first three lines of the poem illustrate the way in which combined metrical and unmetrical elements create an overall absence of metrical expectation. The first two lines are alexandrines. While it is possible that the first line may be perceived as an alexandrine by the hearer (the line is a classical alexandrine with an 'extra' primary stress on the second syllable), the second line is rhythmically unorthodox. There are actual alexandrines, or echoes of alexandrines, throughout the poem. Echoes are found notably in the presence of six-syllable phrases in the fourteen-syllable lines (lines 3, 8 and 12), and at the beginning of line 9. Such echoes, formed by the presence of recognisable metrical units, may be seen as a counterpart to the glimpses of the self, the 'présence éparse' (line 3), recognised in the 'parcours' and discovered 'en filigrane' (line 9) in the words of the poem itself. (This, the poem as an expression of the self, was discussed as a theme in Chapter 4.) These words and expressions appear, moreover, in the six-syllable phrases in question.

The paradoxical effect of enjambement has already been seen on numerous occasions. It both undermines the autonomy of a line while drawing attention to the line as such through its accompanying pause or apparent pause. In both instances in this poem, enjambement is used to expressive effect. Between lines 8 and 9, it is suggestive of the sinuous character of the routes. Both here, and in lines 15-16, there

is a tension between metricality and the dynamism of the lines taken together. Line 8 is a 'metrical' fourteen-syllable line in that it divides 8/6. At the same time, the two phrases between which the enjambement occurs, 'Avare des parcours' (2+4/.) and 'inscrits dans les journées' (2+4/), together form the equivalent of a classical alexandrine. Meanwhile, line 9, as a whole, has no recognisable metrical identity, and it also, because of the enjambement, belongs with the latter part of line 8.

It is in the last two lines of the poem that the coincidence of form and imagery is most striking. The 'architectures du devenir' hesitate between fixed, tangible reality (this is suggested in the word 'architectures') and something altogether less concrete (the structures are in a state of becoming, and so are not fixed). The prosody at this point, as it did in lines 8-9, shifts between recognisable metrical forms and freer ones: 'et les architectures' is a regular alexandrine hemistich, but belongs to a freed alexandrine in that there is a césure épique at 'sèves' in this line. This line, furthermore, is linked to the last line of the poem through enjambement. It is precisely at this juncture that a re-appraisal of the nature of the 'architectures' is brought about, through the withheld phrase 'du devenir'.

In Chapter 4, we saw the complex relationships between the conscious and unconscious selves, the outside world, and language. Central to this poem is the theme of creation, and, by implication, of the creation of poetry. The 'architectures du devenir' may themselves be seen as an image of the self (that is, of the shifting relationship between the conscious and unconscious selves), and of the poem as an expression of the poet's self. That the phrase 'architectures du devenir' should be split between the two lines is itself significant, therefore, suggesting the separation between the conscious and unconscious, between the self and the outside world, and between the attempt to express these relationships in language and the inability of language accurately to do this.

It is in the poem itself, as a concretisation of the poet's self, that the poet tries to approach the nature of his self, in 'une avance prudente' (line 1). The poem also expresses this search, again

in the words 'une avance prudente' and in 'une quête à ne rien saisir'. The words of the poem can, however, only ever afford a partial revelation of the poet's self, and can never fully unlock the mystery of this self (lines 6-8).

Both thematically and in its form, therefore, this poem concretises the tension between order and disorder. The instability expressed in the themes is echoed in the shifting of the prosody between recognisably metrical elements and apparently less controlled ones. Such instability, both in this particular poem and in others, is, however, an essential part of the poem's dynamism. This very lack of rigidity reflects the individual's inability to grasp fully the nature of his self. Yet it is this same insubstantiality and lack of fixity which makes the poem a successful one. The self is not a fixed relationship between the conscious and unconscious, nor is that self defined in any definitive relationship with the outside world.

It is in the poems written in mixed line-lengths that Seghers's view of the dynamism of the universe, and of the self in relation to the universe, reaches its highest expression.

It has emerged from this section that similar prosodic features, such as the presence of rhythmic constants within lines of different lengths, may lead to different effects (a tension between order and disorder, for example), the effect itself being a function not simply of the device in question, but also of the context in which it is found. The effect, in other words, is inseparable from the thematic content of the verse.

### 3) VERSE WRITTEN IN LINES OF SIXTEEN OR APPROXIMATELY SIXTEEN SYLLABLES

The sixteen-syllable line has already been seen briefly in the introduction to Part II and in section 2) of this chapter (see page 157). In the first part of section 3), I will look at various general questions relating to metre and stress, and will trace the development of the sixteen-syllable line, as used by Seghers, in the poetry which

pre-dates Racines. In section (ii), the discussion will centre on various effects found in the verse, concentrating on the suites, in particular those which post-date Dis-moi, ma vie.

(i) Development and general questions

(a) The metrical identity of the line, and questions of stress

The sixteen-syllable line is rarely mentioned in treatises on prosody, but may be defined tentatively as having a caesura after the eighth syllable.<sup>28</sup> With few exceptions, Seghers's sixteen-syllable lines concord, having a basic 8/8 division. The great variety found in the further subdivisions of the sixteen-syllable lines may be considered, therefore, as a reflection of the fluidity which is the proper of the octosyllable. Hemistichs with binary divisions (for example 3+5/) and ternary divisions (for example 4+2+2/) are found.<sup>29</sup> The practice of a césure épique after the eighth syllable when an unstable e is found at this point reinforces the similarity of the sixteen-syllable line to two octosyllables.<sup>30</sup> Where there is a total of only four stresses per line, whether patterned 4+4/4+4/, 5+3/3+5/, or in any other possible way, this, too, may be seen as reinforcing the similarity of the sixteen-syllable line to two octosyllables: the presence of three stresses in one or both of the hemistichs might, arguably, distract from the metrical identity of the line, possibly blurring the identity of the eight-syllable phrases as such. Sixteen-syllable lines with just four stresses are, however, relatively infrequent in Seghers's verse, though a number of such individual lines will be seen. In some of these lines, the marking of other stresses would, however, be defensible. This is the case in the following line from Au seuil de l'oubli:

|  |               |          |
|--|---------------|----------|
| Un météorite arraché, une larme d'un océan | 5+3/3+5/      | (=16)    |
|  | or 2+3+3/3+5/ | (TM 202) |

The line illustrates another feature of the sixteen-syllable line, as used by Seghers. This is a general tendency towards the presence of four key words (words, that is, which are important semantically, as distinct from being grammatically or syntactically vital) per line,

distributed two per hemistich, even though five or more stresses might be present. In such lines as this, we see once again a tendency towards binary divisions. The sixteen-syllable line frequently presents two hemistichs of equal length, which often have a further binary division in terms of secondary stresses. The presence of two key words in a hemistich may be in tension with the presence of a third stress which is marked for rhetorical purposes. The hemistich of a sixteen-syllable line may, then, present a pattern which is both binary and ternary; a pattern which is found, as we have seen, in other lines, and which is seen in the second of the suggested notations above.

(b) Freed sixteen-syllable lines, and lines of fifteen and seventeen syllables

With regard to lines of eleven and thirteen syllables, I argued on pages 129-135 that they were to be seen, not so much as alexandrins manqués, as line-lengths in their own right, when these lines were the only ones present. The position of the fifteen- and seventeen-syllable lines is slightly different. These line-lengths are never used as the exclusive, or near-exclusive line-length within an individual poem. A number of examples of these lines have already been seen in section 2) of this chapter. The quotation from Racines on page 159 illustrates the way in which a line of seventeen syllables may be integrated with others of sixteen, through the presence of an eight-syllable phrase. Such seventeen-syllable lines, which present one eight-syllable and one nine-syllable hemistich, and which are found in a context of sixteen-syllable lines or of mixed line-lengths, may be considered as freed lines, in relation to the usual sixteen-syllable line.

As I stated on page 91, however, an apocope may be found after a secondary stress in what would otherwise be a seventeen-syllable line. Au seuil de l'oubli provides an example:

sur les colonnes et les frontons où n'apparaissaient que des trous  
 $4*+4/5+3/$  (=16)  
and not  $4+5/5+3/$  (=17)  
(TM 199)

The practice of an apocope in this particular case was confirmed by Seghers, and justifies seeing this line as internally metrical.<sup>31</sup>

Apocope may, however, be considered a feature of freed verse. Where a seventeen-syllable line with a potential case for apocope arises in a context in which sixteen-syllable lines are uppermost, I suggest that an apocope be considered legitimate.

Fifteen-syllable lines in contexts of sixteen-syllable ones are even less frequent than seventeen-syllable lines but pose a similar problem. When a syllable in unstable e follows a primary stress, the practice of a césure épique may be opted for, resulting in a fourteen-syllable line. Alternatively, the syllable may be maintained. This example comes from Qui sommes-nous?:

Ni palmes, ni racines. Dans ses infinis d'équations

2/4(+1)/5+3/ (=15)  
or 2/4\*/5+3/ (=14)  
(TM 213)

The merits of the alternative readings must be assessed individually. In this particular case the difference between the two readings is minimal, the reading with a césure lyrique resulting in a slightly longer vowel in [in], while it is difficult, in a césure épique, not to pronounce the final unstable e at all.

Those lines which have a caesura at a point other than after the eighth syllable may, together with lines with more than one primary stress, also be considered to be freed lines. A small number of examples will be seen in the course of section 3).

### (c) The development of the sixteen-syllable line in Seghers's poetry

The first poem in which lines of sixteen syllables are found is 'Le pain blanc', published in 1942, in Pour les quatre saisons. Although it is tempting to see the line's presence here as anticipating the later poetry, the lines are not without ambiguity, metrically

speaking. The first example of a sixteen-syllable line is the middle one of the following three:

Quand nous reverrons flamber les tayolles dans le soleil  
 $5+2+3/5/$  (=15)  
 Quand les trois chevaux du futur iront de front sur l'aire nette  
 $3+2+3/4+2+2/$  (=16)  
 Alors nous ferons de colline à colline des feux  $2/3+3+3/3/$  (=14)  
(TM 24)

The line divides 8/8, as do the majority of later examples of sixteen-syllable lines. It is, however, unrelated, metrically or rhythmically, to its immediate context: there are no other eight-syllable phrases present, and neither the first nor the third line has a clear metrical identity. The 'metrical' nature of this sixteen-syllable line, then, seems accidental, and another sixteen-syllable line, in the second stanza, furthermore, has no such metrical division, though it does have an internal eight-syllable phrase.<sup>32</sup> Here is the line in its immediate context:

Ils avaient (...)  
 Jeté dans l'air leurs bras cassés, les durs fléaux  
 $2+2/2+2/2+2/$  (=12)  
 De l'avenir. On les avait battus à mort, le grain, la paille,  
 $4/6+2/2/2/$  (=16)  
 4 Et l'espoir demeurait vivace; leur sang coulait comme un soleil.  
 $3+3+2(+1)/2+2/4/$  (=17)  
(TM 24)

'De l'avenir' belongs, syntactically, with the preceding line, creating an eight-syllable phrase which straddles the line-ending. In view of Seghers's later practice, the third line is potentially another sixteen-syllable line, though as yet there is no prosodic evidence to justify a césure épique after 'vivace'.

While evidence from 'Le pain blanc' is inconclusive in determining whether césures épiques should be practised (because the poem is written in a variety of line-lengths), 'L'oiseau-lyre', a poem which also bears the date 1942, is important in justifying the practice. The poem is written entirely in sixteen- and seventeen-syllable lines. In each of the seventeen-syllable lines, there is an

unstable e at the ninth syllable, immediately following a primary stress. The first line of the poem is an example:

Sur les ailes de l'oiseau-lyre que je n'ai jamais rencontré  
 $3+3+2*/4+4/$  (TM 33)

The practice of césure épique here, brings the line into accordance with the unequivocal sixteen-syllable lines.<sup>33</sup> They, too, all have a primary stress on the eighth syllable. The other two lines of the first stanza are unambiguous metrically:

Sur la cendre du souvenir et sur le sable des regrets  
 $3+3+2/4+4/$   
 Sur ma vie de vivre à mourir par absence et par à peu près  
 $3+2+3/3+3+2/$

The first poem in which an unequivocal sixteen-syllable line is used extensively is 'Le cavalier', published in 1945 in Le Domaine public. The argument in favour of practising césures épiques is strengthened by evidence from this poem. There are three lines in the poem for which an orthodox syllable count gives a total of seventeen. In two of these three lines, an unstable e is found immediately after an eighth syllable bearing a primary stress. As in 'L'oiseau-lyre', the practice of a césure épique in these cases standardises the lines. The following is one of the lines in question:

L'air cascadeur. Quand nous le vîmes, ce fut un grand soulagement,  
 $1+3/4*/4+4/$  (TM 48)<sup>34</sup>

From now on, I will assume that a césure épique is standard practice in lines of sixteen syllables, on condition that the lines appear in a context in which the sixteen-syllable line is in the majority, and if the practice is necessary to square the lines metrically.<sup>35</sup>

### (ii) Effects found in the sixteen-syllable verse

#### (a) Stability and order

The repetition of a certain word or phrase in varying positions within a series of lines is a feature which has already been seen as

giving rise to a certain lack of fixity. When the device of repetition is used at the beginning of a number of lines, however, the effect may be one of stability, particularly if the lines are all the same length. The following example is from Au seuil de l'oubli:



The repetition of 'pour' at the beginning of successive phrases creates an almost religious, chant-like effect (though the imagery remains pagan), and it also suggests a certain equivalence between the phrases. It leads to the impression of a careful structuring of the poem, which is quite different from the impression given elsewhere of the poem as a direct reflection of the flow of language as it emerges into the poet's consciousness. The structuring of the poem in this way suggests an attempt to see an order in the outside world where this world might seem chaotic. A certain formlessness is suggested by the images of seaweed, while the piles of bones are seen, rather, to convey meaning, for they form 'lexiques'.

The suggestion of consciously worked language, found in the use of 'Pour' as a structural feature, is complemented by the play on words in 'jeux' (line 4) and 'Je' (line 5). The unusual use of the subject pronoun emphasises the self-conscious nature of the lines. The poet situates himself in the picture he sees (he has his place on the hill crest) while yet remaining separate from his surroundings (he remains an observer of the scene). This duality, and the mise en abîme (the poet's portrayal of himself as an observer in the landscape) suggest the dual nature of consciousness, as discussed in Chapter 4: the individual is conscious of having an identity, and of being distinct from the rest of creation, while at the same time being aware of participating in creation.

The chant-like quality of the poem is enhanced by the regular metrical division of each of lines 1 to 3 into two equal hemistiches. This itself creates a sense of balance. In contrast with this are the second hemistich of line 4, and line 5. The confusion suggested by 'jeux de brouillards' is echoed in the unusual distribution of the stresses: one on the first syllable of the hemistich, and two stresses in succession on 'vent' and 'porte' at the end of the hemistich. These two stresses are, furthermore, followed by a primary stress on the first syllable of line 5, 'Je'. This further underlines the unusual use of 'Je', and the self-conscious nature of the image.

The syntax of the lines is not without ambiguity. In line 2, the 'solstices des jours de fête' might be preceded by a 'pour' which remains understood, but the phrase makes better sense as what the poet proposes in place of the silence and wild wetness; a human presence and pagan worship of the sun. Furthermore, the relationship between 'Je' (line 5) and the images introduced by 'Pour' is also unclear. These ambiguities are, however, to some extent overridden by the general impression of regularity created by the repetition of 'Pour', and the metrical division of lines 1-3.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, however, the ambiguities complement the sense of uncertainty stated in line 4 ('l'imprécis sous l'apparence') and implied in the images of fog and of the 'Je' who is perhaps trying to discern some order, and his own position in it.

My next quotation illustrates how a consistent use of parallel structures in successive lines may override the presence of different line-divisions, and create an impression of regularity. The lines are from Dialogue:

|   |  |            |          |
|---|--|------------|----------|
|   | Précipité dans cette vie comme dans la chaudière de Malraux        | 4+4/6+4/   | (=18)    |
|   | Catapulté dans cette vie comme Ebrahim au coeur des flammes        | 4+4/4+2+2/ | (=16)    |
|   | Brûlé dans cette vie comme une sorcière sur le brasier             | 2+4/5+5/   | (=16)    |
| 4 | Retourné dans cette vie comme le fer rouge dans la forge,          | 3+4/4+1+4/ | (=16)    |
|   | Si le bûcher fut ma maison, si l'incendie fut mon ouvrage<br>(...) | 4+4/4+4/   | (=16)    |
|   |  |            | (TM 136) |

The parallelism of the syntax of the first four lines couples with the similarity of the images themselves. Yet the rhythm of each line is different. The presence of a total of just four stresses in line 1 goes some way to masking the length of the line by creating a fast tempo. This speed is concordant with '*Précipité*'. In having four stresses, the line is similar to lines 3 and 5. Line 3, along with line 4, is unusual, however, as a sixteen-syllable line, in that the caesura does not fall after the eighth syllable.<sup>37</sup> There is, then, a tension in these lines between the syntactic similarity of the lines to each other and their rhythmic differences. The sense of rigidity resulting from the parallel structures is itself in tension with the dynamism implied in the images, but the insistence of the parallelism does also suggest the sense of violence.

The first and third lines of the quotation from Au seuil de l'oubli on page 187 illustrate also the impression of stability which may arise from those sixteen-syllable lines which have a caesura after the eighth syllable and just one secondary stress in each hemistich. The effect of stability in these particular lines is not, however, the result simply of the metrical treatment of the lines. It is, rather, the result of the combination of this with the lines' thematic content. An effect of stability over a series of sixteen-syllable lines is rare, but equally the sixteen-syllable verse lays greater emphasis, thematically, on a sense of transience, as we will see in sections (b) and (c).

#### (b) Metrical ambiguity and fluctuation

In the course of sections 1) and 2) of this chapter, various examples of hybrid, or binary-cum-ternary lines, notably alexandrines, have been seen. On page 183, we also saw how individual hemistiches of sixteen-syllable lines can be both binary and ternary. This type of structure is found also in individual sixteen-syllable lines as units.

The following lines from Les Pierres provide examples:

Par quelle foudre et par quel feu, par quelle hache divisée  
 $4+4/4+4/$  (=16)  
 pour cette nuit dans ma rupture où je me cherche. Suis-je deux,  
 $4+4/4(+1)/3/$  (=16)  
 Double et pareille, et quelles lèvres sans approche  
 $1+3/4/4/$  (=12)  
 me sont blessure au plus secret et me séparent. Dites-moi  
 (...)  $4/2+2/4(+1)/3/$  (=16)  
 $\underline{\text{TM 111}}$

The structure of the first line is both binary (it has a metrical 8/8 division), and ternary (it has three parallel elements in 'foudre', 'feu' and 'hache'). In this line, as in others, the structure is a concrete expression of the duality conveyed by the images. The second line is binary-cum-ternary in terms of primary stresses: the line has a regular first hemistich, but an 'extra' primary stress in the second. In both this line and the fourth, a césure lyrique underlines the idea of separation by creating an actual break in the lines. Lines 2 and 4 are otherwise ambiguous metrically. In each, a secondary, rather than a primary stress on the eighth syllable would be possible, thus following the syntax and leaving the primary stresses for the full stops, at 'cherche' and 'séparent'. The ending of line 2 at 'deux' creates another ambivalence, for while 'Double et pareille' is a binary structure, it is also part of a ternary structure, of which 'deux' (line 2) is the first element. Although from 'et quelles lèvres' onwards, there are no further binary structures, the images themselves imply duality: lips come in pairs, and are suggestive of the two sides of a gaping wound ('blessure'). While the alexandrine (line 3) is, in terms of its length, in tension with the longer lines, line 2 up to 'cherche' follows the pattern of a ternary alexandrine (of which, however, the final unstable e would be sounded). The same feature is found in the fourth line. Here the internal alexandrine is, syntactically, all the more prominent because of the complete change of subject at 'Dites-moi', which also marks the end of the stanza. While neither the hearer nor the reader of the poem may necessarily be aware of these internal alexandrines (+1), their presence creates a certain homogeneity in the rhythm, but is yet in tension with the sixteen-syllable lines.<sup>38</sup>

The use of anaphora may, as we have seen, result in a sense of order and stateliness or solemnity. It may also, however, result in a sense of fluctuation, if the repeated element occurs at varying intervals. Examples of this form of counterpointing have already been seen in section 1) of this chapter. The following example is from Dis-moi, ma vie:

|  |                          |              |
|--|--------------------------|--------------|
| Si ce n'était que par mégarde, ou par une erreur d'aiguillage    | 1+3+4/5+3/               | (=16)        |
| d'un employé inattentif? Si c'étaient, on ne sait pourquoi,      | 4+4/3/3+2/               | (=16)        |
| des fleurs fraîches dans un wagon sur une voie désaffectée       | 2+1 <sup>7</sup> /5/4+4/ | (=16)        |
| 4 échouées là, pour des fiançailles, pour un voyage vers sa fin? | 1+3/4*/4+4/              | (=16)        |
| Si c'était sans l'avoir voulu, si là-bas, au bout du triage      | 1+3+4/3/2+3/             | (=16)        |
| la solitude la plus totale, l'ardeur finale d'exister            | 4+3+2(+1)/2+2+4/         | (=18)        |
| accompagnaient jusqu'au butoir un chargement fait de pétales     | 4+4/4+4/                 | (=16)        |
| 8 Amours, naissance et deuils, rires, parfums, beauté.           | 2/2+2/1(+1)/2/2/         | (=12)        |
|  |                          | (TM 191-192) |

The sense of fluctuation arising from the repeated 'Si' clauses is enhanced by several features. Other than in the last clause, the subject is never defined, heightening the sense of uncertainty which stems from the phrase 'Si c'était' itself. The insertion of an independent clause, 'on ne sait pourquoi', in the second hemistich of line 2, delays 'des fleurs fraîches', creating a slight suspense, and so uncertainty. This sentence (from 'Si c'étaient' to 'fin') is composed of separate phrases, each added to the preceding one as if as an afterthought. The effect is particularly noticeable in line 4, where the two internal primary stresses create a halting rhythm. The impression of afterthought comes from the disparity of the images: engagement flowers, a forgotten railway siding, and the suggestion of death in 'un voyage vers sa fin'. The last line makes a similar association between life and death in 'naissance et deuils'.

The sense of fluctuation in these lines stems also from the variety of the lengths of the segments, which range from single syllables to five syllables. In lines 1 and 3 in particular, this leads to a sense of expansion in the long segments. In line 5, on the

other hand, the shorter segments and the presence of a primary stress on '-bas' lead to a greater rhythmic density in the second hemistich in relation to the first. Line 6, in relation to line 5, also creates a sense of greater density. Although the total number of stresses is the same (six in each case) the vocabulary of line 6 is richer. The sense of density is enhanced by the internal rhyme: 'totale : finale'. The spacing of the stresses in line 7, on the other hand, again creates a sense of expansion, which is countered by the density of line 8; a density arising from the proximity of the stresses to each other and the high proportion of primary stresses, but also from the fact that the line is composed of a string of nouns. There is, then, a high degree of semantic density.

Through features similar to those found in the last quotation, the following lines from the first poem of Fortune Infortune Fortune also create a sense of fluctuation:

|   |   |              |                |
|---|---|--------------|----------------|
|   | Je me plains, je ne me plains pas. Je me plains d'une âme envolée | 3/5/3+2+3/   | (=16)          |
|   | je ne sais où, et qui m'appelle et qui tournoie autour de moi     | 4/4/4+2+2/   | (=16)          |
|   | Je ne me plains pas de mon ciel, ni de mon temps, ni des nuages   | 5+3/4/4/     | (=16)          |
| 4 | ni des sources ni des amours. Je me plains de je ne sais quoi     | 3/5/3+5/     | (=16)          |
|   | D'une blessure envenimée si loin là-bas, dans les ancêtres        | 4+4/2+2/4/   | (=16)          |
|   | D'une image dans un miroir que je voudrais parfois briser         | 3+5/4+2+2/   | (=16)          |
|   | Mais je ne me plains pas de Toi, ô Toi le chant qui m'accompagne  | 6+2/2+2+4/   | (=16)          |
| 8 | pour m'aider et m'exorciser, pour vivre et mourir avec Toi.       | 3+2+3/2+3+3/ | (=16)<br>(p.1) |

The poem is constructed around the return of the phrases 'Je me plains' and 'Je ne me plains pas', the positive and negative alternating (the alternation is carried through to the end of the poem). The emotional changes reflected in the oscillation between 'Je me plains' and 'Je ne me plains pas' are complemented by images of movement, and the duality finds a further counterpart in the binary structures which run throughout the poem, although these binary structures are rarely built around antitheses. The first of these is 'et qui m'appelle et qui tournoie' (line 2). While there is a primary stress on 'appelle', the

break is smoothed over by the liaison. The rhythmic continuity effected by this helps to convey the sense of a continuous wheeling motion. At the same time, the two four-syllable segments of 'et qui m'appelle et qui tournoie' create a sense of regularity as they are framed by two more staccato phrases, 'je ne sais où' and 'autour de moi'. The staccato effect arises from the predominance of monosyllabic words and from the hiatus in 'où, et' and 'tournoie autour'. Line 3 is another hybrid line: 'ciel', 'temps' and 'nuages' form together a ternary pattern, but, syntactically, the second and third elements can be seen as a binary structure, for they are both introduced by 'ni'. This binary structure, furthermore, occupies the second hemistich. Similarly, 'ni des sources ni des amours' (line 4) is a binary structure occupying a hemistich, but it is also the completion of the list started in the previous line. Although there is no structural identity between 'si loin là-bas' and 'dans les ancêtres' (line 5), both phrases qualify 'une blessure envenimée', and imply distance, either spatial or temporal. Lines 5 and 6 are both complements of 'Je me plains', and there is an image of duality in 'une image dans un miroir'. Finally, in line 8, we have two binary structures, the second of which is composed of antagonistic halves. The line itself has a binary structure, the hemistichs having virtually the same syntactic structure: 'pour' followed by two infinitives.

The sense of fluctuation in the lines stems from the oscillation between positive and negative statements, and from the accumulation of parallel elements in lists, which leads to a sense of restlessness. The various forms of rhythmic fluidity and tension are a counterpart to the changing emotional states implied in 'Je me plains, je ne me plains pas'. Dynamism is also implied in the image of death, 'une âme envolée' (line 2), as in each element of the list from 'ciel' to 'sources' (lines 3-4). Along with these is the 'chant' (line 7), or the poet's inner voice. The dynamic relationships implied here were seen in Chapter 4.

In 'Où allons-nous...', from Fortune Infortune Fort Une, the sense of rhythmic ambiguity and fluctuation stems from a mixture of

binary and ternary sixteen-syllable lines:

- Où allons-nous dans ce silence, vers quels voyages intérieurs  
 $4+4*/2+2+4/$  (=16)
- Nous, déportes des temps passés? Sommes-nous livrés sans défense  
 $1/3+2+2/5+3/$  (=16)
- à des orbites inconnues, à des nuits traversées sans fin  
 $4+4/3+3+2/$  (=16)
- 4 Des négations de la matière, anticorps de non-existence  
 $4+4/3+2+3/$  (=16)
- Fulgurations, éclairs éteints à travers des milliards d'années  
 $4/2+2/5+3/$  (=16)
- Ou bien trous noirs à tout jamais sans début ni fin, vie ou mort?  
 $3+1/4/3+2/1+2/$  (=16)  
(p.19)

The uncertainty implied in the use of questions finds a correlation in the relatively free syntax.<sup>39</sup> The phrases are frequently tacked together without any explicit logical link. This is the case from the beginning of line 4 to the end. While these noun-phrases may be seen as complements of 'Sommes-nous livrés à', and so parallel to 'des orbites inconnues' and 'des nuits traversées sans fin', the 'négations de la matière', 'anticorps de non-existence', 'fulgurations', 'éclairs' and 'trous noirs' equally all make sense as phrases in apposition to 'Nous'. In lines 3 and 4, the parallelism which exists between each pair of hemistichs is reinforced by the metrical division of the lines. At the same time, the strings of phrases lead to a sense of the constant movement implied in 'sans fin'. There is, furthermore, a degree of rhythmic contrast between the metrically divided lines (1, 3 and 4), and the others. Line 5, from this point of view, is ambivalent, as its two internal primary stresses create a ternary structure. There are still, however, just two key parallel nouns: 'Fulgurations' and 'éclairs'. The effect of this ambivalence is again to enhance the sense of mobility. The impetus created at the start of the sentence 'Sommes-nous livrés...' (line 2) comes to a full halt only with 'mort' in line 6. Coming as it does at the end of the line, and at the end of such a long sentence, 'vie ou mort' gains in forcefulness. The whole of line 6, moreover, is notable for its accumulation of short stressed nouns, which adds to the sense of climax.

The tensions within these lines, both syntactic and rhythmic, are analogous to the tension between the ephemeral and infinitely small on the one hand, and the infinitely great on the other. This is the case notably in line 5, a binary-cum-ternary line. Here, 'Fulgurations' and 'éclairs éteints' imply short-lived phenomena, while 'à travers des milliards d'années' implies the contrary.

In the following series of lines from Racines, the presence of an internally unmetrical line (line 3) is notable for the sense of uncertainty to which it gives rise:

|   |              |         |
|---|--------------|---------|
| Quel est cet homme universel qui se cache dans les racines      |              |         |
|   | 1+3+4/3+5/   | (=16)   |
| Quel est ce si profond secret vivant au cœur de ces Dieux morts |              |         |
|   | 4+2+2/4+3+1/ | (=16)   |
| Et qui, dans le silence des nuits anciennes d'avant l'homme     |              |         |
|   | 2/4+3+3/4/   | (=16)   |
| 4 appelle et reconstruit le monde par le miracle de la voix?    |              |         |
|   | 2/4+2*/4+4/  | (=16)   |
|   |              | (TM 95) |

The sense of uncertainty in the third line results from the fact that the line is not related metrically to the three sixteen-syllable lines which surround it. (The four lines together form a complete stanza.) These three lines are metrical in so far as they all have a caesura after the eighth syllable, though the fourth line has an extra primary stress. This regularity adds to the sense of solemnity arising from the elevated tone of the questions and the language they use. The parallelism of the questions in lines 1 and 2 is itself almost incantatory. The universal scale of the becoming expressed in these lines finds a reflection in the construction of lines 3-4. The verb of which 'qui' is the subject is delayed until line 4. The anticipation of a verb results in the impulse being carried over the line-ending in a manner similar to enjambement. Line 3 presents a time so ancient as to be unknown; formless, as it were. The rhythm of the line is correspondingly loose. Line 4, on the other hand, presents the creation of order out of this chaos, and a return to a relatively metrical order is found in the line.

## (c) Ephemerality and disintegration

The poem 'Je naïs, je meurs...', in Fortune Infortune Fort Une, is typical of the suite in voicing the poet's sense of ephemerality. This ephemerality, as we shall see, is underlined by a number of features of the verse. Here are the first five lines of the poem:

|  |                            |                      |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Je naïs, je meurs, je fais mon temps.                      | Trajectoire d'un satellite |                      |
|  | 2/2/2+2/3+5/               | (=16)                |
| Un météorite arraché, une larme d'un océan                 | 5+3/3+5/                   | (=16)                |
| dans une immensité sans bornes, un mirage                  | 3+3+2*/3+5/                | (=16)                |
| 4 et l'étincelle d'un déclic. Je suis la mesure d'un temps | 4+4/5+3/                   | (=16)                |
| Une cellule vibrionnante aussitôt morte que lancée         | 4+4/4+4/                   | (=16)                |
|  |                            | (p.11) <sup>40</sup> |

The use of bald statements in the first hemistich recalls the opening line of the quotation from Fortune Infortune Fortune on page 192, though the rhythmic effects of the two are quite different. In this line ('Je naïs, je meurs...'), the frequency of the stresses lends a sense of finality to each verb and slows down the tempo.<sup>41</sup> This is in contrast with the second hemistich of line 1, and with the rest of the lines which follow. Here, the five-syllable segments (four in all) create a much faster tempo. This is accompanied by the absence of verbs. The composite effect is to suggest the rapidity of the satellite's progress across the sky, or the suddenness of a spark. In line 4, the reappearance of full syntax brings a sense of measure or stability; as does the presence of just four stresses in the line. This is, however, countered by the concision of the syntax: 'Une cellule vibrionnante', in line 5, is in apposition to 'Je'. The lines together are a good illustration of the way in which metrical stability may be in tension with a sense of ephemerality. The suddenness and ephemerality of the meteorite and the other related images is underlined by the recurrence of the short vowel [e], which appears nine times in lines 2 to 5.

The rather scientific vocabulary ('Trajectoire', 'satellite', 'météorite', 'déclic', 'mesure') adds a note of sterility to that of ephemerality. Such an extensive use of this type of word is unusual in

Seghers's poetry. As scientific words are frequently long, the effect of concision may be heightened, for their presence limits the total number of key words possible within a line.

Such effects of concision and ephemerality might seem to be at odds with the very length of the sixteen-syllable line. Yet the sixteen-syllable line frequently has the structure of two octosyllables, the difference being that the pause at the caesura is no doubt a little less than that at the end of an octosyllable.

In the following lines from Dialogue, a number of features already seen elsewhere lead to an impression of disintegration:

|   |  |                |          |
|---|--|----------------|----------|
|   | les ministres s'en sont allés, qui tenaient les livres à jour            | 3+5/3+2+3/     | (=16)    |
|   | les forteresses et les tours sous les cris des gamins s'éboulent         | 4+4/3+3+2/     | (=16)    |
|   | et dans les coffres grands ouverts, l'âcre odeur du cyprès<br>pourchasse | 4+2+2/1+2+3/2/ |          |
| 4 | les parfums des soies disparues. Si le bijou qui fut lézard<br>(...)     | 3+2+3/4/4/     | (=16)    |
|   |  |                | (TM 133) |

The metrical regularity of lines 1 and 2 (their division into two equal hemistichs, and their end-stopping) creates a sense of balance and completion suggesting the ministers' definitive disappearance (line 1), and, by association, that the dereliction (line 2) will be total. The alliteration on [u] in lines 1 and 2 serves to underline the regularity of the lines, by falling at the ends of the lines, and at the hemistich in line 2. In lines 3 and 4, on the other hand, there is a rhythmic equivalent to the disintegration. The presence of a primary stress within the second hemistich of line 3, and the enjambement leading into line 4 are both features which create a degree of metrical disruption.<sup>42</sup> The absence of a primary stress before that on 'disparues' throws the word all the more into relief and again underlines the definitive nature of the disappearance.

In 'L'âme s'en ira-t-elle...', in Fortune Infortune Fort Une, the definitive extinction of consciousness, as well as of physical being, is contemplated:

L'âme s'en ira-t-elle un jour? Memento mori. Tous les livres  
 $1+5+2/2+3/3/$  (=16)  
 qu'elle animait, périront-ils? Dans le coquillage béant  
 $4/4/5+3/$  (=16)  
 sur les spirales du dedans, qui viendra s'entendre, et les choses  
 $4+4/1+4/3/$  (=16)  
 4 pourraient-elles, un jour, n'être plus? Le coing d'or du temps fut  
 cueilli  
 $3*/2/3/3+2+3/$  (=16)  
 (p.29)<sup>43</sup>

The series of questions all concern the possibility of disappearance. As was the case in the last quotation, a certain accumulation of 'extra' primary stresses, and the presence of enjambement, create metrically ambiguous lines. Furthermore, although lines 2 and 3 are end-stopped, the line-ends are straddled by questions, which are an expression of doubt. The disparity between metrical and syntactic divisions is another element which contributes to the sense of uncertainty. None of the major breaks in the syntax coincides with the line-endings, other than at the end of line 4. Three-syllable segments at the ends of lines 1 and 3 create an eleven-syllable-long sentence in lines 1-2 (ending 'périront-ils?') and the syntactic equivalent of a sentence, again eleven syllables long, ending 'n'être plus?'. The result is a snaking effect in the rhythm congruent with the 'spirales' of the mind or consciousness. Both hemistichs of line 4 are heavily stressed, the broken rhythm paralleling the breakdown in confidence in the continuity of existence, which is voiced in the first hemistich. In the second hemistich, however, the frequent stresses are accompanied, rather, by a sense of lingering: the 'coing d'or du temps' is remembered with regret and nostalgia, the effect being heightened by the long vowels of 'coing', 'or' and 'temps'.

In my final quotation, from Au seuil de l'oubli, the sense of ephemerality is the result of a combination of features:

Les apparences étaient sauvés. Mais qui tournait autour d'Accra  
 4+4\*/2+2+4/ (=16)  
 sinon le sable et le mica, des yeux innombrables, les nôtres  
 4+4/2+3(+1)/2/ (=16)  
 en regardant le temps passer? Il n'y avait plus rien que nous.  
 4+2+2/6+2/ (=16)

4 Echafaudages de chimères qui s'en allaient, changeaient sans cesse  
 4+4\*/4/2+2/ (=16)  
 selon les aubes et les vents. Nous n'appelions pas les orages  
 4+4/2+3+3/ (=16)  
 Mais les mirages nous fascinaient qui naissaient pour s'évanouir  
 4+5/3+4/ (=16)  
 en longues laisses de regrets. Pour écouter au loin la vie  
 2+2+4/4+2+2/ (=16)

8 nous nous penchions sur nos poitrines où douce était la peau des  
 songes  
 4+4\*/2/4+2/ (=16)  
 Une nacre de coquillages broyée par les vents. La marée  
 3+5\*/2+3/3/ (=16)  
 du sang nous avait laissés là, racines échouées, passages  
 2/4+2/2+4/2/ (=16)  
 dans une écume transparente où criaient sans fin des oiseaux.  
 4+4/2+3+3/ (=16)

(TM 206)<sup>44</sup>

The lines use a mixture of brief statements, as it were of fact ('Les apparences étaient sauvés', line 1; 'Il n'y avait plus rien que nous', line 3; 'Nous n'appelions pas les orages', line 5). These are interspersed with longer sentences. The interweaving of the two produces a sense of dynamism which is heightened by the structure of the longer sentences themselves. The addition of short phrases, one to the other, to form a long sentence, is reminiscent of, for example, the lines starting 'Si ce n'était que par mégarde', quoted on pages 191.

In line 2, the reader's initial reaction to 'qui' is to someone exterior both to himself and to the poet. When 'qui' is revealed to be sand and mica, and then 'des yeux', the effect is one of surprise, though the eyes may be human and so correspond to those of the person suggested by 'qui'. The final implication of the reader or hearer, along with the poet, in 'les nôtres' effects another readjustment of the reader's position. The sentence which follows, 'Il n'y avait plus rien que nous', confirms this implication. The very shortness of the statement gives our isolation the status of something definitive.

In lines 4 and 5, rhythm, syntax and phonetic characteristics all combine in a particularly effective way to suggest a mirage-like ephemerality. The lack of fixity of the 'Echafaudages de chimères' is in part conveyed by the incomplete syntax (there is no article), while the verbs are ones of change. The passage is in the imperfect tense, implying indefinite duration or repetition, and making the changes signified all the more disturbing. The ephemerality is highlighted in lines 4 to 5 by the repetition of a series of fricatives: [ʃ], [ʒ] and [s]. With the addition of [f], these are almost imitative of the sound of the wind. An analogous effect derives from the further repetition of [ʒ] in 'mirages' (line 6), 'songes' (line 8), 'coquillages' (line 9), and 'passages' (line 10), and of [s] in 'fascinaient', 'naissaient', 's'évanouir' (line 6), 'laisses' (line 7), 'douce' and 'songés' (line 8), 'sang', 'laissés', 'racines', and 'passages' (line 10), and in 'transparente' and 'sans' (line 11).

The recurrence of regular eight-syllable hemistichs, composed notably of two four-syllable segments, is also responsible for a sense of flux in the lines. The rhythm of these hemistichs contrasts with the more broken rhythms present elsewhere, as for example in the second hemistichs of lines 2, 4, 8, 9 and 10. The regularity of the hemistichs composed 4+4/ is also in contrast with line 6, which, though it is a sixteen-syllable line, does not divide into two equal hemistichs. A further counter to their regularity is found in the six-syllable segment of line 3. This run of unstressed syllables speeds up the tempo, such that the stress on the second syllable of 'rien' is all the more noticeable. The final two-syllable segment, 'que nous', is so short in contrast with the preceding segment that it, too, emphasises the sense of solitude and insignificance. Both the hurriedness of this hemistich and the sense of insignificance engendered are then complemented in line 4 by the image of the 'Echafaudages de chimères'. The enjambement at the ends of lines 9 and 10 likewise creates metrical instability, particularly as it combines, here, with the presence of 'extra' primary stresses in both line 9 and line 10. Here, as in many cases seen in sections 1) and 2) of this chapter, the move away from a strictly metrical treatment of the lines translates images of change; in this instance, the tides and flowing blood.

### Conclusion

Syntactic ambiguity, throughout a series of lines, may be important in conveying a sense of dynamism; the dynamism arising from uncertainty which provokes readjustment in the sense and the reader's or hearer's reaction. Such syntactic ambiguity may overlay the metrical regularity of the verse.

The dynamism of the verse written in sixteen-syllable lines differs considerably from that of the freed alexandrine verse and that of the verse written in mixed line-lengths. A major difference lies in its regularity or the relative infrequency of licence on the level of the metre: the types of lines defined on pages 183-184 as freed sixteen-syllable lines are relatively rare, as are lines with enjambement. The effects of dynamism come, nonetheless, as much from the internal treatment of the lines as from the rhythmic relationship between different lines. The binary-cum-ternary structure of some lines is one recurring feature, in the internal treatment of the lines, which is responsible for effects of dynamism. The division of the line after the eighth syllable is an almost constant feature and leads to a degree of rigidity. This rigidity is, however, in tension with the variety of rhythms possible within each hemistich; and these rhythms are the rhythms proper also to the octosyllable. The rigidity is also in tension with the dynamism of the lines as individual units, their length creating a sense of expansion and breadth which overrules, to some extent, the medial caesura.

The metrical rigidity of Seghers's handling of the sixteen-syllable line is, furthermore, in tension with the thematic content of the verse. Particularly from Au seuil de l'oubli onwards, the poetry lays a greater emphasis on death and the poet's sense of his inability to grasp and know his self. In such a context, the relatively rigid nature of the sixteen-syllable verse can be seen as countering the sense of fluidity and disintegration by imposing a structure on what is otherwise elusive and in a state of constant becoming.

CONCLUDING COMMENTARIES

The commentaries which follow are designed to do several things. The discussion of whole poems will complement the fragmentary approach taken in the main body of the thesis, illustrating the significance of various features in relation to the larger context of a poem, as well as in conjunction with each other.

The three poems which I have chosen for commentary are from different periods of Seghers's career. 'Poète', a wartime poem, is a fairly early poem. It is written in fixed form. The second is from the earliest of the suites, Racines. This suite marks the start of Seghers's mature output. The poem is in alexandrines, which are handled with some degree of freedom, though they mostly follow a basic classical model. The progression this marks from 'Poète' is taken one step further in the third poem, which is from Au seuil de l'oubli and in mixed line-lengths. While these differences exist, the discussion of the poems will also illustrate a thematic similarity between them.

## POETE

|    |  |  |                                |
|----|--|--|--------------------------------|
|    | Au monstre des secrets je plie sans jamais rompre<br>Jusqu'à l'existence et la voix,   | 2+4/2+4/<br>3+2/3/                       | (=12)<br>(=8)                  |
| 4  | Je me lie à mon temps qui roule entre mes doigts<br>Comme un bracelet d'or ou d'ambre.   | 3+3/2+4/<br>3+3/2/                       | (=12)<br>(=8)                  |
| 8  | Je sens autour de moi la vie morte, passée<br>Mon sang la polit chaque jour<br>Tel un bijou dans sa coquille de détours<br>Aussi fluide que la pensée.               | 2+4/2+1/3/<br>2+3/3/<br>4/4+4/<br>3/5/   | (=12)<br>(=8)<br>(=12)<br>(=8) |
| 12 | Ce qui fut m'est léger. J'invente, j'imagine<br>Je tresse la nuit, le soleil<br>Je réponds en offrant les champs et les abeilles<br>L'espoir, le jour que je devine. | 3+3/2/4/<br>2+3/3/<br>3+3+2/4/<br>2/2+4/ | (=12)<br>(=8)<br>(=12)<br>(=8) |
| 16 | Sur mes chariots la vie balance ses navires<br>De foin, de mers et de parfums<br>Et je feins d'oublier le début et la fin<br>Il n'est de réel que de dire.           | 4/2+2/4/<br>2/2/4/<br>3+3/3+3/<br>5/3/   | (=12)<br>(=8)<br>(=12)<br>(=8) |
|    |  |  | <u>(TM 54)</u>                 |

Central to 'Poète' is the theme of language, and, in particular, of language as used in poetry. Throughout the body of this thesis, frequent reference has been made to the dialectical relationships implied in the process of creating a poem: the transforming of language from the unconscious, but which refers to the outside world, in the fabric of the poem; the poem as the concretisation of the poet's self (itself the relationship between the conscious and unconscious selves) in its relationship with the outside world.

The dialectic between interior and exterior spheres, typical of Seghers's poetry in general, is reflected in images found throughout the poem. It is implicit in the first stanza in so far as these lines voice the poet's craft as poet. The poet bends and shapes language, but words have a hidden mystery, are rich with resonances, which escape any discipline he can impose. These resonances, too, affect the picture the poet, and the reader, has of the poet's self. This hidden mystery of words, the 'monstre des secrets', is both terrible, because it means that the self is ever elusive, and cannot be pinned down, and, for the same reason, also wonderful. Constant becoming is a condition of human existence, and its expression is central to Seghers's imagery, but the fact of constant becoming is converted into something positive: without it, the poem would not exist. As is implied in these lines from 'Poète', the individual's becoming takes place, at least in part, in the language he uses. The poem thus becomes fully reflexive: it expresses the poet's becoming, while his becoming also takes place in the words of the poem. Each is like a mirror for the other; the interaction between them is perpetuated ad infinitum.

In lines 3-4, the mingling of inner and outer domains is paradoxical. The poet binds himself to his time, or the age in which he lives, and along with this turns through his own fingers. This suggests the poet's identification of himself with the times. The poem's date of composition is significant to an interpretation of this. Resistance writers considered that it was their role both to reflect and to influence the society in which they lived, and to change the course of history. While the image of a bracelet suggests seamless continuity, a bracelet is something palpable, and limited, and it is these qualities which suggest an ability to shape time. Also implicit

here, because of the poet's identification of himself with his time, is the refashioning of himself. For the poet, language is the means through which history can be influenced; but his language, as we have seen, also embodies his self. To this extent, therefore, if a poem is part of written history, the poet's self is also present in history.

While a bracelet normally encircles the wrist and is, that is, exterior to the wearer, this bracelet runs between the fingers which therefore encompass it. The bracelet is thus another embodiment of the ambivalence between interior and exterior domains, and a further expression of the way in which the poet can, to some extent, dominate or influence time, while it is impossible for him to be totally separate from it.

The second stanza plays on similar paradoxes. The '*vie morte*' recalls the '*temps qui roule*' of line 3, and is external to the poet, though the use of the verb '*sentir*' in '*Je sens autour de moi*' suggests the poet's consciousness of, and to this extent presence in, dead life. The poet's blood, meanwhile, is, literally speaking, inside him, though it is this which polishes dead life. The implications here are several. First, the images bring to mind the fact that the individual is, through the process of becoming, the culmination of all the generations which have preceded him; his blood comes, literally, from them. Second, the images also suggest the poet's function of transforming reality, including the apparently dead and sterile, revivifying it in the words of the poem. In order to do this, exterior reality must be interiorised: it must enter into the poet's consciousness and then be re-expressed, transformed, by him. This is done, of course, in language, notably metaphor. The image of burnishing is a metaphor for what happens in the poem itself: the words of the poem express certain realities, but at the same time transform them. It is also, however, a metaphor for what the poet does to language itself. Through a careful crafted use of words, the poet frees words of encrusted clichés, and also revivifies language, suggesting new meanings and associations. Only in language can '*la vie morte*' be transformed into '*un bijou*'.

It is at this point (lines 7-8 in particular) that the syntax itself becomes ambiguous: is it the '*vie morte*' which becomes '*Tel un bijou*'; or is the '*sang*' '*Tel un bijou*'? Logically, '*Tel un bijou*' would seem to refer to past life, as this is what is presented as being polished; but blood courses through the convolutions of the body, which may be seen, metaphorically, as a '*coquille de détours*'. It is precisely because of the fluidity of thought patterns, and because of the relative independence of words from objective reality that '*Tel un bijou*' can refer to both '*la vie morte*' and '*Mon sang*'. The reality of words ('*Il n'est de réel que de dire*') does not always coincide with 'objective' reality, which can, in any case, only ever be perceived through the individual's consciousness, and therefore in a subjective way. The use of ambiguous syntax to suggest the constantly shifting relationship between the poet and the outside world is a feature which has been seen on numerous occasions. The words of the poem are themselves a reality: they are a linguistic object, which, when completed, becomes independent of its creator. At the same time as expressing the reality of the poet's self in relation to the outside world, the poem also becomes an independent reality in which associations and relationships between words are made by the reader. For the poet, as for the reader, the poem is an expression of the poet's self, but this self remains ever elusive. The poem contains the poet's self, like a shell around him, but does not impose limits: it is a shell which allows for development in unseen directions, notably because the poem is open to interpretation.

The transformation of exterior reality in the poet's imagination is again stated in the third stanza. The poet opposes the past, '*Ce qui fut*' (recalling '*la vie morte*', line 5) to the night, the sun, and so on. Here we again touch on the dual nature of language. The images of night and sun are in the poet's imagination, but these and the words which signify them also refer to things commonly known in the outside world, and so refer the reader back to these. This ambivalence is implicit also in the verbs used. One cannot invent or imagine anything which is entirely new, but only things which are an extension or transformation of what is known. In line 9, the use of the verbs '*J'invente*' and '*j'imagine*' is ambivalent. While they are apparently being used as absolute constructions, they may also be parallel to '*Je*

tresse' in the next line. The verbs 'inventer' and 'imaginer' are suggestive particularly of cerebral activity. By contrast, 'tresser' is much more physical in connotation; but the very use of 'tresser' here is an illustration of the extension or transformation implied by the two earlier verbs. The usual meaning, to plait, is here extended, or used metaphorically, to cover the intricate weaving of words, ideas and associations which give rise to the poem, and which will rise from it. Again, the image of plaiting night and sun is impossible other than in words.

The poem's historical context is again relevant to an interpretation of this (the third) stanza. It was the Resistance poets' role to offer hope in a new France, to offer light in the place of darkness: the night (line 10), by being expressed in the words of a poem, an essential message of which is one of hope, becomes transformed. Night gives way to hope and daybreak (line 12). Daybreak is not simply the promise of a potential new day but is actually its start.

One of the functions of artistic creation for the poet, suggested in line 15, is as a means of keeping awareness of ephemerality at bay. We may conclude that the finished poem, as a concretisation of the poet's self, gives permanence to this self by outlasting his physical existence. The idea of permanence is implicit in the images of gold, amber and gems, which are used in a particularly successful way. Let us look first at the lines

Je me lie à mon temps qui roule entre mes doigts  
Comme un bracelet d'or ou d'ambre.

The lines are striking because of the suggestion of a similarity between abstract, unfixable time, and the altogether more concrete and durable bracelet. They are similar in that both are continuous, but it is a similarity perceived more through intuition than by a logical link between them. The expression of the intuition in the words of the poem fixes this intuition, but still leaves the lines open to interpretation. The poet's alchemy transmutes both the fleeting vision he has of his self and the passage of time in the words of the poem, giving them permanence. The lines thus themselves embody the tension

between the ephemeral and the permanent, between what is fixed and what is unfixed, and between what is inside and outside the consciousness. The likening of time, or the age, to a bangle (a closed ring) emphasises the continuity of time; an image which is countered by 'Et je feins d'oublier le début et la fin' (line 15). Time is continuous and seamless, but individual events, notably those which make up the individual's lifespan, are limited in time.

The second stanza again implies the conferring of permanence on what is ephemeral. The ambiguity of 'Tel un bijou' (line 7) has already been discussed; 'la vie morte' and 'Mon sang' are both possible terms of comparison. They are again images of transience or fluidity, but which are given permanence by being expressed in the words of the poem, and they are, furthermore, compared to a solid durable gemstone.

In the first stanza, the 'monstre des secrets' is itself a combination of the concrete and abstract. The verbs 'plie' and 'rompre' are, by contrast with both the 'monstre des secrets' and 'existence' and 'voix' in line 2, particularly physical in their immediate connotations; connotations which are especially physical because of the association of the two verbs with each other. They suggest a pliant (as opposed to a brittle) material, and physical resistance to a physical force. Nonetheless, they are metaphors for the poet's work of bending language to his will, while language resists having precise meaning put upon it.

Alongside images implying interior and exterior domains, and underlining the sense of the fluidity between the unconscious and conscious selves and the outside world, are images which connote curves. Obvious examples are found in 'bracelet' and 'coquille de détours'. A number of the verbs also are important in this respect, implying, as does 'détours', dynamism as well as a curve: a curve, as a line, is static. The most obvious example is found in 'rouler' in line 3, here used intransitively, though with suggestions, because it is between the poet's fingers, of being rolled. In the first line, on the other hand, the verb 'je plie' denotes a specifically active role, and in the last stanza, 'la vie balance ses navires' suggests a rocking movement, but also suggests the to some extent passive role of the

poet. He is offered images of life, in all its profusion and richness. His reply is to offer them, in turn, woven into the fabric of a poem (stanza 3). 'Je tresse' is again an active verb. The interplay of active and passive modes, together with the implications of curves, is, then, another expression of the duality of the relationship between the consciousness and the outside world, and of the dual nature of artistic creation.

The association between 'bracelet d'or ou d'ambre' and 'un bijou' is that between crystalline, polished, and precious materials. The colour association between gold and amber is echoed further in the images of the sun (line 10) and of bees (line 11), with another possible association in 'champs', if one thinks of fields ripe for the harvest, and, finally, in 'foin' (line 15). The images all imply riches (precious gold and amber) or fertility and bounty (honey-producing bees, harvests and hay).

Further associations between words arise from their phonetic characteristics. A cluster of words is found in lines 14-15: 'foin', 'parfums', 'feins' and 'fin'. The (spatial) proximity of these rhymes and half rhymes to each other creates another rhythm running in counterpoint to that of the metre. The pattern is complicated by the fact that the rhyme (that is, at the ends of lines 14 and 15) is not true rhyme, though phonetically [fœ] and [fɛ] are very close to each other. There is, however, a true, internal, rhyme in line 15 between the homonyms 'feins' and 'fin'. The effect of this phonetic accumulation is not so much one of insistence as of instability, both because 'foin' and 'feins' (near the beginning of their respective lines), and the internal rhyme 'feins : fin' run counter to the metre, and because these words are at unequal distances from each other. The phonetic density in these lines is also a counterpart to the accumulation of nouns in 'De foin, de mers et de parfums'.

Rhythmic structures also create a sense of dynamism. This is the case in the first stanza as a whole. The eight-syllable lines, in relation to the classical alexandrines (a longer line-length), create an impression of constraint and density. This lends greater weight, in line 2, to the key words 'existence' and 'voix', and in line 4

emphasises the precious nature of the materials. In line 3, the smaller proportion of internal primary stresses (in relation to the total line-length) results in a sense of greater expansion which is particularly appropriate in the second hemistich, where it helps to convey the idea of movement. At the same time, in this hemistich, the following of the short two-syllable segment by the longer four-syllable one creates an acceleration in tempo.

A similar effect is found in line 8. The presence of the césure enjambante gives rise to an apparent pause, which almost contradicts the meaning of 'fluide', and then a slight increase in tempo in the relatively long five-syllable segment. The effect of dynamism here is heightened by the contrast with the rhythm of the preceding line, a regular ternary alexandrine.

Line 13 is a metrically ambiguous line, and ends, furthermore, with enjambement. A ternary reading of the line (in terms of primary stresses) creates a lilting effect which is appropriate to the meaning; an effect heightened by the césure enjambante. Yet 'la vie' is important thematically and may be felt to warrant a primary stress itself. Again, the implication of dynamism found on the thematic level is reinforced by a prosodic feature.

The overall prosodic construction of the poem creates an impression of fluctuation. The regular alternation of longer and shorter lines (alexandrines and octosyllables) is underlined by the regular rimes embrassées, the rhyme highlighting the line-endings. There is, however, a tension in that the lines which rhyme together are of different lengths. This is particularly noticeable in the middle two lines of each stanza, where a sense of expansion results in the second of the two lines in question. In the first stanza, the sense of expansion in 'Je me lie à mon temps qui roule entre mes doigts' (in relation to the preceding shorter line) translates the idea of dynamism present in the image of passing time. The third line of the second stanza reflects the implication of an indefinite, extensive space in 'détours'. In the third stanza, meanwhile, the use of 'offrant' implies openness on the outside world, and, in this sense, expansion.

In the last stanza, on the other hand, the internal rhyme in line 15 counters the potential sense of expansion, and it is, moreover, at this point that the poet expresses his sense of being finite. The internal rhymes, and half rhymes in end position, are confining. By contrast with lines 14 and 15, then, the final line, an octosyllable, counters this sense of constraint. Its first segment is relatively long, but 'Il n'est de réel que de dire' also implies openness: for the poet, utterance is a public act, and the affirmation suggests the poet's intention of continuing to give utterance, and bearing witness to his belief in the value of this. The use of fixed form has a part to play in this respect. The form of this poem is itself in some ways traditional. The poem uses alexandrines (the most traditional of all lines) and octosyllables, and a near-regular rhyme pattern. The exceptions to complete regularity are the half-rhymes in the first and last stanzas. Resistance poets used features of traditional prosody both as an illustration of what they were defending (French culture in general, and as embodied in French poetry and the French language) and as a persuasive weapon with which to defend these parts of the French heritage.

While the use of fixed form in 'Poète' can be related to the forms and aims of Resistance poetry, an essential feature of this poem is its dynamism. The dynamism is both thematic and prosodic, and underscores the dynamic relationship which, through consciousness, exists between the poet and the outside world.

My second poem for commentary, taken from Racines, is again characterised by a degree of formality on the level of the prosody, and also, as we shall see, on the level of the expression. As I shall illustrate, the function of this formality is, however, different from that found in 'Poète'.

Vaine puissance, ô mort, qui te change en compare?

$$1+3/2/1+2+3/ \quad (=12)$$

Qui t'inscrit dans un cycle où rien n'est jamais clos?

$$1+2+3/2+2+2/ \ (=12)$$

Ce qui s'use en ton nom se reforme, une lampe 3+3/3/3/ (=12)

4 s'allumera toujours dans la nuit des veilleurs. 4+2/3+3/ (=12)

Toujours un homme absent renaîtra de tes cendres 2+2+2/3+3/ (=12)

Aveugle, mais vivant et te marquant du doigt. 274/3+3/ (=12)

Il mourra, mais sa voix te fera prisonnière 3/3+3+3/ (=12)

Prise, l'insaisissable, à la nasse des mots. 1(+1)/4/3+3/ (=12)

Tu n'es rien. Tu est (sic) blanche et noire. L'éloquence

$$3/3+274/(=12)$$

de tes ombres ne joue pas avec les saisons, 374/5/ (=12)

Tu ignores les ciels mêlés, l'odeur des pommes 3+3+2/2+2/ (=12)

**Le bruit des voix, tu scies le vent sur tes violons**

$$2+2/2+2/4 \quad (=12)$$

Tu cries comme un mauvais acteur, tu te déclames 2/3+3/4 (=12)

0 mort de mélodrame et ton rideau t'emporte 2+4/4+2/ (=12)

*Tes craies et tes fusains, tes ongles, tes couteaux.*

16 Tu prends une carcasse et dans nos cages vides 2+4/4+2/ (=12)

tu prends une carcasse et dans nos cages vides  
le soleil ruisselant se caisse sous tes doigts

Mais tu n'as rien plus rien car la sève et la vaix

Mais ce n'est rien, plus rien, car la seve et la voix 4/2/3+3/ (-12)

Ont rejoint nos forêts par des chemins liquides. 3+3/4+2/ (-12)

Une liaison des forces par des chemins liquides. 349, 442, (-12) (IM 98-99)

(TM 98-99)

Before I look at the poem itself in detail, there are a number of points to be made about its context.

The poem is the eighth in a suite of thirteen. In all the poems which precede this one, we find images which imply the cycles of birth and death in nature, but with an overall emphasis on rebirth. This is the first, and only, poem in the suite to address Death directly and thereby lay emphasis on the role of Death, even if, in so doing, the poet reiterates that death is powerless and, in a sense, temporary. Just how this is true we will see presently. In its emphasis on death, in whatever guise, the poem is in contrast with the one which immediately precedes it. This poem emphasises permanence, as in the words '*Les millénaires qui se sont couchés n'ont point péri*' (TM 98), but a form of permanence which is in tandem with ephemerality. Becoming implies constant change and so ephemerality, while all past states continue in the present. We will see presently, in the poem I have chosen for commentary, how this poem likewise expresses the tension between transience and permanence.

The poem which immediately follows this one presents the whole of nature, including man, as a temple to be venerated. This complements the quasi-religious tone of the present poem ('*Vaine puissance, ô mort...*'). The poems which follow all underline, slightly more emphatically than do the earlier ones of the suite, the position of the individual as a physical being in creation. The suite culminates with a poem in which the poet contemplates his own death: '*Si je m'endormais au cœur du Rien*' (TM 101). The poet sees his own death in the context of the continuing cycles of death and rebirth, and the tone is calm, and even one of wonder. The address to Death in the poem with which we are concerned is perhaps a defensive act, the result of an underlying refusal to accept mortality. But in the light of the last poem of the suite, and of the emphasis on rebirth throughout Racines, the poem seems primarily a genuine affirmation of belief in the continuity of existence.

As I have stated elsewhere, Racines was inspired by a series of photographs, by Fina Gomez, of pieces of sea-washed driftwood, some of which are strangely anthropomorphic. Other photographs suggest new

life growing from these apparently sterile vestiges of the Amazonian forests. The photograph which accompanies this particular poem is of a stump of wood on an empty shore, the wood reminiscent of someone screaming, arms outstretched. Light and shadow are in sharp contrast on the surface of the wood, and the wood throws a deep shadow on the sand. While this visual context is not essential to enjoyment of the poem, it does elucidate certain images: 'Tu est (sic) blanche et noire. L'éloquence / de tes ombres...' (lines 9-10); in line 15, the images of chalk and charcoal, which imply pure white and black; and the portrayal of Death as a histrionic actor.

While the photograph casts light on the poem, I would argue that, equally, the poem results in the photograph being seen in a different light. Without the poem to illustrate it, the piece of driftwood in the photograph would not readily be seen as a personification of death.

The picture given of death in this poem is dual. Death is ever present and yet a vain force; vain because, as we shall see, life also is an unassailable force. The duality is summed up in the first phrase of the poem, 'Vaine puissance'. Death is presented in terms of an unconvincing and histrionic actor, a 'mauvais acteur' (line 13), whose grand gestures (lines 9-10) and declamatory melodramatic style (lines 13-14) the poet decries, thereby suggesting that human preoccupation with death is exaggerated.

Images taken from the realm of theatre run throughout the poem. In the first line, the poet implies that traditionally the role of death is seen as the opposite of that of a walk-on or silent actor ('comparse'). The question of mortality runs throughout Seghers's poetry, and is of course a universal concern. The role of death is therefore no minor one. But here we touch on the duality of death. For each individual, the moment of death is but a moment. In this, Death's role is indeed like that of a walk-on actor. But the result, of course, is permanent. When the curtain falls shroud-like on an individual's life, this also signals Death's own exit from the stage (line 14). His role is finished for the moment, but will be repeated.

Meanwhile, Death, too, is shroud-wrapped, veiled from human understanding, an apprehended presence lurking in the wings.

Death's ranting gesticulation (lines 9-10 and 12-14) is contrasted with the voice or utterance, or language used in a more controlled way, as in the poem itself. It is precisely through language that death can be tamed (lines 7-8): to express something in language is to impose an order on it and to defuse its frightening characteristics. Death is caught by language (lines 7-8) while language itself escapes the hold of death (lines 18-19). The more usual order is thus inverted. Death is reduced to something innocuous, while language (notably in the form of the poem) lives on; and, in so far as the poem is the embodiment of the poet's self, he, too, lives on in the poem.

Death's strident clamouring is contrasted with images suggesting greater subtlety and variety of sensation (line 11):

Tu ignores les ciels mêlés, l'odeur des pommes

Sight and smell are implied here, separately, but the image of apples also brings in suggestions of colour. Both images imply a certain mingling of colour or sensory richness. Parallel to these is 'Le bruit des voix' (line 12): human utterance, blended voices, which are contrasted directly with Death's noise: 'tu scies le vent sur tes violons'. Death's own noise is devoid of meaning; but the poem, a linguistic object, lives beyond its creator's death and can be said to fill his void.

Part of the dynamism of the poem (any poem) is its openness to interpretation. When the poet states, in the last two lines, 'la sève et la voix / Ont rejoint nos forêts par des chemins liquides', he implies that his own voice, as embodied in the poem, will continue to exist in this way. Because each successive reading and interpretation of the poem is a re-creation of it, and so of the poet's self, the poet will continue to be reborn. The forests themselves are used throughout Racines as an image of something which is in a state of constant becoming and renewal. At this particular juncture they are being used

specifically as a metaphor for the becoming of the poem in the consciousness of others.

The idea of cycles is important thematically in the poem. The poet asks (line 2)

Qui t'inscrit dans un cycle où rien n'est jamais clos?

It helps here to remember that Racines frequently presents images of tropical forests, in which all stages of seasonal change are present together. Cycles of life and death thus overlap with each other. While death might be ever present in such a context, the absence of a winter season as such diminishes the visible presence of death. The statement 'L'éloquence / de tes ombres ne joue pas avec les saisons' (lines 9-10) is ambivalent, suggesting both that Death does not resolve the seasonal changes, in the rain forests, into any visible pattern, and also that Death cannot, in this context or one in which the four seasons succeed each other, stop the resurgence of new life: 'rien n'est jamais clos'.

It is because the cycle of death and life is not closed that, in lines 3-5, what seems primarily an image of death (the watch over the dead) is inverted, and becomes, instead, an affirmation of the continuity of life. The fact that there are people to keep vigil means that life is present. Because keeping watch over the dead is a traditional act, this itself brings in suggestions of the transmission of tradition from one generation to the next. The presence of the light is as much an affirmation of the presence of life as a signal of the presence of the dead. The light is also what wards off the darkness, and may itself be seen as a symbol of life. In the very next line of the poem, Seghers reaffirms the phoenix-like rebirth of the individual from, literally, the ashes of Death: 'Toujours un homme absent renaitra de tes cendres'. Here, the ashes of the dead are transposed and presented as the ashes of Death itself. In so far as life is reborn of the ashes, Death itself is vanquished. There is a further suggestion in 'un homme absent' that the dead themselves are reborn in the new generations. Again, this is related to the nature of becoming.

In lines 3 and 4, the images of light and dark suggest life and death. Related to these images are those of black and white, applied to Death. In their suggestion of a lack of subtlety, these images complement those which portray Death as a ham actor. In line 15, the images of chalk and charcoal also connote dryness and sterility, and are also suggestive of heavily stylised makeup. A further image associated with that of light is found in lines 16-17. The sun's being clotted by Death illustrates the power of Death, but again the image is undermined by the affirmation in the last line and a half. The verb 'se cailler' suggests blood, and while physically the individual is reduced in death to a skeleton, a 'carcasse' or 'cage vide', the 'sève' (the equivalent of blood in the plant world) continues to flow, and new life will emerge.

The equivalence suggested here between 'sève' and 'voix' recalls the association, seen in 'Poète', of 'existence' and 'voix'. We have already seen with regard to the earlier poem the existential importance of language to the individual. Here, in the poem from Racines, the 'chemins liquides' suggest those between consciousness and the outside world, and those between the poem and its reader.

Death, as we have seen, is portrayed as a histrionic actor. Death's exaggerated style is implied in the, at times, grandiloquent style of the poem itself. This is seen notably in the use of apostrophe in lines 1, 'Vaine puissance, ô mort', and 14, 'Ô mort de mélodrame'. Death's own declamatory style is turned against Death itself, and becomes mocking.

The insistence of Death's tone is further suggested in several cases of alliteration, found in lines 12-14. First, that on [v] in 'voix', 'vent' and 'violons'. Here, the fricative quality of the consonant suggests the resonance of both wind and violin; but the verb 'scies' suggests that the resonance has a harsh quality. The insistent tone is further conveyed through the repetition of [t] and [c] in line 13, and [m] in lines 13-14, and is further underlined by the internal rhyme in 'déclames : mélodrame'.

The function of the rhyme proper in the last four lines is quite different, and is again used in such a way as to suggest an undermining of Death's own rhetorical style. The rhyme here is not an ironic mimicry of Death's manner but rather represents a measured, conscious use of the device as an affirmation of order. The use of blank verse (lines 1-15) and rhyme (lines 16-19) is, then, the opposite of what one might expect. Histrionic Death, in the first fifteen lines, speaks, as it were, through the blank verse. This might itself be seen as reflecting Death's sham: traditionally, one would expect a true tragedian to speak in rhymed alexandrines. The rhyme is reserved, instead, for the poet's affirmation of the continuity of existence, and again the poet's voice stands in opposition to that of Death.

A further aspect of the rhetorical nature of the poem is found in the different forms of opposition which run throughout. We have already seen that suggestions of death as a void are countered by implications of continuity. Similar oppositions are to be seen on the level of the choice of individual words. Lines 1 and 2 are again significant from this point of view, 'Vaine' being in tension with 'puissance', and 'cycle' with 'où rien n'est jamais clos'. In line 5, the ideas of presence and absence are in tension with each other in 'Toujours un homme absent renaitra de tes cendres': the presence of new life sprung from past life, the presence of absent dead generations in the present one and future ones. The concision of line 5 translates this coexistence: 'un homme', suggesting physical presence, is immediately countered by 'absent', such that the 'homme' refers both to the living and to the dead, as well as to future generations, at the same time.

In line 8, 'Prise' and 'l'insaisissable' are opposed directly. Again the concision is effective. Here it is suggestive of an immediate capture because of the juxtaposition of two primary stresses on 'prisonnière' and 'Prise'. The effect is further enhanced by the echo of the first syllable of 'prisonnière' in 'Prise'.

The poem from Racines is characteristic of Seghers's poetry from several points of view. First of all, thematically, it lays stress on the questions of mortality, artistic creation and consciousness, and

overall emphasis is placed on rebirth, both in the continuity of successive generations with each other, and in the poem. Second, this is done by and large through concrete images. Third, the poem is typical of the period to which it belongs (that is, the early part of the mature period, which starts with Racines) in using a form which is still essentially classical.

In the context of Racines as a whole, the oscillation between relatively classical verse and verse in freer form is a counterpart, on the level of the prosody, to the tension between the picture of a world in formation and that of a world in a state of constant disintegration. Even within the context of this particular poem, there is a straining of the verse towards a slightly freer alexandrine: although virtually all the lines have some degree of stress on the sixth syllable, relatively few have a strictly orthodox two-stresses-per-hemistich pattern, and just one internal primary stress on the sixth syllable. Again, this can be seen as an underlining of the portrayal of Death's role as an important one, but the structure of a number of lines reflects the poet's own affirmative voice. This is the case in line 1. The multiple stresses translate Death's own insistent speech but at the same time mock it. The same is true of line 12. In other lines, however, multiple stresses reflect the poet's own direct affirmation of Death's vain noise. Lines 5 and 8 are cases in point. In line 11, on the other hand, the multiple stresses translate, rather, the rich plurality of existence.

A further aspect of relative formality in the poem is the grouping of lines. The first two groups are of roughly equal length only, and are not defined by rhyme or by having distinct subjects. It would, therefore, be inaccurate to refer to them as stanzas. They are, however, characterised by being concluded in similar ways. Line 8 states the ensnaring of Death. Lines 14 and 15 portray the removal of Death from the stage. The function of the final four lines, which do form a stanza, is, as we have seen, to conclude the poem in a measured, but assertive, manner.

The final commentary is on a poem from Au seuil de l'oubli. The poem affords some of the best examples of the combination of fluidity

and fixity of imagery, and fluidity and fixity of form. It is, then, one of the most successful concretisations of features which, throughout Part II, have been seen to be typical of Seghers's poetry.

- |   |   |                  |          |
|---|---|------------------|----------|
|   | L'échafaudage des illusions, qui l'avait dressé, quelle lumière                   | 4+5/1+4/1+3/     | (=18)    |
|   | le traversait au jour naissant, le pénétrait la nuit venue                        | 4+2+2/4+2+2/     | (=16)    |
|   | dans l'ordre exact de ses boulons, de ses colliers, de ses structures             | 2+2+4/4/4/       | (=16)    |
| 4 | organisées et connectées dans leurs dentelles d'équations?                        | 4/4/4+4/         | (=16)    |
|   | Quel architecte avait osé, devant ses façades tremblantes                         | 4+4/5+3/         | (=16)    |
|   | Miroirs sans tain, glaces noyées, l'infini fou                                    | 1+3/1+3/1+3/     | (=12)    |
|   | des réfractions, des courbes mouvantes, des coups d'éponge                        | 4/2+3/3+2/       | (=14)    |
| 8 | sur les colonnes et les frontons où n'apparaissaient que des trous?               | 4*4/5+3/         | (=16)    |
|   | Etais-ce trahison, mégarde, inadvertance? Epuisement peut-être ou défi, démission | 6/2/4/1+3+2/3/3/ | (=24)    |
|   | Formes et forces vacillaient, et les circuits de repêchage                        | 1+3+4/4+4/       | (=16)    |
|   | S'éteignaient, s'affaissaient et ne répondraient plus.                            | 3/3/3+3/         | (=12)    |
|   |   |                  | (TM 199) |

This particular poem is the second in the suite as published in Le Temps des merveilles. (It does not figure in either the Revue des deux mondes (1973) or the Virgil edition (1976), details of which will be found in the bibliography.) It is typical of the suite in being written in a mixture of line-lengths. Thematically it is closely related to the first and third poems in the suite through the images of insubstantial structures, as seen in the first line of each of these two poems:

Dans des demeures de mémoire battues en vain par de grands vents  
 (TM 198)

Les maisons intérieures, celles qui vont par de grands pans  
 sur nos jetées s'abattre (...) (TM 199)

Such images as these are typical of the whole suite, though in other poems they are sometimes related to images of the theatre and suggest stage sets, as in 'Sur les travées imaginaires d'un théâtre' (TM 200). Images expressing a tension between fixity and greater dynamism are typical of all Seghers's poetry, and in the course of this commentary more examples will be seen. In its thematic use of architectural structures, this poem, and other poems in the suite, recall the poems of Piranèse, while the theatre imagery is reminiscent of Dis-moi, ma vie.

The first poems in Au seuil de l'oubli suggest that the architectural structures are within the imagination. They are countered by the last two poems of the suite, amongst others, in that these poems suggest openness on to an immense outside, as expressed here:

Auras-tu encore besoin de sauvegarde dans ces passages  
 lointains ou nébuleux (...) (TM 208)

The dialectic between interior and exterior domains has been seen on numerous occasions, and it is implicit in much of Au seuil de l'oubli, both in the relationship of different poems to each other and within the framework of individual poems. In this particular commentary, we will concentrate less on the dialectical relationship between the individual and the outside world in favour of a more detailed

discussion of the relationship between the imagery of the poem and the ways in which the poem is structured.

Before looking in detail at the way in which the structure of the poem and its imagery combine, it is worth pointing to the fact that, prosodically, the poem belongs both with the sixteen-syllable verse (through lines 2-5), and with the mixed-line verse (notably through lines 5 to the end). On this somewhat superficial level, then, the poem shows characteristics of what may be seen as relatively orthodox verse (the sixteen-syllable lines, which here all have a caesura after the eighth syllable) and freer verse (lines of disparate lengths, including, in lines 1 and 9, the very long). The section which is in a mixture of line-lengths itself also embodies this tension, for metrical lines (6 and 8) alternate with unmetered ones (7 and 9), and line 9, furthermore, starts with what might, were it not for the presence of a caesura after the eighth syllable, be a classical alexandrine. The second half of the line, too, is the equivalent of a classical alexandrine, with, again, an 'extra' primary stress on 'défi'. The line is not, then, quite so unmetered in character as its length might at first suggest, though it does contain one of the very few examples of a six-syllable segment. This feature itself results in a certain looseness, and is suggestive of free verse. It is the first line of the poem which is the most unmetered in terms of its internal structure, and this is enhanced by the enjambement; a feature which we will see in greater detail presently. From the start, then, there is a sense of instability.

The first phrase of the poem, 'L'échafaudage des illusions', implies a tension between a fixed structure and something more unstable. This is true also of 'façades tremblantes' (line 5). Similarly ambivalent phrases are found elsewhere in the poem. The phrases 'dentelles d'équations' (line 4) and 'les frontons où n'apparaissaient que des trous' (line 8) both associate the concrete and an absence of physical material. The pattern of lace is made of the relationship between the threads and the holes between them. The word 'dentelles' is itself being used metaphorically for the structures, which are the concretisations of equations or mathematical proportions. The phrase 'dentelles d'équations' is thus particularly

striking; the delicacy implied by lace is in marked contrast to the massiveness, in scale, and in the material they use, of the architectural structures. At the same time, there is no certainty that the structures described have any physical reality. They are an '*échafaudage [d'] illusions*', and the pediments ('frontons') appear, paradoxically, only as holes. A further possible ambivalent phrase is to be found in '*courbes mouvantes*' (line 7): '*courbes*' most readily suggests fixed lines, and not things which themselves move. As trajectories, however, they do not have any physical solidity. Here, they also imply the limit between solid structures (walls for example) and the empty spaces on which these border. The '*glaces noyées*' also suggest a lack of definition. The fact that the mirrors are drowned suggests that the images they reflect, including the one of any individual who looks into them, will be distorted, and so of limited use to the individual in defining his picture of himself.

The images of insubstantiality, and, in the last two lines of the poem, of the switching off of currents, suggest that a central concern in the poem is the ephemerality of human existence. Death seems an accidental flicking of a switch. Yet, at the same time, it is hard not to read the poem as being about the nature of artistic creation, and in particular the creation of poetry itself. The poem on the page has a particular structure. It is a sort of scaffolding with multiple possible relationships between its various elements. But it is also, to some degree, an illusory structure. Precise relationships between various elements of the poem are not necessarily intended by the poet. The poem itself is like a piece of lace in which it is for the reader to see the pattern, to make the necessary mental leaps in associating the different elements: the similarity of the '*échafaudage des illusions*' (line 1) to the '*frontons où n'apparaissaient que des trous*' is not necessarily intended by the poet, just as the use of these images as a metaphor for the poem is not explicit.

The poem has a precise order (an '*ordre exact*') in so far as its structure is fixed on the page and the elements are articulated in particular ways. But the poem also acts as a mirror for the self, though the self is not fixed. The ambiguous relationships between the different elements of the poem reflect this, implying the poet's own

constant redefinition of his self in terms of things which are themselves constantly becoming. The poem becomes a 'miroir sans tain' or 'glace noyée'; that is, a surface for imperfect reflections, reflecting light in unexpected directions. The 'échafaudage des illusions' is light-filled, and so reveals its structure (lines 1-4). If the poem is both an analogy for, and a reflection of, the self, this suggests that the self, too, is in some way illuminated: the poem acts as a mirror to the self, revealing it.

The insubstantiality implied in 'L'échafaudage des illusions', and other images, is underlined by a number of phonetic features. First, the consonants [ʃ], [f] and [ʒ] in the word 'échafaudage', and [z] of 'illusions' are all fricatives. They are suggestive of a certain lack of definition, no doubt because they can all be lengthened indefinitely. The phoneme [f] occurs elsewhere in the poem, to similar effect, notably in 'Formes et forces vacillaient' (line 10), where the related [v] serves a similar function. The alliteration on [f] here underlines the parallelism between 'formes' and 'forces'. Although the first implies concrete reality, and 'forces' something abstract, both are apt to prove ephemeral. The effect of the repeated [f] in 'l'infini fou / des réfractions' (lines 6-7) is different. Here, it is in contrast with a number of relatively short vowels, [i], [u] and [e]. The combination suggests the excited reaction implied in 'fou', the speed of the darting, refracted light, and the speed of the eye as it seeks to encompass the complexity of the structures. The sense of imbalance, or change of balance, finds a counterpart also, as we shall see, in the presence of enjambement. The alliteration on [d], in association with the [t], in 'dans leurs dentelles d'équations' (line 4) creates a sense of lightness which is a counterpart to the image of lace. The tempo of this phrase (4+4/) is also slightly faster than that of the preceding hemistich, where the presence of two primary stresses leads to a slightly ponderous effect. A relatively slow tempo, is, moreover, found throughout the lines, from 'L'échafaudage des illusions' up to this point. There are either 'extra' primary stresses within individual hemistichs (the second hemistich of line 3, and the first of line 4), or there are a number of short segments, of one, two and three syllables. In contrast with what precedes, then, the relative speed of 'dans leurs dentelles d'équations' gives an

impression of lightness, which the alliteration on [d] and [t] serves to enhance.

We have seen elsewhere how particular rhythmic effects are a function of the meaning conveyed. The same is true of alliterative effects: the sounds get their force from coming in particular words in a particular context, while at the same time they reinforce the meaning.

Syntactic ambiguity is another feature of Seghers's poetry, particularly the freed verse, which has been seen on many occasions. A first ambiguity arises in line 4 where the relationship of 'organisées', 'et connectées' and 'dans leurs dentelles d'équations' to each other is unclear. The last phrase could go simply with 'connectées', or with both 'organisées' and 'connectées'. The past participles both agree with 'structures' (line 3), but one has the choice as to whether 'organisées et connectées' should be considered as a closely bound binary structure, or whether one should consider there to be a slightly more important break in syntax after 'organisées', and thus consider 'de ses structures / organisées' as one unit, and 'et connectées dans leurs dentelles d'équations' as another. The important thing is not that one should choose one or other reading. Although a choice has to be made as to how the poem is to be read, if it is to be read aloud, the richness of the verse resides, in part at least, in such ambiguities. A reading of the verse will, ideally, bring out such ambiguities. A possible way of doing this in this instance might be to suggest a hesitation, maintaining a relatively high pitch on the stressed syllables of 'organisées' and 'connectées', in a way similar to the conveying of enjambement.

The presence of such ambiguities suggests a degree of spontaneity in the composition of the poem. Through the very sense of slight vagueness which they engender, such features are also an analogy for the complexity of the architectural structures depicted in the verse. This complexity is such that it cannot all be taken in at a glance.

The second example of syntactic ambiguity complements both the idea of complexity and that of instability. It concerns lines 5-8 of the poem. The verb 'avait osé' has as its direct object 'l'infini fou', which is itself qualified by the three parallel phrases 'des réfractions', 'des courbes mouvantes' and 'des coups d'éponge'. Interposed between the verb and its object are three parallel elements, 'façades tremblantes', 'Miroirs sans tain' and 'glaces noyées'. The delaying of the object of 'avait osé' until after this list is destabilising, and it is also with 'Miroirs sans tain' and 'glaces noyées' that the possible ambiguity arises. These two phrases might, at first, appear to be the objects of 'avait osé', and the resulting readjustment in one's understanding of the syntax is another source of instability. The destabilising effect provoked by the particular syntactic structure of the lines is a further counterpart to the suggestions arising from the images themselves: suggestions of foggy mirror images, of ill-defined pictures of the self.

Line 9 presents a certain looseness as the subject of 'Etait-ce' remains unspecified. Furthermore, the line has no specific metrical identity, although it can, as we have seen, be related to the alexandrine. The accumulation of nouns results in a high number of stresses. Yet this rhythmic and semantic density increases, rather than detracts from, the sense of vagueness and uncertainty: the sense of dynamism which would result from more normal syntax is absent, and the nouns of the list are, furthermore, semantically far enough apart (with the exception of 'mégarde' and 'inadvertance') for them not to suggest a gradual homing-in on one more precise and apt word to locate the reason for the architect's strange treatment of the structures. The whole sentence is, moreover, formulated as a question. Again, the loose structure of this line is suggestive of a certain spontaneity in the writing, and again the lack of precision here, or in the other examples of syntactic ambiguity, is an essential part of the poem's richness. There is, once more, a coincidence between what the images convey (a complex structure, of which the articulations are not all clear) and the way in which the poem itself is articulated.

Related to the syntactic ambiguity is the presence of binary-cum-ternary lines. Line 4, already seen above, is a case in point.

There are a total of three primary stresses, the first two of which fall within the first hemistich, on the two elements of a possible binary structure. Line 6, although a ternary alexandrine, may be considered, from a syntactic point of view, to have a binary character. The first two phrases, 'Miroirs sans tain' and 'glaces noyées' are unrelated, syntactically, to the third phrase, 'l'infini fou', and, furthermore, are related to each other semantically. Line 8 is similar. The first hemistich is composed of a binary structure and has an 'extra' primary stress on the fourth syllable. Finally, line 11 is composed of three parallel verbs, the first two of which occupy the first hemistich, and the third of which occupies the second hemistich.

Like the runs of three elements which occur in lines 3, 7, 9 and 11, the binary-cum-ternary structures of some lines are a further feature of the poem which is responsible for an impression of density and complexity. The density and complexity are, then, rhythmic, semantic and syntactic, while a further complexity arises from the use of metrical and non-metrical lines of different lengths. While all these features are themselves typical of Seghers's poetry, the degree of density and complexity achieved in this particular poem is unusual.

Enjambement presents a further counterpart to the tension between the solid and the chimerical, and adds another level of intricacy by undermining the lines as units and establishing counter rhythms. Between lines 1 and 2, the enjambement suggests spatial continuity between the '*échafaudage des illusions*' and the outside world. The structure is insubstantial enough, like lace, or a façade full of apertures, to let the light penetrate easily.

In lines 3-4, on the other hand, the presence of enjambement underlines the density and complexity of the structures. It is precisely through the enjambement in the phrase 'ses structures organisées' that lines 3 and 4 are connected ('connectées') to each other, and the maintained pitch at this point creates a kind of bridge between the two lines. The presence of the enjambement suggests that while the order might be 'exact', it is not, however, an order which is immediately apparent or understandable. Line 3, from 'de ses boulons' onwards, presents what seems to be a straightforward list of three

elements, but whereas 'boulons' and 'colliers' are rather technical words and are both associated with joints, 'structures' is rather more general. On the level of the imagery, then, there is a move from the more to the less precise. This finds a counterpart in the handling of the lines. The first hemistich of line 3 is perfectly orthodox. The second would be were it not for the primary stress on 'colliers'. The enjambement represents a further undermining of the metre.

The phrase involved in the transition from line 6 to line 7, 'l'infini fou / des réfractions', is abstract in relation to the more concrete 'Miroirs sans tain' and 'glaces noyées' which precede it (though, as we have seen, the phrase 'l'infini fou des réfractions' does not fulfil the same grammatical function as the other two phrases). Here, the enjambement destabilises what is a perfectly regular ternary alexandrine, and the effect is a counterpart to the image of refracted light. What would be a straight line of perspective is bent. What would be an orthodox line of verse is destabilised.

The poem is a particularly successful one and combines features which are typical of much of Seghers's poetry. The poem is a synthesis of metrical, semantic and rhythmic elements, which in conjunction with each other are both an analogy for, and a reflection of, the poet's self.

Before I relate directly the three commentary poems to a general conclusion, it is worth while recapitulating some of the salient thematic and prosodic features found in Seghers's poetry. These features themselves relate to the tension between relative fixity and relative fluidity.

Dynamism, both on the thematic and prosodic levels, is essential to Seghers's poetry. On the thematic level, it is seen in the portrayal of the constant cyclical becoming of the natural world. It is seen further in images of historical becoming. The individual's own becoming, and his mortality, are implied in both of these. Man is a physical being who is subject to cycles of decay and rebirth. He is

also a social and political being, capable of influencing the evolution of the society in which he lives, and history. Also central to Seghers's poetry is the question of the self, the totality of which is the synthesis of the conscious and unconscious selves. The individual's relationship with the outside world is also implied here. Consciousness of the self involves consciousness of the non-self, against which to see one's difference and individuality.

Language is the medium, for the poet, through which these dialectics are expressed. Language, and in particular the language of poetry, is itself the concretisation of these dialectical relationships. The poem embodies language from the subconscious in conjunction with consciously wrought language. While it thus refers to the poet's self, it also, of necessity refers to the outside world at large, independently of which language would not exist. One of the principal functions of language is as a means of imposing some sort of order on experience, thereby defining more sharply for oneself the limits between self and non-self.

Implicit in the notion of self is the idea, if not of fixity, at least of identity, or of being distinct. The actual prosody of the verse (and the verse itself gives expression to these ideas) is characterised by a tension between features suggesting a certain stability, and others which give rise to a greater sense of dynamism. The two types of feature are not separate from each other but function in conjunction with each other. It is in the tension between the two that the overall dynamism peculiar to Segers's poetry resides.

In the fixed-form poetry, conservatism of form and strict regularity of line-lengths and rhyme patterns are countered by the creation of larger dynamic structures. These may result from any of several features: a syntactic pairing of lines, with or without enjambement; the pairing of lines through parallel structures; rime enjambante (a particular form of enjambement), and enjambement between stanzas.

The tension between metrical and non-metrical elements in the fixed-form poetry was a concretisation of the aims of the Intellectual

Resistance. The use of traditional features of prosody and an undermining of these was a formal parallel for the traditional values upheld by the Resistance (French Republican values, and the very fabric of the French language) and undermining of these in that particular political and historical context.

A number of features are constant throughout Seghers's poetry. These include a tension between metre, on the one hand, and syntax on the other, as embodied in enjambement and counterpointing. Both features suggest a straining of the verse away from the confines of strict metricality towards a freer form of expression. Conversely, the same features also suggest the imposing of some degree of order on otherwise continuous discourse. This is not to say that discourse is itself without order: discourse is language arranged according to the rules of grammar and syntax, but not usually according to metrical structures.

Two other features which are typical of Seghers's poetry are eight-syllable phrases, and lines which share characteristics of both binary and ternary lines. The frequency with which both features occur suggests a possibly instinctive predilection for such structures. Seghers himself attached some importance to the question of 'souffle' (this is his word) and the length of phrase which was natural to him. This is something which emerged in the interview from which I have quoted, and from other discussions I had with Seghers, in particular when Fortune Infortune Fort Une was in preparation. In the course of Seghers's revision of some of the poems in this suite, I saw an apparently instinctive recognition on Seghers's part of eight-syllable phrases, and likewise an immediate recognition of anomalous phrases (of, say, nine syllables).

Binary-cum-ternary structures, found notably in octosyllables and alexandrines, are themselves an embodiment of the tension between orthodox verse forms and freer ones. This metrical ambiguity can again be seen as a parallel for the ordering of experience in language. While the expression of experience does go some way to structuring perception of experience, experience itself takes place independently of language and is haphazard. Any order expressed is subject to the

individual's own subjective view of experience, and language itself is inadequate to express the totality of experience. Binary-cum-ternary structures themselves suggest a tension between a rigorous order and a less rigorous one.

The different basic forms of poetry (fixed-form, freed alexandrine, mixed line-length and sixteen-syllable) all embody the tension between fixity and greater dynamism. The freest form and the greatest sense of dynamism are found in the poetry which uses a mixture of various line-lengths, some of which have no distinct metrical identity.

We are now in a position to conclude by relating the three commentary poems to a feature which often accompanies and is frequently implied by those features I have recapitulated in the preceding few pages. The lack of fixity on the level of the prosody is analogous to the self's own lack of fixity. The poem is the concretisation of the poet's self. It is also in his poetry that the poet expresses his search to understand the nature of this same self, and the nature of human existence. The poetry is thus quest. This gives rise to the presence of questions or implicit questions. Questions are a typical feature of Seghers's poetry. Many examples have been seen in the course of this thesis. The following quotations also illustrate the questing nature of the poetry. They are taken from different periods; from *Les Pierres*:

(...) Suis-je deux,  
Double et pareille, et quelles lèvres sans approche  
me sont blessure au plus secret et me séparent? (...) (TM 111)

### Dialogue:

Que reste-t-il de toi qui te regardes en cet instant? (TM 132)

and Fortune Infortune Fort Une:

Peut-être était-il un homme? Qu'est-ce qu'un homme?  
Il va vers la mort le front haut

The first quotation suggests a sense of the impossibility of self-knowledge. In the second, this combines with a sense of becoming: the self can be glimpsed only in a succession of images, and never in totality. The picture of the self is thus itself subject to becoming. In the third quotation, the poet asks more specifically what it is to be human, but this is answered by an expression of mortality, which implies further questions.

The questioning nature of poetry (that is, as giving voice to questions while itself being a quest towards understanding of existence) is illustrated in the three commentary poems.

Central to 'Poète', as we saw, is the theme of language, as used in poetry. The tone of the poem is confident in affirming the poet's transformation of language and of reality through language. Yet this also implies the mystery of language, the 'monstre des secrets'. The sense of the mystery of language is a field for potential questions. The shelving of questions is implied in line 15, 'Et je feins d'oublier le début et la fin'. Yet through the very fact of stating this avoidance, questions concerning the nature of human existence are posed: where indeed do we come from? what is the nature of death?

In 'Poète', such questions are not expressed explicitly. Their presence in the poem is to be inferred only. The poem from Racines, on the other hand, opens with two direct questions concerning Death. Although mortality is central to the poem as a whole, the questions as such are not. The answer to them ('Personne', for example) is implied in the questions themselves, and is to be inferred further from the rest of the poem. The personification of Death, in the questions and throughout the poem, has the effect of diminishing, rather than aggrandising, Death's stature, making Death a figure of mockery. In this poem, then, questions give way immediately to affirmations which belittle the importance of Death and assert the continuity of existence in language.

The poem from Au seuil de l'oubli is in contrast with the two earlier poems in being built almost entirely around questions. Only in the last two and a half lines are affirmative statements made; but the

images here imply failing, while the syntax also implies uncertainty, in 'peut-être' and 'ou'. The questions themselves have several functions and effects. Those with reference to a person ('qui l'avait dressé', line 1; and 'Quel architecte avait osé', line 5) suggest, again, the personification of some supra-human force. The force is by and large creative, however, even though there are suggestions of devastation in 'des coups d'éponge', and in the depictions of skeletal constructions open on the outside world. At the same time, however, the 'architecte' refers to the poet, the person who constructs the poem. The questions 'qui' and 'Quel architecte' thus imply an attempt on the part of the poet to understand who he is: what sort of a person is one who can invent such structures? This question cannot, of course, be answered other than through such metaphorical uses of language as are themselves found in the poem. Questions express uncertainty, as do, here, the images of insubstantial and shifting structures. An analogy for these is found on the prosodic and syntactic levels. Both syntax and prosody, at various points in the poem, suggest a lack of fixity or definition. In so far as the 'échafaudages' and other (insubstantial) architectural structures are formulated in language, these structures embody the poet's self. At the same time, the questions in the body of which these chimera-like structures are formulated themselves imply the search to understand the nature of individuality and the self. The self, as the relationship between the conscious self, the unconscious self and the outside world, is itself perpetually being redefined. It can never be fully grasped, but seen only in a series of fragmentary glimpses. The complex links between the self, the outside world and language form an imaginary structure, or one which can only be intuited, which is in a state of constant becoming. The nature of the self can only be intuited, glimpsed in a succession of images each of which effaces the preceding one, and its totality can never be pinned down. Thus questions will always lead to more questions, and the self is seen as 'un abîme de questions' (Fortune Infortune Fort Une, p.27).

## NOTES

Notes to the Introduction

1. Au seuil de l'oubli (Virgil, 1976) is illustrated by Virgilèje Nestjestić; Qui sommes-nous? by Ivan Lacković Croata, and Fortune Infortune Fortune by Gérard Blanchet.
2. A ghazel is a poem composed of five to twelve lines (Yunus Emre), or five to sixteen lines (Hâfiz). In the context of a ghazel, a line is defined as being composed of two hemistichs, usually of sixteen syllables each. (D. Halbout du Tanney, Introduction to Yunus Emre: Le livre de l'amour sublime (p.15), and P. Seghers, Hâfiz: Le livre d'or du Divân, p.165, note 6.) The following example of a 'line' from Le livre de l'amour sublime will make the structure clearer:

O mes amis, je ne puis dire  
    où s'en est allé tout mon être  
Avec les mots, je ne puis dire  
    Celui qui, seul, a pris mon coeur.

(p.39)

(The sixteen-syllable hemistich is then further divided by Seghers into two eight-syllable phrases.)

3. For other instances in Seghers's prose writings of words such as 'chant' and 'accords' with reference to poetry, see e.g. 'Le langage de la divine proportion' (1942):

... faire l'apprentissage de son art et jouer des nombres, des timbres, des sons, de toutes les valeurs de son instrument ... c'est là le travail, le but et la joie. (p.3)

'"Le Chiffre sept": le plus grand poème de Jean Cocteau va paraître' (1952):

Heureusement, il demeure quand même en France ... quelques hommes sensibles à la poésie, à son orchestration comme à son chant. Il leur appartiendra d'entendre un poème de cent strophes, un canto jondo, le chant profond le plus pathétique peut-être qu'un poète ait écrit.

'Approches d'un poète', in Psycho-génèse d'un poème (1973):

Le poète invente le tapis-volant de sa propre vie et sa flûte, sa partition, son intime musique ne seront toujours que lui-même. ... Ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler "son œuvre", l'artisan du chant prodigieux la ressent comme son propre, son plus intime orchestre. (p.11)

'Un nouveau baroquisme' (1984):

Si [le lecteur] sait les entendre et les suivre, les mots et leurs échos, leurs sens et leur pouvoirs deviennent compagnie. ... Un orchestre. Une symphonie où chaque note, chaque vibration, chaque respiration assurent l'homme - ou non - de sa propre existence. (p.10)

Notes to Chapter 1

1. In the following lines, from Qui sommes-nous? (1977), the sense of regret is for the plenitude of spring and summer, and is projected into a future beyond the poet's own death:

Qu'en sera-t-il de ces printemps, des longues tiges des  
narcisses  
qui se tendaient, des figues de miel de l'été  
grises et noires, mangées comme la fin du monde (TM 215)

See also Dialogue:

N'oublie pas: nous avions des visages d'hommes, des bras  
d'hommes  
et des corps qui dansaient et plongeaient dans la mer  
sous le blanc soleil d'Août. (...) (TM 138)

2. For other expressions of this duality, and of cycles of death and rebirth, see e.g. Les Pierres (1958):

(...) quand tout aura péri  
Ou presque tout, par la sagesse des arbustes  
des fleurs deviendront baies qui referont des fleurs (TM 112)

#### **Dialogue:**

Le temps qui fait sa mousse et le grain qui pourrit entre deux moissonneurs. (...) (TM 133)

and 'Les cloches du passé', in *Les Mots couverts*:

[l'automne] s'en va, ses vendanges faites, rameuter ses morts dans les bois. (TM 175)

3. The following line, also from Racines, suggests the presence of future generations in present ones:

L'homme est un arbre et l'arbre mort est un enfant. (TM 101)

4. See also 'La vérité', a poem published shortly after the Liberation, in *Le Domaine public* (1945):

L'hiver qui creusait ses fosses dans l'été (TM 46)

and 'Paris-Pentecôte', also in Le Domaine public:

Un Paris étranger qui se tend et attend  
Le printemps, puis l'été, puis la chute des feuilles

Un Paris d'un hiver pierreux et dur, qui dure (p.15)

5. A similar disruption of the seasons is expressed in these lines from a considerably later poem, in Qui sommes-nous?:

As-tu vu, fourmi, les saisons se faire la guerre  
Et la pluie ne jamais cesser (...) (TM 213)

The spring, also, may undergo defilement, as in 'Le cavalier':

On eût dit que chaque chemin savait déjà  
Qu'il passerait, broyant les pousses des fougères,  
Arrachant la mère à son fils, broyant nos sources et nos os.  
(TM 48)

An equivalence is suggested between the young spring growth and the country's youth. Nature is defiled, 'broyée', by mankind, just as the youth of France is wasted.

6. The twenty-seven Châteaubriant hostages, along with twenty-one from Nantes, were shot on 22 October 1941, as a reprisal for the killing of a German officer two days earlier, in Nantes. Fifty hostages from Bordeaux were shot on 23 October in reprisal for another assassination. The Châteaubriant hostages had already been in various prisons for a little over a year, arrested by the French police who acted on the Gestapo's orders. Most of the hostages were Communists who held positions of authority, and included mayors and trade-unionists. They had not been arrested for any specific criminal acts. An account of the events up to and including the shooting of the hostages is given by Fernand Grenier in Ceux de Châteaubriant (Paris: Editions sociales, 1967). Seghers gives his own account in La Résistance et ses poètes (Paris: Seghers, 1974) pp.146-149.

7. See also these lines from the same poem:

Compagnons le sang qui s'écaillle fait graine  
Ce n'est plus le temps des rêves, mais des moissons (TM 25)

For other poems using the harvest or vintage as a metaphor for death, see 'Présences' (TM 15-17), and two poems in Le Chien de pique (1943): 'Epiphanie' (pp.12-13) and 'Prière pour les vivants' (pp.22-23).

8. In the wartime poetry in general, blood imagery serves to depict the bloody horror of war. Being essential to life, blood also represents life itself. Blood imagery may also be used to convey moral concerns. 'Quarante-trois' illustrates this. The moral debasement of those who have become polluted by Nazi ideology is expressed in terms of the putrefaction of blood:

On pourrissait le sang dans les veines des hommes (TM 38)

The line gains force from the implication that the men are still alive. For a similar image see 'Allemagne 1945':

Unter den Linden, les soldats de pierre qui étaient des hommes  
sentent leur sang se figer (...) (TM 62)

9. For another example in which tidal movement suggests a tension between fluidity and fixity, see Les Pierres:

(...) Comme la vague sur la vague  
Sans cesse nous roulons et nous nous refaisons (TM 112)

10. The duality of the sea, as life-giving and life-destroying, is brought out in 'Chasses, III', a poem from Les Mots couverts:

Qui cherche à se sauver à travers les lointains  
liquides, dans les eaux mères et l'étouffoir des profondeurs?  
(TM 169)

For another series of lines presenting the sea as a modelling force, see Dis-moi, ma vie (1972):

(...) Immémoriales, les marées  
nous ont roulés sans fin l'un sur l'autre, leurs bruits  
furent des chutes d'infini. Dans l'écume de leurs orchestres  
Nous devîmes objets trouvés, morts l'un à l'autre, polis et  
blancs.  
(TM 181)

The following example, from Fortune Infortune Fort Une (1984), expresses a transition from a passive undergoing of nature's forces to an active participation in them:

(...) J'ai dévalé jusqu'à la mer  
frangée d'écume. De l'écume j'étais le sel  
dispersé par un autre vent sur une autre terre moins rude  
J'y fus lanière de mon fouet qui déchiquetait les oiseaux.  
(p.33)

11. For other images of the Sorgues with a similar tone, see 'D'une prison' (TM 36); Dialogue, 'Peut-être faudrait-il...' (TM 140); Dis-moi, ma vie, 'Dis-moi, ma vie...' (TM 182), and Fortune Infortune Fort Une, 'Dans cet espace où j'ai rêvé...' (p.15).
12. Cf. note 8 above. For a similar suggestion of viscosity and stagnation cf. this line from 'Les lépreux' in Le Futur antérieur (1947):

Le sang comme de l'eau vieille croupissait  
(p.50)

Again, the human domain is presented in terms of the non-human. Viscosity is also implied in 'Le silence des mers, I':

Le présent s'enlisait dans la vase de lônes,  
Rien ne venait, l'eau se gâtait

13. For other instances of blood as an image of the continuity of existence, see the following quotations from Les Pierres:

et quel sang reconnu et jailli d'avant tout  
Entre Terre et Soleil s'anime et se retrouve?  
(TM 110)

(...) Une éternelle vie  
coule en leur cœur inquiet qui meurt sans se tarir.  
(TM 111)

and from 'Quand le soleil':

Quand le soleil, un jour, ne tournera plus dans tes veines  
 Quand la force qui passait en toi rejoindra son flux au creux  
 des mers (TM 57)

14. Qui sommes-nous? presents a similar image: a rain-soaked world in which

(...) Sans fin, la boue se colle aux hommes  
 Une poudre devenue gluau (...) (TM 213)

15. See also 'Faction' (in Le Chien de pique):

Et dans les prés flaquéés de sang  
 Voici la lave qui descend... (p.17)

A related image is found in 'Le cœur mort':

Le ciment des années passées, dessous l'écorce  
 s'est coulé. (...) (TM 76)

The fact that cement dries implies a contradiction to the fluidity of 's'est coulé'. For a similar example, see Au seuil de l'oubli (1976):

Et, des collines éventrées pour des prothèses de ciment  
 s'en va le sable, une noria, sans fin le sang, le sang  
 s'égoutte  
 que le vent sèche et fait poussière. (...) (TM 202)

16. See e.g. Racines:

(...) La boue  
 en traîne d'apparat, primitive, luisait. (TM 96)

See also the first quotation in note 10, above.

17. See in particular 'Les apparences étaient sauvages' (TM 206), and a later version of the same poem in Fortune Infortune Fort Une (p.49). For the theme of desolation, cf. Au seuil de l'oubli:

(...) Quand je rêvais de villes  
 Le désert du silence y régnait et les vents (TM 204)

See also in Fortune Infortune Fort Une 'Nous sommes prisonniers du vent...' (p.47), where the wind is purely destructive. For another expression of the duality of the wind, see Piranèse (1960):

(...) sa victoire éclate et devient un nuage  
 que le vent des lointains disperse et réunit. (TM 121)

18. In the apocalyptic world of Au seuil de l'oubli, a similar image is found:

(...) Les yeux devenaient métalliques  
De l'acier bleu, ou bien, bruni. (...) (TM 207)

For similar examples, see also 'Poussières, I', in Les Mots couverts:

(...) Leurs yeux luisaient d'anciens éclats  
devenus minéraux, quand les mers s'étaient asséchées  
Des yeux de sel. (...) (TM 170)

and 'Grand Guignol', in Le Futur antérieur:

Il avait, l'on dit, de hautes paupières  
De hautes paupières qu'on disait de pierre (p.32)

19. The hardness and brightness of gems may add a note of exoticism, as in three poems from Dialogue: 'Ici une maison sans toit...' (TM 133); 'Ta robe ne sera pas de brocart...' (TM 134-135), and 'Comme des innocents au jardin...' (TM 139). See also, in Les Mots couverts, 'Un parmi d'autres, III-IV' (TM 164-165).

20. For other instances of clay used in ambivalent manner, see 'La Dame de Chat ou le grand jeu':

Tout dort  
L'arbre du sang rêve dans son argile. (TM 63)

and 'Prière':

Mon Dieu, vous m'avez pétri avec du brouillard,  
(...) Vous m'avez fini dans la nuit  
avec de la mauvaise argile (TM 15)

21. 'Poussières, II', in Les Mots couverts, contains a similar image:

Le plus fin matériau s'invente et se ravive  
Poussière qui se fait vertèbre et devient homme. (TM 171)

The lines imply the cycles of life and death already seen in section (i).

22. For a similar example, from 'Poussières, II', see note 21 above, an image countered by this one from 'Poussières, III':

(...) Rien qu'un éclat de  
de feldspath, un instant illuminé que la nuit guette  
pour l'anéantissement total. (...) (TM 171)

A similar duality is implied in Racines:

(...) la fuite du sable  
Etais-ce temps perdu ou le temps éternel? (TM 94)

For a similar sense of insignificance, see the following line from Fortune Infortune Fort Une:

et toi, ce grain de roche rouge, un prisonnier qui va et vient. (p.15)

23. For a sense of bleakness, see the first quotation in note 22 above, and the following lines from Fortune Infortune Fort Une:

(...) Sommes-nous livrés sans défense  
à des orbites inconnues, à des nuits traversées sans fin  
Des négations de la matière, anticorps de non-existence  
Fulgurations, éclairs éteints à travers des milliards d'années  
Ou bien trous noirs à tout jamais sans début ni fin, vie ou mort? (p.19)

24. A poem from Fortune Infortune Fort Une also expresses the idea of the universe living in the individual:

Laisse en toi l'univers venir, vous serez ensemble plus vastes  
Laisse en toi se lever le jour et vivre la fin de la nuit (p.55)

25. The rhythms of the universe are summed up in 'Le système du ciel':

Celui qui porte les nuages  
Celui qui fait battre la mer

Germer pousser fleurir s'éteindre  
Le maître à danser des saisons  
Le grand appariteur demeure

Aussi Parfait qu'au premier jour  
Il règne aux chemins de ton sang (TM 55)

26. For other lines in which the cosmic dimension and the physical dimension of the individual are combined, see 'Avenir', in Le Futur antérieur:

Nous serons sous le soleil des dieux de chair  
Molécules divines groupées pour une œuvre divine  
Serviteurs et libres, avec de l'amour dans nos mains. (p.26)

and Les Pierres:

(...) nous les fils  
d'un astre toujours neuf, qui renaît dans nos veines (TM 112)

Notes to Chapter 2

1. The lines are quoted as they appear in I. Higgins, Anthology of Second World War French Poetry (London: Methuen, 1982) Coll. Methuen's Twentieth Century Texts, p.165. This edition reflects Seghers's most recent wish concerning the first of the two lines quoted. Compare

J'ai vu rouler dans le ruisseau ceux qui nous ajustaient avec leurs fusils (TM 62)

Compare also Seghers's account of the event which inspired the poem, in La Résistance et ses poètes, p.361.

2. See also the companion piece to this poem, 'Chevaliers' (TM 82). A number of other poems of circumstance, now dismissed by Seghers as naive (in conversation with me), are calls for justice and for respect of mankind. These include 'A mon ami américain', Les Lettres françaises, 9 mars 1950, p.3; 'A ceux qui n'ont rien dit', Les Lettres françaises, 31 juillet 1953, p.2; 'Hongrie, décembre 1956', Hommage des poètes français aux poètes hongrois (Paris: Seghers, 1957) p.76, and 'A un ami bulgare', Le Puits de l'ermite, 10 (2e trimestre 1968) p.7.
3. See C. Seghers, Pierre Seghers: Un Homme couvert de noms (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1981) p.66, and Seghers's note, TM p.79.
4. For similar references in Racines, see:

(...) les marées  
rejettent en grondant un ossuaire de géants morts (TM 100)

Ce n'est pas un désastre ici, ce sont des Rois durant leur halte  
Chair et bûcher pour l'holocauste des rôdeurs (TM 100)

In Les Pierres, resistance to tyrannical religious power is suggested in

Ils sont dedans, et ils s'y tiennent, serrés et forts,  
Nés de l'amour, élus de la lumière ancienne  
Traqués en vain par les églises et par les meutes des piqueurs. (TM 107)

5. 'Chasses, I', in Les Mots couverts (TM 167-168), also depicts the sadism of tyrannical power.
6. For another poem in which the ephemerality of political power is implied, see Dialogue, 'Ici, une maison sans toit...' (TM 133).
7. For other suggestions of fallen civilisations, see Dialogue, 'Les idoles se sont dégradées...' (TM 139), and Les Mots couverts, 'Poussières, I-III' (TM 170-171).

Notes to Chapter 3

1. For similar images, see Chapter 1, section (i) and note 2; and, in Chapter 2, section (i), the quotations from 'Le pain blanc' and '25 août 1944 (Libération de Paris)'.
2. For another affirmation of continuity very similar to that from Racines, see Fortune Infortune Fort Une:

(...) rien ne s'éteint jamais, ni de l'homme ni du moment.  
(p.37)

For an expression of becoming on a cosmic scale and which emphasises re-birth, see Au seuil de l'oubli:

Quand l'éphémère disparaît, un fugitif évanoui  
Quand le cendre obscurcit le ciel, quand les constellations  
s'éteignent

D'autres naissent. (TM 203)

3. For another poem in which memories are seen as impeding the process of becoming, see Dialogue, 'Le devenir s'en va...' (TM 131). The following lines from the same suite also suggest the futility of keeping memories alive:

(...) A s'en aller le long des rues  
raviver un feu fixe éteint comme l'enseigne  
d'un mauvais hôtel, la glu vous prend. (TM 131)

4. In Le Futur antérieur, the poem has a further stanza, the first line of which also implies memory of the dead:

Paris vous porte en sa poitrine  
Et vous, votre mort dans vos mains,  
Saints des chemins les plus humains  
Vous lui offrez vos lendemains. (p.44)

For an expression of the faculty of memory as perpetuating the memory of the dead, see Au seuil de l'oubli:

(...) Dans la mémoire multipliée  
des éclairs, des échos, des éclats de phosphore  
disent que les veilleurs se souviennent. (...) (TM 208-209)

5. That one's sense of identity depends on memory is suggested in the following depiction of torture, found in Piranèse:

(...) Ils le courbaient, l'agenouillaient,  
faisaient la nuit dans sa mémoire (TM 117)

6. For similar examples, see Dialogue:

(...) Au plus profond  
des vieux bassins, que cherches-tu? Dans une moire  
de souvenirs, vas-tu te perdre, là où l'enfance t'abandonne  
sur ses mille miroirs qui ne retiennent rien? (TM 131)

and Dis-moi, ma vie:

L'oubli qui marche à reculons, l'oubli nous efface à nous-mêmes (TM 195)

7. The same is true of Les Pierres, as emerges from such lines as these:

(...) quand tout aura péri  
Où presque tout, par la sagesse des arbustes  
des fleurs deviendront baies qui referont des fleurs (TM 112)

8. The lines from 'Le reliquaire' echo closely the opening lines of 'Octobre 41':

Le vent qui pousse les colonnes de feuilles mortes  
Octobre, quand la vendange est faite dans le sang  
Le vois-tu avec ses fumées, ses feux, qui emporte  
Le massacre des Innocents. (TM 19)

For other Resistance poems which emphasise the waste of France's youth, see 'Epiphanie' (TM 17-18); 'Carré blanc' (TM 22-23), and 'Le pain blanc' (TM 24-25). The latter two poems are quoted with respect to this sense of waste in Chapter 1, section (i).

9. For other images of absence in Dialogue, see:

(...) le soleil distrait  
s'en allait dans la brume, avec toi, dans l'automne. (TM 128)

Ici, une maison sans toit. Et là, des tuiles abandonnées. Un puits sans eau. Une rivière sans moulin. (TM 133)

10. For similar images, here of the individual being like a fragile casing, see two examples from Fortune Infortune Fort Une:

dans le verre vert où je suis, prisonnier mais insaisissable  
Moi, poussière d'un seuil perdu, sable et sablier de mon sang. (p.23)

La glace qui me protégeait volera en mille morceaux (p.85)

and, from Au seuil de l'oubli:

La nuit s'en vient. Ne brisez jamais de vos doigts  
le cristal qui vous fut offert. (...) (TM 205)

The poem from which these lines are taken appears, in identical form, in Fortune Infortune Fort Une (p.83).

11. For similar uses of technical vocabulary, see Fortune Infortune Fort Une:

Je suis un sac de peau fragile, un agencement de miracles  
 Des chronomètres, des compteurs qui vont s'arrêter tout à coup  
 (p.41)

(Il) Me laisse éteindre ou flamboyer ou me voue à l'éclatement  
 Une supposition peut-être. Ai-je existé? Une hypothèse...  
 Il m'avait pris, il m'a jeté. Rien, pas même un dérangement.  
 (p.53)

12. For another direct expression of the individual in terms of things other, see these lines from Dialogue, which underline the chimera-like nature of the individual's picture of himself:

Dans ma réalité, je vis en songe. Moi,  
 Poussière et vin, sang et fumées, mer et montagnes  
 par un rêve accordés, qui m'a fait? (...) (TM 128)

13. A similar quicksilveriness is expressed in Dialogue:

(...) Epris de Lui  
 qui passe et flue et se rejoint dans ses méandres  
 sans jamais se saisir. (...) (TM 129)

14. The poem was inspired by the photograph of one of the stones of Carnac which is split down its full height.

15. For other images of reflections which suggest complementarity, see the following examples from Fortune Infortune Fort Une:

(...) Je me suis rencontré sur l'eau (p.33)

Est-ce imaginaire ou réel? Illusion, un masque, une empreinte  
 Une image dans un miroir (...) (p.39)

Nous qui sommes des illusions un instant vouées à nous perdre  
 dans un réel, miroir ardent (...) (p.43)

For related images of shadow, see the quotations from Fortune Infortune Fort Une (p.63) and Qui sommes-nous? (TM 214) at the end of section (iii) above.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. From an article entitled 'Vers une poésie sociale', published in Le Figaro, 26 juillet 1941, p.2.
2. Published in Le Figaro, 12-13 septembre 1942, p.3.
3. A similar statement is made by A. Blanchard in 'Poètes casqués, nos camarades', published in Poètes casqués 1940, 4 (juillet(?) 1940), pp.18-20:

Poètes, nous savons de science certaine que ce qui est en jeu, ce n'est pas seulement notre terre, nos villages, nos richesses, mais notre âme, nos croyances, notre langue, notre génie et tout ce que celui-ci a de plus secret, de plus incomunicable: notre poésie. (p.18)

See also the references to Domaine français in note 6 below.

4. The phrase 'l'unité française' is taken from a speech made by Pétain on 30 October 1940, and published in J. Isorni (ed.), Quatre années au pouvoir (Paris: La Couronne Littéraire, 1949):

C'est dans l'honneur et pour maintenir l'unité française, une unité de dix siècles, dans le cadre d'une activité constructive du nouvel ordre européen que j'entre aujourd'hui dans la voie de la collaboration. (p.70)

5. The following extract from another speech by Pétain, broadcast on 7 April 1941, illustrates the remarkable similarity in the language used by Pétain and by the Resistance, and so the extent to which the Resistance's battle was one for words:

Pour un Français, il n'y a pas d'autre cause à défendre ni à servir, que celle de la France. Si nous devons espérer, notre espoir est en nous. Il est dans notre attachement à notre sol, dans notre volonté de vivre, dans la fraternité étroite qui nous tient tous solidaires et unis. (Ibid., p.5.)

Amongst the key words are 'France', 'espoir' and 'fraternité'. On the appropriation of certain words by Vichy, see H.R. Kedward, 'Patriots and Patriotism in Vichy France', published in the Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th series, Vol. 32, 1982, pp.175-192. Other publications found useful in relation to collaborationist use of language include G. Loiseaux, La Littérature de la défaite et de la collaboration (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1984) and G. Miller, Les pousse-au-jouir du maréchal Pétain (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

6. Aragon's poem 'Le conscrit des cent villages', published in Domaine français (Genève: Editions des trois collines, 1943) pp.22-25, associates the French language, recognised as that which unites the French people, with the concept of 'patrie'. In this poem, it is not so much the French language in general which is an expression of the nation, as place names. These are heavy with implications of history and culture, as well as having

geographical reference to France. Here is just one stanza from the poem:

Il faut reprendre ô saoulerie  
Ce déroulement implacable  
Et boire et boire les vocables  
Où flambe et tremble la patrie.

(p.23)

A similar point is made in the very title of an article, contemporary with the Aragon poem, by Louis Martin-Chauffier: 'Ma patrie, la langue française', also in Domaine français (pp.63-70). The 'patrie de la langue française' is composed both of French literary heritage and the contemporary, rich, French language, unadulterated by Vichy, which unites the French people into a nation, and expresses 'l'esprit français'. Furthermore, the voice ('voix') of France must be used as a means of reinstating France to her rightful position in Europe. For another warning against the undermining of the French language and the consequent devaluing of French literature past and present, see Jean Schlumberger: 'Propos sur le langage', Domaine français, pp.107-114. This article makes several further points. A firm belief in the power of language, as in a religion, can 'soulever l'homme au-dessus de lui-même' (p.111). The French language is a 'bien commun' which it is the writer's duty to safeguard by practising his skill (p.114). For a number of post-War discussions on the subject of language as a weapon of Resistance, and as something which must itself be defended, see M. Adereth, Aragon, the Resistance poems (London: Grant and Cutler, 1985); J. Gaucheron, La Poésie, la Résistance (Paris: Les Editeurs Français Réunis, 1979), and three works by I. Higgins: 'Shrimp, Plane and France: Ponge's Resistance Poetry', in French Studies XXXVII (July 1983) pp.310-325; 'Tradition and Myth in French Resistance Poetry', in Forum for Modern Language Studies, Vol. XXI, no. 1 (January 1985) pp.45-58, and Anthology of Second World War French Poetry.

7. Reflexive poems are common among the works of other Resistance poets. See e.g. R. Desnos, 'La voix' in Contrée (Paris: Robert-J. Godet, 1944) pp.44-45; P. Emmanuel, 'Soir de l'homme' in Combats avec tes défenseurs (Villeneuve-lès-Avignon: Editions Poésie 42, 1942) pp.9-14; H. Michaux, 'Immense voix' in Exorcismes (Paris: Robert-J. Godet, 1943) pp.13-15, and J. Tardieu, 'Incarnation' in Jours pétrifiés (Paris: N.R.F., 1947) pp.69-76.
8. For a poem which refers specifically to the poet's role of rebuilding society, see 'Paroles en l'air' (TM 44).
9. In 'Un prisonnier chantait', the prisoner's song is again a defiant affirmation of confidence in the future and a rejection of Nazi authority:

(...) qui chante  
que tout renaîtra  
  
Qui dit l'étandard  
sanglant et la France  
Une voix immense  
Qui tout recommence.

(TM 60)

The 'étandard sanglant' is a quotation from the Marseillaise, and so by implication an affirmation of French Republican values.

10. For other wartime (but not Resistance) poems in which the theme of language is found, see 'D'une maison' (TM 49), 'D'une poursuite' (TM 50-51) and 'Le système du ciel, III' (TM 56).
11. In the following quotation, from Dis-moi, ma vie, the idea of language as a means of illuminating something obscure combines with the image of transmission:

Etais-ce langage, questions et réponses, rumeurs des mers  
Correspondances pour des feux et des éclipses dans l'espace  
Signaux, messages (...) (TM 181)

For an image of the poet as a receiver of signals, see 'Quand le soleil, III', in Les Mots couverts:

Un signal longtemps attendu, un feu d'amers enfin capté (TM 162)

12. The idea of duration is found also in a poem from Les Mots couverts entitled 'Poète'. The poet aspires to

l'anéantissement dans un chant qui n'a ni commencement ni fin. (TM 177)

13. For another line suggesting the poet as an eye, see Fortune Infortune Fort Une:

(...) Je suis une conscience ardente  
La pupille d'un vieux soleil à la queue de quelque train fou (p.9)

14. Another example is found in these lines:

(...) Aux balcons,  
des grilles. Et cependant nulle prison n'existe  
ici, mais un palais donnant sur des jardins. (TM 120)

15. For artistic creation as the creating of form, see e.g. Piranèse:

(...) En eux, l'obscur  
devient clarté, en eux le chaos s'organise,  
la fureur et le bruit se font ordre. (...) (TM 119)

and Dialogue:

(...) La masse et le marteau  
dans la pierre ont cherché la forme (...) (TM 139)

16. For two wartime poems which use prison imagery and which express a similar idea, see 'D'une prison' (TM 36-37) and 'Un prisonnier chantait' (TM 59-60). For another quotation from Piranèse, see:

Chaque jour enfermé, à chaque jour plus libre (TM 121)

17. In the following lines from 'Quand le soleil. V', in Les Mots couverts, 'trace', when applied to the poet, suggests his poetry:

(...) Eternel  
est l'homme, la mort n'emporte que son ombre  
Il vient, donne et s'en va, mais sa trace survit. (TM 165)

## PART II

### Notes to the Introduction

1. From an interview with me, 4 April 1987.
2. Elements recognised by Seghers, *ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. In Seghers's own words

[La poésie] peut être lue tout seul, sans être dite. Mais je préfère de beaucoup quand on dit la poésie ... si on la dit bien. (Ibid.)

As I pointed out in the Introduction to this thesis, the importance of performance for Seghers is to be inferred also from the numerous public readings of his own poetry which he gave, and from the 'Galaxies' which he produced.

5. In not restricting the term caesura to the traditional place of primary stress within a line, my terminology is close to that of J. Mazaleyrat, in Éléments de métrique française (Paris: Armand Colin, 1974) pp.139-146. The term caesura can, therefore, designate a pause created by an unorthodox, asymmetrical division. Mazaleyrat is reluctant, however, to extend the term caesura to the two principal breaks in a ternary line, his reason being that the term caesura is normally associated with the term hemistich. He does, nonetheless, accept the extension of the term hemistich to designate unequal 'half' lines, as in a decasyllable dividing 4/6. My use of the terms segments and phrases (defined on page 90) gets round the problem of what to call the 'hemistichs' of heavily asymmetric binary lines, where the term seems particularly inappropriate, and of what to call the rhythmic or metrical elements of ternary lines.
6. The line is from 'Mains', Bonne-Espérance, p.33.
7. I have translated the term 'unstable e' from the French 'e instable', used by J. Pineau in Le Mouvement rythmique en français, (Paris: Klincksieck, 1979). I prefer this term to the more standard one mute e. An unstable e is unstable in several ways. First, notably at the hemistich in a sixteen-syllable line, a syllable in unstable e may be suppressed, as it is at the end of any line. Second, the rhythmic effect of the presence of an unstable e within a line, at for example a césure lyrique or a

césure enjambante, may be one of slight instability. The same is true when a syllable in unstable e follows a secondary stress. The general effects on the rhythm of these types of caesura, along with the effect at a secondary stress, are described more fully on page 91.

8. As a general practice, this was confirmed by Seghers during my interview with him, 4 April 1987. On the césure épique and césure lyrique, see Fr. Deloffre, Le Vers français (Paris: S.E.D.E.S., 1969) pp.37-38, and J. Mazaleyrat, op.cit., pp.153-157.
9. Not all syllables composed of unstable e plus plural s, and followed by a word beginning with a vowel result in a césure épique. There is some inconsistency in Seghers's practice here. For further remarks on this question, see Chapter 6, note 14 below.
10. While Seghers's own practice is generally to run on over a line-ending which has enjambement, he accepts my suggested way of reading enjambement as an alternative (interview, 4 April 1987).
11. The special cases regarding in particular the sixteen-syllable line, which were mentioned on pages 90-91, will be seen in greater detail in Chapter 6.
12. Clive Scott's French verse art: a study (C.U.P., 1980) contains a useful, though incomplete, table of rules governing synaeresis and diaeresis (pp.242-243).
13. A feminine line-ending is one which ends in an unsounded syllable containing an unstable e, as for example, 'attente', or 'empoisonnées'. All other endings are masculine.

#### Notes to Chapter 5

1. In the most extreme cases, where the stanza has neither rhyme nor syntactic autonomy, the stanza may, theoretically, appear an arbitrary division. In practice, however, the stanza divisions in any one poem never all seem arbitrary. The most arbitrary use of stanza divisions seems to me to be in 'Le système du ciel, IV':

Ils avaient voulu faire  
Une règle d'un Dieu  
Comme si Dieu n'est pas

Dans le sein que tu touches,  
Comme si Dieu n'est pas  
Dans l'épaule et la bouche

Comme si Dieu n'est pas  
Dans l'amour qui l'a fait.

(TM 56)

A syntactic grouping of the lines would give stanzas of two, four and two lines, or four couplets. The original arrangement of the lines underlines the only rhyme ('touche : bouche') in the middle

stanza, but the repeated line, 'Comme si Dieu n'est pas' appears at irregular intervals, as the third, second and first line, respectively, of the three stanzas.

2. The strictly regular poems are: in Bonne-Espérance, 'Saint Agricol' (p.21) and 'L'île du pirate' (p.26); in Le Domaine public, 'Jusqu'à la fin' (p.92); and 'L'amour' (TM 37). Other poems with a very high degree of regularity include, in Le Chien de pique, 'Faction' (p.17); in Le Domaine public, 'Regards' (p.84); and '25 août 1944' (TM 61). (N.B. The first of these contains the line 'Sait tout va lorsque tout dort'. The line should read 'Sait que tout va...' (Seghers's correction, interview of 4 April 1987).) A number of poems in blank verse (that is, which do not use a rhyme pattern) use a regular gender pattern. These include, in Bonne-Espérance, 'Chanson des trois matelots' (p.13); in Le Domaine public, '...Du ciel' (p.22) and 'Les dons, III' (p.74); also 'Le système du ciel, III' (TM 56), and 'Un peu, beaucoup, pas du tout, I' (TM 70-71). Although the presence of a gender pattern has little or no effect on the hearer of the poems, its presence confirms Seghers's respect for traditional prosody, in particular during the war years.
3. See e.g. Seghers's note to Dis-moi, ma vie (TM 198). For examples of individual poems in the suites which are apparently of fixed-form, see Les Pierres, 'Où sont les filles de futaine...' (TM 110), and Piranèse, 'Dans les gravois et les décombres...' (TM 122-123).
4. A small number of near-regular fixed-form poems are found later. See e.g., in Les Mots couverts, 'La vie' (TM 177), and 'Portrait légèrement déhanché' (TM 178), and several poems published for the first time in Le Temps des merveilles: 'L'oiseau Ancâ' (pp.217-218), 'Cyclades' (p.218), and 'Toi' (p.220). See also two poems published in Les Lettres françaises, 9-15 juin 1971, p.3, under the collective title 'Deux sonnets, pourquoi pas?'. The second of these has thirteen lines and a number of lines of thirteen syllables.
5. Such memorability may be seen as important in the case of contraband poetry, and in that poetry which was intended specifically to be morale-boosting. The question of memorability is raised by J. Gaucheron in La Poésie, la Résistance (Paris: Les Editeurs Français Réunis, 1979) and is linked by him to another purely practical problem; the shortage of ink and paper (p.25). In 'Un grand moment de la poésie française' (Europe, no. 543-544, juillet-août 1974, pp.3-38), Gaucheron points to traditional and popular forms in poetry as vehicles for expressing commonly-held views and sentiments:

Au temps de la Résistance et de la Libération s'était réalisée dans la poésie ... une confiance qui permettait à la poésie de s'exprimer pour tous, par les voies d'une expression dont le lecteur était complice ou encore avec des moyens qui sont ceux de la poésie populaire, poésie de proverbe ou poésie de chanson. (p.34)

In the same issue of Europe (pp.176-206), M. Houssin's and J. Tovar-Estrada's article, 'Poésie et chansons populaires dans la Résistance', makes similar points concerning the quantity of poetry, as opposed to other forms of literature, produced during the period:

Mais pourquoi la poésie?

Sans doute pour des raisons matérielles: Il est plus facile de dissimuler une feuille de papier que deux ou trois cents, c'est aussi le genre qui se prête le mieux à une impression et à une diffusion simples, peu onéreuses ... et le propre du poème populaire est précisément de concrétiser un besoin de communication, de permettre une lecture rapide, une mémorisation facile. (p.177)

6. Two poems only are written in nine-syllable lines. These are 'Jeune fille, V', in Jeune Fille (p.25), and 'Venez, les miroirs du ciel s'embrument...' (TM 75), from Six poèmes pour Véronique. The latter is not a fixed-form poem and includes lines of various other lengths.
7. Cf. Chapter 4, notes 5 and 6.
8. See Th. Elwert, Traité de versification française des origines à nos jours (Paris: Klincksieck, 1965) p.120.
9. The poem was published by Eluard in Paris, in L'Eternelle Revue, no. 1 (nouvelle série), 1 décembre 1944, p.27, under the pseudonym Louis Maste. See also Chapter 4, note 9. (Cf. the quotation from 'Chanson de celui qui changeait de noms', on page 96.)
10. See Th. Elwert, op. cit., p.128.
11. Ibid., p.129.
12. For another poem in six-syllable lines, with rhyme, and in which there is pairing of lines, see 'L'amour' (TM 37).
13. For a poem in blank couplets see 'Un peu, beaucoup, pas du tout, I' (TM 70-71).
14. Elsewhere in the poem, assonance takes the place of rhyme, as in the last stanza where 'billes' is answered by 'midi'. For another poem in which six-syllable lines are paired syntactically, see 'Le système du ciel, IV', quoted in note 1 above.
15. It is possible that the pairing of lines, creating larger units, anticipates Seghers's later preference for longer lines. Cf. note 16, below.
16. On the metrical resemblance of the sixteen-syllable line to two octosyllables, see pages 90-91. This will be discussed further in Chapter 6. The predominance of eight-syllable phrases (i.e. in the form of octosyllables, and as the hemistichs of the sixteen-syllable line) seems all the more significant if one takes into account, jointly, two things. First, Seghers's preference that verse should be heard, and second, Cornulier's discovery,

presented in Théorie du vers: Rimbaud, Verlaine, Mallarmé (Paris: Seuil, 1982):

(...) en français, la reconnaissance instinctive et sûre de l'égalité exacte en nombre syllabique de segments voisins rythmiquement quelconques (c'est-à-dire égaux uniquement en nombre syllabique total) est limitée, selon les gens, à huit syllabes, ou à moins. (p.16)

I am not suggesting that Seghers consciously worked to a limit of eight syllables, but the fact that eight-syllable phrases abound may be symptomatic of the importance of performance.

17. See Th. Elwert, op. cit., p.123, and M. Grammont, Petit traité de versification française (Paris: Armand Colin, 1965) p.43.
18. The majority of the poems in rhyming octosyllables are confined to Bonne-Espérance and Le Chien de pique, and have not been collected in Le Temps des merveilles. When asked if there was any particular reason for their not being included in Le Temps des merveilles, Seghers replied that it was no doubt because he felt that they no longer corresponded to his 'souffle' (interview, 4 April 1987). Cf. notes 15 and 16, above.
19. The title, 'La nuit de mai', and the placing of the year, 1942, at the end of the poem, are a dual recollection of Aragon's poem of the same title which ends with these lines:

A-t-il fait nuit si parfaitement nuit jamais  
Où sont partis Musset ta Muse et tes hantises  
Il flotte quelque part un parfum de cytises  
C'est mil neuf cent quarante et c'est la nuit de Mai

Later collected in Les Yeux d'Elsa, the poem was published in Poésie 41, 4 (avril-juin(?) 1944) pp.7-8. The imagery of self-sacrifice in Seghers's poem also recalls the passage in Musset's poem, 'La nuit de mai', relating the pelican's giving of its own heart as food to its offspring.

20. The image of the torn flag perhaps suggests the division of France into Northern and Southern Zones. For the use of 'une soie' in the sense of a flag, cf. Jouvet's poem 'A une soie', published in Lettres, 2 (mars 1943) pp.8-9.
21. Most examples of the device are concentrated in Le Chien de pique, published in 1943. Seghers's use of the device in his Resistance poetry is no doubt due in part to the influence of Aragon's article, 'La rime en 1940', which Seghers published in Poètes casqués 1940, 3 (avril 1940) pp.33-40. In this article, Aragon encouraged poets to use this new form of rhyme as an extension of the tradition of rhyme in French poetry. Aragon included rhymes extending over several words, as in this example, by Seghers, from 'Le Vert-Galant': 'sale : tendus à / la' (Le Chien de pique, p.39). The earliest example of rime enjambante I have found in Seghers's poetry occurs in 'Epiphanie' (TM 17-18), first published in Fontaine, 15 (septembre 1941) pp.51-52. In this poem, the rhyme 'découpe : coups / périront' (TM 18) is found. Aragon

himself used rime enjambante, as, for example, in the following lines from 'Les amants séparés', written in December 1939, and first published in Poètes casqués 1940, 2 (fevrier 1940) pp.29-31:

(...)  
 Fait-elle à la façon des cris  
 Mal des cris que les vents calmèrent  
 Du frémissement de leurs rimes  
 Du frémissement de leurs crimes (p.30)

This example differs from Seghers's use of the device in that the rime enjambante is the proposing, and not the answering, rhyme. It is interesting to note a very similar example in Seghers's poem, 'Carré blanc':

C'est l'attente et les loups  
 Qui se vêtent de crimes  
 Et ce chant votre cri  
 Mes frères morts pour nous. (TM 23)

An uncertain case of rime enjambante, in which it is apparently the proposing rhyme which is spread over two lines, is found in these lines from 'Juda', in Le Domaine public:

Terre d'amour cache tes mains le jour est sans  
 ombre, et le soleil de la vengeance  
 (...) (p.42)

The case is uncertain because for there to be any form of rhyme at the end of the first line, a very unorthodox liaison would have to be made between the two lines. The rhyme would, moreover, be only approximate, the s at the end of 'sans' being voiced if liaised, while the sibilant at the end of 'vengeance' is unvoiced. The presence of rhyme here would, however, tally with the rhyme pattern of the poem as a whole.

The individual words involved in rime enjambante may themselves be significant. In three cases, including the example from 'La nuit de mai', quoted on page 105, Seghers uses the word 'mensonge'. Resistance poetry was resistance to the betrayal and lies of Vichy: the 'fausse parole' which reinterpreted for Vichy's own ends such words as 'patrie' and 'liberté' (cf. Chapter 4, notes 4 and 5). The other examples in question are found in two poems in Le Chien de pique, 'La rose des temps':

Vieillard qui portait les mensonges  
 De nos trésors intérieurs  
 Dis-moi dis-moi où elles sont  
 Je ne sais plus ni leur couleur  
 (...) (p.20)

and 'Les oiseaux':

Nous ironnons en nous-mêmes, noirs  
 Comme fut ton premier mensonge  
 Brûlant nos images qui sont  
 Jeux cruels et cruels espoirs (p.31)

22. Enjambement is a frequent feature also in octosyllables which are paired syntactically speaking, and which are found in poems using rhyme. For other examples, see the opening lines of 'La nuit de mai', quoted on page 105, and the following lines from two poems in Le Chien de pique, 'Le temps':

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Mais tendre ici qu'il n'est envers<br>Ceux qu'il eut (sic) brisé (sic) comme verre | 2+2/4;<br>1+4/3/ (p.29) |
|--|-------------------------|

and 'Les oiseaux':

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| N'oublie plus ta haine, l'amour<br>Gercé, saignant, mauvais à dire | 3+2/3;<br>2/2/2+2/ (p.31) |
|--|---------------------------|

and, from 'Comme une flotte désarmée':

|   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Entre celle qui fut et celle<br>qui sera, le Temps s'est perdu. | 3+3/2/<br>3/2+3/ (TM 47) |
|---|--------------------------|

The presence of enjambement increases the lines' resemblance to sixteen-syllable lines.

23. Note that, in the lines from 'Les oiseaux', 'tourne' (line 1) is answered by a rime enjambante, 'vautours / N'oublie', over the stanza break.
24. '25 août 1944 (Libération de Paris)' uses a further rhyme scheme. The stanzas all rhyme -aaa, -bbb, and so on. It is also interesting to note that all the lines bar one follow a regular gender patterning. The presence of paired octosyllables in three-line stanzas is found, notably, in two poems from Bonne-Espérance, 'L'île du pirate' (p.26), rhyming abb, abb; and 'Place réservée' (pp.41-42), which has the irregular rhyme pattern a-a, -bb, cc-, -dd.
25. For another poem written in couplets of rhyming octosyllables, see 'Faction' in Le Chien de pique. An impression of monotony arises from the succession of aphoristic couplets:

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Celui qui vit passer la mort<br>Sait que tout va lorsque tout dort | 2+3+3/<br>1+3/3+1/      |
| Quiconque a vu passer la nuit<br>Connaît le mensonge des bruits    | 2+3+3/<br>2+3+3/ (p.17) |

On the second of these lines, see note 2 above. Other examples of rhyming octosyllabic couplets will be seen in section (iii).

26. As a relatively short line, but one which is also long enough for a narrative element, the octosyllable is suited to conveying, in respectful understatement, a discreet impression of a person, as in 'Portrait' and the self-portrait, 'Poète'. For other portrait poems written in octosyllables, and which also make extensive use of parallel structures, see 'Celui qui buvait dans les bars' (TM 53) and 'Un peu, beaucoup, pas du tout, IV' (TM 71). For a

further poem in octosyllables using the same device, see 'La clôture' (TM 65).

27. First published in L'Eternelle revue, 1 (juin 1944) p.3. The first two stanzas use a sequence of phrases beginning with 'Quand'.
28. Ternary structures are a feature of this poem, as seen in these lines:

Un jour, une heure, une minute

Les soeurs, les mères les enfants

29. It also suggests, again, that a measure of eight syllables is in some way natural for Seghers. Cf. notes 16 and 18 above.
30. Other examples of the pairing of end-stopped octosyllables abound. See e.g. 'Présences' (TM 16), the eight lines beginning 'Vous n'entendrez plus leur bourdon'; the first section of 'Le grand belt' (TM 85); the first stanza of 'Pusztas' (TM 88); the first stanza of 'Vivre se conjugue au présent' (TM 88), and, from 'Mains', in Bonne-Espérance, the following lines:

O mains tremblantes et plus pâles  
 Du désir de la découverte;  
 Silencieuses fleurs de givre  
 Nées aux carreaux de cet hiver,  
 Vous qui peuplez de faits-divers  
 La volonté de ne plus vivre

(p.34)

31. See Fr. Deloffre, op. cit., pp.61-62; and M. Grammont, op. cit., p.42. H. Morier, in Le Rythme du vers libre symboliste (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1977), states that a 5/5 division is admissible practice in Romantic verse (Vol. I, p.30, note 1). Grammont sees this same structure as a modern treatment of the line (pp.42-43). The presence of a secondary stress within the six-syllable hemistich is usual (Grammont, p.42). This is seen also in Seghers's handling of the line. Seghers's lines dividing 5/5 also frequently have a secondary stress within the hemistichs. The presence of secondary stresses within five- and six-syllable hemistichs concords with Clive Scott's statement:

measures of four and five syllables are already pushing towards the limit of tolerable accentlessness.

(op. cit., p.42)

Although, here, Scott is discussing the octosyllable, the principle is of general application. Cf. J. Mazaleyrat:

à [l'] accent tonique principal tend à s'ajouter, dans les groupes de quelque étendue (à partir de 4 syllabes) un accent secondaire.  
 (op. cit., p.110)

and J. Pineau:

[les unités prosodiques de quatre ou de cinq syllabes] tendent à se subdiviser quand le texte a une certaine densité poétique. (op. cit., p.46)

32. The exceptions are 'Chanson des trois matelots' in Bonne-Espérance (p.13), and, from the same collection, 'Clairière' (TM 12). The lines of the former are arranged in blank couplets, but use parallelisms extensively. 'Clairière' is not a fixed-form poem and includes a number of five-syllable lines.
33. This is Seghers's explanation, related by Fr. J. Carmody in 'Pierre Seghers, Poet and Editor', Books Abroad, Vol. 34, 1, (winter 1960) pp.233-235 (p.234).
34. Oeuvres poétiques, edited by P. Albouy (Paris: Gallimard, 1964) Vol. I, p.1122.
35. Ibid., p.1123.
36. These are: 'Le carrousel' (TM 39); 'Le temps' (TM 40); 'Le système du ciel, V' (TM 56); 'Les jardins de Murcie' (TM 63-64); three poems in Le Domaine public: '...Du ciel' (p.22); 'Sapates' (p.64) and 'Les ornières du temps' (p.41); and three poems in Le Futur antérieur: 'Invocation aux planètes, I' (p.22); 'La nuit des morts' (pp.41-42) and 'Allemands beaux enfants' (pp.48-49).
37. The earliest poem I have found using the alexandrine as its basic line-length (other lines are present) is 'Je n'entendrai plus que le langage des monts lointains...', published in Poètes casqués 1940, 4 (juillet(?) 1940) pp.27-28. The poem bears the date 20 May 1940.
38. For alexandrines on the classical model, see e.g. these lines from 'Le temps':

|   |                      |                 |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|
| Les pays tailladés avaient tant de visages<br>Et tant de paysans se déliaient les mains | 3+3/3+3/<br>2+4/2+4/ | ( <u>TM</u> 40) |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|

from 'Les ornières du temps', in Le Domaine public:

|   |                      |        |
|---|----------------------|--------|
| Les charrois ennemis ont nos corps divisés (sic)<br>Le sol de notre espoir est plus blanc que la pierre | 3+3/3+3/<br>2+4/3+3/ |        |
|   |                      | (p.41) |

and from 'La nuit des morts', in Le Futur antérieur:

|  |                          |        |
|--|--------------------------|--------|
| Sainte-Croix-des-Malheurs qui venez pour me prendre<br>La Dame bleue des ports vous regarde et me suit | 1+2+3/3+3/<br>2+2+2/3+3/ |        |
|  |                          | (p.41) |

39. In Le Domaine public, as in Poèmes choisis, the order of the middle two lines of this stanza is the reverse.

40. This is suggested in such lines as the following:

Les camions écrasaient les coeurs dans les ruisseaux

41. 'Florida', in Bonne-Espérance, uses alternating alexandrines and six-syllable lines. For the most part, there is no syntactic relationship between the two sorts of lines, as here:

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Cet amour mal venu qui si bien te ressemble | 3+3/3+3/    |
| - Un casque de colonial -                   | 2+3+2/ (=7) |
| Cet amour mal venu par ce soir de Décembre  | 3+3/3+3/    |
| - On s'en moquait pas mal -                 | 4+2/ (p.47) |

The syntactic discontinuity combined with the colloquial tone of the short lines create an uneven texture.

42. The reference in this line is explained by Seghers:

Ce sont les chevaux de Marly, au débouché des Champs-Elysées, place de la Concorde. Les occupants étaient à l'Hôtel Crillon, au Ministère de la Marine. Les chevaux de pierre paraissaient le ressentir, ne pouvoir le supporter, ils se cabraient.

in M. Zimmermann (ed.), Occupation allemande et Résistance intellectuelle: Pierre Seghers se souvient (Bielefeld: Cornelsern-Vielhagen und Klasing, 1982) p.31.

43. For another poem which has the appearance of a fixed-form poem, see 'La Dame de Chat ou le grand jeu' (JM 63). The line groups are, however, of different lengths, and although a number of alexandrines are present, the interspersing of these with much shorter lines gives the poem a rhythm approaching free verse.
44. For other poems using a mixture of line-lengths, but with a predominance of alexandrines, arranged in stanzas, see Le Chien de pique, 'Un 28 juillet' (pp.14-15) and 'Basses-Alpes' (pp.56-57). See also 'Cantique à Milosz', Cahier spécial Milosz, Editions Poésie 42, pp.39-40.

45. Cf. Fr. Deloffre:

La césure de ce vers est de 5+6. D'autres poètes, contemporains, le coupent 6+5 et en font ce qu'ils appellent un 'alexandrin manqué' (Yves Bonnefoy). (op. cit., p.63)

Th. Elwert is rather less dogmatic:

[le vers de onze syllabes] peut avoir une césure après la cinquième syllabe ... ou après la septième ... ou n'en avoir aucune. (op. cit., p.125)

46. With the exception of the last line of 'Août 41' and the second line of 'Automne', both of which have ten syllables, and one alexandrine ('Le jour plus fort (...)') in the latter poem, the poems are written exclusively in eleven-syllable lines.

47. 'Automne' offers another example of a line which divides 6/5, at least as far as its most important syntactic break is concerned:

Que le sang glisse en moi, comme après l'orage 3/1+2/1+4/  
(TM 52)

48. Cf. note 31 above.
  49. On the use of the term '*alexandrin manqué*', see note 45, above.
  50. Few works on prosody discuss the line, but Th. Elwert has this to say on Verlaine's handling of the line:

le nombre de syllabes permet une très grande variation de rythmes en déplaçant la césure après la 5e, 6e, 7e, 8e, 9e syllabe; ou en mettant deux césures, l'une après la 4e et l'autre après la 9e. (op. cit., p.126)

51. The octosyllables which close each stanza have a similar function.

52. I have suggested a coupe lyrique in the first line to avoid a stuttering effect of the repeated [d].

## Notes to Chapter 6

1. H. Morier, op. cit., Vol. I, p.18.
  2. The use of the césure épique in the sixteen-syllable line can be regarded as an additional rule. (See pages 90-91 and note 8 of the Introduction to Part II, above, and note 14 below.)
  3. For two early poems written in a particularly free form of freed verse, see 'Prière' (TM 15), which incorporates some rhyme, and groups lines in regular stanzas; and 'Menaces de mort, I-VII' (TM 73-74).
  4. For a number of near-regular poems in the suites, see Chapter 5, note 3.
  5. M. Grammont (op. cit.) states that the line usually  
 se présente avec deux coupes, la première fixe après la  
 troisième syllabe, et la seconde libre'. (p.45)
  6. A six-syllable segment (i.e. having five consecutive unstressed syllables) is very unusual and represents the limit of tolerable accentlessness. (Cf. Chapter 5, note 31.) Significantly, one of the other rare likely examples of a six-syllable segment is found in another free verse poem; the poem from Racines quoted on page 140.
  7. Cf. H. Morier:

Quant à l'enjambement...le vers libre n'y devrait recourir qu'après un alexandrin; sinon, le nombre de mesures étant

variable et la rime désordonnée, voire mal marquée,  
l'enjambement équivaut à la ruine de l'unité du vers.

(op. cit., Vol. II, p.244)

If the point is applicable to verse with rhyme, it would seem all the more relevant to verse in which there is no rhyme.

8. Cf. these lines from the last poem of Dialogue:

(...)

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| ailleurs que dans ma tête où bourdonne une mouche | 2+4/3+3/ |
| Bleue   | 1/       |
| Qu'en vain j'accroche à l'hameçon du souvenir.    | 2/2/4+4/ |

(TM 141)

9. The exceptions are one ten- and one fourteen-syllable line. In a further three lines, apocope at the sixth syllable is necessary if the lines are to conform metrically, as here:

-J'ai bien dormi, dit-elle. J'ai faim. Si l'on mangeait?

4/2\*/2/4/ (p.5)

There are, furthermore, only three alexandrines in the suite which do not have some degree of stress on the sixth syllable. Two of these are orthodox ternary alexandrines. The third is

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| droite et noire sur le mur blanc! Dans le verger | 1+2/4+1/4/ |
| (...)  | (p.7)      |

10. For other poems in which the majority of alexandrines are handled in a classical manner (but without rhyme) see, in Racines 'Qui parlait de linceul...' (TM 94), 'Etait-ce le Chaos...' (TM 96), 'Vaine puissance, ô mort...' (TM 98). Together with a poem from Dis-moi, ma vie, 'Cahotante, blutée...' (TM 189), these poems are the most traditional, metrically speaking, though the last cited has the peculiarity of being composed largely of strings of adjectives. See also in Les Pierres 'Où sont les filles de futaine...' (TM 110). The majority of lines in this poem are classical alexandrines, arranged in couplets, and closely structured around questions and answers.

11. The last line of this poem closely resembles a classical alexandrine. For other final lines which are alexandrines with an orthodox binary or ternary structure, see e.g. Piranèse:

Et le palais secret ouvert à tous les vents.

3+3/2+4/  
(TM 123)

Dialogue:

en vain seront sur nous. Rien ne nous atteindra. 2+4/1+3+2/  
(TM 139)

Racines:

L'homme est un arbre et l'arbre mort est un enfant. 1+3/4/4/  
(TM 101)

and Dis-moi, ma vie:

Seghers et toi, ein Augenblick, rien qu'une graine...

2+2/2+2/1+3/ (TM 197)

12. It is possible that there should be an apocope in line 4 ('s'installe' 2\*/). Cf. the first quotation from the interview in note 14 below.
13. The addition of 'y' in line 3 is Seghers's correction (interview, 4 April 1987).
14. If a syllable in unstable e has a final s, and an apocope or césure épique is practised, and this syllable is followed by a vowel at the beginning of the next word, the final s is not liaised in Seghers's practice. Cf. his comments on the following line from Au seuil de l'oubli:

(...)

sur les colonnes et les frontons où n'apparaissaient que  
des trous?

4\*+4/2+3/3/ (TM 199)

Pour moi, le e muet est muré, et surtout s'il s'alourdit d'un s, qui est là pour l'orthographe mais qui ne l'est pas pour l'oreille. L'oreille efface le s. (Interview, 4 April 1987)

As I stated in note 9 to the Introduction Part II, there seems to be some inconsistency in Seghers's practice concerning the césure épique and apocope. The following line was read by Seghers with both a liaison and a counted unstable e at 'grilles aux':

Aux lucarnes des grilles. Des grilles aux fenêtres 3+3\*/2+4/  
(TM 120)

Seghers commented:

Mais là, j'y tiens. 'Des grill(es) aux fenêtres': le vers est faux. Et la liaison n'est pas à l'hémistiche. (Ibid.)

15. It follows from Seghers's comments quoted in note 14 that line 5 should possibly be considered as a thirteen-syllable line.
16. The enjambement at the end of line 4, where one would not necessarily expect it, reflects Seghers's own reading of the lines (interview, 4 April 1987). He stated specifically that the two lines were to be linked in this way, even making a liaison between 'fuyant' and 'et'. (Elsewhere, however, he corrected such a liaison after I had pointed it out.) Such a practice, while not necessarily legitimising a liaison over the line-ending, does draw attention to the problem, in performance, of transmitting the tension which exists between what the eye sees (the line) and the dictates of sense and syntax. For other series of freed alexandrines amongst which enjambement is found, see, in Les Pierres, the opening four lines (TM 104); the first five lines of 'Quels vagabonds...' (TM 106), and the poem 'Secrètement armée de puissance...' (TM 109). In Piranèse, see the first seven lines of

'Il ne restait plus rien...' (TM 117). In Dialogue, see 'Les idoles se sont dégradées...' (TM 139) from 'Le masse et le marteau' (line 9) to 'sur les planches' (line 15).

17. The binary-cum-ternary structure is typical of Les Pierres where it is not restricted to the alexandrine. For other examples, see the following lines from the first poem of the suite:

travaillé par le seul Soleil, par les orages et leurs clams  
3+3+2/4+4/ (=16)  
(TM 104)

qui vont et se refont. Sous ses ailes sauvages  
2+4/3+3/ (=12)  
(TM 104)

and from other poems:

Vous fécondez vos fleurs, énormes, solitaires.  
4+2/2/4/ (=12)  
(TM 106)

Les pluies, les pleurs et l'à quoi bon des renommées  
2/2/4+4/ (=12)  
(TM 109)

18. For other examples in Piranèse of the combination of binary-cum-ternary alexandrines and enjambement, see:

(...) Le soleil  
est sa seule sagesse, il vit et il dispose 3+3/2/4;  
l'inutile attirail (...) (TM 121)

(...) étrangement déserte et silencieuse. Comme 2+4/4\*/1/  
des ombres (...) (TM 117)

19. For another poem from Les Pierres making extensive use of binary structures, see 'Secètement armée de puissance...' (TM 109). For further examples, see Racines, the first section of 'Je rêvais de confins...' (TM 98); Piranèse, 'Dans un péristyle de lanterneaux...' (TM 121); Dialogue, the first four lines of 'Epris de sa confusion...' (TM 129), and Au seuil de l'oubli, 'Nous vivons dans la solitude éboulée...' (TM 200).

20. By unmetrical lines, I understand those lines which are of an unconventional length (e.g. lines of eleven, thirteen or fifteen syllables). I also include lines of regular lengths but treated in unorthodox fashion, as for example this sixteen-syllable line:

Brûlé dans cette vie comme une sorcière sur le brasier  
2+4/5+5/ (TM 136)

This 6/10 division is unusual amongst Seghers's sixteen-syllable lines, which usually divide 8/8. Such lines may also be defined as freed sixteen-syllable lines, further defined in section 3)(i)(b) below.

21. The fact that the lines are not perfectly metrical is not necessarily obvious to the ear. Cf. Chapter 5, note 16.
22. In Poésie 43, 13 (févr.-mars 1943) pp.19-20.
23. Even if, in line 2, there were a césure épique after 'châles', the line would be unmetsrical in its divisions (2+275/3\*/4/). Alternatively, a césure épique could be practised after 'elles', giving a first hemistich of eight syllables, while the unstable e on 'châles' could be maintained. The line suggests an inconsistent use of the césure épique on Seghers's part.
24. The notation for the first line corresponds to '(...) entre trente-sept degrés centigrades (...)'.<sup>25</sup>
25. Interview, 4 April 1987.
26. Seghers; *ibid.*
27. An earlier version of this poem, 'En transit', was published in Les Mots couverts. See TM 177.
28. See Th. Elwert, *op. cit.*, p.127.
29. On the variety of structures possible within the octosyllable, see p.102 above and Chapter 5 note 17.
30. A césure épique may be found at points other than after the eighth syllable. This practice was confirmed by Seghers in my interview with him, 4 April 1987.
31. Interview, 4 April 1987.
32. For other sixteen-syllable lines in series of different lengths, and which do not have a basic 8/8 division, see 'Paroles en l'air' (TM 44), four lines from the end; the penultimate line of 'Le pipe-line de Bassorah' (TM 58), and 'Menaces de mort, I' (TM 73), four lines from the end.
33. For another series of five sixteen-syllable lines in which the same practice is called for, see the end of 'Le mal d'aimer' (TM 42). This poem was published in 1943, in Le Chien de pique.
34. While it might be argued that the unstable e in 'soulagement' could be dropped, and that at the end of 'vîmes' maintained, creating a césure enjambante (1+3/475+3/), the discounting of an internal unstable e would be at variance with Seghers's usual practice.
35. A number of lines, that is, are found in which the practice of a césure épique would result in a falling short. This is the case in the following line from 'Le cavalier', where a césure épique after 'fermes' would result in a fifteen-syllable line:

Le monde vert et vomissant le sang des fermes et des villes  
 (TM 48)

36. For a much earlier poem using 'Pour' in a similar way, and using similar imagery, see Racines 'Pour l'encens, l'odeur de la mer...' (TM 99). For other poems written in sixteen-syllable lines and using anaphora, see Dialogue, 'Pour un prétexte d'existence...' (TM 127); Dis-moi, ma vie, 'Rien que l'éclair d'un météore...' (TM 190), and Au seuil de l'oubli, 'Dans des demeures de mémoire...' (TM 198). For a poem in Les Pierres in which a series of 'si' clauses helps to create a sense of dignity, see 'Tout ce qui reste d'une armée...' (TM 105).
37. The presence of a number of other unmetrical lines in this poem suggests a particularly free form of freed verse.
38. For other examples of recognisable metrical elements within other structures, see pages 157-158, on an extract from Dis-moi, ma vie; pages 161-162, on an extract from Piranèse; and page 170, on lines from Dialogue.
39. For other examples of poems in Fortune Infortune Fort Une in which questions are prominent, see pp.29 and 39 of the suite. For examples in other suites, see Racines, 'Qui parlait de linceul...' (TM 94) and 'Quel est cet homme universel...' (TM 95); and Piranèse, 'Quelles fourmis infatigables...' (TM 119). The very title of the suite Dis-moi, ma vie implies a question to be answered. Through the uncertainty which they imply, those poems which use questions are similar to those in which 'Si' is prominent. The two constructions combine in Piranèse, 'Et si c'était l'honneur...' (TM 115).
40. An earlier version of this poem is found in Au seuil de l'oubli (TM 202).
41. A similar sense of finality, arising from a series of short segments and the presence of 'extra' primary stresses, is found in these lines from Piranèse:
- (...) parmi les dalles de safran  
où les colonnes sont éparses, brisées et couchées dans la  
boue. 4+4\*/2/2+4/ (=16)  
On a crevé le toit du temple et le soleil, qu'éclaire-t-il?  
3+3+2/4/4/ (=16)  
(TM 126)
42. Enjambement, in sixteen-syllable lines, is much rarer than in the freed alexandrine or mixed line-length verse. This may, again, reflect a predilection for measures of eight syllables.
43. 'Memento mori': (2+3/). This is Seghers's reading of the phrase. Interview, 4 April 1987.
44. A later version of this poem is found in Fortune Infortune Fort Une (p.49).

**PIERRE SEGHERS: BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Unless otherwise stated, the place of publication for books is Paris.

With the exception of section 13) (reviews of P.S.'s works), items are listed chronologically within each section. Cross-references in section 1)(ii) (poems published in periodicals, prefaces etc.) state in which collections individual poems are to be found.

Where Le Temps des merveilles is referred to in the body of another bibliographical reference, it is abbreviated to TM.

In the case of untitled poems, the first phrase or line is given, followed by suspension points.

The following abbreviations are used:

repr. = reprinted or reprint  
n.p. = no place of publication stated  
n.d. = no date

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## A. PRIMARY MATERIAL

## 1) POETRY

(i) Books

1. Bonne-Espérance, Villeneuve-lès-Avignon: Editions de la Tour, 1938. [Includes the following poems not repr. in TM:
- a) 'Le mal marié' (pp.9-10)
  - b) 'Barbaresques' (pp.11-12)
  - c) 'Chanson des trois matelots' (p.13)
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  - o) 'Aveugles' (pp.52-54)
  - p) 'Les jours passés' (pp.57-58)
  - q) 'L'appel' (pp.59-60).]

2. Le Chien de pique, Neuchâtel: Ides et Calendes, 1943, Coll. Ides Poétiques. [Includes the following poems not repr. in TM:

- a) 'La fête' (pp.9-11)
- b) 'Un 28 juillet' (pp.14-15)
- c) 'Côte' (p.16)
- d) 'Faction' (p.17)
- e) 'La nuit de mai' (pp.18-19)
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- i) 'Les oiseaux' (p.31)
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- k) 'Le Vert-Galant' (pp.38-39)
- l) 'Chanson' (pp.40-41)
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- o) 'Prisonniers' (pp.53-54)
- p) 'Basses-Alpes' (pp.56-57)
- q) 'Grand Guignol' (pp.60-61)
- r) 'Elle viendra...' (p.62)
- s) 'A la Suisse' (p.63).]

3. a) Le Domaine public, Seghers, 1945, Coll. Poésie 45.

b) also Fribourg: L.U.F. [identical to 3a)]

c) and Montréal: Parizeau [unverified].

[Includes the following poems not repr. in TM:

- a) 'Révolution' (pp.9-10)
- b) 'Paris-Pentecôte' (pp.15-16)
- c) '... Du Ciel' (p.22)
- d) 'Chant funèbre pour de nouveaux héros' (pp.23-24)
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- g) 'Les ornières du temps' (p.41)
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- i) 'La maison des sables' (p.46)
- j) 'Art poétique' (pp.52-53)
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- l) 'Les dons' (pp.72-74)
- m) 'Celle que j'ai chantée' (p.75)
- n) 'Moralité' (pp.79-80)
- o) 'Du miroir' (pp.82-83)
- p) 'Regards' (p.84)
- q) 'Les quatre fils Aymon' (p.89)
- r) 'Le tien' (p.90)
- s) 'Jusqu'à la fin' (p.92)
- t) 'Le regret' (pp.93-94).]

4. Le Futur antérieur, Editions de Minuit, 1947, Coll. L'Honneur des poètes. [Includes the following poems in neither 3 nor TM:

- a) 'Invocation aux planètes' (pp.22-24)
- b) 'Avenir' (pp.25-26)
- c) 'La nuit des morts' (pp.41-42)
- d) 'Allemands beaux enfants' (pp.48-49)
- e) 'Les lépreux' (p.50)
- f) 'Les valeurs' (pp.53-54)
- g) 'A la Grèce' (pp.55-56)
- h) 'A Cristina Garcia, à ses amis' (pp.57-58)
- i) 'Le quai des Orfèvres' (pp.61-62)
- j) 'A Paul Eluard' (pp.68-69)
- k) 'Aux jeunes' (pp.70-71).]

5. Jeune Fille, chez l'auteur, 1948. [Includes the following poems not repr. in TM:

- a) 'Jeune fille, I-VI' (pp.19-26)
- b) 'Iroquoises, III': 'Les pronoms' (p.36)  
'Portrait, I-V' (pp.41-42) appears in TM (pp.70-71) with the title 'Un peu, beaucoup, pas du tout, I-V'.]

6. Menaces de mort, La Presse à bras, 1948. [Includes one poem (IV, 'Arthur, c'était le squelette...') not repr. in TM.]

7. Six poèmes pour Véronique, Editions Poésie 50, 1950. [Includes the following poems not repr. in TM:

- a) 'L'or...' (pp.3-4)
- b) 'Quand le chat-huant...' (pp.5-6)
- c) 'Il y a des tourterelles...' (pp.7-8)
- d) 'Quand le chant des grillons...' (p.10)
- e) 'Vagabond sous le pont des nuits...' (p.11).]

8. Poèmes choisis, 1939-1952, Seghers, 1952. [Includes poems from 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7, and a number of unpublished poems:

- a) 'L'écho' (TM pp.75-76)
- b) 'Le cœur mort' (TM p.76)
- c) 'Poète' (TM pp.76-77)
- d) 'Où partir, d'où venir?' (TM p.77)
- e) 'Morts dans la vie, les jours qui ne sont plus' (TM p.77)
- f) 'Paysage pour un enfant à venir' (TM p.78).]

9. Le Coeur-Volant, Lyon: Les Ecrivains Réunis, 1954. [Includes two poems not repr. in TM:  
 a) 'Les Parques' (pp.15-16)  
 b) 'Le chevalier de la mort nulle' (p.17).]
10. Poèmes, Milano: Schwarz, 1956, Coll. Dialoghi col Poeta. [Includes poems from 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9, and:  
 a) 'Ce qui passait en nous' (p.18)  
 b) 'La chanson méchante' (p.20)  
 c) 'Portrait d'une maîtresse d'école' (pp.39-40, repr. TM pp.102-103)  
 d) 'Le mur du son' (pp.44-45, repr. TM pp.79-80)  
 e) 'La mue' (p.46, repr. TM p.83)  
 also three poems from Racines (see 11, below):  
 f) 'Etait-ce le chaos...' (p.49, repr. TM p.96)  
 g) 'Quel est cet homme universel...' (p.50, repr. TM p.95)  
 h) 'Si je m'endormais au coeur du Rien...' (p.51, repr. TM p.101).]
11. Racines, Intercontinentale du Livre, 1956.
12. Les Pierres, Intercontinentale du Livre, 1958.
13. Piranèse, Neuchâtel: Ides et Calendes, 1960, Coll. Ides poétiques.
14. Dialogue, chez l'auteur, 1965. [Includes 2 poems not repr. in TM:  
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 b) 'Tu es un homme de science...' (p.19).]
15. Les Mots couverts, Les Editeurs Français Réunis, 1970. [Includes the following poems not repr. in TM:  
 a) 'Architectures' (pp.13-14)  
 b) 'Jardins' (p.57)  
 c) 'A un ami bulgare' (pp.67-68)  
 also three poems repr. in Au seuil de l'oubli (see 17, below):  
 d) 'Quand le soleil, V': 'Auras-tu encore besoin de sauvegarde...' (p.21, repr. TM p.208)  
 e) 'Quand le soleil, VI': 'Quant (sic) au sortir du jour...' (p.22, repr. TM pp.208-209)  
 f) 'Trésors, III': 'Nous vivons dans la solitude éboulée...' (p.65, repr. TM p.200).]
16. Dis-moi, ma vie, Bruxelles: André de Rache, 1972. [Includes 2 poems not repr. in TM:  
 a) 'A ravauder le temps perdu...' (p.43)  
 b) 'Pour un ordre dans ce chaos...' (p.49)  
 'Les mandarins sont morts...' (p.91) appears in TM (p.80) with title 'A Frantisek Halas'.]
17. Au seuil de l'oubli, Virgil, 1976, [unpaginated]. [Suite of 11 poems all in TM but in different order and interspersed with others:  
 a) 'Dans des demeures de mémoire...' (TM p.198)  
 b) 'Auras-tu encore besoin de sauvegarde...' (TM p.208)  
 c) 'Les maisons intérieures...' (TM p.199)  
 d) 'Pour des oboles de silence...' (TM p.201)  
 e) 'Ailleurs. Sur les travées imaginaires...' (TM p.200)  
 f) 'Nous vivons les moments...' (TM p.205)]

- g) 'Quand les constellations s'éteignent...' (TM p.203)  
 h) 'Dans des histoires embourbées...' (TM p.203)  
 i) 'Les excavatrices...' (TM p.202)  
 j) 'Nous vivons dans la solitude éboulée...' (TM p.200)  
 k) 'Quand au sortir du jour...' (TM p.208).]
18. Le Mur du son, Sofia-Presse, 1976. [Includes 10 d); poems from 15 and 16; 17 c), f), e), 'L'échafaudage des illusions...' (TM p.199), and 17 g); also 'Aux liseurs de poèmes', repr. in TM (pp.210-211).]
19. Qui sommes-nous?, Zagreb: Bozo Bizkupić, 1977, Coll. Arbor. [Suite of 7 poems, repr. in TM in different order:  
 a) 'Qui sommes-nous?...' (TM p.216)  
 b) 'Quelle patience de pierre ponce...' (TM p.213)  
 c) 'Que la vie vous soit belle...' (TM pp.212-213)  
 d) 'As-tu vu là-bas...' (TM pp.213-214)  
 e) 'Un simulacre d'existence...' (TM p.214)  
 f) 'Et si l'homme n'était au bout...' (TM pp.214-215)  
 g) 'Qu'en sera-t-il de nous...' (TM p.215).]
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 a) 'Quand, sous les cintres soubaissés...' (pp.200-201)  
 b) 'Les gradins d'un théâtre fou...' (p.201)  
 c) 'Je naïs, je meurs, je fais mon temps...' (p.202)  
 d) 'Tous ces remous...' (p.203)  
 e) 'Enfutaillé comme un mauvais vin...' (p.204)  
 f) 'Qu'y a-t-il de vrai...' (p.205)  
 g) 'Pour hachurer le jour qui vient...' (pp.205-206)  
 h) 'Les apparences étaient sauvées...' (p.206)  
 i) 'Etais-ce vanité de la parole...' (p.207)  
 j) 'Ce n'est pas le rêve d'un fou...' (pp.207-208)  
 k) 'L'oiseau Ancâ' (pp.217-218)  
 l) 'Cyclades' (p.218)  
 m) 'L'homme froissé' (p.219)  
 n) 'Toi' (p.220).]
21. Fortune-Infortune-Fortune, Lions International, 1981.
22. Commediainte, Anke Kerlo, 1984.
23. Fortune Infortune Fort Une, chez l'auteur, 1984. [An augmented edition, minus the first and last poems, of 21.]
- (ii) Poems published in periodicals, prefaces etc.
24. 'Le bateau dans la bouteille' and 'Mains', Yggdrasil, 32 (25 déc. 1938) p.148. [Repr. of 2 poems in 1.]
25. Untitled poem, 'Mon Dieu, vous m'avez pétri...', Poètes casqués 1939, 1 (déc. 1939) p.20. [Repr. in TM (p.15) with title 'Prière'.]
26. Untitled poem 'Je n'entendrai plus que le langage des monts lointains...', Poètes casqués 1940, 4 (juill.(?) 1940) pp.27-28. [Repr. in 2 (pp.56-57) with title 'Basses-Alpes'.]

27. 'Présences', Poésie 41, 3 (févr.-mars 1941) pp.37-39. [Repr. in TM (pp.15-17).]
28. 'Le Vert-Galant', Poésie 41, 6 (oct.-nov. 1941) pp.47-48. [Repr. in 2 (pp.38-39).]
29. 'Un 28 juillet', Fontaine, 15 (sept. 1941) pp.51-52. [Repr. in 2 (pp.38-39).]
30. 'Sylvie', Pyrénées, 3 (nov.-déc. 1941) p.328. [Repr. in 2 (p.43).]
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 a) 'Les captifs' [repr. in 2 (p.53) with the title 'Prisonniers']  
 b) 'Le Vert-Galant' [see 28].
32. 'Cantique à Milosz', Cahier spécial Milosz, Villeneuve-lès-Avignon: Editions Poésie 42 (1942) pp.39-40.
33. 'Les poèmes de l'été' in Pour les quatre saisons, Villeneuve-lès-Avignon: Editions Poésie 42 (1942) pp.41-60. [Repr. in 4 (pp.11-26); 'Août' repr. in 8 with title 'Août 41'; whole series minus 'Invocation aux planètes' and 'Avenir' repr. in TM (pp.20-25).]
34. 'Octobre', Traits, 3 (janv. 1943) p.3. [Published anonymously. Repr. in 3 (pp.9-10), and in TM (p.19) with title 'Octobre 41'.]
35. Méridien, 6 (mars-avril 1943) p.10. Includes:  
 a) 'Novembre' [repr. in 2 (p.50), and with title 'Novembre 1942' in 8 (pp.23-24) and TM (pp.30-31)]  
 b) 'L'amour' [repr. in 2 (p.28) and TM (p.37)].
36. 'Avec sa vérité', Lettres, 4 (juillet 1943) pp.27-29. [Repr. in 3 (pp.77-78), 8 (pp.38-39) and TM (pp.51-52).]
37. 'Le silence', Lettres, 6 (déc. 1943) p.35. [Repr. in 3 (p.21) and TM (p.28).]
38. 'Au jour le jour', Poésie 43, 2 (févr.-mars 1943) pp.19-23. [Series of 4 poems:  
 a) 'Quarante-trois' [repr. in 8 (pp.24-25) and TM (p.38)]  
 b) 'Le carrousel' [repr. in 3 (pp.37-38) with title 'Le silence des mers, III', and in TM (p.39)]  
 c) 'Le rouet'  
 d) 'Le silence des mers' [repr. in 3 (pp.33-34), in 8 (pp.19-20) and in TM (pp.39-40)].]
39. L'Honneur des poètes, Editions de Minuit, 1943 (pp.18-23). Includes, published under pseudonym Louis Maste:  
 a) 'Octobre' [see 34]  
 b) 'Paris-Pentecôte' [repr. in 3 (pp.15-16)]  
 c) 'Le beau travail' [repr. in 8 (pp.22-23) and TM (p.26)].
40. Domaine français, Genève: Editions des trois collines, 1943 (pp.71-72). Includes:

- a) 'Les ornières du temps' [repr. in 3 (p.41)]
- b) 'Paroles en l'air' [repr. in 8 (pp.9-10) and TM (p.44)].
  
- 41. 'Trois poèmes intérieurs', Traits, 2 (févr. 1944) pp.3-4. [Repr. in reverse order in 3 (pp.67-69) and TM (pp.50-51), in the latter with the title 'D'une poursuite'.]
  
- 42. Europe (2), Editions de Minuit, 1944 (pp.49-50). Includes, published under pseudonym Robert Ruyters:
  - a) '... Du ciel' [repr. in 3 (p.22)]
  - b) 'Fidélité' [repr. in 3 (pp.19-20)].
  
- 43. 'Le système du ciel', Poésie 44, 19 (mai-juin 1944) pp.41-43. [Repr. in 3 (pp.61-63) and 8 (pp.50-52) with title 'Des Dieux', and in TM (pp.55-56).]
  
- 44. 'Le système du ciel', 2<sup>e</sup> cahier de Poésie 44 (n.d.) pp.41-43. [Identical to 43.]
  
- 45. 'Paris se libère', L'Eternelle revue (nouvelle série) 1 (juin 1944) p.3. [Repr. in 3 (pp.25-26).]
  
- 46. La Jeune poésie, II, Cahier Comoedia - Charpentier 13 (mai 1944) pp.45-46. Includes:
  - a) 'Le tien' [repr. in 3 (p.90)]
  - b) 'Sapates' [repr. in 3 (p.64)]
  - c) 'Le temps' [repr. in 3 (pp.54-55)]
  - d) 'Art poétique' [repr. in 3 (pp.52-53)]
  - e) 'Le nègre Bungalow' [repr. in 3 (pp.87-88), 8 (p.13) and TM (pp.54-55)]
  - f) 'Celle que j'ai chantée' [repr. in 3 (pp.75-76)].
  
- 47. 'Paris se libère', Les Lettres françaises, (30 sept.-6 nov. 1944) p.5. [See also 45.]
  
- 48. Four lines of verse (untitled) in L'Homme du commun, Editions Poésie 44 (p.18).
  
- 49. 'Un prisonnier chantait', L'Eternelle revue (nouvelle série) (1 déc. 1944) pp.27-28. [Repr. in 4 (pp.36-38) and TM (pp.59-60).]
  
- 50. 'Allemagne', Les Lettres françaises (10-16 févr. 1944) p.3. [Repr. in 4 (pp.45-46), and TM with title 'Allemagne 1945' (pp.62-63).]
  
- 51. 'Damas', Les Lettres françaises (16-22 juin 1945) p.3. [Repr. in 4 (pp.59-60), and with title 'Le pipe-line de Bassorah' in 8 (pp.25-26) and TM (p.58).]
  
- 52. 'Les possédés', L'Eternelle revue (nouvelle série) 4, (juin(?) 1945) p.21. [Repr. in 4 (pp.48-49) with title 'Allemands beaux enfants'].
  
- 53. 'Allemagne', America, 1 (juillet 1945) p.57. [See also 50.]

54. 'Libération de Paris', Solstice, 1 (automne 1945) pp.5-6. [Repr. in 4 (pp.51-52) and TM (pp.61-62).]
55. Les Poètes de la vie, Corréa, 1945 (pp.137-140). Includes:  
 a) 'Les valeurs' [repr. in 4 (pp.53-54)]  
 b) 'Damas' [see 51]  
 c) 'Allemagne' [see 50 and 53]  
 d) 'Variations sur Hélène'  
 e) 'Tahiti'  
 f) 'L'oiseau-lyre' [repr. in 9 (p.11) and TM (pp.33-34)].
56. 'Octobre' in Nouvelle poésie épique de la France, Singen (Hohentwiel): Haut-Bade, 1946 (pp.24 and 26). [Repr. of 34. Bilingual edition.]  
 b) also Zurich/Genève: Parti du Travail, n.d. (pp.26 and 28). Identical to 56 a.).]
57. 'Iroquoises', Poésie 47, 38 (avril-mai(?) 1947) pp.50-52. [Series of 4 poems, repr. in 8 (pp.35-37), and, minus 'Les pronoms', in both 5 (pp.33-37) and TM (pp.69-70).]
58. 'Les bestiaires, I, II, Les Lettres françaises (27 mai-2 juin 1948) p.3. [I repr. in 5 (p.13), 8 (pp.39-40), Exposition Jean Lurçat, Maison de la pensée française, 1952 (unpaginated) and TM (p.66).]
59. 'Les épouvantails', Les Lettres françaises (29 juillet-4 août 1948) p.3.
60. 'Automne 1947', La Presse à bras, 1948.
61. 'Menaces de mort' in Anthologie de la jeune poésie française, tome second, 1944 (pp.64-66). [Supplement to Septembre. Repr. of 6, and repr. minus 'Arthur, c'était le squelette' in TM (pp.73-74).]
62. 'A mon ami américain', Les Lettres françaises (9-15 mars 1950) p.3.
63. Untitled poem, 'Entre...', in foreword to M. Tavriger, La Légende de St. Germain-des-Prés, La Roulotte, 1950 (unpaginated).
64. 'Un poème pour Véronique', Les Lettres françaises (19-25 oct. 1950) p.5. [Repr. of 'Il y a des tourterelles...', in 7 (pp.7-8).]
65. Untitled fragments in 'Les Gabonnais', Les Lettres françaises (31 mai-6 juin 1951) p.8.
66. Poetry Vol. LXXX, VI (Sept. 1952) pp.322-324. Includes:  
 a) 'Morts dans la vie, les jours qui ne sont plus'. [Also in 8 (p.53) and repr. in TM (p.77).]  
 b) 'L'écho' [also in 8 (p.15).]
67. J. Rousselot, Panorama critique des nouveaux poètes français, Seghers, 1952, 2nd ed. 1953 (pp.321-323). Includes:  
 a) 'Le pipe-line de Bassorah' [see 51]

- b) 'Vagabonds sous le pont des nuits...' [repr. of 7 (p.11) and repr. in 8 (p.62)].
68. Untitled poem, 'La nuit franchit le seuil...', in Exposition Jean Lurçat, Maison de la pensée française, 1952 (unpaginated). [See 58.]
69. 'A ceux qui n'ont rien dit', Les Lettres françaises (31 juill.-6 août 1953) p.2.
70. 'Automne', Les Lettres françaises (8-15 oct. 1953) p.10. [Repr. in 9 (p.21) and TM (p.90).]
71. 'Automne', Imprimerie Union, oct. 1953. [Printed as poème-objet. Poem same as 70.]
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74. Untitled poem, 'La ville n'était pas ruinée...', La Presse à bras, 1954. [Also in 9 (p.23) with title 'Paris', and repr. in TM (p.82).]
75. 'Pusztas', Le Point XLVIII (juin 1954) p.24. [Repr. in 9 (p.22) and TM (p.88).]
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 b) 'Ce qui passait en nous' [repr. in 10 and TM (p.103)]  
 c) 'A l'école' [same poem as 78]  
 d) 'L'amour vient de si loin'  
 e) 'Poète' [repr. of 8 (pp.46-47) and in TM (pp.76-77)].
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83. Untitled poem, 'Avec l'eau vive des ruisseaux...', in preface to Exposition Richard de Bas, Bruxelles, 1958. [Catalogue, Bibliothèque Royale.]
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 b) 'Si je m'endormais au cœur du Rien' [extract of 11, repr. in TM (p.101).]
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91. 'Pour une île', La Revue des deux mondes (août 1971) pp.319-321. [4 poems repr. in 16, and in TM:  
 a) 'Entêté devant les énigmes...' (p.195)  
 b) 'J'ai vu les yeux des caïmans...' (p.192)  
 c) 'Rien que l'éclair...' (p.190)  
 d) 'Pour un excès d'éclat...' (p.192).]
92. 'Pour F. Halas', Les Lettres françaises (17-23 nov.1971) p.8. [Repr. in 16 (p.91) and in TM (pp.80-81) with title 'A Frantisek Halas'.]
93. 'Dis-moi, ma vie', Sud, 5-6 (nov.-déc.(?) 1971) pp.110-112. [3 poems repr. in 16, and in TM:  
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 b) 'Qui de nous deux fut le piégé?...' (p.180)  
 c) 'Du labyrinthe, j'ai fait mon chemin...' (p.194).]
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98. 2 untitled poems, Le Puits de l'ermite, 21-22 (1973) pp.12-13:  
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99. 'Au seuil de l'oubli', La Revue des deux mondes, 7 (juillet 1973) pp.51-53. [Series of 7 poems:  
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 b) 'Ailleurs. Sur les travées imaginaires...' [repr. in 17 and TM (p.200)]  
 c) 'Pour des oboles de silence...' [repr. in 17 and TM (p.201)]  
 d) 'Etais-ce vanité de la parole...' [repr. in TM (p.207)]  
 e) 'Les gradins d'un théâtre fou...' [repr. in TM (p.201)]  
 f) 'Nous vivons les moments...' [repr. in 17 and TM (p.205)]  
 g) 'Quand les constellations s'éteignent...' [repr. in 17 and TM (p.203).]
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105. 'Joe Downing' in Joe Downing, 1979(?) (unpaginated). [Catalogue of exhibition, Galerie Bellint.]
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107. 'Sans bruit j'avance', Poètes du Monde, 1 (oct. 1979) p.29. [Repr. in 21 (p.2) and 23 (p.17).]
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109. 'D'une prison' in La Liberté en poésie, Gallimard, 1979, Coll. Folio Junior (p.20). [Repr. of 2 (p.45) and TM (pp.36-37).]
110. 'Celui-là dit' in Instruments étranges, Stockholm: A.H. Grafik, 1980 (p.67). [Repr. in 21 (p.11) and 23 (p.71).]
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112. 'Paris-Pentecôte' in Paris en poésie, Gallimard, 1981, Coll. Folio Junior (p.141). [See 39 b.)]
113. 'La torche', Sud, 39-40 (mai(?) 1981) p.285. [Repr. of poem in 15, and in TM (p.167).]
114. 'Poème à Bahia' in C. Seghers, Pierre Seghers: Un Homme couvert de noms, Robert Laffont, 1981, pp.86-87. [Repr. of untraced poème-objet.]
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 b) 'Où allons-nous dans ce silence...', [repr. in 23 (p.19)].
116. Poem from 13, 'Quels fourmis infatigables', in Poésie française (Anthologie critique), Bordas, 1982 (p.459).
117. Créer, 47 (mai-juillet 1982). [Includes poems from 3, 9, TM (p.216), 13, 16, 21 and 23.]
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 a) 'J'ai pris mon billet pour l'éternité...'  
 b) 'Dans les ornières de l'obscur...' [repr. in 23 (p.59)]  
 c) 'La poésie, ce sont paroles d'envoûtés...' [repr. in 23 (p.61)].
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 b) 'Août 41' [see 33]  
 c) 'D'une prison' [see 109]  
 d) 'Automne' [repr. of 3 (pp.65-66)]  
 e) 'Paroles en l'air' [see 40 b)]  
 f) 'Poète' [repr. of 3 (p.81)]  
 g) 'Libération de Paris' [see 54]  
 h) 'La vérité' [repr. of 3 (pp.29-30)].
120. Poem from 12 in La Campagne en poésie, Gallimard, 1982, Coll. Folio Junior (p.141). ['Pour l'aubépine...' repr. in TM (p.108).]
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122. Untitled poem, 'Je ne suis que le satellite...', Phréatique, 32 (printemps 1985) p.89. [See 115 a.).]

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125. Fragment, 'Aime la vie, aime ta vie...', ibid., on back cover.
126. Untitled poem, 'Le soleil ne décline pas...', Poésie 88, 21 (janv.-févr. 1988) p.6.
127. Untitled poem, 'Dans le retrait du cœur distant...', ibid., p.47.
128. 'Trois poèmes pour Fina Gomez Revenga', ibid., pp.48-49.
129. 'Un corps évidé qui flamboie', Poésie 88, 23 (mai-juin 1988) p.78.  
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b) 'Si mon cœur de noir est vêtu...' [repr. in 133 (p.71) with title  
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133. Nouvelles chansons et complaintes, 2 vols (I Paroles, II Musiques), Seghers, 1964.
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(i) Poems

Laurent Terzieff (Adès P. 37 A. 10 001)  
 Jacques Doyen (Orphée-Pacific 150 048 B1)  
 Jean Négroni (Chant du Monde, LDX S 6027)  
 Nicole Louvier (SM 45 72)  
Poèmes (dits par l'auteur), Coll. Vox poetica, Monteiro  
La Résistance, ses chants et ses poètes (Adès)

(ii) Songs

Jacques Douai chante Seghers (BAM EX 235)  
 Marc Ogeret chante Seghers (Orphée-Pacific 150 024)  
Aimé Doniat chante Seghers (Véga 2016)  
 Jean Borredon: Petite musique à la guitare pour six chansons de Pierre Seghers (Pathé EG. 148)  
Marie-Claire Pichaud chante Seghers (S.M. 45-72)  
Béatrice Arnac chante Seghers (Orphée-Pacific 155 055 B)  
Serge Kerval chante Pierre Seghers (1973) (disque SFP no. 14 008)  
 Léo Ferré: 'Merde à Vauban' (Barclay 80 133)  
 Marc Ogeret: 'Merde à Vauban' (Orphée-Pacific 150 008)  
 Francesca Solleville: 'Merde à Vauban' (BAM EX 274)  
 Jacques Douai: 'L'Amour sans amour' (BAM LD 370)  
     : 'La Rivière de ton dos' (BAM LD 370)  
     : 'Les Douces Douleurs' (BAM LD 354)  
 Hélène Martin: 'Chanson à tuer le temps' (BAM LD 391)  
 Simone Bartel: 'Les Voyageurs' (BAM 260)  
 Germaine Montero: 'Chanson des Beaux Enfants' (Pathé AT 1090 M)  
 Les Trois Ménestrels: 'Des filles, il en pleut' (Fontana 660 220)  
 Aimé Doniat: 'Des filles, il en pleut' (Vega 2016)  
 Pia Colombo: 'Les Beaux Amoureux' (Festival FLD 334)  
 Marc Ogeret: 'Les Beaux Amoureux' (Orphée-Pacific 21 060)  
 Michèle Arnaud: 'Les Beaux Amoureux' (Pathé EG. 635)  
 Catherine Sauvage: 'Adios Amigos' (Philips 77892)  
 Marc Ogeret: 'Noel des Ardents' (Orphée-Pacific 150 051)  
     : 'Les Gisants' (Orphée-Pacific 150 024)  
 Aimé Doniat: 'Les Gisants' (Véga 2016)  
 Béatrice Arnac: 'La Rue Saint-Jean' (Orphée-Pacific 150 009)  
 Simone Bartel: 'La Rue Saint-Jean' (BAM EX 282)  
 Michèle Arnaud: 'Le Coeur félon' (Pathé 45 EG. 635)  
 Marcel Rothel: 'Le Coeur félon' (Pathé EGF. 857)  
 Hélène Martin: 'Bel-Abbès' (Adès 591)  
     : 'L'Auberge Toi et Moi' (Adès 591)  
 James Olivier: 'Poil du Chien, Poil du Chat' (Bel-Air 11 054)  
 Jacques Douai: 'L'Amour nous a quittés (BAM Fine Fleur no.3)  
 Marie-Claire Pichaud: 'Revenant, fou de guitare' (BAM LD 417)  
 Marc Ogeret: 'L'Amour-Amour' (Pacific LDO B 21 060)  
     : 'Un nouvel amour' (Pacific LDO 21 076 B)  
 Monique Morelli: 'Rives défendues' (Arion 30 T 075)  
     : 'Les Amours légendaires' (Arion 30 T 075)  
 Béatrice Arnac: 'Sans amour' (Vogue CLVLX 360)  
 Juliette Gréco: 'La Panthère' (Philips 849 457 BY)  
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149. La France à livre ouvert, Seghers, 1965.
150. Le Livre d'or de la poésie française contemporaine, 2 vols, Verviers: Nouvelles Editions Marabout, 1969, Coll. Marabout Université.
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182. Foreword in 67, pp.7-10. [Both editions.]
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199. Preliminary text in 163, pp.7-8.
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213. Introduction in 169, pp.7-44.
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216. Preface in J.-M. Drot, L'Enfant fusillé, Stock, 1979, pp.11-17. [See 106.]
217. Preface in P. Fanlac, Ferveur du Périgord, Pierre Fanlac, 1979. [Unpaginated.]
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