

SIGHT TO THE BLIND IN THE AGE OF ANXIETY? A STUDY OF NARRATIVE FORM IN THE
NOVELS OF PAUL GADENNE

by

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ABSTRACT

Paul Gadenne, long considered a literary outsider, has received limited critical attention until recently. This close reading of his novels foregrounds their interaction with foundational mythic and Biblical narratives. Informed, in particular, by the thinking of Vladimir Propp and Paul Ricœur, it analyses characterization, the depiction of space and the evocation of the experience of time. It argues that these narratives provide not only a thematic and ideological background to the works, but also their structure and dynamic. An examination of the extent to which his writing is determined by these hypotexts shows an evolution in technique, towards a more challenging relation to his sources. Greater demands are placed upon the reader, in a move from didacticism towards creative ambiguity. Several of his novels undermine the status of the narrator and employ disturbing shifts in chronology, demonstrating Gadenne's awareness of literary developments at the dawn of *le nouveau roman*. While acknowledging these links to his contemporaries, this study sees him as a Christian metaphysical novelist, a fellow traveller with Mauriac, Bernanos and Green, who integrates an understanding of Kafka and Kierkegaard into a distinctive vision of man, caught between the anguish of exile and the hope of divine Grace.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife Christine, who translated sections of Adelheid Wiehe-Deitz's book for me, and to the rest of my family and friends. Their continuing interest in my research was both a surprise and a delight to me.

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INTRODUCTION

In a tribute paid to him on his death by the critic Marcel Arland, Gadenne's work was described as 'l'une des plus solitaires qui se soient formées depuis vingt ans, et l'une des plus originales' (1956, p.1118). My aim is to examine the validity of this assessment. While not wishing to diminish Gadenne's originality, I will explore to what extent and in what ways his work engages with the thinking of his contemporaries on the practice and purpose of the novel. Furthermore, rather than seeing Gadenne as in some way a marginal figure, I will suggest that he was acutely aware of literary traditions, as well as of the writing of his day. It is hard to imagine a novelist with a more extensive literary culture. His studies at the Sorbonne, of which we get a fictional echo in the student life of Simon Delambre, the protagonist of *Siloé*, gave him grounding in classical philosophy and literature. He had gained a deep Biblical knowledge from his strict Catholic education. Always a voracious reader, his diaries list the many works he read, drawn from the literatures of France, Germany, Italy, Russia, America and Britain. These were backed up with copied passages, notes and published articles. Indeed I will argue that one of the specific and original features of his writing is the way in which he reworks ancient and more recent narratives in order to express and to challenge the concerns of his day.

When one considers the details of his life, it is indeed tempting to characterize him as 'solitaire'. His life was marked by illness. In March 1933, six months from the start of his teaching career, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and was dispatched to the Praz-Coutant sanatorium in Haute-Savoie. He spent two years there and returned to work, apparently cured. A relapse a year and a half later necessitated a further stay at Praz-Coutant. The

disease affected a kidney and he underwent an operation to remove it. Apart from a brief period working for *télé-enseignement*, he was unable to take up paid employment again and survived on the income from his writing and sporadic sickness benefits. In May 1940 he settled in Bayonne, moving eleven years later to Cambo-les-Bains, where the climate was supposedly better for his health. Throughout this period he lived in miserable accommodation, suffering from the cold and lack of space to write. Gadenne's diaries indicate that the living conditions of Didier, the central character of *Les Hauts-Quartiers*, were very much his own. For most of his life then, Gadenne was in a sense exiled from Paris to the provinces, at a time when, for a writer, being 'absent de Paris' was indeed akin to death. Tuberculosis finally claimed his life on May 1st 1956 at the age of 49 (Sarrou, 2003, pp.129-156).

Despite this apparent isolation, he had important literary friendships and supporters, particularly Raymond Guérin and Albert Béguin. Béguin esteemed him highly, considering him 'un romancier comme on en compte un ou deux dans une génération' (1956, p.987). He published six novels in his lifetime through the Gallimard and Julliard publishing houses, with his final novel *Les Hauts-Quartiers* appearing posthumously in 1973. Literary reviews regularly featured short stories and extracts of his works and, according to Bruno Curatolo (2000, p.20), he attracted the attention of the most notable critics of the day.

His first novel *Siloé* was published in 1941, with a print run of 25,000 copies, and was widely tipped as one of the frontrunners for the Prix Goncourt; though *Le Monde* considered the field to be a rather poor one in 1941/2. Despite the success of this work, Gadenne spent a considerable time reassessing his narrative technique, in the light of criticism by some of his

readers and his own dissatisfaction with what he considered to be misinterpretations of it. He next published in 1947 with *Le Vent noir*, followed in successive years by *La Rue profonde* and *L'Avenue*. These three novels are very different from each other in terms of structure, technique and tonality. Their disparities are even more remarkable given that he worked on all three over the same period. As Gadenne wrote in his diaries, 'Il y a un Protée en chacun de nous. Pourquoi serions-nous condamnés à une formule?' (Sarrou, 1999, p.56) His subsequent novel, *La Plage de Scheveningen*, shared the first Prix de la Fondation Del Duca, awarded in 1952; and this despite Gadenne's pessimistic remark in his diary, 'Il faut peut-être se persuader que les temps accordés à la littérature pure sont finis, qu'un livre comme *La Plage* ne peut que me faire des ennemis de tous côtés' (Sarrou, 2003, p.149). The last novel published during Gadenne's lifetime was *L'Invitation chez les Stirl* in 1955. Unusually, it was written in a relatively short period of time. His other novels had gestation periods of several years and existed in different versions before they finally appeared.

After his death, interest in Gadenne's work waned and his wife Yvonne had difficulty securing publication of the final novel in a form which she felt was true to his intentions. The reasons for this are complex but, in broad terms, Gadenne was a proponent of an aesthetic which, by the late 1950s, had become unfashionable. This perhaps explains the relative lack of critical attention devoted to his work. The posthumous publication of *Les Hauts-Quartiers* in 1973, however, triggered a flurry of articles leading to the first substantial assessment of his writing, by an American, James Bolton Davis. His study, *La quête de Paul Gadenne: une morale pour notre époque*, appeared in 1979 and, as its title suggests, seeks to derive a moral code from the novels. While Davis makes some useful observations, his approach does not, in my view, do justice to the complexity and ambiguity of Gadenne's thought. Later

scholars owe a debt to Didier Sarrou, who helped to foster interest in Gadenne in France during the last quarter of the twentieth century. He secured republication of some of Gadenne's articles, together with selections from his diaries. There is no complete biography of Gadenne, but Sarrou's book *Paul Gadenne* contains a useful chronology of the major events of his life (2003, pp.109-156). Sarrou's own essays on Gadenne rely mainly on an archival and biographical approach. Towards the end of the century, Gadenne's work began to attract wider attention from European academics, as evidenced by *Die Stimme der Stille* (1995) by Adelheid Wiehe-Deitz and *Spazio e Immaginario in Paul Gadenne* (1999) by Daniela Fabiani. The first full-length book on Gadenne in France was published in 2000; Bruno Curatolo's *Paul Gadenne: L'écriture et les signes*. It arose out of his interest in restoring the reputations of forgotten twentieth century French writers. The most recent French publication on Gadenne, Marie-Hélène Gauthier's 2010 study *La Poétique: Paul Gadenne, Henri Thomas, Georges Perros*, focusses on the influence of classical philosophy on Gadenne's thought and contains a particularly perceptive reading of his first novel, *Siloé*. I have traced four doctoral theses in French universities devoted to Paul Gadenne, but the only one to which I have been able to gain access is Sophie Balso's *Pensée et écriture romanesque dans l'œuvre de Paul Gadenne* (2007). I have not discovered any academic writing on Gadenne emanating from British universities. I will refer to all the studies mentioned above at various stages in my dissertation. None of these, however, deals fully with the central importance of myth in Gadenne's novels and its effect upon their structure and form. This will form the core of my argument.

Furthermore, Gadenne himself could justifiably have claimed to be a literary critic of some significance. He thought deeply about the nature of the novelist's craft and the purpose of

the novel in the twentieth century, publishing a number of articles on the subject. His views are also evident in his assessments of the work of his contemporaries. This critical writing has been collected and edited by Didier Sarrou in three slim volumes: *A propos du Roman* (1983), *Le Romancier congédié* (1999) and *Une Grandeur impossible* (2004).

For Gadenne writing a novel is an undertaking of the utmost seriousness. The novelist is not playing a game of elegant detachment. The creative process is not 'une activité comme une autre, seulement plus amusante, un moyen particulièrement efficace d'attirer l'attention, de faire parler de soi...' (1983, p.13). Nor is it a question of finding a suitable subject out there in the world. The subject of a novel is a matter of deep sincerity, arising from within. He recalls approvingly Nietzsche's remark: 'Je n'aime que ce que l'on écrit avec son sang' (1983, p.7).

Writing is a superhuman undertaking, which Gadenne, who had read Melville, likens to whale hunting. It is costly too; writing is a trial of strength which kills many an author: 'Ce n'est pas peut-être pas un hasard si Balzac meurt à cinquante ans, si Stendhal tombe dans la rue pour ne plus se relever' (1983, p.129). To which Gadenne adds waspishly, 'On n'a pas encore vu un lecteur mourir après avoir lu un livre. Je ne veux pas d'autre preuve de notre manque d'imagination' (1983, p.130).

Gadenne was of course aware of the danger of writing from the heart, even when making a diary note: 'Pourquoi écrit-on? Pour se lire' (Sarrou, 1999, p.77). His diaries provide ample evidence of his introspective nature, but he was always clear that such a tendency must be balanced by curiosity about others and that writing was a fraternal act: 'Le roman répond à cette curiosité de l'homme pour l'homme qui peut aller, comme lui, des formes les plus vulgaires aux formes les plus hautes; besoin d'indiscrétion, mais aussi besoin de

connaissance' (1983, p.125). This knowledge of others gained by the proper exercise of curiosity was not on the level of their social function or psychological make-up however. Such areas of enquiry could no longer for Gadenne be the stuff of a modern novel. He went so far as to accuse some French writers of lack of scope and ambition in their work:

Nos romanciers, même dans leurs moments de hardiesse, restent plus volontiers sur terre : leur observation se contente facilement d'un champ plus étroit. Le naturalisme a chez nous trop longtemps confiné l'esprit entre des limites étouffantes, et l'imagination métaphysique paraît suspecte en France (1983, p.41).

It is then, for him, in the domain of the metaphysical that the true interest of the novel lies.

It should awaken the conscience, that part of the imagination 'qui nous permet non seulement de pénétrer dans l'humanité d'autrui, mais de nous associer à l'univers, de concevoir Dieu' (1983, p.40).

Gadenne, writing before the war, spoke of 'Le besoin métaphysique, besoin primitif, enraciné dans l'homme, impossible à extirper' (1983, p.12). This need is seen as a response to anxiety, which is an inescapable part of the human condition. Indeed this *inquiétude* is in some ways desirable, as it acts as a spur to our search. In an article entitled 'La Littérature devant le bourreau', written in 1946, he suggests that man's need of the metaphysical is only heightened by the events the world has experienced: 'Car s'il est vrai que la vie de chacun s'écoule pareillement devant le bourreau, le condamné – celui que nous sommes tous – n'a besoin de savoir qu'une chose: c'est qu'il a vécu dans la vérité' (1983, p.80). The focus of the novel is, then, the destiny of the individual, but its ambition is boundless. 'Le domaine du Roman c'est le concret: c'est le reflet du monde dans chaque être, c'est aussi le reflet de chaque instant, c'est l'histoire de l'univers telle que chaque être la vit' (Sarrou, 1999, p.54). The sensory experience of the world of each person, and the way they reflect

upon it, form only one level to be found in Gadenne's writing. Everything can be read as an allusion to something beyond. 'Rien n'est fini, nous vivons dans un monde à double sens...' (1983, p.15). Or again, 'Le roman est un genre où les paroles ont un sens ailleurs' (Sarrou, 1999, p.77).

Towards the end of his life Gadenne was conscious that the conception of the novel dear to him was under threat and that it was undergoing one of its periodic moments of crisis. On one level he saw this as a crisis of language itself, which had been devalued in the face of the horrors of war. 'Toute une partie de la langue est alors sans valeur, comme une fausse monnaie que l'on n'admettrait plus à circuler' (1983, p.75). In the face of this, writers were questioning their powers. In his view, they felt guilty at working in a world turned upside down, in which events seemed to move faster than the speed of thought. He saw two possible reactions to this, both of which he abhorred. Firstly a documentary approach in which events would be reported without comment and the human element would be displaced. Secondly, he felt there was risk of writers giving way to futility and that, being convinced of the absurdity of the universe, 'on ne s'attache au contraire qu' à la forme' (Sarrou, 1999, p.61). Gadenne's review of *Molloy* summed up his own rejection of the bleak vision put forward by Samuel Beckett. He could not accept 'la résignation incompréhensible des personnages à cet univers aveugle et sourd' (Gadenne and Sarrou, 2004, p.93). The concentration on form and style was considered at the very least an example of *divertissement*, at worst an abdication of the writer's responsibilities to humanity. The reader too was guilty if taken in by the externals of style. Quoting Malebranche (from *La Recherche de la vérité*), he remarked, 'les divers styles ne nous plaisent ordinairement qu'à cause de la corruption secrète de notre cœur' (1983, p.103).

In his comments on the writing of the post-war period, Gadenne does not make reference to the concept of *littérature engagée*, as developed by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Les Temps modernes*. It is clear that he did not share the political views of most of the contributors and it is only in his final novel, *Les Hauts-Quartiers*, that he deals with contemporary social problems. While his criticism in it of exploitation may suggest a socialist view of social stratification, the novel makes it clear that the cause of this pernicious evil lies in the fallen nature of man, rather than merely in inequalities of wealth and power. Despite the distance separating him from the writers of *Les Temps modernes*, the theoretical essays quoted above suggest that he nonetheless shared their belief in the responsibilities of the writer and in the potential efficacy of literature to bring about change.

Notwithstanding his concerns about modern trends in the novel, Gadenne remained optimistic about its survival. He wrote that he could not imagine a time, or any political regime 'où l'homme renonce à ces grandes images de lui-même pour traduire son angoisse, sa vision et, espérons-le, sa joie, à ces grandes mythologies qui satisfont son éternel besoin de magnifier ou de condamner son destin' (Sarrou, 1999, p.64). This quotation has particular significance for my study of Gadenne's novels in that it links novels and mythologies as dual aspects of narratives which serve to raise human experience to the level of destiny. He also uses the word 'traduire', in his theoretical writing, in a particular way. We are not talking about stories which merely express human hopes and fears, but which have the power to change them from one state to another, in the context of the 'metaphysical realism' (Coupe, 2009, p.89) implicit in Gadenne's view of the world. Laurence Coupe defines this as the belief in which 'reality is thought to culminate in an ultimate and absolute essence, towards

which the human soul seeks to ascend' (2009, p.89). As we will see later, Gadenne makes frequent use of metaphors of ascent in order to suggest this idea.

Given the importance of the concept of myth in this study of the novels, I need to define how the term may be understood and explain why this particular view of it is appropriate to a consideration of Gadenne's work. In popular usage, myth is defined in relation to what it is not. As Jean-Pierre Vernant explains, such a practice goes back to ancient Greece,

to a tradition of thought peculiar to Western civilisation in which myth is defined in terms of what is not myth, being opposed to reality (myth is fiction) and, secondly, to what is rational (myth is absurd) (1982, p.186).

This is not the way I will use the term, though its relation to reason will be of significance.

Nor should Gadenne's use of 'mythologies', quoted above, be linked to Roland Barthes' 1957 use of it in the sense of ideologies, serving in some way to deceive. For me the most productive approach to myth, as it is used by Gadenne, is developed in the work of Paul Ricœur; a contemporary of Gadenne. According to Andrew von Hendy, his understanding of symbol and myth is unmistakably transcendentalist, springing from a Christian existentialist view (2001, pp.307-308). For Paul Ricœur, myth is not

a false explanation by means of images and fables, but a traditional narration which relates to events which happened at the beginning of time and which has the purpose of providing grounds for the ritual actions of men of today and... establishing all the forms of action and thought by which man understands himself in his world (Ricœur and Buchanan, 1969, p.5).

This idea of myth as narration linking past and present and providing a basis for the way characters see themselves is a productive one. For Ricœur, myths have both a synchronic and diachronic dimension:

On the one hand, they constitute a certain system of simultaneous symbols which can be approached through structuralist analysis; but, on the other hand, they have a history, because it is always through a process of interpretation and reinterpretation that they are kept alive (Ricœur and Valdés, 1991, p.484).

My analysis of mythic narrative in Gadener will indeed owe something to structuralism but Ricœur's reference to the vitality of myth, sustained by telling and retelling, is also key to my argument.

Further on in the interview just quoted, Ricœur makes an interesting reference to Karl Jasper's philosophy of boundary situations. He suggests that, in the face of suffering and war, individuals, or a whole society, may undergo an existential crisis. 'For it is only when it is threatened with destruction from without or within that a society is compelled to return to the very roots of its identity; to that mythical nucleus which ultimately grounds and determines it' (1991, p.484). It is interesting to speculate whether the ways in which Gadener refers to France's experience of the war owes something to myth's ability to situate individual pain and loss in a universal narrative. This aspect will be explored in Chapter 4.

Von Hendy sums up Ricœur's thinking on the function of myth in this way:

1. By means of a time that represents all times, man is manifested as a concrete universal.
2. It sets the archetypal man in a movement which confers upon this experience an orientation, a character, a tension.
3. It deals with the discordance between his ontological status as being created good ... and his existential status experienced under alienation (2001, p.311).

This notion of movement and tension is much exploited in Gadener's work. In *The Symbolism of Evil*, Ricœur concentrates in particular on the Christian narrative of the Fall and 'the myth of the exiled soul which is attached to it as a curse' (1969, p.331). It is this which

creates the particular dynamic evident in the novels and, 'thanks to the myth, experience is traversed by the essential history of the perdition and salvation of man' (1969, p.163).

Given the unmistakably Christian background to most of his novels, it is perhaps timely to consider briefly how this apparent 'solitaire' might fit into the literary landscape of the mid twentieth century, if only to provide some benchmarks against which his work may be assessed. Could he, for example, be compared with the major figures of the French Catholic novel? Bruno Curatolo states unequivocally that Gadenne was a believer whose 'éthique de la littérature était fondée sur la foi chrétienne' (2000, p.10). Determining the extent to which Gadenne himself was a Catholic lies outside the scope of my study, but based on the published diaries, which speak above all of the struggle for faith, I would suggest a more nuanced assessment. Nonetheless, I agree entirely with Curatolo that his novels, in all their complexity, contradictions and ambiguity need to be understood in the context of an aesthetic which admits the possibility of religious faith.

Even though Paul Gadenne is not mentioned in any account of the French Catholic novel that I have encountered so far, a useful starting point might be Malcolm Scott's analysis of the relationship between Realism and the Catholic novel in 19th and 20th centuries. He explores 'the tension between Realism's reliance on the seen, and the unseen dimension upon which revealed religion depends' (1990, p.2). He sets out to show how 'Realism and the Catholic novel, hitherto discussed as two separate subjects ... are in fact the two sides of one single, even broader subject; the struggle between two opposing visions of the real, expressed in and through the novel form' (1990, p.5). Scott's explanation of the 'defensive scepticism' of Realist and Naturalist novels with regard to religion is persuasive, but it is more difficult to

follow him completely when he suggests that, 'despite Proust and Gide and all the twentieth century metamorphoses of the genre, the basically mimetic aesthetic of Realism, its dependence on the seen or on what can be imagined on the basis of the seen, remained the dominant mode of the novel' (1990, p.51). Gadenne does indeed set himself in opposition to Naturalism's straightjacket, as is clear from my earlier reference, and he goes on to say, '*Rien que la Terre*: ce titre d'un roman connu semble, pour la plupart des romanciers, avoir une valeur de programme' (1983, p.41). In a way though, he knew that that particular battle had already been won, as evidenced by the writing of three novelists whose work he knew well – Dostoevsky, Proust and Kafka.

Michel Raimond uses Nathalie Sarraute's term 'l'ère du soupçon' to describe this period when the novel's claim to truth was shaken. 'On ne croit plus qu'à ce qu'on perçoit, qu'à ce qui est ressenti dans l'immédiateté de la conscience' (2011, p.92). The world and human activity within it were no longer the centre of attention. It was the images awakened in the mind by contact with the real. Daniela Fabiani, who has written extensively on Gadenne, characterizes this period as one in which there is 'a growing realization of a fracture between man and the world and the consequent reorganization of narrative elements to express it' (1998, p.201).

Despite some reservations about the way Scott seems to minimise the impact of Gide and Proust on the French novel of the first part of the twentieth century, he does suggest a number of features in the writing of his Catholic novelists which are germane to my study of form in Gadenne's work: namely the treatment of the evidence of the senses, 'l'échelle des réalités' (1990, p.209), as found in Julien Green, and the use of symbols and the *fantastique*.

All these will contribute to my analysis. Finally, though, I return to what Fabiani calls the poetics of crisis, 'which uses myths and symbols to re-propose the image of a character lost in the often painful labyrinth of existence' (1998, p.201).

In my close reading of the texts, I shall argue that myth and Biblical narrative are not merely the ideological background to Gadenne's novels. They determine the form of the works themselves. The title of this dissertation, *Sight to the blind in the age of anxiety?*, makes direct reference to the plot of *Siloé*, but also alludes to the dialectic of brokenness and wholeness evident in all the novels. Furthermore, it suggests a tension between the desire to pass on a transforming message of hope and an individual experience of periods of anguish and solitude. I intend to demonstrate that these conflicts are exemplified not only in terms of ideas, but also on the level of narrative form. I hope to show that Gadenne's work reveals an evolution from a monologic narrative stance, determined by external hypotexts, to a more dialogic approach allowing plural readings. It is in the light of these opening remarks that three key areas of literary organization: characterization, the treatment of space and time will now be considered in detail.

CHARACTERIZATION

I intend to examine characterization in Gadenne's novels in the light of his use of myth and foundational Christian narrative, as understood by Ricœur, in order to assess to what extent it is dominated by these intertexts. If there is a high degree of determination by external sources, the works may conform to the patterns of *romans à these*. Given a lesser degree of determination, a more experiential approach to the building up of character, more in keeping with the norms of mid-twentieth century aesthetics, may be evident. How do these novels sit in relation to these possibilities? Additionally, this study will aim to show whether there is continuity of inspiration and technique across the seven novels, or whether a development may be perceived.

My starting point will be a functional analysis of the characters, along lines suggested by Vladimir Propp in *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968). A similar approach has been adopted, particularly in respect of the female characters, by modern critics of Gadenne, such as Adelheid Wiehe-Deitz in *Die Stimme der Stille* (1995) and Sophie Balso in *Pensée et écriture romanesque dans l'œuvre de Paul Gadenne* (2007). Reference will also be made to *Authoritarian fictions* by Susan Suleiman (1983). I will begin with a detailed survey of *Siloé* because, of all the novels, the mythic context is most evident here. Thereafter a more thematic approach to character will be followed to encompass all the works. I will then analyse how a sense of character is built up, using some of the categories outlined by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in *Narrative fiction: contemporary poetics* (1983) and Michel Raimond's *Le Roman* (2011) in order to place Gadenne in relation to his contemporaries.

In Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (Propp et al., 1968), the author develops a functional analysis of a collection of Russian fairy tales 'according to the functions of their dramatis personae' (p.20). He recognized that, while the number of individual characters in his corpus was extremely large, the number of functions, 'understood as an act of a character defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action' (p.21), was small. He admitted too that 'the repetition of functions has long been observed in myths and beliefs by historians of religions' (p.21). It is this insight which led him to develop his approach to the folktale and suggests its possible application to Gadenne's novels, if they are indeed strongly influenced by mythic and Biblical sources and thus conform to their patterns.

Some of the key functions defined by Propp were the hero, either 'a seeker' or a 'victimized hero' such as a seized or banished boy or girl (p.36), the villain, 'a disturber of peace, cause of some form of misfortune, damage or harm', and the donor, 'a magical agent or helper' (p.27). These functions were not only carried out by characters, but also by objects. A typical pattern of a tale might involve the departure of the hero from home or a place of safety on a quest. The villain, or series of villains, would attempt to thwart his efforts, whereas donors would give him the means of overcoming the obstacles placed in his path. At the conclusion of the quest the hero would return home, his enemies having been vanquished, and a new order of peace and harmony would be established. Propp suggested that while the main functions were always present in a tale, the overall pattern rarely was. If there is a similarity in structure between Biblical and mythic narrative and the folktale, can a similar pattern be discerned in any of Gadenne's works?

Siloé, Gadenne's first novel, is particularly marked by references to two hypotexts, to adopt the terminology of Gérard Genette (Allen, 2000, p.101), which act as major sources of its significance. The title alludes to the pool where Jesus restored the sight of the man born blind, according to the account in St John's Gospel (9:1-12). In the miracle narrative, Jesus makes a paste of spittle and dust from the ground, anoints the man's eyes and sends him to wash in the pool, whose name means 'Sent'. His sight is restored and, when his neighbours inquire how this came about, he replies, 'I went and washed, and I received sight' (9:12). The Vulgate version of this line, 'Et abii, et lavi, et video', serves as the epigraph to Gadenne's novel. In the Bible, the significance of the story rests upon the notion of cleansing from sin, but also suggests rebirth or re-creation. Just as Adam was created from dust and the essence of God, so, under the new covenant, Jesus has the power to create a new humanity, once again united with the divine.

The second hypotext is drawn from Greek mythology and uses elements of the story of Theseus' escape from the Labyrinth. The Minotaur, fruit of the union between Pasiphaë and a bull sent by Poseidon, was confined in this maze and periodically devoured a tribute exacted by King Minos of seven young Athenian men and seven maidens. Theseus undertook to kill the Minotaur and travelled to Crete, where Minos' daughter Ariadne fell in love with him. She helped him navigate the Labyrinth and gave him a thread, allowing him to retrace his steps and escape. He slew the creature and sailed off with Ariadne, though he later deserted her on the island of Naxos.

As we shall see, Gadenne makes skilful use of the poetic resonance of these two mythic narratives and the dynamic they imply, in his retelling of the stories, but it is the way they

shape individual characterization and the relationship between characters that is primary here.

Simon Delambre, the central character in *Silvoé*, is a young student at the Sorbonne, of whom great things are expected. His penetrating explanation of the classical texts has won him the admiration of his fellow students and the approbation of his tutors. Despite this success, he is dimly aware of the vanity of his studies. He is dissatisfied too with his relations with his family, whose values are determined by hard work and the pursuit of material comfort. For him, they are blind to the higher callings of art and music. In his frequent arguments with them,

... il semblait garder un secret espoir, visible mais têtu, de convertir sa famille à ses principes, de dessiller les yeux, de les rajeunir. Il lui semblait qu'on souffrait autour de lui d'une maladie pour laquelle une opération était possible (1974, p.31).

As he soon discovers, he is the one who is ill and a diagnosis of tuberculosis from Dr. Lazare, whose name suggests the possibility of a rebirth to new life, condemns him to a stay in a sanatorium at le Crêt d'Armenaz.

Placed under the care of sœur Saint-Hilaire, whose taciturn severity belies the word play on her name, he must come to terms with the fact that 'l'apprentissage de la maladie était celui de l'impuissance et de la servitude' (p.96). Subject to a routine of temperature-taking, weighing and complete inactivity, he is confined to his room, unable to meet other patients. Late one afternoon he believes he hears a voice outside his room and goes to investigate.

There is no sign of anyone, he wanders and almost immediately loses his bearings:

Que faisait-il là ? A quel vertige imbécile avait-il cédé ? Le long du mur les portes se succédaient, à intervalles égaux, closes, silencieuses, surmontées de leurs numéros... Il ne s'y retrouvait plus ; il ne percevait plus aucun bruit... Il se remit à marcher,

trouva un nouvel escalier plus étroit que le précédent mais qui aboutissait à un couloir tout pareil (p.108).

He soon realizes that not only is he lost in a maze-like building, but that his life too is aimless, a sightless wandering from one experience to the next, lacking any valid purpose. Illness has brought him to the revelation that he is alone and afraid: 'Tout était tellement silencieux. Seuls le mal, la douleur pouvaient produire un tel silence. Il sentait son désastre uni à tous les autres, et cela faisait vraiment un silence prodigieux' (p.108).

In Propp's terms, Simon the hero is both a victim, having been banished from the certainties of his former life, and a seeker, conscious of the inadequacies of what he has left behind.

Tuberculosis acts as the villain which overthrows the established order of the hero/protagonist's life, but it is also a donor in that it contributes to the awareness of his need and launches the protagonist on a search for a clearer vision of a meaning to existence. As Pondorge, another donor who appears later in the novel, puts it 'la maladie est un poison utile' (p.441). The right conditions for Simon's therapeutic journey have been established.

A reconnection with nature and the world will be one element in Simon's cure. I will deal with this aspect fully in Chapter 3, but it is appropriate to emphasize here the connection with the earth and water of the Biblical healing story. Even before he is allowed to go onto his balcony and see the natural world for himself, Simon can hear the sound of a distant waterfall. As with all the people and objects in this utopian space, it points to a different, transcendent level of reality in its reference here to the 'Word', recalling the start of St.

John's Gospel:

... il se laissait remplir par cette clameur sauvage, par ce grondement qui s'emparait du ciel et se soumettait tous les silences, par cette parole surhumaine qui parlait pour toute la nature et racontait la terre depuis le chaos... Cette parole-là tombait du

ciel, elle coupait en deux la montagne et sonnait contre le granit... Elle retentissait au-dessus des temps (p.121).

It is however primarily the encounters with other characters which determine the progress of Simon's recovery of sight. Once his health permits, he enters the society of le Crêt d'Armenaz and mixes with the other patients. They come from far more varied social backgrounds than the students he frequented in his Parisian existence and he encounters new donors, as well as meeting challenging opponents.

Two male donors are particularly significant in Simon's development. Jérôme Cheylus represents one form of spiritual enquiry. Gadenne's choice of name suggests important intertextual allusions. Saint Jerome is known as one of the greatest Biblical scholars and the founder of an ascetic religious community in Bethlehem. Gadenne's Jérôme is similarly ascetic, having set aside passionate love in order to devote himself fully to the life of the spirit. Unlike Simon, who at the end of his cure returns to the real world, Jérôme exemplifies the monastic virtues of stability and discipline, saying, 'Je suis de ceux qui restent' (p.529). Their final conversation is interrupted by the sound of the sanatorium bell, summoning him to return. His particular gift to Simon is a new appreciation of time:

Il n'y a pas pour moi d'heure perdue, de mauvaise saison. J'ai mis quelque temps à comprendre cela, venant de la ville où l'on gaspille son temps tout en croyant faire quelque chose. Mais croyez-moi : ici chaque minute qui s'écoule est une minute de vie (p.114).

Pondorge acts as a contrast to the other-worldly Jérôme, though it is tempting to suggest that he also is marked by a significant name; here a pun might indicate that he will be a layer of golden eggs! He is seen by the other patients as eccentric in appearance, speech and manner. Meeting him for the first time, Simon is struck by the disparity between his ravaged features and the fire burning within:

Pondorge avait une tête de cataclysme. Il n’y avait de vivant que les yeux : des yeux bruns et chauds dont les prunelles s’agitaient sans cesse, sous des paupières lourdes. Mais, au passage de ces prunelles dans l’axe des siennes, Simon percevait le reflet aigu de la flamme qui brûlait au fond de ce volcan (p.161).

Pondorge, his experience of the world gained from over twenty years graft in a variety of low-paid jobs, is profoundly contemptuous of the academic background of his new friend:

‘Quand on commence par discuter, on finit toujours par s’abstenir’ (p.162). Despite his dismissal of bookish learning, Pondorge has committed to memory some lines of poetry, which have a resonance for him: ‘Je ne m’apercevais pas que je montais/Mais je m’aperçus que j’étais plus haut/ En voyant la femme de mon cœur devenir plus belle...’ (p.165). They are from Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and establish the important link, discernible throughout Gadenne’s work, between female donors and the spiritual advancement of the protagonist.

Pondorge’s impetuous nature and obscure remarks divide opinion, but he wins the patients over in a series of strange lectures delivered as part of the cultural activities fostered in the sanatorium. His ‘sermon on the mount’ is full of parables, which engage his audience, and form part of his gift to Simon and his other ‘copains’; that is, those with whom he breaks bread. His message that true life must be lived simply and honestly is encapsulated in his story comparing the lock and the spider. He describes an intricately perfected lock as a symbol of the absurdity of modern existence:

Elle avait toutes les perfections, certainement, elle devait jouer la Marseillaise, comporter un mouvement d’horlogerie ou un système pour pincer le nez des gens qui regardaient à travers, mais il fallait la remonter sans doute avant de s’en servir ; bref, elle était bonne à tout ce qu’on voulait sauf à fermer une porte ! (p.435)

This artificial ingenuity is contrasted with the image of a tiny spider quietly weaving its web and seeming to sum up the mystery of life. His audience is transfixed and time in the sanatorium will henceforth be classified as either before or after Pondorge. He, however,

becomes discouraged and weeps at his words' inability to express his thoughts as he would wish. For Simon, though, Pondorge has fulfilled his purpose as donor. His message that, 'la société aussi passait son temps à vous envoyer le soleil dans les yeux, pour vous empêcher de voir clair' (p.429) has been understood and will contribute to the protagonist regaining his sight. Pondorge's name may recall Aesop's fables, but other aspects of his story are Christ-like and, with his unusual combination of fabular and Biblical references, his gift to Simon is revelation and healing.

Donors in Gadenne's novels are more frequently female, and with the dyad Ariane/Minnie we enter the heart of the Labyrinth myth, which is intertwined with the healing narrative. In myth Ariadne and the Minotaur share the same mother, Pasiphaë, thus in Gadenne's novel Ariane and Minnie are easily confused when seen from a distance. This similarity is further justified in that, on a symbolic level, they exemplify different conceptions of love. They are in opposition however, separated by mutual dislike, and by the conflicting emotions they arouse in Simon. As he parts from Ariane one evening, 'il fut de nouveau submergé de tristesse, car derrière les yeux d'Ariane, se mélangeant à cette eau si pure, il voyait encore étinceler les petits yeux pervers de Minnie' (p.291).

Minnie therefore belongs to the group of villains in Propp's classification, though the diminutive form of her name suggests that she is a lesser risk to life than the Minotaur. She is a young widow who, having recovered from tuberculosis, has joined the staff of the sanatorium as secretary and *animatrice*. The men and women live in separate buildings and in the highly charged atmosphere of the men's section she becomes the focus for their desires. She delights in the power she has over them and one of the patients, Kramer, is

infatuated with her, almost to the point of madness. Driven by his obsession to various ridiculous, extravagant gestures, the other patients view Kramer with a mixture of amusement and contempt. As Minnie rehearses the performance of a piece of theatre to celebrate the birthday of the sanatorium director, Kramer is inspired to write his own play in which he expresses his love for Minnie through his invented characters. He forces Simon to read it and, almost despite himself, he is deeply touched by the transformation Kramer manages to achieve in art. The play reveals a cultured man of refined sensibility and not a grotesque worthy of pity : 'Ce n'était plus Kramer, c'était Minnie, cette jeune femme élégante, bien élevée, toujours aimable, qui devenait le véritable monstre' (p.417).

All Minnie can really be accused of is being flirtatious and a touch artificial in her dealings with the patients. It is significant that her efforts to draw Simon into her orbit revolve around her attempts to get him to perform alongside her in an extract from a play by Musset to be staged for the entertainment. Simon is flattered and physically attracted to her, but rightly sees any attachment to her as a direct threat to his love for Ariane. He therefore resists her approach, accepting only to assist with the make-up in the production. The boundaries of theatrical *badinage* are breached, however, when Minnie sends Simon up to her room, reached through a maze of corridors and staircases, to retrieve a forgotten script and then joins him there. The sexual threat revealed in the struggle between Minnie's power, expressed by the harsh gleam in her eyes, Simon's fidelity to his love for Ariane and his desire for Minnie is played out. The true battle is between the chaos of the senses and the clarity of profound love. Simon risks losing the hard-won vision of harmony represented by Ariane, as he is drawn into the 'vertige' of Minnie's embrace, when a violent gust of wind, the sign of approaching springs, bursts open the window and allows the sound of the

cleansing waterfall to be heard. 'Alors, d'un geste brusque, il repoussa Minnie, il écarta d'une main décidée cet univers chaotique où elle l'entraînait et qu'emplissait la rumeur du sang... Aussitôt, il se sentit libéré' (p.429).

The monstrous nature of Minnie really exists only in relation to the contrast with Ariane, her half-sister in myth. As with many of Gadenne's female donors, she walks the boundary between the world and the supernatural. The name Ariane means utterly pure and one explanation of her origin in the mythic narrative is that she was a Minoan vegetation goddess (Willetts, 1977, p.121). Whether Gadenne was aware of this interpretation or not, Ariane is marked from her first appearance by closeness to nature, even before she is named. In the semi-darkness of a consulting room, after a chest x-ray, Simon sees her for the first time. Light from a window seems to cast the shadow of a plant upon her face. A brief glance is exchanged,

...et Simon, ayant vu ses yeux, eut le sentiment qu'il pénétrait dans un autre monde. Comment donc aurait-il jamais pu croire que la Maison recelait un pareil lieu, où l'attendaient depuis si longtemps, avec la flamme fauve de ses yeux, avec ses tentacules épais mais translucides et fragiles, la jeune fille et la plante (p.137).

When seen with a group of female patients, she is among them but not of them, as befits her status, seeming to tread her own path. 'Ariane paraissait ne se rattacher à rien, pas même au petit groupe d'amies qui l'entouraient. Elle semblait se mouvoir au-dessus de la route, le long d'une allée invisible' (p.201). When she and Simon later meet properly, it is she who leads him to the waterfall, which so far he has only heard in the distance, and to a tree in the higher pastures, which will become the place of their meetings and gain a special significance. In Simon's mind there is something elemental about her, in her love for the rain, wind and darkness, and yet she is real – a disconcerting mix of lightness and gravity. As his

love grows, Simon comes to understand that: 'Ariane toute entière semblait mise à la place de quelque chose qu'elle était chargée de signifier, et l'élan qui emportait Simon ne pouvait déjà plus s'arrêter à elle' (p.222). She is a sign and in his love for her he has already entered a new life beyond the words he knows. Simon is on the point of receiving a new faculty of sight, which will allow him to see that actions and thoughts are merely an allusion to a higher world, '...où chacun d'eux se trouve éternellement transcrit en un langage que nous n'avons pas fait...' (p.224). He comes to see the tree as a symbol which holds the earth and heaven in its embrace and he returns there to think and pray. Beyond his physical union with Ariane and his awakening to the power of nature, he receives the revelation of the connectedness of the whole of creation:

Il savait que tout se communique, se répond, que l'homme et la terre ne sont pas séparés, que dans le sang de nos artères circule un peu de la sève des arbres, qu'il y a de la musique dans les montagnes et des mouvements de sphères dans les symphonies ... la vie lui apparaissait lumineuse (p.524).

Simon's bookish past has been sloughed off, like a dead skin; all hostile forces can be reconciled: 'Le torrent, l'arbre, le chemin qui y conduisait, tout cela était bien le même visage de Dieu, de ce bonheur, de cette certitude foudroyante qui avait fondu sur lui' (p.485).

Paradoxically, though, at the height of their happiness, Simon and Ariane are aware that when happiness goes beyond the limits of the human it may become anguish. Ariane feels that her task has been fulfilled and that the two paths which had brought them together will also separate them. A few days later she is swept away by a spring avalanche when walking alone on the mountain. After a period of revolt and grief, Simon remembers Ariane's words: 'Simon, ne vaudrait-il pas mieux que nous en restions là ?...Nous nous serions acquittés de nos tâches...Il ne faudrait pas en être tristes...' (p.539). His spiritual cure is complete, closely

followed by a physical one, and he is ready to return to his family in Paris, strengthened by the understanding that 'L'amour c'est une faculté de vision... poussée jusqu'au génie' (p.547). Ariane's influence is not lost: it lives and grows in others.

This love is placed in a specifically Christian context in the relations between Simon, Ariane and the final villain Massube. He represents a spirit of negativity, spreading malicious rumours and pouring scorn upon the patients, Ariane among them, who pray in the sanatorium chapel. His ugliness is hard to look at, as the patients line up to be weighed, and he resembles, '...l'un des « Réprouvés » dont les peintres flamands se sont plus à représenter la chute dans les Enfers' (p.168). The struggle between Simon and Massube is encapsulated in a game of chess: a trope Gadenne later uses in *L'Invitation chez les Stirl*.

Unable to escape from the board, Simon is goaded by Massube's lies about Ariane, as well as his attack on ideas such as happiness and God. According to him, Man is irremediably alone and the only pleasures he can aspire to are those 'qu'on peut attraper à ras de terre' (p.252). Stunned by this sordid allusion to his love for Ariane, Simon throws over the board in rage.

As Simon's insight grows, however, he recognises the suffering in Massube, whose condition worsens. Massube is no longer able to mix freely with the other patients, but despite his repugnance Simon goes to visit him. No real understanding is reached, but Simon arranges for Ariane to see him. The visits continue, as Massube declines towards death, and Ariane manages to bring him peace, allowing him to kiss her hand in what was possibly his only gesture of tenderness towards another creature. This represents a challenge to Simon: 'Car il ne pouvait plus se racheter maintenant qu'en aimant, à travers Ariane, Massube lui-même – d'un amour plus que fraternel' (p.453). In death Massube becomes beautiful, with a crucifix

at his head and a rosary between his fingers; though Simon concedes that this might only be the conventional window dressing accorded all who die in the sanatorium. He prefers to interpret it as the sign that Ariane has taken responsibility for his destiny beyond death by relieving him of the anger and violence that had made him hated in life: 'Elle semblait renouveler en sa faveur la geste de la jeune fille qui apprivoise les monstres' (p.501).

Siloé represents the extreme case, in Gadenne's output, of a novel's determination by external narratives, as the myth of the Labyrinth and the parable of the healing of the blind man are rewritten. Propp's categories of hero, villain and donor are clearly exemplified and the development of the narrative conforms to the pattern found in the classic fairy tale.

Although Gadenne would have rejected the term, it could be argued that *Siloé* falls into the category of the didactic novel. Susan Rubin Suleiman's important study of the ideological novel (1983) provides an alternative model to Propp's to explain the dynamics of this novel, in her description of 'positive exemplary apprenticeship' (p.77). Her schema summarizes this development as from 'ignorance of truth', through 'trials surmounted', to 'knowledge of truth' resulting in 'new life in accordance with truth'. The protagonist will move from a state of passivity to 'action based on knowledge'. The *roman à these* may be considered an anti-modern genre; she argues:

it is essentially an authoritarian genre: it appeals to the need for certainty, stability, and unity that is one of the elements in the human psyche; it affirms absolute truths, absolute values. If, in this process, it infantilizes the reader (as Beauséjour suggests), it offers in exchange a paternal assurance (p.11).

It runs counter to modernism's attempts to 'multiply meaning or to pulverise it ("faire éclater le sens" was one of Roland Barthes' favourite expressions)' (Suleiman, 1983, p.22).

It is easy to see how well this pattern applies to *Siloé*. Simon's journey follows the parable from blindness to the truth, through revelation, to new life. In his case, previous actions were inauthentic and futile. His implied future activity will be informed by love. The narrative restates the paradigm of Christian life and thus aims to impart a clear message. As Suleiman points out though, the use of the term *roman à these* does not have to have negative connotations; for its practitioners it is simply the novel of ideas and the reader must ultimately judge the acceptability of the thesis of the work. It remains true, however, that the novel is an elaborately worked illustration of a formula. The characters are indeed functional and any development in their relations is subordinated to the overall message contained in the hypotexts. Though there is much to be appreciated in the work, it is hard to warm to the characters, given that their value as signs is never in doubt.

A number of critics have tended to down-play the importance of *Siloé* in their assessment of Gadenne's work. Its explicitly Christian hypotext and imagery are inconvenient for those, such as Sophie Balso (2007), who prefer to see him as a writer in search for meaning in a world from which God is absent. Gadenne himself was ambivalent towards it in later life, despite it being his most successful novel in terms of sales and the only one republished in his lifetime. Indeed, its reception as an anti-intellectual work led him to rethink his approach to the craft of the novel. For François Lermigeaux, in his article 'Gadenne au miroir de Giono' (2005), this re-evaluation resulted from a study of what he both admired and found lacking in the work of Giono:

...il voit bien que chez Giono, il n'y a 'aucune inquiétude' et que 'les silences des espaces infinis lui-même l'effraie à peine'. Par-là, c'est avec son propre livre qu'il prend ses distances et qu'il perçoit la nécessité de prendre en compte le tragique (p.106).

Certainly his subsequent novels have a different tone and are never as easily read for their message as *Siloé*. Summing up his approach to the novel, in notes written towards the end of his life, Gadenne said 'Le vrai roman fuit l'énoncé' (Sarrou, 1999 p.75). For him, at that time, the novel consisted of four elements: '1. Temps, 2. Dialogue, 3. Silence, 4. Ambiguïté' (p.75). There is little space for ambiguity in his first novel.

It would be wrong, however, to dismiss *Siloé* as *une œuvre de jeunesse* upon which Gadenne turned his back in later years. In her article, Claude Audinet makes the point that while it may be the novel of a young author, it is not the novel of a young man. When he finished the novel in 1938, aged 31, after apparently being cured of tuberculosis, then suffering a relapse, he already knew what course his life was likely to take:

Plus qu'un roman d'initiation, *Siloé* est un roman d'initié. Si sa technique romanesque présente encore quelques faiblesses, il sait déjà comment tenter de répondre au grand problème du pourquoi et du comment de l'existence (1983, p.25).

While I do not wish to suggest that this novel alone is the key to understanding Gadenne's work, it serves as a reference point of comparison and departure. I shall argue that subsequent novels display a very similar typology of character to that found in *Siloé*, suggesting a continuity of inspiration throughout the seven works, even though there may be a significant evolution in narrative technique.

Both Sophie Balso in *Pensée et écriture romanesque dans l'œuvre de Paul Gadenne* (2007) and Adelheid Wiehe-Deitz in *Die Stimme der Stille* (1995) devote considerable space to an analysis, analogous to Propp's, of the typical Gadenne protagonist and to the functions of the other characters with whom he interacts. Despite the differing structures of the seven novels, the focus is always on a single character and even when, as in *Le Vent noir*, we have

multiple first person narrators, as well as a heterodiegetic narrator, the varying perspectives are united by their relation to Luc the central protagonist. Wiehe-Deitz summarizes the situation in this way:

If one subjects these protagonists to closer scrutiny, it becomes obvious that they are very similar to each other: all are male, single artists or intellectuals, most of them are marked in some way by illness (1995, p.36).¹

Thus we have writers, or would-be writers, in the Poet of *La Rue profonde* and Luc in *Le Vent noir*; two creative artists in Olivier Lérins the painter of *L'Invitation chez les Stirl* and the sculptor Antoine Bourgoïn from *L'Avenue*. Simon Delambre in *Siloé* and Didier Aubert of *Les Hauts-Quartiers* are scholars, while Guillaume Arnoult in *La Plage de Scheveningen* is by training an archaeologist. According to Sophie Balso's summary of the protagonists, they have a surname, which is often only revealed later, and above all a first name. Their physical appearance and clothing are rarely described. They have no fixed abode which might define them in any way. Indeed the reader has no desire to visualize them, for it is by their thoughts that we know them:

le personnage a le visage de ses pensées puisque si nous ne savons rien de son apparence physique, en revanche nous connaissons ses pensées, et c'est bien cela dans le roman, comme dans la vie, qui nous permet d'accéder vraiment à un être (2007, p.240).

¹ Unterzieht man diese Protagonisten einer näheren Betrachtung, so fällt auf, daß sie einander sehr ähnlich sind: Alle sind männlichen Geschlechts, alleinstehende Künstler oder Intellektuelle; die meisten in irgendeiner Weise durch Krankheit gezeichnet Wiehe-Deitz, A. (1995) **Die Stimme der Stille** : das Werk des französischen Schriftstellers Paul Gadenne (1907-1956). *Münstersche Beiträge zur romanischen Philologie*, 0936-9724 ; Bd. 12 Münster : Nodus Publikation . (All translations from German by Christine and Michael Thompson).

The Gadenne protagonist is above all a creature of thought, whose restless inquiry rarely brings him peace. As Charles Blanchet pointed out in his influential article, while the heroes of the novels may have different names,

Ils... n'en partagent pas moins la même passion, la passion de la Communion, de la Rencontre... Cette passion de la Rencontre aura plusieurs dimensions : rencontre avec les êtres, avec les choses, avec Dieu (1963, p.611).

My analysis of *Siloé* has already shown how Simon, in his journey from blindness to sight, realises this three-fold encounter with love for Ariane, his reconciliation with nature and his intimation of the divine. While this communion will not be achieved in such an overt fashion in the subsequent novels, the search for it is fundamental to each of them.

The centrality of a single idea and Gadenne's recognition of its deeply personal inspiration has led to an important strand of psycho-biographical criticism in approaches to the author:

It has repeatedly been maintained that Gadenne identified himself with his characters and basically always portrayed only himself (Wiehe-Deitz, 1995, p.36).²

There is plenty of evidence to justify such an approach, as the various articles and books by Didier Sarrou show. Both *Siloé* and *Les Hauts-Quartiers*, incidentally both narrated in the third person, closely follow events in Gadenne's own life. His wife Yvonne said in an interview, '*Les Hauts-Quartiers*, c'est du vécu – y compris sa mort, si l'on peut dire...' (1983, p.26). This identification of author and protagonist, which in life Gadenne was at pains to deny, is not part of my study of his work. Besides, that ground has already been covered by Sarrou. More importantly, a psycho-biographical criticism of the novels is contrary to Gadenne's own aesthetic, as detailed in his writings on the novel. In my view, the apparent

² So wurde immer wieder behauptet, Gadenne habe sich mit seinen Figuren identifiziert und im Grunde immer nur sich selbst dargestellt (1995, p.36).

interchangeability of the various Gadenne protagonists points to their status as the Everyman of foundational and mythic narrative, rather than them being images of the author himself. They serve as representatives of a universal human predicament. Charles Blanchet quotes from Gadenne's notes for *La Plage de Scheveningen* where he explains that writing is an act of reaching out, rather than an excuse for introspection: 'On écrit un roman avant tout pour placer un homme devant une question ou une image et la regarder ensemble. Ecrire des romans, il n'y a pas d'acte plus fraternel' (1963, p.609).

What is it that drives the protagonists in their '...Quête dans l'espoir de la Rencontre' (1979, p.vii), as James Bolton Davis expresses it? One clue is that 'they are marked in some way by illness' (1995, p.36), as Wiehe-Deitz has observed. Illness may be seen as an outward sign of human imperfection, which calls out for a remedy. Simon and Didier suffer from tuberculosis. Antoine in *L'Avenue* has an injured knee as a result of an air raid and, becoming depressed, partly due to separation from his wife in the chaos of the flight before the invading German forces, he consults a doctor in Gabarrus. The best treatment for his anxiety, apparently a fashionable illness, is a few drops and 'ce remède tout simple, le meilleur des remèdes : une ou deux heures de promenade quotidienne, à pas mesurés, dans la campagne, entre l'aube et la tombée du jour' (p.21). It is this movement which initiates his search for the Construction the locals talk about and his own metaphysical journey which accompanies the quest.

While Luc, Guillaume, and the Poet of *La Rue profonde* are not suffering from any physical illness, and Olivier is not unwell before entering the malevolent atmosphere of the Stirl household, they are all weighed down by a burden of guilt caused by a broken relationship.

Whether the lost love is called Edith, Irène or 'la jeune fille aux cahiers gris', the reasons for the breakdown remain obscure. They may involve infidelity, physical violence, bitterness and grief occasioned by an abortion or perhaps the more insidious process of the loss of a shared language. Whatever the cause, communication is now either impossible or strained to the limit. Edith and 'la jeune fille aux cahiers gris' are both physically absent from their respective novels and yet their presence in the mind of the protagonist drives the narrative. While Irène and Guillaume are separated only by the space between two twin beds in a cheap hotel for the majority of *La Plage de Scheveningen*, they are distanced from each other by the weight of their past and by the opposing casts of their minds. Guillaume, the archaeologist, attempts a forensic examination of their relationship in an effort to establish guilt and innocence, while Irene taciturnly resists his interrogation, which aims to dissect the complexity of the feelings they have shared. Though it is not clear whether Ethel and Olivier in *L'Invitation chez les Stirl* have had more than a close friendship in their previous encounter in the Alps, for obscure reasons, communication is no longer possible between them. Here, however, it is Ethel's constant babble, punctuated by offensive remarks, which prevents Olivier from recapturing the intimacy they had formerly enjoyed:

Il ne comprenait pas d'où venaient à son amie cette nervosité, cette passion de contredire, et bientôt cette manie de tout confondre pour pouvoir le vaincre, cette impérieuse et obsédante incohérence où elle se précipitait tous les jours pour le mieux accabler, et où il se précipitait avec elle (p.66).

Even at the end of the novel no convincing explanation is found for the enmity between them. It is clear, however, that the rift between Man and Woman, between a past of shared pleasure in communication and a present of bitter struggle, is not simply a product of a

breakdown in human relations. Its source is to be found in mythic narratives which, in Gadenne's view, shape the dynamic of his characters' behaviour.

Sophie Balso is, in my opinion, correct in emphasizing the importance of the narrative of original sin in understanding the inevitable and yet inexplicable failure of the love relationships in Gadenne's novels; though I would take the implications of this further.

Il y a chez Gadenne deux formes du péché originel : le péché Adamique, bien entendu, qui condamne l'homme, quoi qu'il fasse, à un amour coupable, et le crime de Caïn qui meurtrit sa conscience et le marque du sceau de la trahison (2007, p.286).

The theme of being an outcast from paradise conditions both the relations between characters and, as we shall see, the treatment of space and time. The story of Cain's murder of his brother Abel is of particular significance, however, as an imaginative retelling of the narrative forms an important strand of *La Plage de Scheveningen*. While it applies initially to Hersent, who betrays friendship, country and humanity in his collaboration with the occupying German forces and his promotion of anti-Semitism, Gadenne's over-riding point is that we all bear the mark of Cain. Guillaume describes to Irène an incident in his childhood when, while his mother was out, he enticed one of their chickens into the kitchen with a trail of crumbs. Despite his own fear and the bird's frantic efforts to escape, he messily cut its throat under the kitchen table and then spent a quarter of an hour feverishly cleaning to remove all traces of the blood. Irène makes light of his story saying that housewives slaughter chickens every day, to which he responds:

Je sais. On fait la guerre aussi tous les jours. Et des choses pires que la guerre. Aujourd'hui, délicieuse Irène, on abuse de tout !...Moi, aussi, aujourd'hui je « fais ça » tous les jours. Mais cette fois-là, c'était la première fois... (p.154).

The name of Cain does not need to be mentioned for his story to occupy the foreground. In *Le Vent noir* Luc recalls his angry attack upon Edith. He first smashed a Japanese print, an icon of their previous happiness, depicting 'ce paysage exquis et serein où nous avions si souvent tous deux situés nos rêves', cutting his hands on the glass in the process. Then, goaded by the contempt he apparently read in her eyes, 'mes mains étaient allées sur elle, le corsage était maintenant en lambeaux et sur ces lambeaux était répandu le sang de mes mains, de sorte qu'on aurait pu croire à un crime...' (p.112). Luc had previously described to Marcelle the plot of a novel he was trying to write, which closely follows his own experience. Allowing for Luc's melodramatic expression, his protagonist mirrors the one found in all Gadenne's novels:

C'est un condamné à vie, pour lequel il n'y a pas de rémission. Il tremble sous cet arrêt qui le sépare du monde, de lui-même : il a perdu son unité. Il lui semble que cette condamnation doit se lire sur son visage, qu'il est dans l'univers comme une espèce de rebut... (p.100).

This is a dramatization of Cain's lament at God's judgement: "...from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass that every one that findeth me shall slay me" (Genesis 4:14).

All Gadenne's protagonists bear the same mark, expressed by illness or moral anguish, whatever the nature of their fault. Banished from a state of harmony with nature and with their partner, they pursue a means of recovering what has been lost. While these characteristics superficially conform to the defining features of Propp's heroes as either searchers or victims, the depth of the despair of Gadenne's protagonists is, of course, of an entirely different order. Indeed, far from there being a break between Simon in *Siloé* and the

subsequent protagonists, there is a continuity or even an intensification of the notion of guilt and the suffering it entails.

Several critics have created a classification of the female characters in Gadenne's novels.

Wiehe-Deitz uses the classes of 'femme médiatrice' and 'femme séductrice' (pp.51-7). Balso discusses three groups: 'les jeunes femmes médiatrices aux noms parfois prédestinés', 'les femmes aimées' and 'les femmes mûres qui font obstacle...' (2007, pp.246-7). Propp's categories of donors and villains can, in fact, cover much of this ground. One may question individual judgements about to which category a particular character belongs. For example Balso places Ariane among the 'femmes médiatrices', a role she undoubtedly plays, however this disguises the fact that she is transformed from a symbol into a creature of flesh and blood and 'une femme aimée', only to revert to the status of a sign in her death and return to nature at the end of the novel, thus fortifying and releasing Simon for the resumption of real life in Paris and completing her duty as donor. This ability to pass through the boundaries between one mode of existence and another is an essential feature of myth. Propp's notion of a single character performing a number of functions obviates such problems of categorization.

Another criticism of these classifications is that the female characters are defined in terms of their relation and usefulness to the male protagonist. The 'femmes médiatrices', in particular, have a habit of disappearing, or indeed dying, when their message has been communicated. Sophie Balso, however, recognises that female characters become more complex and subtle in some of the novels after *Siloé* and can share in the existential suffering experienced by the protagonist; though none attempts to follow him in the search for transcendence. With

these reservations, it is productive to examine the importance of the female characters in terms of Balso's groupings.

In considering the mediators, or donors, I will concentrate on what is probably Gadenne's most perplexing novel *L'Avenue*, partly because it contains several examples of the type, but also because they play a crucial role in facilitating the spiritual development of the protagonist Antoine. For Sophie Balso it is the key work in Gadenne's output : 'la pièce maîtresse de cette aventure' (2010, p.289).

The sculptor Antoine takes refuge from the war in the provincial town of Gabarrus. Cut off from his wife and the features of his previous life, he concentrates on what is most important to him. Balso quotes Gadenne's own summary of the plot, taken from his notebooks:

L'Avenue. Un homme prend conscience de la part de l'inconnu ou si vous voulez de divin qui est dans son art, et cherche à rejoindre directement cet inconnu, ce divin. Dès lors il découvre que l'art ne lui est plus nécessaire (2010, p.289).

This development is paralleled by his discovery of three places in the town, La Construction, La Résidence and Le Château, which are symbols of his metaphysical search. These discoveries can only be made due to the intervention of mediators. Balso, in her fascinating interpretation, argues that: 'ces lieux du roman sont des sites qui figurent les trois étapes kierkegaardiennes – esthétique, éthique et religieuse – sur le chemin de la vie' (2010, p.289). For her the novel represents the nexus of ideas from Gadenne, Kierkegaard and Kafka. While I disagree with the conclusion she draws from her analysis, as I shall explain later, her reading is a very productive one.

La Construction is a topic of conversation among the Gabarrois, though there is no general agreement about what it is or was, or exactly where it may be found. Despite, or because of, the mass of information he hears, Antoine can never locate the site of the Construction during his extensive walks in the area. The first donor, or mediator, who points the way is unusual in that he is male and appears several times; though in functional terms he is typical of the various 'femmes médiatrices'. His arrival at Antoine's door is not prepared in any way. It may be motivated by his job as representative of the insurance company Le Soleil, but even this is uncertain. He has lived in the area all his life, but is somehow *étranger*. Like many of Gadenne's mediators he struggles to express himself clearly when questioned about La Résidence, a term he prefers to the more generally used La Construction. Though M. Maignon imparts no precise information about the building which he says determined his vocation, Antoine is conscious of a change a few days later in his wanderings on the outskirts of the town:

... contrairement aux autres fois, il est léger, il ne sent aucune fatigue. Il regarde ce paysage qui l'étonne, mais qu'il *comprend* si bien ; cette large étendue, vivement, mais uniformément éclairée, déserte au surplus, mais animée d'il ne sait quelle présence... (p.97).

In subsequent meetings the insurance salesman is able to describe La Résidence more precisely, but still Antoine cannot find it. It will require one of the female mediators to take him closer.

On a later walk he catches sight of a young woman coming towards him. She seems familiar, perhaps someone he had seen in town skipping onto a moving tram. Yet at the same time she seems to belong to another world. So aware is he of her otherness:

... la distance à laquelle il se sentait irrémédiablement jeté par rapport à elle, tant elle paraissait se mouvoir dans un espace privé, personnel, dans une zone protégée, qu'il était bien sûr que, de son côté, aucune parole n'arriverait à franchir (p.165).

Much to his surprise, she answers his enquiry and offers to show him a short cut to the Résidence. She guides him along a narrow path, into an abandoned house, through a series of maze-like corridors, taking his hand. He knew that: 'ce geste fût une approbation donnée au meilleur de lui-même, comme un signe qui s'étendrait désormais sur son avenir' (p.170). From a balcony Antoine can see a green hillside and a few cypress trees surrounded by a low wall. Though it in no way resembles what M. Maignon had described, he is sure that they had both seen the same thing. A revelation.

Antoine sentit qu'une légère mais irrémédiable faille venait de se produire dans le système où la raison tend à nous enfermer. Il respira. L'intuition qui venait de le pénétrer lui donnait le singulier courage d'aller jusqu'au bout de sa pensée. Il ne savait pas grand-chose de ce mur qu'il avait sous les yeux, mais il le libérait ... (p.173).

The woman tears out a sheet of paper from a cheap notebook and tells him to write down what he has seen; combining the supernatural and the banal in a way typical of Gadenne's mediators. Finding the crumpled piece of paper in his damp overcoat a few days later, Antoine realises he has not the words to convey what he has seen. Perhaps the work of his hands shaping the clay of his model will serve to encapsulate the vision?

The path to enlightenment is not smooth, however, and what Balso sees as the Kafkaesque elements of the narrative assert themselves. Antoine imagines that le Château, both an image remembered from childhood and, according to Balso, the third level representing the religious life in Kierkegaard's model of spiritual ascent, can never be reached. Besides, if one could gain admittance, it would be found to be empty and merely an elaborate deceit invented to control the populace. In a nightmarish dream his mediator is transformed into

parody - a toothless old woman serving in a noisy tavern where he is viewed with suspicion bordering on hostility. The workers are talking of the end of the Construction: 'ce sont les derniers jours' (p.220). In the face of this vision of Apocalypse, a new mediator will be required to set him back on the path.

Irma, the primary school teacher's wife and mistress of the newspaper editor, her name suggesting 'whole' or 'universal', provides a final criticism of the failings of the Gabarrois, as well as a revelation of the connectedness of all things. She invites Antoine, by means of a note pushed under his door, to meet her in what seems to be an empty house and has left a diary for him to read. In it she denounces the opportunism and materialism of the editor, as well as her husband's lack of understanding of her. His pursuit of the grand idea of building a new society isolated him from life itself: 'As-tu jamais donné un instant de ta vie à la joie paisible qui est au coeur des choses?' (p.239) For Antoine though her message is a positive one, which gives him the inspiration to return to his statue of Eve, in an attempt at re-creation, and complete it. Recalling her love for walking alone in the countryside, she speaks of her attachment to the remaining stones of La Construction and also that, '...j'ai eu la révélation, je sais que ces pierres sont vivantes' (p.244). Having fulfilled her duty of passing on her message, Irma leaves not only the town, as she had hinted, but life itself, by gassing herself in the kitchen. Antoine is initially anxious that Irma has constrained him by admitting him into the intimacy of her suicide confession, but he realizes her revelation has opened his eyes and set him free. He has become aware of a mysterious line in nature linking everything together, which he is able to communicate to his statue Eve, 'cette ligne qui la cerne et la complète, celle qui dénonce et à la fois recouvre son secret' (p.251). In a manner which reminds us of Simon in *Siloé*, he grasps the truth that,

Il suffisait de soulever un peu la brûlante matière des paysages, des routes, et des architectures que les hommes posaient au bord des routes, et voici que nous pouvions entendre, sur la nudité de la terre, se répercuter l'écho du mot initial (p.248).

In hearing this echo, the sculptor is brought close to God's act of creation and the innocence of Paradise may be recaptured.

To sum up, Gadenne's mediators, almost exclusively female, are characterized by an ease of movement. They are at home in their setting, but are not limited by it, crossing the boundaries of the real and the supernatural, as befits their quasi mythic status. They tend to be intuitive rather than articulate, standing in contrast to the often hidebound rationalism of the protagonist. They disappear, or pass from life into death, as their mission is accomplished; that of giving the protagonist the key to understanding himself and his place in the world. There is much that is conventional in the presentation of female donors in Gadenne's novels. Even his greatest supporter, Didier Sarrou, feels it necessary to pose the question: 'Faut-il incriminer sa vision de la femme, telle qu'elle apparaît du moins dans la relation de ses héros masculins avec les créatures féminines, si diverses, qui jalonnent son œuvre ?' (2003, p.8). Sarrou provides no answer to his question, but, as will be clear later, several of Gadenne's female characters escape the narrow bounds of their narrative function in relation to the protagonist. Even within their role as donors, it would be wrong to downplay the significance of their Christ-like mediation between the human and the divine. In Gadenne's work they replace priests in carrying out this function. Something of a challenge to orthodox Catholicism.

When it comes to the group 'les femmes aimées' the love of Simon and Ariane, set in the other-worldly environment of sanatorium and mountain, is the point of reference.

Relationships in subsequent novels, now viewed in the past, came close to recapturing it. Guillaume in *La Plage de Scheveningen* recalls his life with Irène before their break up. Her life and movement seemed to fill the room. Like Ariane she is a creature of the elements; in her case the sun, sea and wind of the beaches of the south-west. Returning to their flat after a swim she would immediately strip off her clothes, supremely confident in her nakedness, as Eve shameless before the Fall:

C'était une impression d'extrême pureté qui se dégageait de tous les mouvements d'Irène. Le soir, quand il s'endormait près d'elle, baigné dans cette grande nudité dorée, il avait encore la sensation d'être couché sur le sable, bercé dans le vent qui agitait les pins à leurs cimes (2009, p.29)

Edith, in *Le Vent noir*, is physically absent from the novel but her influence is pervasive, affecting not only Luc who has lost her, but also Marcelle and Madame Monge. Luc has only to pass a sports shop for the image of Edith's skill and grace on ice skates to surge into his consciousness. Her dress sense and apparently selfless devotion to her social work are both lauded by Madame Monge, though with the purpose of belittling Marcelle. Luc is forced to admit to her: 'C'est vrai... Mme Monge ne vous a pas trompée. Edith était admirable. Elle était sans tache' (p.165). All further attempts at forging a relationship are made against the background of these now unattainable images of perfection.

Charles Blanchet, among other critics, draws attention to Gadenne's study of Kierkegaard's *Repetition*, which was often his bedside reading (Sarrou, 2003, p.28), as a key to understanding the dynamics of relationships between men and women in the novels.

La hantise de Kierkegaard, « Y a-t-il une répétition possible ? » traverse les romans de Gadenne... La signification la plus immédiate du *Vent noir* n'est-elle pas celle d'une recherche d'un instant de paix ? Luc a connu avec Edith, autrefois, ces instants de béatitude et il voudrait retrouver avec Marcelle la saveur de ces instants... (1963, pp. 613-4).

Luc has, however, shattered the image of that happiness, in the symbolic form of the Japanese print, and his attempts to recapture it with Marcelle are doomed to failure. Even when alone with her on their night time walks through the streets of Paris, Luc is dogged by the memory of Edith: 'De nouveau il fallait fuir, il se heurtait à l'interdit qui frappait toutes les provinces où le corps, l'âme d'Edith avaient erré' (p.156). Excluded from such places of felicity, their wanderings become increasingly ex-centric only for them to part, following the murder of Madame Monge, after a nightmarish stay in a sordid hotel in the outer suburbs in the depths of winter; a bitter parody of the country idylls Luc used to share with Edith.

Neither Luc nor Marcelle have been able to free themselves from the crushing perfection of Edith. The reconciliation with the past desired by Luc has not been achieved and this drives him to obsession and madness. His fault is irredeemable. It seems that he will irrevocably be marked by his blood that he smeared upon Edith and the blood of Madame Monge. The final lines of the novel are more ambiguous though:

O joie! le jour venait. Ce n'était rien de se charger de la réprobation des autres, de s'y construire, d'y trouver la force... Il s'avancait, un pas après l'autre, les mains libres, le cœur vide et pur. Le jour continuait à se lever devant lui, au-dessus du bois, où le soleil naissait dans une flaque de sang (p.443).

Though Marcelle is important to Luc mainly as a means of trying to recover a trace of Edith, and in this she is a poor substitute, she is significant as one of Gadenne's most complex female characters. They are often seen as merely ancillary to the protagonist on his metaphysical journey, providing aid or opposition according to their nature, a view which reduces them to one or other of Propp's functions. Marcelle, however, is a full participant in the existential guilt of the protagonist. She is estranged from her family and lives with Madame Monge, having a room in which Edith had lived before her. Even the bookcase

speaks of the bedroom's former occupant: 'Elle comprenait, devant cette rangée de livres, qu'elle possédait ce sentiment contradictoire du sacré, qui fait qu'on respecte un objet jusqu'au moment où ce respect se transforme en une rage impatiente de destruction' (p.47). This association with violence, both done by her and to her, is implicit in her characterization. Like Luc, she too is marked by blood; whether it belongs to another such as her neighbour, a prostitute, whom Marcelle believes in her childhood innocence to be a nurse, as a result of an illegal abortion, or is her own. She describes a nightmarish trip to the dentist where she feels vulnerable, invaded and in pain. As the drill works away in her mouth she cries out:

Et ce cri que je venais de pousser à deux reprises n'avait rien de comparable au cri que je sentais sans cesse au fond de moi et que je cherchais sans cesse à étouffer. Car ce cri-là s'il avait jailli m'aurait tuée, je le sentais (p.30).

In reality she had not uttered a sound and the source of her cry, it gradually becomes apparent, was a deeper hurt. Like the so-called nurse, Marcelle had become pregnant and had been 'helped out' by Monsieur and Madame Monge, by arranging an abortion. Bound in an ambiguous relationship with Madame Monge, whom she addresses as "m'amie" (or is it "mammy"?), she is paired off by her with suitable men, such as Luc, who might give her a child, yet at times shares her bed. As Luc's obsessive pursuit of Marcelle reaches its height, he offers to free her of Madame Monge. He claims she had previously asked him to do so:

Une détente brusque, un tressaillement dans le poignet de Marcelle, une voix qui lui semblait celle d'un espoir épouvanté.

- Vous le feriez ?

Il avait juré que ses yeux s'illuminaient... (p.400).

Of course we view this scene from Luc's point of view and the assent he reads in her eyes may be entirely illusory. The reasons for which Luc murders Madame Monge are confused

and complex, but in his mind Marcelle is in some way complicit. After the killing, Luc abducts Marcelle in a deranged attempt to spend an hour of peace with her as a repetition of moments spent with Edith. What ensues is a tortured dark night of the soul for both of them: 'L'esprit, le cri de Marcelle étaient en lui, et il ne cherchait qu'à les étouffer ; en vérité, il n'avait jamais été plus près d'elle, et il découvrait que c'était là l'enfer' (p.440). Marcelle does not fall neatly into any of the categories derived from Propp or proposed by Balso and Wiehe-Deitz. She is no mere satellite held in the protagonist's gravity, but a character in her own right.

The group of 'femmes aimées' is not a homogenous one ; as Sophie Balso puts it: 'La femme, dans les romans de Paul Gadenne, est alors tour à tour chance et malédiction, bonheur et malheur de l'existence, tentation et renoncement' (2007, p.254). This may indeed be the case, but her descriptors once again relate to woman's significance for the male protagonist. As the example of Marcelle shows, certain female characters have sufficient depth to be considered independently as actors in their own existential drama. This will also be so of those in Balso's final category, 'les femmes mûres qui font obstacle'.

Sophie Balso's treatment of this category, as represented by Madame Monge in *Le Vent noir* and Madame Chotard-Lagréou in *Les Hauts-Quartiers*, is surprisingly cursory. She attributes their opposition to the love of protagonist and 'la femme aimée' principally to jealousy (2007, p.247). It is true that Madame Monge at times feels that she loves Luc and that he loves her. Madame Chotard-Lagréou is torn between her desire to seduce Didier and the need, as she sees it, to save his soul. The reasons for their opposition are far more complex, in my view,

and suggest a depth of characterization which goes well beyond that required of their function as obstacles.

Madame Monge shares the same deep sense of loss as Luc and Marcelle. As a young actress she had an affair with an aristocrat, Hubert St. Vallier, and gave birth to a son called Brice. Considered by his family to be an unsuitable mother, she was induced to give up her child to be raised by Hubert's mother. He would have all the advantages of status and money, provided there was no contact with his birth mother. A second pregnancy resulted in a miscarriage.

A sense of brokenness and guilt drives Cécile Monge's actions throughout the novel. Aware that war is approaching, she believes her son, now a lieutenant, will be among the first to be killed. She embarks upon a desperate search through government offices and a maze of corridors in order to get news of him. Sent from pillar to post, she learns nothing. Her own description of this quest is revealing: 'Vraiment, on dirait que je cherche un cadavre après une bataille perdue' (p.355). The attempt to create a substitute family dominates her actions, yet seems doomed to failure. Her enigmatic husband spends as little time at home as possible, preferring to sleep in his flat in a dismal *quartier* frequented by prostitutes and their clients. Cécile's manipulation of Edith and Marcelle has at its root her own desire for a child. Marcelle is aware of this herself: 'Je ne pense pourtant pas que l'on puisse s'y tromper. Elle voudrait que je lui donne un enfant' (p.33). Thus Cécile apparently tries to bring Marcelle and Luc together. Marcelle is willing at times to comply. Cécile, playing the good fairy, in a way that recalls Propp's folktales, offers to facilitate their marriage, even after a painful argument. They will marry, provided she can live with them. All appear to accept.

However Luc is conscious that, ‘...tout ne tenait que par elle, par ses sortilèges, que si elle nous laissait seuls un instant, tout allait s’écrouler’ (p.329). Cécile has overplayed her role, however, and the attempt ultimately fails.

For Luc it is her malign influence, as evil fairy, which comes to dominate his thinking. ‘La magicienne’, a nickname he and Marcelle had given her, had always had knowledge of Luc’s failed relationships and the ability to conjure up memories. Whether the woman was Alison, Michèle, Edith or Marcelle, Luc sees a connection with Madame Monge. As she herself says, with remarkable prescience, ‘... il se sentait deviné, je savais tout – j’étais devenue sa conscience. Voilà ce qu’il ne me pardonnerait jamais : il avait eu honte devant moi’ (p.92). It is ultimately in an attempt to silence that consciousness of failure and guilt that Luc kills Madame Monge. Yet in this he misses his target, as the epigraph to the novel, taken from Kafka’s *The Castle*, suggests: ‘je manquerai la personne que j’attends, dit K. en hochant la tête...’ (p.15).

It would be easy to see Fernande Chotard-Lagréou in *Les Hauts-Quartiers* as a satirical portrait of a typical *bien-pensante* spinster. Her religious bookshop adjoins the cathedral and she is on good terms with the multitude of clergy who seem to dominate the town. She is adept at raising money for charitable causes, such as replacing the local convent’s aged cow. Fernande attends mass regularly, preferring those said by younger, good looking priests. Above all, she is a gossip who manipulates others and ruins reputations with half-truths and lies:

Or il était difficile de savoir ce qu’il y avait de spontané ou de calculé dans ses mensonges, car elle était visionnaire et, au bout de peu de temps, elle s’installait dans ses visions. Celles-ci devenaient alors articles de foi et, comme tels, bonnes à

colporter, de sorte que, le jour où les bruits qu'elle avait fait courir lui revenaient aux oreilles, rien ne séparait plus le mensonge de la réalité (p.209).

In Fernande Chotard-Lagréou, Gadenne creates a character worthy of Balzac – a writer whose passion he admired. Fernande is announced in such a manner: 'On sentait la violence sourde d'une nature puissante et d'une vie insatisfaite' (p.106). She is driven to destroy Didier's relationship with Betty, to estrange her from her family and to exclude him from all the houses in Les Hauts-Quartiers, until he ends up in a squalid room in the lower town where he dies, either from gas poisoning, like Irma, or a crisis of his tuberculosis. As with some of Balzac's great characters, there is more than the whiff of sulphur about her:

Il suffisait de voir son visage tourmenté, presque tuméfié, comme si on l'avait martelé à coups de poings, d'observer son attitude, les éclairs noirs qui sortaient de ses yeux, ce désir qu'on lisait clairement dans toute sa personne de meurtrir, de voir la couleur de votre sang... Didier n'avait jamais cru au diable : soudain il le voyait, il était là, à deux pas, il animait un être, une face humaine (p.203).

Yet it would be wrong to see her simply as a personification of evil or as means of attacking bourgeois religious hypocrisy; though Gadenne misses no opportunity to use her for this purpose. Didier denounces her distorted values, according to which the only sins that count are those of the flesh, and not the selfish devotion to money and power.

It is however a deep suffering which motivates her destructive behaviour. She is at war with her nature as a woman. Her menstrual bleeding drives her to distraction: 'Chaque fois que cela m'arrive, je perds la foi, et je suis encore plus désespérée. Le sang est une chose qui m'aveugle' (p.328). Blood being a mark of original sin, as developed in *Le Vent noir* and *La Plage de Scheveningen*. Fernande's marriage failed after only a few days, for reasons which never become apparent, and she is visibly torn between the desire to seduce Didier and the wish to save his soul. The conflict within her is given comic form in an incident when she is

kept awake by amorous cats calling in her garden. Her method of chasing them away is to make signs of the cross and sprinkle them with holy water. As she explains to Didier, 'Je ne les punis pas...j'éloigne le maléfice, je le dissipe...Vous voyez ? ... Le diable s'éloigne' (p.202).

In the face of such ridicule, it would be easy to dismiss Fernande as a butt of Gadenne's satire, but it is to her that the final moments of the novel are given. She goes several times to clear up the room where Didier and his wife Flopie died and is deeply struck by the presence of a wooden crucifix above the bed. We are not told what significance she found in it, but it is clear that her complacency has been shaken: '... son esprit revenait sans cesse à cette image, et elle ne pouvait s'empêcher d'en faire mention comme d'une chose qui obsédait perpétuellement sa pensée' (p.787).

This analysis of characterization in the novels has shown the way in which the myth of the Labyrinth and Biblical narratives of Paradise and the Fall have created a dynamic in Gadenne's writing, based upon a feeling of loss which motivates the desire to repeat or recover a previous state of communion. An awareness of personal imperfection marks the Gadenne protagonist, whether he is searcher or banished victim, and he requires the help of donors if he is to recover the sense of unity he desires. The classification of other characters in relation to their function is more problematic. While some are indeed instruments in his progress, or impediments to it, I have suggested that the emphasis on function can be excessively reductive. This should be no surprise given the variety of form and developments in technique to be found in the seven works. There is greater depth to be found in the characters of *Le Vent noir*, *Les Hauts-Quartiers* and *La Plage de Scheveningen*, for example, than in others such as *La Rue profonde* and *L'Avenue* where they are closer to being ciphers.

The question of how that sense of complexity is built up in the mind of the reader forms the final section of this chapter.

Despite writing *La Rue profonde* in which characters have labels such as 'le poète', 'la jeune fille aux cahiers gris' and 'ma jeune fille' rather than names, in Gadenne's work we are far from the death of character in the modern novel. Thus he would have rejected Roland Barthes pronouncement in *S/Z* that, 'Ce qui est caduc aujourd'hui dans le roman, ce n'est pas le romanesque, c'est le personnage ; ce qui ne peut plus être écrit, c'est le Nom Propre' (1970, p.102). From my analysis of characterization so far, it will be clear that character is central to Gadenne's conception of the novel. He claims that great characters in literature are not 'fictifs', and in 'L'Efficacité du Roman' he describes their significance for the writer as 'le lieu où sa pensée a rencontré le monde' (1983, p.30). His approach would seem to be that of traditional mimesis. He outlines his practice in this way:

Prendre un individu dans une situation donnée, le plonger dans cette pleine mer de la vie (Du Bos), que chacun de nous connaît ou est censé connaître par expérience, assister aux pressions qu'il subit, aux remous qu'il fait, donner au lecteur la conscience de cet océan dans lequel il est plongé, lui-même, et où la vie ne lui permet pas toujours de descendre (Sarrou, 1999, p.53).

In the light of this statement there is an evident tension between the portrayal of figures determined by the structure of myth, the narrative of the Fall or a Kierkegaardian cycle of failed repetition, and a more experiential presentation of individuals engaged in a search, to use a phrase with which Gadenne was familiar from reading Kierkegaard, for 'the truth that is truth for me' (Caputo, 2008, p.17).

One may ask whether the criticism Sartre made of Mauriac that his characters lacked autonomy, due to his overt narratorial intervention, could be applied to Gadenne. William

Holdheim sums up the basis of Sartre's attack in two questions: 'Does the drama take place within the realms of freedom?' Are the characters 'plunged in a time where the future is wide open and where nothing is ever finished or determined in advance?' (1962, p.256)

While freedom within the context of a work of literature may be a rather problematic concept, the tension between an externally imposed narrative pattern and the experience, which the author conveys, of an individual acting within it is worthy of consideration.

It has already been shown that the constrictions of mythic narrative are particularly evident in *Siloé* and that its patterns are reinforced by significant names such as Ariane, Minnie, Pondorge and Lazare. The use of such names is not abandoned, however, in the later novels where the influence of myth and religious story is still present, but is arguably more subtly conveyed. This can easily be read as an example of direct characterization of a sort which goes back to humours, types and the flat characters, as defined by E.M. Forster, '... who in purest form... are constructed round a single idea or quality' (Lodge et al., 1972, p.138). The names of Gadenne's donors are often charged with mythic and literary heritage. Irma in *L'Avenue* has already been discussed, but *La Plage de Scheveningen* introduces Irène, whose name means peace, as well as Laura with connotations of victory and strength. Her name too may recall the wife and mother idealized in Petrarch's sonnets. Among the more sinister characters, one could easily make a link between the way Mme Monge seems to destroy the independence of Marcelle and Luc, trying to make them into her creatures, and a pun upon her name. Such interpretations can be dangerously speculative however. Alexandra Perrin, in 'Paul Gadenne ou l'invitation aux vraies richesses', explores the name Marcelle as deriving from the Latin verb 'marceo', meaning 'I wither, droop or am weak' (1996, p.189). This relates to Marcelle's indecision over her relationship with Luc and her submission to Mme.

Monge's authority. An equally plausible derivation for Marcelle, though, might be a link to the Roman god of war via the Latin name Marcellus. Marcelle, in *Le Vent noir*, associates with soldiers, dreams of blood and guns and is the only character who desires the coming of war, as an echo of her inner turmoil and suffering. Is one explanation more valid than the other?

Gadenne enjoys, in a playful way, the connotations names may evoke. Phanie, the abbreviated form of Epiphanie, is the inarticulate and incompetent maid in *L'Invitation chez les Stirl* who quakes beneath the stern gaze of her mistress. When her master dies and Madame Stirl leaves the house for the funeral, Phanie is transformed. She understands Olivier's instructions perfectly and has already anticipated what arrangements might be needed: 'L'espérance de la liberté lui donnait des ailes, presque de l'esprit' (1995, p.179). Her mind now freed, she provides the revelation, if it is to be believed, that the antagonism between Olivier and her mistress is caused by their mutual inability to express their love for each other. Further light is cast, or is it mystification, by Lucienne Lucius, in her rambling letter to Olivier at the end of the novel. The letter is full of crossings out and has pages missing: 'Cela devrait pourtant faire de la lumière!' (1995, p.169) In a novel in which appearances are deceptive and little we are told can be relied upon, the ironic play on character names, which seem to promise enlightenment, adds a comic layer to the dramatization of the difficulty of communicating.

Except in the case of the purely functional figures, characters in Gadenne's work must not be reduced to the name they bear. This point is represented by Hersent in *La Plage de Scheveningen*. Widely accepted as modelled on Robert Brasillach (Sarrou, 1999, p.21), whom

Gadenne knew while they both studied at Lycée Henri IV, Hersent is not physically present in the novel, but is never far from the thoughts of Guillaume and Irène. Reports of his flight, arrest, trial and execution punctuate the novel and form a counterpoint to the main characters' exploration of betrayal, guilt and judgement in the context of the breakdown of their relationship. Guillaume wonders how the charming, irreverent schoolboy he had known could have been transformed from a Christian humanist into a supporter of dictatorship and a vitriolic campaigner against the Jews in France. The name Hersent is unpacked as Guillaume seeks news of him from an acquaintance José: 'Comme il faisait le tour de la table, il aperçut le buvard de José, et les mots que celui-ci y avait inscrits, peut-être par automatisme, « Herr Sang... » Rêvait-il ?' (2009, p.64) Gadenne's point is that a name, or even the label 'traitor', can never define an individual. Perhaps the concept of justice is merely contingent: 'Quel monde avons-nous aujourd'hui à opposer à ce monde où la force faisait l'innocence, où le seul tort était de ne pas réussir ?' (2009, p.26) Everyone has shared in the spilling of Abel's blood, though they may not have written hate-filled anti-Semitic articles. As Guillaume says: 'Et en somme, du point de vue d'une saine morale, tout cela était parfaitement criminel. Et Irène l'était aussi. Et lui-même également. Tous criminels' (2009, p.275). The problem is how to act and to judge in the light of this understanding.

Names, then, provide conflicting indications as to the nature of individual characters, but which other methods of presentation does Gadenne use? In what follows I will make use of some of the categories outlined by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in her treatment of characterization in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (1983, pp.59-70).

Gadanne rarely employs direct definition, by which the principal traits of a character are provided by the narrator, or another authoritative source. Indeed many of Gadanne's narrators are homodiegetic and, as explained later, reveal themselves to be unreliable and ill-suited to their task. Even in the two novels whose form is most 'traditional', *Siloé* and *Les Hauts-Quartiers*, where there is an apparently heterodiegetic narrator, the principal focalizer is the protagonist and the validity of his view may at times be called into question.

Nor is use made of physical appearance as an indication of character, at least with regard to the protagonist. The reader can say little about the stature, colour of hair and eyes, or clothing of Luc, Simon, Didier and Olivier. The women, however, are more often defined through the gaze of the protagonist, frequently in terms of their beauty or sexual attraction. Arguably such descriptions reveal as much about the focalizer as about the woman in front of him. This view of Betty given by Didier in *Les Hauts-Quartiers* is a good example:

Elle est menue, si menue, sous une légère chemise, il pourrait l'écraser sans s'en apercevoir, sans qu'elle crie. Il pourrait la prendre et la jeter par la fenêtre, ou la plier et l'installer sur une chaise pour le reste de la nuit. Mais c'est qu'elle le voudrait bien, car il sent les muscles sous la peau, plus vigoureux qu'il ne semble, et ses longues jambes flexibles, et ses petites cuisses bien rondes et bien dures (1973, p.344).

Patterns of speech too can serve as indicators of character. This is particularly the case in *Le Vent noir* where there are three homodiegetic narrators. Each one dominates different chapters and it is their idiolect which allows us to identify them, as much as what they say, since no initial marker is given to help identify the name of the narrator. The punchy directness of Marcelle's language may speak of her popular origins, but her paradoxical means of expression and abrupt transitions from one idea to another betray the discomfort and confusion which lie at the core of her character:

Maman détestait tout ce qui venait du dehors, comme si nous étions la seule famille honnête dans Paris, ce qui fait en définitive que les hommes, pour en avoir, il aurait fallu les arrêter dans la rue. Je ne sais comment Berthe, si timide, avait pu faire pour trouver son fiancé. Peut-être qu'elle avait mis une annonce dans les journaux ? Je ne suis jamais où je suis, parce que je suis toujours là où je voudrais être, voilà la raison (1983, p.27).

The language of her would-be lover Luc, with its literary phrasing, accumulation of visual detail and hyperbolic emotion, could not form a greater contrast. It is clear that the sense of desolation and abandonment he experiences on missing collecting Marcelle from work has a deeper source:

Tout lui était égal. Je ne sais pourquoi ce mot me rappela subitement ma détresse à la vue du marché désert, les trottoirs couverts de débris que chassait le jet vigoureux des lances à eau, le ciel bas et triste, et le sentiment de défaite irrémédiable avec lequel j'étais revenu ce soir-là (1983, p.65).

The misuse of language and constant babble, are negative markers in Gadenne's characterization. Fernande Chotard-Lagréou represents an extreme example appropriate to the frequently satirical tone of *Les Hauts-Quartiers*:

Le pataquès n'était pas un supplément chez elle, un enjolivement ou un accident purement extérieur, purement technique. Il résonnait dans toute sa pensée et son système du monde était un gigantesque calembour (1973, p.159).

Ethel Stirl's incessant talking has already reduced her husband to silence, despite his reputation as 'un fin causeur' before his marriage, and now her loquacity and support of outlandish opinions seem to suck the life out of her guest Olivier. All other topics of conversation having been exhausted, 'la conversation retombait bientôt sur les chiens, c'est-à-dire qu'on assistait à un monologue passionné et quasi ininterrompu de Mme Stirl' (1995, p.33). Language has been diverted from its true purpose as communication to become a concealer of truth and a means of domination.

Rimmon-Kenan also points to the use of environment as a means of characterization:

A character's physical surrounding (room, house, street, town) as well as his human environment (family and social class) are also often used as trait-connoting metonymies. As with external appearance, the relation of contiguity is frequently supplemented by that of causality (1983, p.66)

Gadanne's evocation of space goes far beyond its use as a means of characterization and brings us back to the key role of the foundational narratives. A separate chapter will therefore be devoted to it. It is worth noting, however, how small the influence of family and class on his protagonists is. Even those with a family, such as Simon and Didier, are very soon taken out of its orbit. Simon is abstracted from his known world by tuberculosis, only to enter the utopian sphere of the sanatorium. Didier's parents leave Irube to work in North Africa. Antoine, the sculptor of *L'Avenue*, is separated from his wife by the vagaries of war and avoids even letter contact with her as his spiritual development advances. Gadanne's protagonists stand alone as individuals in search of their truth or resolution, as befits their status in mythic narrative.

My reference to focalization above points to the fact that characterization in Gadanne's novels is mainly achieved through what Michel Raimond calls 'le réalisme subjectif'. He explains that it is a feature of -

un récit dans lequel le narrateur s'astreint à ne dire que ce que sait le personnage et à ne montrer que ce qu'il perçoit : c'est ce que Jean Pouillon appelle la « vision avec » : le récit s'attache à respecter la limitation d'un point de vue subjectif... (2011, p.149)

The use of this technique in each of the novels has been exhaustively examined by Sophie Balso in her thesis (2007) and by Bruno Curatolo in *Paul Gadanne: l'écriture et les signes* (2000) in respect of *Le Vent noir*. Constraints on space preclude a similar analysis here and,

besides, it is hard to disagree with their conclusions. I do, however wish to highlight the consequences of the use of focalization upon the experience of the reader. Raimond sums them up neatly:

Il implique que nous coïncidons avec le personnage ; la dernière conséquence est de tendre à transformer le lecteur en personnage et de l'inviter à participer, le temps d'une lecture, à une expérience humaine sur le mode de l'imaginaire (2011, p.150).

Whether by means of focalization, *style indirect libre* or internal monologue, we are plunged into the experience of the characters and share in their sense of perplexity and confusion. *Le Vent noir* best illustrates this, with its three first-person narrators and a third-person narrator who adopts the point of view of different characters in turn. When Luc's obsession robs him of his first person voice, the heterodiegetic narrator takes his place; but such is the degree of identity that the reader scarcely notices the change. Each individual is incomprehensible to the other: '...chaque personnage, restant prisonnier de sa compétence, l'oscillation entre savoir et ignorance, entre vérité et mensonge, s'avère particulièrement forte' (Curatolo, 2000, p.127). If one adds to this the way in which the identity of the focalizer is not immediately revealed, facts are withheld and chronology is disrupted by flashback, it is hard to disagree with Curatolo when he claims that '*Le Vent noir* porte au plus haut degré la contribution de son auteur à la modernité romanesque du vingtième siècle' (2000, p.120).

While the faculty of sight is important in Gadenne's novels, the clear vision which Simon recovers in *Siloé* is rarely granted to protagonists in subsequent novels. The numerous references to glass and mirrors are one example of the world of imperfect sight in which his characters operate. The fundamental transparency of glass seems to be subordinated to its

reflective and refractive properties, opening us to a distorted and fragmented reality; that of the experience of the main characters. Their troubled nature is revealed in the conflict between the real and its distorted image.

Sophie Balso has written an extensive analysis of one of the café scenes in *Le Vent noir* (2007, pp.140-144). Almost as soon as Luc and Marcelle enter, he is caught up in a play of mirrors which transform his view of her and act as a springboard for a transition into Biblical narrative. They prefer to contemplate each other in the café mirrors which multiply and repeat their gestures a hundred times:

Elle avait ce sourire qu'elle ne montrait jamais dans la réalité, ce sourire qu'elle n'avait jamais que dans les glaces, où ses traits s'altéraient, s'adoucissaient insensiblement, et je m'efforçais de déchiffrer, de retenir dans ma mémoire ce visage-là, ce visage détendu, bon, aimable, qui cesserait aussitôt d'être le sien si, au lieu de le contempler dans l'image que j'en avais en face de moi, je détournais la tête pour le regarder à mes côtés (1983, p.98).

Luc's imagination transforms Marcelle into an ideal she is not and which can only exist in the distortion of mirrors and his obsession. In this fantasy the bird, part of her elaborate hat, is metamorphosed into the dove flying out from Noah's ark in search of dry land. This dove seems to presage disaster rather than signalling a peaceful landfall, when one links it to the bloody dawn which concludes the novel:

...c'étaient cent oiseaux qui, perchés sur la tête de ma compagne, semblaient conjurer de toutes leurs plumes le froid qui menaçait notre univers, en faisant courir au-dessus de nous une traînée de flammes rougeoyantes (1983, p.98)

The mirror in Gadenne's work is not only a source of illusion. As one of the tropes of the *fantastique*, it facilitates the passage from one layer of the real to another. In *La Rue profonde* a reflection in an oily puddle may simply emphasize the poet's inability to see things as they are: '... c'était comme un hublot providentiel par où il m'eût été donné

d'apercevoir, sous la mince croûte de terre qui nous supporte, la doublure céleste dont elle est toute entourée' (1995, p.99). The mirror in his room is perhaps a more reliable revealer of the hidden nature of things, as his new friend, unbeknownst to him a young prostitute, contemplates her reflection in it:

Elle reste là un instant, bougeant à peine, s'observant, s'interrogeant avec un soin grave, méticuleux, ne se lassant pas d'épier cette autre femme si attentive qui vient à sa rencontre du fond des temps, le corps troué çà et là d'étranges blessures, et dans laquelle elle s'inquiète de ne pas se reconnaître tout à fait (1995, p.121).

Despite Gadenne's expressed disdain for the type of narrative experimentation which accompanied the dawn of the Nouveau Roman, two of his novels foreground the unreliability of the narrator. The poet narrator of *La Rue profonde* should, by nature of his calling and his elevated station above the street, be able to discern the truth. He proves himself particularly unsuited to the task. He comes to the aid of a street performer being insulted by a crowd and receives a beating for his pains. A girl picks him out of the gutter and takes him to a café to recover. The men drinking there look at them with a mixture of hostility and amusement. The poet puts this down to the fact that he wears a tie and glasses: 'Je portais les emblèmes d'un monde qui n'était pas le leur... Les hommes qui fréquentent cet établissement n'ont pas de cravates et leur vue est absolument sans défaut' (1995, p.116). There is indeed nothing wrong with the drinkers' eyesight. They have made sense of the girl's black satin dress and heady perfume, ill-suited to the time of day, and drawn the correct conclusion. The poet is slow to catch on and believes that she might be a replacement for 'la jeune fille aux cahiers gris' with whom he had experienced the intense moments of the passing of 'le cheval de minuit'. He is struck by her innocence: 'Je fus frappé soudain par la pensée de ce qu'il y avait, - dans certaines attitudes, certaines pudeurs de

mon amie, - de virginal' (1995, p.144). The poet only realises that she is a prostitute when he follows her to her flat and gradually makes sense of the trappings of the *maison close* into which he has been introduced. The irony at the poet's expense plays on several levels. Not only has his blindness been painfully exposed, but he has precipitated the revelation by going against their habit of meeting only in his room or in public places. The girl's wish to experience the moment of the passing of 'le cheval de minuit', which he has told her about, could have been the cause of her deliverance and perhaps even his own. The reader may have enjoyed a feeling of superiority, having seen through the poet's illusion, but he too has been taken in by a narrative sleight of hand. The start of chapter XVIII emphasises the poet as narrator and his account as literature, retelling his story from a position of knowledge: 'Je raconterai maintenant au passé les événements qui ont suivi, car pendant plusieurs jours je n'ai pas pu écrire' (1995, p.139). He is of course already aware of his self-deception and has moved to a new vantage point, hoping to have learned from his experience and its transformation into a novel.

The narrative structure of *L'Invitation chez les Stirl* further demonstrates how Gadenne makes the reader share in the perplexity of the protagonist Olivier. The novel starts with a traditional third person external narrator who presents the setting, Barcos-les-Bains, and briefly introduces Olivier. The narrator reports Olivier's words in direct speech and he seems to address the reader directly, as he recounts the events of his stay with Ethel Stirl and her husband to a few friends. He invites us to draw our own conclusions from his story: 'Bref, entre eux et moi, je voudrais vous mettre à même de juger' (1995, p.18). The account then continues in the third person, when one might have expected a switch to the first person, with Olivier as the sole focalizer. It is evident that his view is partial and we are left with a

number of unanswered questions. Do Ethel and Olivier love each other? Did Ethel try to kill Olivier by sending him into an abandoned room where the floor gave way beneath him? Did the battle of wills between them over a game of chess contribute, in some way, to the death of Allan Stirl? The last two questions belong to the realm of the *fantastique*, whose atmosphere pervades the novel, and the ambiguity of the narrative stance contributes to the hesitation and doubt on which, according to Todorov's analysis (1970, pp.37-38), that genre depends. The evidence presented by Olivier, together with Phanie's opinions and the strange letter of Lucienne Lucius, should shed light upon events, but they suggest no clear conclusion. The novel ends with Olivier addressing us directly once again:

Enfin, vous avez écouté mon histoire – et me voici moi-même – il eut un drôle de sourire - Olivier – Olivier Lérins...

« A présent, dit-il, je vous écoute... » (1995, p.183)

The third person narrator has failed in his duty of providing a resolution. He seems to know no more than the protagonist. The disordered papers have been left in a dusty room, to echo the epigraph taken from Eliot's *Animula*, and their significance cannot readily be established. As Gadenne said in his preface to the novel, his ambition was, 'de composer un ouvrage où ce qui compte est tout ce qui n'est pas dit' (1995, p.11).

My review of characterization in Gadenne's novels has shown a development from the distinctly functional figures of *Siloé*, whose roles can be defined in terms derived from Propp, to the more complex characters of many of the later novels, into whose inner life we gain privileged access. This progression is paralleled by a use of more sophisticated narrative techniques which encourage varying readings of the significance of the protagonists' behaviour and vision of the world. These novels move away from the overtly authoritarian

approach of *Siloé*. To an extent we go from the 'lisible' towards the 'scriptible', to use Barthes' terminology (1970, p.10). In my view, however, it would not be justified to place Gadenne in the camp of the moderns as a result. While the reader shares the anxiety of the protagonist as he experiences a confusing and fragmented world, this emotion is set in the context of foundational narratives which on one hand portray the individual as outcast, but on the other allow the hope of reconciliation. This reconciliation is achieved in *Siloé* and is suggested as potential elsewhere, as I shall argue in Chapter 4. In Gadenne, to quote Martin Price's formula, it is indeed possible to view characters 'at once as persons and as parts of a design' (Mack, 1968, p.290).

SPACE

I have argued for the importance of the foundational narratives of the expulsion from Paradise and the myth of the Labyrinth in an understanding of the characters in Gadenne's novels and the dynamics of the relations between them. Do these narratives also determine the value of the spaces in which the characters move? Which techniques are used to create a sense of such spaces? The treatment of description is one of the factors which contrasts the nineteenth century Realistic tradition with more modern twentieth century iterations of mimesis. Where does Gadenne sit in relation to these developments? In discussing these questions, reference will be made to Michel Raimond's studies of the development of the novel and a framework of analysis suggested in Mieke Bal's *Narratology: introduction to the theory of the narrative* (1997) will lead to a thematic approach to the representation of space in Gadenne's work, based on such oppositions as city versus the natural world. Daniela Fabiani's *Spazio e immaginario in Paul Gadenne* (1999) uses this contrast, but I will expand its scope and change its emphasis.

By way of introduction, it is important to consider how Gadenne's depiction of the physical world of objects and places compares with various approaches to description in twentieth century French novels. This discussion is guided by Michel Raimond's exposition of 'La description de l'espace' in *Le Roman* (2011, pp.182-191). Practice has moved beyond description as decoration or document. No longer a pause in the narrative, descriptions are directly linked to the perceptions of the characters, in the context of 'un réalisme subjectif' (2011, p.184). This was already evident in the writing of nineteenth century Naturalists, in their efforts to confine description to what the hero could actually see. My earlier remarks

about focalization as an element in building up a sense of character suggest that Gadenne was broadly in sympathy with this practice. Raimond quotes the following observation from Gérard Genette about the nature of description in Proust: ‘... la description proustienne est moins une description de l’objet contemplé qu’un récit et une analyse de l’activité perceptive du personnage contemplant’ (2011, p.187). Gadenne had studied Proust’s style as the subject of his dissertation for the Diplôme d’Etudes Supérieures, submitted in 1930. The exploration of perception, and the influences upon it, are indeed one aspect of the description of objects and places in his own novels. The rigour and attentiveness he attributes to Proust are evident in the evocation of settings and objects. For Gadenne, they are charged with meaning. Gaston Bachelard, in *La Poétique de l’espace*, draws attention to this interaction between individuals and the space in which they operate:

L’espace saisi par l’imagination ne peut rester l’espace indifférent livré à la mesure et à la réflexion du géomètre. Il est vécu. Et il est vécu, non pas dans sa positivité, mais avec toute les partialités de l’imagination (2012, p.17).

For Gadenne, though, this meaning is derived not only from the significance of spaces and objects for the character who experiences them, but also from their value as metaphors within the mythic context which underpins all his works. In this Gadenne stands in opposition to the emerging Nouveau Roman. We are very far from the conception of description which Barthes finds in the writing of Robbe-Grillet: ‘L’objet n’est plus... un foyer de correspondances, un foisonnement de sensations et de symboles; il est seulement une résistance optique’ (Raimond, 2011, p.190). In Gadenne, to use Barthes’ expression quoted by Raimond, the ‘cœur romantique des choses’ beats strongly still.

In *Narratology: introduction to the theory of narrative*, Mieke Bal sets out a theoretical basis for the study of space in literature, suggesting that ‘few concepts deriving from the theory of narrative texts are as self-evident and have yet remained so vague as the concept of space’ (Bal and Boheemen, 2009, p.132). In my study I am not concerned with the way in which Gadenne describes specific places, even though it has been suggested that one could follow the night time walks of Luc and Marcelle through Paris or could pick out the particular vantage point from which the poet surveys the city at the end of *La Rue Profonde*. This, however, is beside the point. Gadenne’s purpose in description is not documentary, and he in no way wishes to follow Balzac in his depiction of precise locations. His interest lies in space and Bal explains the distinction between it and a sense of place:

The story is determined by the way in which the fabula is presented. Owing to this process, places are linked to certain points of perception. These places seen in relation to their perception are called space. That point of perception may be a character, which is situated in a space, observes it, and reacts to it (2009, p133).

She further points out that:

the semantic content of spatial aspects can be constructed in the same way as the semantic content of a character... by a preliminary combination of determination, repetition, accumulation, transformation, and the relations between various spaces (2009, p.135).

For me the element of determination is especially significant. Bal sees this as operating in terms of the reader’s frame of reference. This is clearly the case; but in Gadenne’s novels the mythic and foundational narratives he retells and transforms provide an important level of determination to the value of spaces and the ways in which they function. The narratives of the Fall and the Labyrinth, as I will show, add their extra layers of meaning and, just as they contribute to characterization and the reader’s understanding of the protagonists, so they also inform the appreciation of space.

Various oppositions have been suggested as a means of examining the structural significance of space in works of literature such as: 'far-near, open-closed, finite-infinite, together with familiar-strange, safe-unsafe and accessible-inaccessible' (Bal and Boheemen, 2009, p.216). These neat contrasts hold a certain attraction but, as Bal recognizes, in most works the significance of a space is much more complex. The privacy of a bedroom can be a token of intimacy or isolation, of security or of threat. The categories which seem to me most appropriate to a consideration of Gadenne's depiction of space are natural world-urban environment, the idea of home, and ascent-descent. It should not be surprising, however, given the nature of Gadenne's thought, that his treatment of space spans the distance between contrasting terms in an attempt to reconcile these opposites.

Daniela Fabiani provides a detailed treatment of space in her book *Spazio e immaginario in Paul Gadenne (1999)*, though her analysis is centred mainly on the urban space and the natural world. My more limited survey will inevitably cover some of the same ground. I prefer, however, to reverse the order and take the natural world as my starting point. I have already suggested that *Siloé* should serve as the point of reference for comparison and contrast in any consideration of Gadenne's output, as it develops most explicitly the mythic foundation of his view of existence. I will place greater emphasis on this than Fabiani, as well as according equal status to exploring the connotations of home in his novels and the interplay between ascent and descent in the characters' experience of the world.

It should come as no surprise that reconciliation with the natural world is central to Simon's recovery of sight and health in *Siloé*. Its role is prefigured in the prologue to the novel when Simon takes a brief stroll in les Jardins du Luxembourg between seminars at the Sorbonne.

He passes some shrub roses, which are just bursting into flower, and takes in their heady scent:

Il suffisait de plonger un instant son visage dans la fraîcheur de ces branches naïves, et l'on pénétrait aussitôt dans des régions de la vie inconnues... Simon éprouva tout à coup le sentiment aigu de tout ce qui manquait à sa vie (1974, p.46).

This obscure sense of separation and loss is at the root of his growing dissatisfaction with his academic studies and is arguably the psychic cause of his physical illness. His stay in the sanatorium at le Crêt d'Armenaz will provide the space and time for discovery and healing through his encounters with the forces of nature and his love for Ariane. As I have shown in Chapter 2, Ariane is barely distinguishable from nature itself:

Ariane avait poussé droit sur le sol, elle en avait jailli comme un jeune tronc. Les veines qui parcouraient son corps devaient avoir puisé leur première nourriture au sein de la terre et c'est pourquoi sans doute elle s'entendait si bien avec toutes les formes de la nature (1974, p.271).

In the early stages of his cure, Simon is confined to his room or its balcony. Fabiani rightly describes this as a limbic state:

In fact, the more disease leads Simon to a state of non-death and non-life, towards a state we could define as limbic, where everything remains suspended in actual nothingness, disconnected from any kind of social or divine reference, the more he will rely upon the natural world and its inner pulsations (1999, p.100).³

Simon's initial attitude to the spectacle of the mountains is one of indifference and incomprehension. When a patient invites him to admire the gradual emergence of Le Grand-

³ Quanto più infatti la malattia spinge Simon verso una condizione di non-morte e di non-vita, verso uno stato potremmo dire limbico in cui tutto resta come sospeso nel nulla presente, sganciato da ogni tipo di riferimento sociale o divino, tanto più egli si affida al mondo della natura e alle sue pulsazioni interiori Fabiani, D. (1999) *Spazio e immaginario in Paul Gadenne*. La Spezia: Agorà Edizioni. (Translation of the Italian facilitated by Clelia Boscolo).

Massif from the mist, Simon is not far from sharing Massube's dismissive judgement, 'Vos montagnes, eh bien quoi, c'est des excroissances de la terre ! C'est des boutons de fièvre ! ... Une acné un peu prolongé ! Il n'y a pas de quoi faire tant d'histoires !' (1974, p.115) The development of Simon's understanding will be gradual.

It is interesting to note the elements of the natural world which Gadenne assembles to effect the education of the protagonist. They are a meadow, a rushing stream and a tree – the traditional features of the 'locus amœnus', the privileged setting for love scenes in classical literature (Bal and Boheemen, 2009, p.138). In this space Simon's love for Ariane may grow and his revelation of the sympathetic unity of creation may be experienced. The meadow is the first space he learns to appreciate, though in image it is already associated with the cleansing water of Siloé. It imposes its presence upon him with a force which is hard to resist:

La prairie venait à lui, coulant comme une eau verte, intarissable, étoilée de points multicolores ; elle venait se mettre à son niveau, elle venait s'appliquer avec une sorte de douce frénésie contre les barreaux du balcon d'où elle le regardait, lui, l'hôte étrange de cette chambre, l'habitant de cette cabine, le passager aux exaltations solitaires... Il la sentait vivre. Elle avait un rythme, une volonté (1974, pp. 175-176).

I have previously alluded to the significance of the waterfall in the context of Simon's cure and the parable in St. John's Gospel, so I will deal more fully with the symbolism of the tree in *Siloé*. As Simon's strength grows he is able to wander beyond the immediate surroundings of the meadow in front of the sanatorium. Indeed such walks are encouraged as integral to the therapeutic process. As he goes beyond the waterfall, a particular tree takes on a special value for him. He tries to grasp its meaning as a symbol of the life within it, despite its winter

dormancy. He embraces it, experiences its power, but for a moment feels somehow rejected by it, as though the victim of a cruel joke:

il eût vu Massube sortir de l'arbre, le dos voûté, avec un sarcasme au coin de la bouche, qu'il n'eût pas été plus effrayé. Mais ce mauvais rêve prenait fin ; de nouveau l'arbre l'enveloppait de son amour, l'attirait à lui, ayant ce grand secret à lui dire qui devait rendre la vie merveilleuse. Il était redevenu la grande puissance pacifique et bienfaisante (1974, pp.317-318).

Later, after the death of Ariane, Simon seeks solace beneath the tree, addressing a lengthy prayer to it. He tries to make sense of the intensity of his love for Ariane and his bitterness at her loss:

L'arbre se dressait au bord de la route, dans un mouvement énorme de délivrance, de certitude, de victoire. Il était le résumé de tout, ordre, passion, vertu. Sa tête sereine élevée sur le ciel ne cherchait pas à renier le corps à corps violent de ses racines avec la terre. Une de ses plus basses branches s'arrondissait au-dessus de la route, en un geste doux et protecteur (1974, p.533).

Marie-Hélène Gauthier, in *La Poétique: Paul Gadenne, Henri Thomas, Georges Perros*, offers a sensitive reading of *Siloé* in the light of Gadenne's Sorbonne studies of classical philosophy. Her explanation of the significance of the tree is particularly eloquent:

Il est, dans *Siloé*, le symbole de l'unité sympathique de la nature, par-delà l'écoulement dispersant du Torrent. Il est la permanence de ce qui ne cesse pas de passer dans le variant, l'identité dans le variable et le multiple, la durée dans l'écoulement (2010, p.184).

There is much here with which I would agree but, for me, this is a limited interpretation, which does not give enough weight to the Christian context provided by the parable of which the novel is a reworking. The link between the tree and the Cross is finally made explicit as Simon lies in bed on the edge of sleep, shortly before his discharge from the sanatorium with his cure complete. He can see a brown wooden crucifix on the wall, one of the fixtures in every patient's room, and the image of his tree merges into it:

Les yeux fermés, Simon se laissait prendre par cette puissance lumineuse venue vers lui et qui lui annonçait la beauté, la bonté du monde. Il s'endormait en plein ciel, porté, poussé, par ces rameaux fervents et doux qui commençaient à se couvrir de feuilles. Alors, Simon comprenait qu'il fallait vivre (1974, p.541).

For him, this tree has become a tree of knowledge. A reconnection with the earth and with water has transformed his vision. Paradise has been regained, in the sense that his separation from nature and the divine forces of creation working within it has been eliminated. His journey, however, is only beginning, as he must return to the real world of the city to share the love he has experienced with those he meets.

The harmony between the natural world, the divine and the protagonist achieved in *Siloé* will rarely be repeated in Gadenne's later novels. In fact the relation between man and nature is usually experienced in terms of exclusion and loss, emphasizing the key narrative of the Fall, which is a fundamental component of his characterization. Nature itself can be under attack, infected by human failings, or is at least resistant to the progress of the protagonist. References to trees bear this out. In *Le Vent noir*, those seen by M. Monge on a night-time walk through Paris reflect his own isolation:

Des formes d'arbres, émergeant des berges, s'y découpent sombrement. Des arbres noirs, noircis par le temps, noirs comme les pierres des édifices. Des arbres sans espoir, oui, des arbres comme les pierres, figés, arrêtés pour toujours, à l'écorce noire et crevassée (1983, p.59).

In *La Plage de Scheveningen*, the landscape of northern France has been ravaged by war and the trees are wrecks: 'Maintenant il comprenait pourquoi il avait tant de mal à reconnaître les arbres. C'est qu'ils étaient déchiquetés et paraissaient s'émietter dans le crépuscule' (2009, p.100). Where they have survived, their dense interlocking branches obscure the sky, rather than embracing it, as do the trees in *Siloé*.

An analysis of the treatment of gardens in the novels will reveal the pervasiveness of the narrative of the exclusion from Paradise and, importantly, how the later works refer back to the harmonious relation between earth and heaven, which is the vision proposed in *Siloé*.

L'Invitation chez les Stirl which, at first glance, could not be more different from *Siloé* in fact harks back to it in numerous ways, to the extent that it could be read as an anti-*Siloé*. Olivier had known Ethel four years previously in Savoie and formed a deep friendship with her. Invited to her new home in the south west, he hopes to re-establish the easy communication they had enjoyed in the clear alpine air. He expects to be able to paint, inspired by the contrast between his damp Paris studio and the bright sun and colours of *le pays Basque*. He intends also to visit an old friend from his sanatorium days called Bernard Schulz, who bears a striking resemblance to Simon's spiritual guide Jérôme in *Siloé*. In all these hopes Olivier is disappointed. He is unable to work. His relations with Ethel become a 'sourd combat' which prevents any genuine communication. He falls ill, despite the supposedly healthy 'toni-sédatif' atmosphere of Barcos, and circumstances always seem to conspire to prevent him going to visit Schulz.

The transformation of the natural world is even more striking, however. Despite unpromising first impressions, he hopes to rediscover, 'l'enchantement de ce jardin touffu, de ce vieux pavillon de bois, où une fine poussière était répandue sur les objets ; recréer le paradis, en somme, pour un quart d'heure' (1995, p.106). This modest attempt at 'repetition' is doomed to failure and the paradise he seeks to recreate in this garden belongs to an irretrievable past. Normally Olivier can draw upon the peace and strength of trees, but here this is impossible:

en les regardant davantage, il voyait tout ce que ces feuilles acérées, ces éventails sans cesse agités et repliés, ces dards végétaux, contenaient d'allusion à l'activité et au langage de son hôtesse, et il était saisi par la complicité entre Mme Stirl et ses palmiers (1995, p.42).

His obsession with the lush vegetation, barely kept in check by his hostess with a menacing pair of secateurs, culminates in a long sleepless night. He can gain no relief from the pain in his side and a full moon in a stormy sky casts moving shadows of palm leaves onto the walls of his room:

Ces ombres, ces fausses ombres, ces ombres mortes, plaquées sur son lit par les palmiers coléreux de Mme Stirl, ressemblaient aux barreaux d'une prison furieusement agités, qui s'écartaient pour se resserrer davantage, et qui lui rendaient la maison encore plus étouffante... (1985, p.124).

His escape from this prison is at the cost of the death of M. Stirl. His hostess leaves the house to accompany her husband's body back to Normandy and the evil charm is somehow broken. Olivier's inspiration returns, but his semi-abstract canvases seem to have transformed the cutting edges of those palm leaves into blades and bayonets.

Given that we view the Stirl garden exclusively from Olivier's perspective, it could be argued that the menace he reads into the natural world is simply a product of his conflict with Ethel. In Gadenne's final novel, *Les Hauts-Quartiers*, there is no doubt that nature itself is under attack from man and that he is destroying the last vestiges of connection with the Edenic paradise. Again there is a specific link to *Siloé*. The first chapter of *Les Hauts-Quartiers* bears the title 'Que vois-tu Jérémie?' which repeats a line from the epigraph to the final section of *Siloé*. The question is part of a quotation from Jeremiah (1:11) in which God calls the prophet to go out and fulfil his purpose. What Jeremiah sees is the branch of an almond tree, significantly the first tree to blossom and bear fruit. This is what Simon must do as he returns

to his former life. The quotation's application to *Les Hauts-Quartiers* and Didier's personal journey is much more problematic, however.

This novel begins with a dual expulsion. A few months after their flight from Dunkirk and then Paris to escape the German advance, Didier and his family have taken refuge in Irube (Bayonne). Taking advantage of some fine weather, Didier and his mother walk out of the town and spend some time relaxing in a meadow. It is striking how elements of the description recall the setting of *Siloé*:

La prairie en fleurs se bombait légèrement avant de descendre vers le fleuve et les montagnes apparaissaient au loin. On sentait la terre battre sous les pommiers et la grisante rumeur des routes parvenait aux promeneurs en même temps que des bruits de sources (1973, p.18).

They are chased away from this idyllic spot and accused of trespass by the angry owner, a M. Beauchamp. His ironic name is suited to the often satirical tone in the novel, and in the background of the work we are told of his active collaboration with the forces of Occupation, his rehabilitation after the Liberation and his rise from scrap metal dealer to become a *député*. Didier and his mother have been excluded from a place where the harmony of the forces of life could be experienced and sent back to their place in the streets of an overcrowded town. As the narrative develops, Didier is barred from other gardens and places of felicity, whether as a result of his refusal to compromise his principles, as in his ideological differences with his friend Pierre, or the hypocrisy of *bien-pensant* disapproval whipped up by Fernande Chotard-Lagréou.

It is in the description of the progressive stages of degradation of the garden at the house where Didier lodges that Gadenne's satire is combined with a metaphysical exploration of

estrangement and despair. Didier is particularly fond of a peach tree growing outside his window. The description hints at its significance as a sign of the possibility of transcendence:

Ce pêcher, très ancien, ... était devenu un arbre de belles proportions, aux inflexions gracieuses. Didier l'apercevait, dès son lever, par la fenêtre de sa petite cuisine, et il était la signature du matin, le chant du ciel (1973, p.66).

The house owner has decided that the somewhat neglected garden must be put to better use and sends in 'le Jardinier'. This white-shirted model of Aryan manhood is a member of the *La Légion des volontaires français contre le bolchevisme*, who thus wears a German uniform. He savagely cuts down the vegetation in order to grow vegetables; something for which the meagre soil is ill-suited. Didier develops a deep loathing for him and imagines him as a demonic fallen angel. He sums up the reason for this assault upon nature: 'Les plantes sont haïes par les guerriers parce qu'elles ont d'énormes réserves de paix et nous conseillent la paix, et qu'elles recherchent la paix avec une avidité arrogante' (1973, pp.80-81). In Didier's mind 'le Jardinier' and M. Beauchamp, who has cut down his trees to sell for firewood, are connected: 'Et ainsi le héros rejoignait l'usurier sur l'écran furieux de la pensée' (1973, p.81).

After the Liberation the house is rented by a retired colonel, who has served through two World Wars, without getting mud on his boots. The garden is now transformed in the French style, with flowerbeds reinstated and gravel paths obsessively raked by the colonel. These activities are as inimical to Didier's peace as the work of 'le Jardinier'. The colonel's housekeeper makes matters worse, however, with her installation of a chicken coop. As the colonel's strength declines, and Katia's influence increases, the chickens proliferate. The vegetation is pecked away and the ground is covered with droppings. She spends hours

talking to her birds in a made-up language which points to the failure of true communication through the stripping of meaning from words:

Plus d'une minute ne s'écoulait sans apporter aux oreilles de Didier l'écho de ces cris toujours renaissants, de cette tempête d'affolement et de tendresse, de cette stridulation inventive, de ce luxe d'encouragements pour inviter à la nourriture des bêtes qui, laissées à elles-mêmes, s'y ruent avec une exemplaire voracité : Tititi-ti-ti pourrah... sato fité titia... titititia... Pourrah pititititia... (1973, p.152).

After the colonel's death, Katia is replaced by the Maillehort family. They are travelling grocers who adulterate their produce and give short measure to their customers. The garden and garage, above which Didier has his flat, are transformed into a working space. The noise as the extended family packs the goods and the coming and going of the lorry through a creaking gate add further layers of torment to Didier's existence. What is left of the garden is clogged by their rubbish, the abandoned toys of their spoilt child and the dog's excrement. Even the natural sound of rain falling on the ground is replaced by its drumming on the tin roof of the lorry parked beneath his window. This brutal invasion of materiality forms an ironic counterpoint to Didier's attempts to work on his magnum opus, *Conditions de la Vie Mystique*. This work is progressively downgraded from treatise, to encyclopaedia, to dictionary as he struggles with the chasm between 'la beauté des desseins de Dieu' and 'ce fumier' (1973, p.429).

There appears to be a great distance between the experience of the natural world as a place of encounter with God, as one finds in Siloé, and its apparently wilful destruction by man in the final novel. The material seems to have vanquished the spiritual and Didier is cut off from the source of inspiration which Simon enjoyed. This contrast is perhaps not as absolute as Didier portrays it in his darkest moments. He muses over his study of Tauler, the German

mystic, and a page he is trying to write on 'Le combat contre les Monstres'. The image of 'le Jardinier' with his beautiful features and immaculate shirt comes into his mind:

Mais non, ce n'est pas là le visage de Satan. Ce serait plutôt... Peut-être que l'Ange aussi aime torturer. Et quelle torture plus exquise que celle de l'Ambiguïté ? D'ailleurs Lucifer est un ange, il faut partir de là... (1973, p.460).

Ambiguity indeed, which reflects Gadenne's view of the conflicting forces within man's fallen nature. As a member of the LVF, this 'Jardinier' is a traitor to the French cause. There is a troubling contrast between his physical beauty and his destructive activity. Yet even here the potential of the divine spark can be discerned. The gardener was Mary Magdalene's mistaken identification of Christ on the morning of resurrection. This young man is not the true gardener, of course, but Didier still facilitates his escape from arrest at the Liberation, despite the harm he has done.

With few exceptions, the urban space dominates Gadenne's work. Three of the novels derive their titles from it. In addition, *Le Vent noir* takes place almost entirely in Paris. It is the point of departure and return in *Siloé* and the start of Guillaume and Irène's attempt to unravel the truth of their past in *La Plage de Scheveningen*. Only in *L'Invitation chez les Stirl* is the town very much in the background because Olivier is held, almost spellbound, in the mysterious villa.

On one level, the town could be seen as standing in simple opposition to the natural world, where there remains the potential for encounter with the divine. Antoine in *L'Avenue* reflects upon the fact that le Château of his imagination, which his ideal couple hope to enter, is empty:

Ce lieu vers lequel ils se rendaient, c'était le lieu, éternellement vacant, que nous réservions depuis toujours à l'action supérieure à toute action, à l'amour supérieur à tout amour, à la Présence dont nous avons invoqué la venue au cours des siècles, par toutes nos constructions et nos constitutions, par tous nos édifices, par des armées de maçons et d'architectes... (1984, pp.190-191).

It would be easy to conclude that the 'Présence' is itself a lie, created as a means of controlling the people. The interpretation which is most in keeping with the novel as a whole, however, is that the work of human hands and of the imagination cannot conjure the presence which is immanent in nature. After all, Antoine needs a series of almost supernatural donors to experience it, on the edge of the town amidst the ruins of 'La Construction'. Even then, his next step on his spiritual journey, taken at the end of the novel, requires a leap into the unknown.

It would be wrong, however, to ascribe a single value to the urban space. As Fabiani explains:

The urban topography, due to its vastness and variety, provides a privileged range of places apt to stimulate internal investigation: illuminated by the sight and the presence of the character, they lose their inert materiality and participate in the chaos of the human thoughts (1999, pp.55-56).⁴

This chaos springs from the rootlessness of the protagonist as he wanders in the city and harks back to the experience of the labyrinth myth first evoked in *Siloé*. An example from *L'Avenue* is typical:

Antoine quitta la route, emprunta un second passage semblable au premier – il arrivait chez lui par un labyrinthe de sentiers, de segments de routes et de passages

⁴ La topografia urbana, grazie alla sua vastità e varietà, fornisce una gamma privilegiata di luoghi favorevoli all'indagine interiore: illuminati dallo sguardo e dalla presenza del personaggio essi perdono la loro matericità inerte e partecipano alla caoticità dei pensieri umani (1999, pp.55-56).

interdits – et s’engagea enfin sur un chemin d’herbe qui longeait le mur des Capucins (1984, p.177).

As his walks take him further, he is conscious that the town actively resists his desire to make sense of it and to find his destination. High walls topped with broken glass hem him in and discourage climbing to get a view of what might be beyond. Though he knows the avenue now, it stubbornly refuses to take him to his goal and becomes in itself a source of pain: ‘Il avait désiré l’avenue pour la joie amère, l’espérance difficile qu’elle lui donnait toujours’ (1984, p.209). Lacking the revelation which Irma will pass on to him, he knows that, ‘L’angoisse était de ne pas savoir ce qui était au bout de cet appel, de ne jamais connaître que la poussière de la route, jamais son terme’ (1984, p.212). He will need a guide if he is to reach his goal.

Gabarrus is, in any case, an unreal space in which a close relation to myth is to be expected, but the urban space of Paris, even when the description is apparently realistic, can also contribute to the protagonist’s sense of bewilderment and vulnerability. In *La Plage de Scheveningen*, Guillaume returns to the capital after the Liberation only to find that its very geography has changed. The names of streets and metro stations have been altered.

Familiar guides such as street maps and the Bottin have been torn up. When he is able to track down former acquaintances they live in unfamiliar places, their lives subtly changed in ways he cannot quite comprehend.

Paris figures most significantly in *Le Vent noir*, where its nocturnal life seems to accord with the darkness that lies deep within Luc and Mathilde. As Fabiani points out (1999, pp.68-69), their walks create a space for them to explore the deeper recesses of consciousness. It is

noticeable how Luc shuns brightly-lit, frequented places which might distract them from themselves and each other:

Le Luxembourg était une faute. Luc s'écarta précipitamment, lança Marcelle à l'assaut d'une petite rue anguleuse qui filait vers les hauteurs du Panthéon, d'où ils dévalèrent vivement par des ruelles borgnes, en longeant des mesures, des terrains vagues, des boutiques sordides de brocanteurs... Paris était une ville pleine de dangers (1983, p.156).

Even in daylight Luc's fragile sense of self, it seems, cannot survive extended contact with the bustle of busy streets. The wind of impending disaster blows through the city and Luc needs to take refuge in quiet cafés:

Le vent soulevait du sol une poussière noire, et l'aspect gris des façades, les branches nues des platanes brandissant leurs brindilles irritées sous un ciel saccagé qui se dispersait en menus flocons, tout cela me distrayait de penser : dehors j'appartenais aux choses (1983, p.97).

The life of the city is not always threatening in Gadenne's work. Even in *Siloé*, which is dominated by the natural world, its attraction to Simon is evident, though he views it from behind the isolating glass of an omnibus window:

Simon riait tout à coup en pensant à ces philosophes qui se demandent gravement si le monde extérieur existe. Eh parbleu, messieurs, allez donc le demander à la ménagère en train de palper la salade d'une main si étrangère à vos prétentieuses inquiétudes ! La rue vous répondra... (1974, p.15).

For the poet in *La Rue profonde*, the street, seen from his garret room, holds the promise of adventure and relief from the rigours of his writing. Its allure cannot be resisted:

A midi je descends, je tourne le coin de la rue, et je suis dans l'avenue. Le soleil se tient exactement dans l'axe de l'avenue, et je marche vers lui, la main devant les yeux aveuglé... Cette heure a été donnée au monde pour sa gloire. Les oranges des marchands forment des pyramides rayonnantes dont les pierres, le ciel se renvoie l'écho (1995, pp.81-82).

Michèle Hirsch expresses neatly the relationship between the poet and the contrasting spaces of *La Rue profonde*. For the protagonist, Paris is 'le pôle détendu et multiple de ce jeu d'oppositions entre la chambre à écrire et la rue, le survol et l'immersion' (1983, p.61). My quotation from the novel underscores not only the pleasures of the street for the poet, but also its danger. There he is blinded by the sun, but more particularly by his illusion. He hopes that the street will offer him an encounter with 'la jeune fille aux cahiers gris', or at least a suitable substitute. In this he is disappointed, as he fails to read the true situation of the young woman who bathes his wounded head after a street brawl. In pursuing an impossible repetition, he misses the chance of a new beginning in his life and a transformation in the condition of this young prostitute. As his obsessive behaviour develops, Luc too often waits at crossroads, hoping to meet up with Marcelle, but, as with the poet, the image of the woman he tries to intercept on her way home from work does match the reality.

The urban space in Gadenne's work can, then, be charged with vitality and the potential for encounter, or it can be a disorienting place of distortion and self-deception. Whichever value it represents at a particular moment in the narrative, Antoine's judgement in *L'Avenue* remains true:

Et cependant, la ville n'était ni le nœud ni l'issue. Aussi bien le secret se tenait-il tapi derrière un buisson négligé, au tournant d'une allée, dans la boue d'une ornière amollie par l'eau des averses (1984, p.248).

Gaston Bachelard writes of the phenomenological significance of the house in the literary imagination:

La maison, dans la vie de l'homme, évince des contingences, elle multiplie ses conseils de continuité. Sans elle, l'homme serait un être dispersé. Elle maintient

l'homme à travers les orages du ciel et les orages de la vie. Elle est corps et âme (2012, p.26).

Gadanne's protagonists are indeed 'êtres dispersés'. As befits their mythic origins, they are outcasts from a state of paradise, divided against themselves, wandering in a world which their senses cannot fully comprehend. Homes and places of security, where body and soul are in harmony, are rarely found in the novels. The chalet des Borons is one such place, where Simon and Ariane first make love in *Siloé*. The building itself, dark and austere, is cradled by the mountain and its fire offers warmth and relief from the cold. The skylight opens onto the immensity of the sky. It is as though time stands still: 'Tout était pur. La porte était ouverte devant eux, et longtemps, l'un près de l'autre, sans hâte, debout sur le seuil, ils ont regardé dans la nuit' (1974, p.483). However, the chalet is almost literally out of this world. The couple must climb high above the sanatorium in order to reach it. Their stay there can only be brief and it can never be a place of permanent refuge.

It is interesting how few references there are to childhood homes in Gadanne's novels. For Marcelle, in *Le Vent noir*, home is a place she is glad to inhabit not longer and her periodic visits to her mother and sisters are marked by bitterness and disagreement. Her bedroom is tainted by feelings of fear and guilt, drummed into her from visits to the confessional: 'Toute seule, après le dîner, dans l'obscurité de ma chambre, je regardais avec épouvante le reflet des flammes qui dansaient sur le mur' (1983, p.136). The distance she has travelled from what should be a place of safety is conveyed in an obsessive memory of broken dolls house furniture, which fills her with fear. Only Antoine in *L'Avenue* can recall a childhood home with any fondness, and that is solely because he has been able to integrate his past into his progress towards the revelation of faith.

The living spaces of Gadenne's protagonists are never places of security. Rented rooms or cheap hotels predominate, their walls seeming not to protect the inhabitant from the gaze of outsiders. Luc's early love affairs and longer relationships with Edith and Marcelle are apparently known in every detail by Mme Monge; whether from what she has overheard through feeble partition walls, open doors, or rumour and confidences. Marcelle's refuge in the Monge house is really a décor created for a former inhabitant, Edith, and other members of the household seem to be able to enter her room freely, when she is not about, and search through her things.

In *La Plage de Scheveningen*, the hotel room in which Guillaume and Irène try to explore the root cause of the failure of their past relationship is porous to all kinds of influences. While the intrusion of the memory of past places and people predominates, the room is not immune from the effect of present events in the final days of the war. The couple hear the passing of bombers on their way to Germany:

Ils écoutèrent le grondement s'éloigner, puis une sorte de légère onde sismique agita mystérieusement la maison, et sur la tablette les verres se mirent à vibrer. Loin vers l'est, derrière les arbres, une rougeur s'éleva (2009, p.246).

Soon after, the hotelier enters carrying a fractious toddler. They calm the child down. This brings the couple a message of sorts:

-Il a oublié son bobo, dit Guillaume. Il croit que le monde est entièrement bon, qu'aucun mal ne peut lui arriver.

-C'est ainsi qu'il faut être, dit Irène.

L'hôtelier... approuva avec un sourire poli. Il ne s'élevait pas jusqu'aux sous-entendus de cette métaphysique (2009, p.248).

It is an idea Guillaume is not ready to accept and thus this room ultimately belongs to the category, in Gadenne's novels, of 'les huis clos des chambres d'hôtel où l'on ne peut ni s'aimer ni se quitter' (Hirsch, 1983, p.58).

In *Les Hauts-Quartiers* the difficulty of having a place to stay becomes central. This is the only one of Gadenne's novels which confronts a contemporary social problem. Didier lives *la crise du logement* throughout his life in Irube. In the background to his struggle to find a space of peace in which to write and think, we hear accounts of rising rents, properties being divided and sub-let, tenants being ejected to be replaced by those who can pay more. Doctors, lawyers and the poor exploit their living space to the maximum. *Faits divers* reporting the death of children who have fallen from the windows of overcrowded flats, or died from asphyxia due to faulty gas stoves, punctuate the narrative. All sense of solidarity and generosity has been lost in a reaction to the experience of war and defeat:

La soif du gain chez les petits bourgeois, fouettés par des années de marché noir, était sortie de toute mesure, et personne ne faisait plus rien que pour de l'argent, le plus d'argent possible (1973, p.230).

The Church, which should stand alongside the poor and suffering, fails to do so and adopts the distorted values of wider society. When Didier approaches the Abbé Singler, a homophone for *cinglé* (another of Gadenne's carefully chosen character names), seeking both spiritual guidance and practical help in finding a flat, he receives the advice: 'Mais pourquoi ne voulez-vous pas devenir propriétaire? Enrichissez-vous, bon Dieu!' (1973, p.404)

This is a far cry from the radical poverty of the worker-priests, whose activities are mentioned by Didier. The Abbé himself later abandons his priestly duties to become editor

of the right-wing popular paper *Irube-Éclair*. From there he is in a position to form public opinion with such edifying headlines as 'Un vieillard bouillait dans la marmite!' (1973, p.783)

It is clear, however, that the focus on the search for a home is not simply a matter of a desire for material survival. Pierre Vilar, in his article 'L'Homme sans Appartement', sums up the dynamic of the novel effectively:

L'homme sans appartement, sans logis ni bagages, s'acharne à composer, reprendre et délaissier une œuvre exégétique dont l'orientation même lui reste mystérieuse, et il compose par cet acharnement avec la double exigence d'aimer et d'habiter un lieu déterminé, avec la maladie enfin qui tient son corps en équilibre entre des mondes incompatibles (2010, p.303).

The fact that Didier has no fixed abode is just one aspect of his mystical imitation of Christ. As he and Betty search for yet another refuge from the disapproval and hypocritical morality of the Haut-Quartiers, the thought occurs to him: 'Lorsque nous nous rappelons que le Seigneur du monde n'en posséda aucune...' (1973, p.447). The degree to which this identification represents a rewriting of the Biblical accounts of Christ's suffering, or is merely an illusion in Didier's mind, will be discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

The distress of many of Gadenne's characters springs from the fact that they do not have a home. As sons and daughters of Cain they are misfits or outcasts, fleeing a past fault, subject to the penetrating gaze of the world. Some hide from judgement, though others, such as Guillaume in *La Plage de Scheveningen*, may seek it as the only way in which a lost harmony might be regained. Whichever category they may belong to, a place of safety is denied them and their restless movement must continue.

Mieke Bal suggests that spatial oppositions can be linked to psychological, ideological and moral positions:

For instance high-low, related to favourable-unfavourable, fortunate-unfortunate, is an opposition which Western literature has inherited from the late biblical vision of heaven and hell, and from Latin and Greek mythology (2009, p.216).

Gadenne makes use of this dialectic in his novels, and yet, given the restless movement which is characteristic of the protagonists, I prefer to analyse it in terms of ascent and descent, considering also the intermediate space between the heights and depths. In some of his works ascent towards the heights affirms the traditional equivalence with the gaining of moral and spiritual merit. Elsewhere, as we shall see, this relation is subverted and a more complex picture emerges.

From the earlier discussion of *Siloé* it is clear that this novel develops a classic narrative of moral ascent. Simon's blindness to the true nature of the world, of love and the relation with the divine is overcome by degrees. Even as he approaches the sanatorium for the first time, the connection between elevation and spiritual growth is implicit in the description. As the coach makes its way up the mountain it repeatedly sounds its horn three times, recalling the striking of altar bells in the Catholic mass signifying the real presence of Christ in the sacred elements:

Leur timbre grave, leur injonction énergique, la volonté qu'on sentait en elles d'arriver au terme, d'épuiser les détours de cette route infinie, de dérouler enfin une fois de plus un lien entre deux mondes qui vivaient séparés, fournissaient à cette montée une sorte d'accompagnement brutal mais pathétique (1974, p.91).

Simon's progress is expressed in his ascent beyond the meadow, to the waterfall and ultimately to the high pasture, the tree and chalet, whose significance has already been explained. He cannot remain at such altitude however, like the chosen disciples who witnessed Christ's transfiguration on the mountain. He has been given a new vision and will return to Paris charged with a new purpose.

In *L'Avenue* the protagonist's movement around Gabarrus is not overtly characterized in terms of ascent. His walks take him outwards, to the fringes of the town, beyond the limits of ordinary experience. The epigraph, taken from Meister Eckhart, implies this type of motion: 'Même si cela s'appelle une ignorance... cette ignorance te conduit et te tire hors de toute chose connue et hors de toi-même' (1984, p.7). Even here the novel contains a significant icon of ascent, referred to on several occasions. In the hallway of his rented house there is an engraving of a man, in eastern dress, standing on a staircase holding a burning torch. He has paused in his climb and looks back anxiously. Nonetheless there is a hint that he will regain his confidence: '... sans doute l'homme n'attendait-il que d'être en haut pour éteindre la torche' (1984, p.95). In the final chapter, when Antoine is on the point of moving beyond his artistic work to step into an uncertain future of spiritual development, the picture is evoked again, lit by a narrow shaft of sunlight:

ce fut assez pour que la spirale de l'escalier, jaillie d'une éclaboussure de lumière et prolongeant jusque dans les ténèbres l'hésitante ascension du sage, lui apparût soudain comme un signe auquel brûler les yeux (1984, p.247).

In my opinion, this image alludes to *L'Echelle Sainte*, an influential ascetic guide to the monastic life, by St. Jean de Climaque; Johannes Climacus being, of course, one of the pseudonyms employed by Kierkegaard in his writing.

Sophie Balso's closely argued article 'Une pensée de l'existence, une exigence d'absolu' (2010, pp.282-296) explores the uses that Gadenne makes of Kierkegaard and Kafka's thought and imagery in this novel. She concludes that, stunned by the realisation that the Château in his imagination is empty and must always be so, Antoine cannot take the final step to become, in Kierkegaard's terms, a knight of faith. She does not, however, take

account of this important sign which suggests that he is willing to make that leap into the unknown implied by the epigraph that I have already quoted. For me, *L'Avenue* is also a narrative of ascent, even though it might not be manifest with the triumphant confidence expressed in *Siloé*.

With a sense of humour, insufficiently acknowledged by critics, Gadenne is willing to subvert the positive correlation between 'high' and 'favourable' which he is happy to employ elsewhere. The beginning of *L'Invitation chez les Stirl* echoes Simon's arrival at the sanatorium in *Siloé*, but in an ironic fashion. A taxi struggles up the hill as it takes Olivier towards the Stirl villa in Barcos. The surrounding landscape is gradually revealed:

Des montagnes à formes paresseuses constituaient le fond du décor. Plus près, quelques collines sournoises développaient leurs lignes monotones. Les prairies étaient fraîches, mais l'air épais et brûlant, presque difficile à respirer, et notre voyageur était gagné par cette redoutable torpeur dont on disait qu'elle écrasait les habitants de Barcos ..." (1995, pp.14-15).

As we have seen, this novel will be an anti-*Siloé* for much of its course.

It is in Gadenne's final novel, *Les Hauts-Quartiers*, that the dialectic of high and low, or ascent and descent, is presented in its most challenging form. The *quartiers* of the title could have been, for Didier, an oasis of peace in which to pursue his research into the mystical philosophers of Christianity: '...dans les Hauts-Quartiers, là où la terre s'élève en plateau, où de merveilleux jardins brillaient sous les yeux comme de paisibles fragments du paradis' (1973, p.424). Bruno Curatolo underlines the traditional symbolism of high places as, 'ces régions où l'esprit cherche à s'élever afin de pénétrer le mystère de la Présence divine en l'humain' (2007, p.392). Didier, however, is gradually excluded from such places of beauty and contemplation, but the *quartiers* themselves are corrupted by the ugliness and

mediocrity of their inhabitants. He despises the hypocrisy and avarice which find their home there and, as he moves from one flat to another, down the hill to the poor districts along the banks of the river: 'A cette pourriture d'âme il préférerait mille fois sa misère' (1973, p.447).

This slide towards the lower depths of the town is paralleled by a decline in Didier's status and reputation. He had enjoyed modest success due to the publication of his *Aspects de la Contemplation*, displayed for a while in Fernande Chotard-Lagréou's religious bookshop. It gave him an entry into the *bien-pensante* society of les Hauts-Quartiers. His behaviour in his affairs with Betty and Paula, together with the slander and lies spread by Fernande, gradually exclude him from polite society and cut him off from sources of income and assistance. To a degree Didier courts their disapproval, in an unconscious (or is it deliberate?) imitation of Christ's kenosis, in order to share in the suffering of the poor. Didier's final physical movement is again downwards, as he and Flopie descend the hill towards the Hôtel de Ville. In the terminal phase of tuberculosis, he will be married to Flopie, herself illegitimate and carrying a child resulting from her rape by a simple-minded relative of her employer. In the eyes of les Hauts-Quartiers, Didier can fall no further. This irremediable pattern of descent has led some critics to view the novel as Gadenne's most pessimistic. On one level it would be easy to agree, but it is important to remember that the values of les Hauts-Quartiers are an inversion of the high-favourable relation. As Didier falls in their estimation, I would suggest that he in fact ascends in the reader's. There is other evidence which hints at a more nuanced judgement than might be warranted by the bare facts of Didier's end. This will be explored further in Chapter 5.

Gadenne's protagonists are rarely at one extreme on the axis of ascent-descent. Albert Béguin, in his article 'Enfin un romancier', included as a preface to the 1983 edition of *Le Vent noir*, rightly draws attention to the writer's repeated use of staircases in his depiction of Paris:

... et comme un leitmotif hallucinant, ces escaliers des maisons, des hôtels, des stations de métro que les personnages gravissent ou descendent, où tant de scènes importantes se passent (1983, p.11).

This figure is particularly appropriate to a novel in which the characters are in a purgatorial state, suffering for their past faults and unable to move into a more promising future. Even in *Siloé*, though, Simon's ascent implies a return to earth and Antoine the sculptor must step into the unknown at the top of his 'ascent of the sage'. Movement remains the fundamental characteristic of Gadenne's protagonists as outcasts in the grand narrative of creation seeking a permanent home. The harmony which seems to prevail in nature may be a potential refuge, but it is under threat from man himself and his potential to become the infernal 'Jardinier' of *Les Hauts-Quartiers*. Any resolution will be a fragile one, but it is perhaps in a different conception of time that it may be achieved.

To conclude, the depiction of space in Gadenne's work is largely through the perceptions of his characters. While his first novel does contain extensive descriptions of nature, conveyed to us by an external narrator, albeit relating to the protagonist's progress in the recovery of sight, such overt interventions are much less evident in the later works. In this he mirrors the literary practice of most of his contemporaries. However, his approach to description could be qualified as sacramentalist. As defined by Stephen Schloesser, this theological doctrine, 'holds that created things are a visible 'sign' (sacramentum) which both bears within itself

and simultaneously points beyond itself to in invisible reality (res) which is, in the final analysis, the Creator' (2005, p.6). This is clearly the case with the trees and the waterfall of *Siloé*. Such evident *correspondances* are less common in the later novels, but all his spaces are caught up in the narratives of Paradise and the Fall and thus gain greater significance from them. They point to the metaphysical journey of the protagonists and place them in an eternal pattern, which transcends the present experience of the individual, however acutely it may be conveyed. This is one aspect of Gadenne's particular vision, which sets him apart from most of his post-war contemporaries and places him alongside the better-known Catholic novelists such as Bernanos and Green.

TIME

How is time treated in Gadenne's novels? Given the central importance of myth and Biblical narrative to my analysis of the works, how is the relation between 'events which happened at the beginning of time' and 'the ritual actions of men of today' (Ricœur and Buchanan, 1969, p.5) mediated? If Gadenne is, as suggested here, an author with a religious outlook, one might expect to find a Christian appreciation of time capable of relating human experience to the eternal. In terms of novelistic form, do the ways Gadenne conveys temporal experience belong more to traditional models or to those of his more experimental contemporaries? These are the questions addressed in this chapter. Analysis will be based upon Paul Ricœur's commentary on time in St Augustine's *Confessions*, set out in *Temps et Récit* (1983), as well as Kierkegaard's thinking on time. Reference will also be made to Michel Raimond's survey of the development of the French novel (2011) in order to situate Gadenne with regard to his contemporaries.

Ricœur speculated that at critical moments of history, man was particularly likely to have recourse to myth in order to articulate his experience (Ricœur and Valdés, 1991, p.484). It is therefore important to consider the extent to which the author engages with the tumultuous events of the decades in which he was writing and the relations of his characters with historical time. The novels cover a period from the mid-nineteen thirties to the early fifties. *Siloé*, *La Rue profonde* and *L'Invitation chez les Stirl* make no reference at all to contemporary events. Indeed, part of the significance of each of these novels derives from the fact that they take place in a space and time, which could be qualified as mythic, untouched by the everyday concerns of the world. This 'rupture' from the quotidian serves

to emphasize the metaphysical nature of the protagonists' journey. It is only once the venture is completed that they return to their former activities of study, writing or painting, in spheres subject to the passage of historical time.

In the remaining four novels the historical context is more readily identifiable. The beginning of *L'Avenue* evokes the confusion of the flight before the advancing German forces and Antoine's wounding in an air raid, but the town Gabarrus, in which he takes refuge, seems strangely untouched by the war. Some incidents may suggest an allusion to the conditions of occupation, such as the lack of petrol, for example:

Voici, sur la route, une voiture. Maintenant, Antoine est en dehors de la route, et il regarde cette voiture, une voiture d'un autre âge, une sorte de calèche, vraisemblable après tout en ces temps singuliers (1984, pp.97-98).

Plausible as this may be, another interpretation emerges, which borders on the *fantastique*; that this carriage is a physical representation of an illustration in a sketchpad he had as a child. The significance of this memory is explored later in the text, as Antoine is able to recapture, to a degree, the sense of security and wholeness he had enjoyed in a state of innocence.

The reader of *L'Avenue* may draw the conclusion that the restaurant scene, in which four dwarfs are driven away from their table by the hostility of the other diners, is a reference to the deportation of the Jews during the war. This interpretation is authorized, in part, by the text itself: 'Antoine sentit l'extrême fragilité de ces êtres, désavoués non pas au nom d'un état ou d'une race, mais au nom de l'espèce tout entière' (1984, p.104). At the same time, the dwarfs, innkeeper, surveyor and the castle are all allusions to the work of Kafka who deals, among others, with the theme of Jewish identity. As Sophie Balso has convincingly

shown (2007), *L'Avenue* is the result of a three-way conversation between Gadenne, Kafka and Kierkegaard. It would be unwise, though, to place too much weight on apparent references to the contemporary, as this novel principally operates in a space seemingly beyond historical time, as underlined by its other-worldly setting.

Michel Jacquet, in *Une Occupation très romanesque*, has made a detailed study of the ways in which the literature of the 1940s deals with historical events and their cultural representation. While he does not refer to Gadenne in his book, the general point is made that many authors used the war and occupation as,

un contexte favorable à la mise en scène d'une quête de soi, identitaire et métaphysique, à laquelle se livrent de jeunes personnages dont le malaise individuel se mêle au chaos du monde qui les entoure (2000, p.15).

This statement would seem to be applicable to *Le Vent noir* and *La Plage de Scheveningen*. I have already shown how, in the latter novel, the war and the destruction it wrought provide a landscape against which the discord between Guillaume and Irène is explored. Hersent's betrayal of his country by collaboration with the occupying forces belongs to this context. Gadenne's emphasis, however, is not upon guilt and judgement at a specific moment in history. Each individual, smeared with the blood shed by Cain, is guilty from the dawn of recorded time. The terms victim and murderer are inter-changeable. Guillaume's thoughts sum this up on the first page of *La Plage de Scheveningen*:

Nous étions des hommes, et nous découvrons qu'être des hommes, c'était répondre au même nom que nos bourreaux. L'honneur des hommes, notre honneur était entaché (2009, p.11).

The events of *Le Vent noir* take place during the *drôle de guerre* but, beyond contributing an atmosphere of joyous rowdiness to the bars and restaurants, it has little influence on the

protagonist. On reading newspaper headlines telling of the growing crisis, Luc is strangely indifferent:

Il éprouva un sentiment bizarre à la pensée que cela ne le concernait plus. Il restait que la folie des hommes encourageait la sienne. Cette nouvelle affaire venait à point pour le justifier (1983, p.404).

Any justification felt by Luc is, of course, entirely spurious and a sign of his detachment from the opinions and feelings of the rest of humanity. He never assumes responsibility for his actions, and ascribes his own failings to the force of circumstances or the weaknesses of others. The black wind of the title is not a reference to the German armies about to cross the frontier. It is rather a more generalized evil, which blinds Luc and maintains his obsession; a malign fate, as he would see it, which rules over the struggles of Marcelle and Mme Monge too.

Les Hauts-Quartiers represents a striking change of direction in terms of the prominence given to the historical context. The novel seems to span a period of about ten years, stretching from the early days of Occupation until newspaper reports of war in Indo China and atrocities committed in Algeria. Satires of social and political phenomena occupy the reader's attention, as much as Didier's spiritual journey in his struggle to find meaning in suffering. In tone the novel is akin to many of the works examined by Jacquet (2000), such as those by Roger Nimier, Jean-Louis Curtis and Jacques Laurent, which undermine the official edifying narrative of a unanimously resisting France.

The description of the career of Pierre Giraud, once Didier's friend, gives a flavour of the irony deployed. Under the Occupation Pierre works for the local pro-Vichy paper *Le Patriote*, while at the same time distributing underground news sheets and planning attacks on the

German garrison. These attacks never take place. At the Liberation, Pierre is seen riding in an American jeep, sporting a decoration. He later organises *cortèges de femmes tondues* and invites Didier to sit with him on a *tribunal d'épuration*. The offer is refused and the friendship comes to an end. As the years pass, Pierre, a convinced socialist, acquires a nice house, a flashy car and a comfortable job on radio. His social advancement is in no way different from that of M. Beauchamp, a scrap metal dealer and active collaborator, who, after a brief period of eclipse following Liberation, establishes himself in Paris and becomes a *député*.

It is hard to miss the similarity of title between Louis Aragon's *Les Beaux Quartiers* and *Les Hauts-Quartiers*. Aragon's novel was published while Gadenne was working on *Les Hauts-Quartiers*, and possibly before he had settled upon its definitive title. Despite differences in their authors' politics, the two works display a shared polemical tone in denouncing economic and social inequalities; though Didier suggests that communism does not provide a more effective model of equitable social organisation. Unusually, in this novel Gadenne directly links the experience of war and the destruction of individual morality: 'Les guerres avilissent les peuples parce qu'elles sont le triomphe des trafiquants' (1973, p.50). It is this debasement which is the root cause of the exploitation and rampant materialism described in the work, and not just inequalities of wealth and power. The evocation of the difficulties of everyday life is prominent not merely for its documentary value, however, but particularly because these irritants prevent Didier from pursuing his study of mysticism and achieving inner peace. The pervasiveness of the material suggests that Gadenne would have agreed with Bernanos' contention in *La France contre les robots*: 'On ne comprend absolument rien à la civilisation moderne si l'on n'admet pas d'abord qu'elle est une conspiration contre toute espèce de vie intérieure' (1947, p.90).

Les Hauts-Quartiers therefore stands in contrast to the other six novels in that it engages more overtly in a commentary on contemporary society. At one point in the narrative, Didier reflects upon a novel that he might write. He imagines a young man living among the workers and sharing the miserable accommodation which is all that society grants them. He is filled with pity, but with ambition too: 'il veut aider ses frères, il pense pouvoir se proposer de leur refaire une âme' (1973, p.431). A stay in the peace of the cloister will fortify him with the strength and purity he will need. Didier rejects this plot: 'Au fond, c'est le roman dans lequel je craignais de tomber' (1973, p.431). He then has second thoughts: 'Ma crainte était mal fondée. Un roman est un moyen d'agir' (1973, p.431). Is this an example of *mise en abyme*, or simply an ironic barb directed at the pretension of the protagonist, or even at the author himself? Gadenne as a committed writer, though not in the same cause as Aragon?

Due to the prominence of historical events, *Les Hauts-Quartiers* is, then, something of an exception. The treatment of time, in the majority of Gadenne's output, conforms to the idea of mythic time as understood by Ricœur. Van Hendy sums up its function, as noted in the introduction: 'By means of a time which represents all times, man is manifested as a concrete universal' (2001, p.311). While Gadenne's protagonists are representative figures of a wider universal predicament, it is through their individual experience of time that this is articulated. An analysis of this experience brings us to the heart of the metaphysical search portrayed in his novels.

Once again Gadenne's novels display elements of both traditional narrative technique and more contemporary developments. While it is true to say that he is not overly concerned with 'une coulée narrative traditionnelle qui accorde une égale importance aux événements

décisifs et aux habitudes qui s'installent quand la vie ordinaire a repris son cours' (Raimond, 2011, p.169), *Siloé* is strongly marked by indications of the passage of time. Here the succession of the seasons is intimately linked to the metaphysical journey of Simon. His progress from the despondency and questioning of autumn, as he dies to the concerns which formerly dominated his life, through the cleansing cold and penetrating sunlight of winter, to the surge of new life experienced in spring, places the Biblical story of the recovery of sight in the context of an eternal pattern of death and renewal. The individual experience is in harmony with the cycle of nature, as well as the religious paradigm of dying to sin and rebirth to new life through the water of baptism.

This traditional symbolism is revisited and apparently subverted in Gadenne's final novel, *Les Hauts-Quartiers*. As previously indicated, historical events suggest the novel spans a period of up to ten years. There is a discontinuity, however, between the lives of the characters and the events which take place in the background, since there is no indication that their experiences extend over anything like that duration. The harmony between the time of the individual and the world is thus exploded. Seasonal references and other allusions hark back to *Siloé*. The novel opens with a chapter entitled 'Que vois-tu Jérémie?' representing God's call to Jeremiah as the buds appear on the branch of an almond tree. This is the same text as an epigraph used in *Siloé*. As with *Siloé*, the final chapter is headed 'Le Printemps', but here the positive image of the earlier book becomes a negative one. Century old trees are cut down to make way for ugly lamp posts, and the seminary garden, which once provided Didier with a vision of peace and harmony, has lost its power:

On n'avait jamais entendu dire, de mémoire de curé, qu'aucun d'eux eût jamais été troublé par la vue d'une fleur, par la naissance d'un bourgeon, ni que sa vocation eût

été mise en danger, l'espace d'un clin d'œil, par l'éclosion d'une feuille d'hortensia (1973, p.786).

One reading of the satirical reversal of the values established in *Siloé* would be that Gadenne has turned his back on the confident hope in the existence of divine purpose, immanent in the world, expressed in his first novel. Suggestive ambiguity is, however, at the heart of the aesthetic of Gadenne's mature writing. Therefore a more nuanced assessment, which takes account of both poles of the *Siloé- Les Hauts-Quartiers* dialectic, would be more apt. This point will be developed further in the next chapter.

Michel Raimond points to a number of ways in which the treatment of time has developed in the twentieth century French novel. He speaks in particular of the broadening of 'le champ temporel' (2011, p.166) through an increased emphasis on the interaction between memory and present experience. He argues that time as it is lived has come to dominate the modern novel and has given rise to stream of consciousness writing:

Plus d'intrigue dès lors ; c'est le déroulement des souvenirs, des projets, des perceptions, qui livre en quelque sorte du temps à l'état pur, du temps en train de glisser, comme glissent les mots, les images et les phrases (2011, p.175).

While Gadenne does not quite go as far as this in any of his novels, the way in which past, present and future are intimately linked in the protagonist's perceptions of himself, of others and his surroundings is characteristic. The example Raimond chooses to illustrate his thesis is Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, and he goes on to quote from Paul Ricœur's analysis of the text: 'Le temps intérieur est tiré en arrière par la mémoire et aspiré par l'attente' (1983, t.2, p.158). He does not quote the two words following this reference, '*Distentio animi*', and they lead us to Ricœur's detailed study of St. Augustine's conception of time, as developed in *The Confessions*. As I shall attempt to show, the ideas which Ricœur derives

from Augustine provide a remarkably effective means of explaining the characteristics of human time, as experienced by Gadener's protagonists, and its relation to the eternal, to which they aspire.

Distentio animi is the concept Augustine uses to explain the possibility of measuring time and perceiving duration, without having recourse to the classical argument of time being based on the movement of heavenly bodies. Herman Hausheer summarizes it thus:

Augustine means by mental distension the faculty of the mind to know successively the past by memory, the future by prevision, and the present by actual perception, to dilate itself, so to say, by prevision and memory from the remotest future to the most distant past (1937, p.507).

Hausheer's use of the word 'successively' does not fully do justice to the idea, however, because for Augustine the three tenses are experienced simultaneously in the present:

On s'aperçoit du coup de l'erreur à parler de trois temps. Pour le sujet humain, tous les temps sont au présent : il y a le présent du passé, le présent du présent et le présent de l'avenir . C'est l'esprit qui introduit la dimension du passé, du présent et de l'avenir (Alaux, 2000, p.1).

The soul is thus pulled in conflicting directions, in its experience of time, by memory, attention and expectation. As a result the individual's existence is characterized by feelings of 'déchirement' and 'dispersion' (1983, t.1, p.50), to use the terms employed by Ricœur . The things of the world are subject to time and change, and yet, for Augustine, there exists deep in man's memory a thirst for that which does not change, for the eternal which can only be approached through an encounter with God: 'Le défaut d'éternité n'est pas seulement une limite pensée, mais un manque ressenti au cœur de l'expérience temporelle. L'idée-limite devient alors la tristesse du négatif' (Ricœur, 1983, t.1, p.48). This pain is one aspect of man's fallen nature, as his soul craves the stability of the eternal present, from

which he is now excluded. The inner voice, however, hints at the possibility that it may be recovered through Grace. Alaux sums up Augustine's teaching on time in this way:

Chez Augustin, le temps revêt une double valeur : une valeur existentielle (au sens heideggérien du mot), ce qui veut dire qu'il est une structure de l'esprit humain ... Mais le temps a aussi une valeur eschatologique car déjà la vie présente, quand elle est vécue en « tension » vers Dieu, peut surmonter le temps et anticiper l'éternel, non pas en s'appuyant sur le seul effort de l'esprit, mais en accueillant dans la foi le Médiateur (2000, p.3).

It is in the context of these ideas that the temporal experience of Gadenne's characters may be best understood. I will examine how they live in time, torn between the desire to recreate a past, or to flee from it, and the hope of some future resolution to their dispersion. For some this may be felt as an eternal present, which suspends the regular flow of time, others may aspire to transcend their finite nature and share in some mystical way in the eternal. Balso, rightly, sees this as being the aim of Gadenne's quest, though, for him, only the search for the 'great unknown' offers any chance of success:

Paul Gadenne cherche avec confiance un témoin capable de lui donner accès, dans sa solitude et sa finitude humaines, à l'éternité : le grand X, une femme, un poème, une sculpture pour témoin (2007, p.89).

The pervasive influence of the past on Gadenne's characters has already been demonstrated in the Chapter 2. The weight of past hurt or guilt is very much part of their present experience. In *Le Vent noir* the cry Marcelle imagines she utters at the dentist, while in fact remaining silent, expresses both a childhood trauma, whose nature is never fully revealed, and the abortion she has undergone. She saw the flames of hell in the patterns of her bedroom wallpaper and, though she professes to no longer believe in sin, the suffering she barely conceals argues the contrary. Mme Monge's giving up of her son Brice, and the loss of

another child through miscarriage, drive her restless attempts to create new surrogate families through her influence over Edith, Marcelle and Luc. Past actions are present to her, motivating her behaviour and hopes for the future.

In this novel the reader's expectations of an orderly chronology are frequently challenged.

Early on in the story Luc is in a café hoping to meet Marcelle, who has been the subject of the previous chapter:

Je la vis passer derrière la vitre tournante au moment où je passais moi-même dans l'autre sens... J'aurais bien voulu continuer à tourner comme cela avec elle, comme si la porte avait été un manège, entre les vitres du tambour. Il n'y aurait eu rien que nous, et nous ne nous serions peut-être jamais rencontrés, car nous aurions continué à tourner inévitablement à la poursuite l'un de l'autre, sans que jamais il nous fût donné de marcher l'un vers l'autre, enfermés entre les parois de verre et tournant (1983, p.35).

Does this event actually happen? Is it a memory or even a fantasy? The apparent authority of the past historic draws us into the revolving door with Luc, even though we may have surmised that he was probably already sitting in the café. Thereafter we are caught up in the labyrinth of conditionals which cast doubt on the actuality of what may be going on. A tiny detail a few lines further on suggests that this woman is blond. Only later do we discover that Marcelle has brown hair. This could not have been her and yet the imagery used perfectly conveys the nature of the future relations between Luc and Marcelle. The reader has shared in the confusion of past, present, future and fantasy which will propel the protagonist towards mental crisis and murder. As Ricœur puts it in his commentary on Augustine, 'Ainsi intensifiée au plan existentiel, l'expérience de distension est élevée au niveau de la plainte' (1983, t.1, p.49).

As previously mentioned, a Kierkegaardian cycle of failed repetition provides the dynamic for the plots of *Le Vent noir*, *La Rue profonde*, *La Plage de Scheveningen* and *L'Invitation chez les Stirl* and consequently the relation between memory and expectation is to the fore. Each of these works is animated by what Charles Blanchet calls 'La passion de la Réconciliation' (1963, p.615). His use of the capital letter, recalling the Catholic sacrament of repentance and the remission of sins, emphasizes that what is at stake is not simply finding a resolution to a broken relationship such as that between Guillaume and Irène in *La Plage de Scheveningen*. This process may indeed contribute to the healing of the protagonist, but the sense of wholeness sought involves more than this, and a new understanding of his connection with time will provide Guillaume with a foretaste of the peace he desires.

Whereas Marcelle and Mme Monge attempt to escape their past because of the horror it represents, for most of the protagonists the pain of the past is caused by what they have lost. It is a Paradise from which they have been excluded, whether by their fault or, as they would prefer to see it, by unmerited misfortune. In *La Plage de Scheveningen*, Guillaume recalls the bliss of his life with Irène six years ago before the war. It was a time of innocence, of easy communication and of instinctive harmony with the forces of nature. Most particularly though, this happiness existed in a space outside time:

Les scènes qu'évoquait pour lui le nom d'Irène n'étaient d'aucun temps, d'aucune époque : rien ne les marquait, elles étaient admirablement dépouillées de ces traits particuliers qui datent un temps, une figure, et qu'Hersent aimait à placer dans ses romans (2009, p.29).

The passing reference to Hersent reminds us, however, that now Guillaume is engulfed in history, which will convict his former friend of treason for collaboration with the Nazis. The question of personal culpability is also suggested, as each of the characters is in a sense

under examination for his or her responsibility in the breakdown of relationships. Being subject to time, which sweeps aside previous certainties, is for Gadenne's characters an inescapable part of the human condition. Guillaume recalls the gift of a piggy bank, when he was a child, in which to save the pocket money he received every Sunday. It was the start of a fall from a state of Grace:

Car dès que l'on se met à compter les jours, alors l'innocence est perdue. Et les « grands » n'ont rien de plus pressé que de prendre aux enfants leur véritable innocence, qui est d'ignorer le temps. Car dès le jour où l'homme connaît le prix du temps, dès lors sa royauté est perdue" (2009, p.259).

Now an adult, he is at even greater distance from the eternal present he inhabited as a child, and recovered briefly in the love he shared with Irène. It is his desire to recover it, or to experience it in a different form, which provides the dynamic to the novel.

Access to privileged moments, which seem to stand outside the flow of time, is usually accorded by a female donor in Gadenne's novels. In *La Rue profonde*, the arrival of 'le cheval de minuit' comes as the poet lies beside his lover; indeed she wakes him from sleep so that he may experience it. The sound of hooves on the pavements echo through the streets as the horse approaches. He has no rider, pulls no cart, and seems to stop beneath their window: 'Il avait traversé des fleuves, des villes, des labours fumants. Il arrivait les sabots tout ruisselants de la fraîcheur glacée du ciel' (1995, p.55). They never hear him leave and yet no trace can be found in the morning. The poet sees his arrival as a special gift for them.

Not only does the poet wish to recapture the intensity of these moments with someone else, he also seeks to encapsulate his experience in a poem. The attempt to transform a feeling of connection with a dimension outside the temporal into a work of art is one of the themes of

this novel and provides an image which Gadenne returns to in *L'Avenue* and *La Plage de Scheveningen*.

The motif of a sea-smoothed pebble is common to the three novels, but is developed most fully in *La Rue profonde*. For years the poet has kept a small pebble with him in his wandering from one rented room to another. It has become a touchstone, a magical synthesis of competing forces. It seems endowed with a special power able to conjure up the movement of the waves and the grey sea from which it sprang:

Il est fait de cette matière transparente, qu'on dirait spiritualisée, intermédiaire entre la pierre et la coquille, le figé et le mouvant, si bien qu'on peut douter qu'il s'agit d'une concrétion aqueuse, ou d'un corps extirpé aux entrailles de la terre et subtilisé au voisinage d'un élément plus fluide... Ainsi la matière affinée, fatigué par le travail de l'eau, par les frottements, a produit ce résultat incroyable, - la pureté même (1995, pp.39-40).

The ideal poem he tries to write in order to convey the experience of 'le passage du cheval de minuit' must display the same ability as his touchstone to reconcile opposites and be expressed in language of equal purity. As the novel progresses he struggles to live up to this arduous task. In an extended metaphor he contrasts 'les mots', which are worn from their passage from hand to hand like small coins, and thus lose their value, with 'un verbe', which is likened to his pebble. The contrast between the temporal and the eternal emerges here, as well as between the human and the divine, in his plea:

Ou bien serait-il possible de compenser par un verbe à la fois limpide, résistant, marmoréen, produit d'une longue patience, de mainte hésitation et de maint retour, enfin pareil à ces roches interminablement lissées par la mer, d'un poli et d'une douceur inimitables, et qui nous font imaginer quelque paradis... pouvons-nous espérer compenser par là les incertitudes, les à-peu-près, les disgrâces de l'action ? (1995, pp.92-93)

The distinction between man's words, which pass, and the Word of God, which is eternal, is a traditional part of religious discourse. Ricœur quotes St. Augustine's formulation which stresses both their difference and their complementarity:

Le Verbe et la voix sont aussi irréductibles l'un à l'autre et aussi inséparables que le sont l'oreille intérieur qui écoute la parole et reçoit l'instruction du maître intérieur, et l'oreille extérieur qui recueille les *verba* et les transmet à l'intelligence vigilante (1983, t.1, p.44).

Gadenne's characters often rage against the inability of human language to promote true communication. The loquacity of Ethel Stirl and Mme Chotard-Lagréou, which acts as a barrier to communion, has already been commented upon. Marcelle and Mme Monge continually change their minds or make promises they have no intention of keeping. The male protagonists utter a seemingly endless flow of words in their desire to achieve clarity in their relations with others, but rarely arrive at a solution which has the purity and resistance to change found in the poet's touchstone. Indeed their very reliance upon words is a barrier to them achieving the sense of integration and harmony felt by Irène in *La Plage de Scheveningen*. A description of her shoulder, 'qui s'offrait ronde et lisse, comme un galet roulé par la mer' (2009, p.276) recalls the timeless perfection of the touchstone. Guillaume realizes he cannot be admitted to the calm certainty which is part of her nature:

... l'éternité d'Irène se détachait mieux que jamais sur l'étoffe du temps, sur l'éternité de l'amour, et qu'aussi il sentait, avec une vraie douleur, cette éternité indépendante de lui, et capable de lui survivre, capable surtout de se passer de lui, et que plus que jamais il lui paraissait impossible d'être admis au royaume (2009, pp.276-277).

References to the pebble, time and the Word form part of the metaphysical subtext of *L'Avenue*, in which the sculptor Antoine's search for 'La Construction' is paralleled by his efforts to create a perfect statue of Eve. His lofty ambition is clear at the outset. It may start from the aesthetic of art for art's sake, but ventures far beyond:

Antoine n'avait pas d'autre souci : être lui-même. C'était à cela qu'il travaillait, et à rien d'autre, persuadé que l'art suffit, et que l'artiste n'a pas à signifier autre chose, et que son rôle est moins de fournir des illustrations à son temps, que de l'installer dans une permanence, de lui ouvrir un débouché sur l'éternel. Faire une statue qui soit comme un caillou usé par le temps, mais sur lequel le temps glisse, faute de prise (1984, p.38).

The novel charts the progress of his statue, as he struggles with doubts and lack of inspiration, but he is equally engaged in the construction of himself by a process of search, discovery and refinement. The importance of donors has previously been analysed, but as he thinks back to his childhood it is evident an inner voice, to use Augustine's terms, was already speaking to his inner ear. It takes the form of a clock ticking away in the hallway of his home:

Comment échapper à l'appel qui remontait du fond des années, du fond de ce couloir obscur, de ce lointain vestibule que peuplait le patient va-et-vient du balancier ? Déjà l'idée de la demeure n'était-elle pas toute dans ce son lointain, dans cette lente construction du temps, ce battement obstiné à l'extrémité d'un couloir, et dans la suggestion de profondeur que donnait à mi-chemin de ce couloir, le départ de l'escalier et son ténébreux essor vers les chambres ? (1984, pp.223-224)

Gadener would have encountered the image of the hall clock in Kierkegaard's *Traité du Désespoir* which, according to his diaries, he first read in 1942 (Sarrou, 2003, p.127). The rest of the quotation also refers to various ascending stages of existence outlined by Climacus, which were discussed in Chapter 3. Kierkegaard, in a formulation which owes something to Augustine, saw man as 'poised between time and eternity, living in the irreducible distance between them, *in* time but *before* eternity' (Caputo, 2008, p.18). Kierkegaard described the task of a Christian as 'to live in time while hearing eternity call, to live in eternity while hearing the hall clock strike' (Caputo, 2008, p.19). This is the dialectic which Antoine as an artist seeks to reconcile in his statue, and in his own spiritual development.

It is Irma, as donor, who helps Antoine to make the connection with the force in nature which will allow him to complete Eve. His discovery is expressed in terms which recall St John's Gospel and Augustine's commentary on the Word: 'Il suffisait de soulever un peu la brillante matière des paysages, des routes, et des architectures, et voici que nous pouvions entendre, sur la nudité de la terre, se répercuter l'écho du mot initial' (1984, p.248). This revelation helps him span the vast expanse of time, in order to experience the beginning of creation. He senses an ideal line holding together in harmony all created objects and manages to convey this in his finished work. For Augustine, humanity's desire for God lies deep in the memory and, for Antoine too his discovery is found both in the world and within himself: 'Il était facile de se refuser à cet enveloppement, à cette conspiration des énergies. L'évidence est un éclair ; la vérité tient dans la force du souvenir' (1984, p.249).

Antoine views his statue for the last time and for him it has achieved the purity of the sea-washed pebble. Perhaps it even echoes the first Word of creation: 'La justesse des linéaments, la densité du volume, l'éclat de certitude qui se dégageait d'elle, tout cela rendait, dans la parfaite banalité du lieu, le son élevé et plein du cristal' (1984, p.259).

Despite this apparent success, Antoine also receives a troubling insight: '... c'est tout l'art, se dit-il, qui est simulacre' (1984, p.258). Art in itself cannot bridge time and eternity. Even in its purest form, it can only be a sign standing for something else. Using Kierkegaard's hierarchy of the stages of existence, the aesthetic must be left behind. Only the ethical man can hear the hall clock strike and hear it, 'in such a way that the stroke of the hour does not shorten, but prolongs his eternity' (Kierkegaard et al., 1959, vol.2 p.142). This is why Antoine draws strength from his figure, but must turn his back upon it if he is to advance.

The problem of the temporal and the eternal moves towards a resolution in *L'Avenue*, but Gadenne returns to it in a more acute form in *La Plage de Scheveningen*. Irène may embody a solution to it, as previously discussed, but Guillaume is excluded from the peace her name suggests. The intrusion of history into the lives of the characters is much more evident here and the conflict between human and divine justice is dramatized in the twin narratives of Hersent the traitor and Cain the murderer. Given the differences between Guillaume and Irène, it is interesting that they both share in the significance of the motif which gives its name to the novel, Ruysdaël's painting 'La Plage de Scheveningen'. They had seen a reproduction of the picture during the early days of their love and it struck a chord in their imagination. They travelled around pre-war Europe to track down the original, but without success. Sceptical friends saw little beyond a conventional coastal scene, but they praised its merits. It encapsulated a truth that was true for them:

Ils avaient aimé chez ce peintre son goût des arbres, ses façons de marier les rythmes de la terre et ceux du ciel, en un temps où, heureux d'eux-mêmes, ils ne demandaient autre chose à la peinture que d'exalter, ou même de maintenir sous leurs yeux, certains aspects privilégiés du monde (2009, p.72).

The harmony of earth and sky and the love of trees recall the idyll of *Siloé*, as Guillaume and Irène share in the intensity of privileged moments. Their love is frequently associated with the sea and, though the picture depicts the North Sea, it also reminds them of a night of intense conversation on the beach at Biarritz with Hersent, before their mutual friend wrote his anti-Semitic articles. It was a time of innocence.

Despite the positive connotations of this picture, it raises a more problematic aspect of time. This painting, '... avec sa plaine noyée sous un vaste ciel, les avait enchantés par un charme subtil, une merveilleuse tristesse, un sentiment juste et mesuré de l'abandon humain' (2009,

p.72). In peacetime and in the first flush of love, the aesthetic of human insignificance in comparison with the vastness of nature could be contemplated with equanimity. Years later, after the war and the breakdown in their relationship, the same image takes on a different value as Guillaume thinks of the small figures on the shoreline:

Leur mort ne paraissait pas du tout pouvoir faire l'objet d'un problème. Les années, les siècles passent, le même rayon de soleil transperce éternellement les nues, la plage répond au même assaut des vagues, les mêmes petits personnages sont toujours là, noyés dans l'immensité, le poudroïement du sable, et personne ne se demande pas leur nom (2009, p.172).

Their lack of importance, their solitude in the face of death in an indifferent universe is emphasized here. What is the value of a human life in the eternal ebb and flow of tides, and the battle between sea and shore? The optimistic view of man's place in creation, and his connection with nature, articulated in *Siloé* and *L'Avenue* has been swept aside. Humanity is crushed by the eternal, rather than being able to connect with it: 'La Plage de Scheveningen, comme les autres, était une plage minée' (2009, p.315).

The novel, however, does not end with this particular judgement of man's relation to time. The split between Irène and Guillaume is definitive and he learns in a letter that she has married an American. Irène invites him to Biarritz, where her sister Laura has settled, to meet her husband before they leave the country. By the time Guillaume is able to get there the couple have already left, but he receives a badly written message to visit Laura, who apparently, 'avait, disait-elle, un « objet » - était-ce bien « objet » ? – à lui remettre, quelque chose à lui confier (confirmer ?)...' (2009, p.322). Laura's husband, an R.A.F. pilot, was killed in the war and she has two young children. When they last met, Guillaume had been struck by the feeling that her life, despite the sadness of recent events, was a success.

Guillaume's search for her flat, on the top floor of a vast abandoned villa, recalls the wanderings in a labyrinth characteristic of *Siloé* and *L'Avenue*. The building is neglected and her flat is sparsely furnished. A temporary shelter, says Laura, suited to the times in which they were living. Guillaume does not agree:

Un campement? Ce n'était pas du tout l'impression de Guillaume. Il se demandait d'où venait cette paix qui l'enveloppait, cette impression qu'il était arrivé dans un havre, un refuge à l'abri du temps (2009, p.326).

For Guillaume, the peace he sees in Laura, and which he experiences himself, has two causes.

Firstly, in her demeanour and in the photographs of her husband around the room, he senses an easy and natural relation with death:

Il se demanda aussi pourquoi les hommes faisaient tout ce qu'ils pouvaient pour se rendre la mort hideuse : jusqu'en faire une punition, - le suprême châtement !... Il se retourna vers Laura : ses yeux brillaient, mais il n'y avait en eux aucun éclat trouble, aucune lueur de défection, aucune larme prête à tomber, rien que la lucidité la plus pure (2009, p.331).

The second cause, or rather source of revelation, is the view he can see from her window looking out onto the beach. It is the same one where he and Laura had talked the night away with Hersent: 'Il venait d'attendre ici un de ces points mystérieux où notre vie trouve une ouverture' (2009, p.332). From this vantage point he describes the endless struggle between the sea and the land, in terms which recall the earlier descriptions of Ruysdaël's paintings.

The harmony of creation is restored and experienced as a moment of Grace. Just as in *Siloé*, this moment has the potential to inform the rest of his life. Irène (peace) and Laura (victory) have fulfilled their task as donors and transmitted their message:

Demain il allait retomber dans ce que les gens qui aiment vider les mots de leur sens appellent bassement « la vie ». Peut-être savait-il un peu mieux où était la vie, et ce qui vaut la peine d'être vécu (2009, p.333).

The ending of *La Plage de Scheveningen* fits well with Gadenne's statement, in his article 'L'Efficacité du roman', that, 'dans le roman la vérité est vue à la lumière de l'instant' (1983b, p.32).

The significance of the third modality of Augustine's three fold present, *expectatio*, should not be underestimated however. For many critics, this notion of *attente* is seen to be central:

En tout cas, cette faim métaphysique, cette attente douloureuse d'une révélation, c'est le fil conducteur que l'on peut suivre d'un bout à l'autre de sa vie, au hasard de ses Carnets et ses livres (Blanchet, 1963, p.633).

It is the characteristic state of being of his protagonists. Guillaume sums up his relationship with Irène: 'Avec vous, reprit-il à haute voix, et c'est peut-être ce que j'aimais, je me suis toujours senti à la veille de quelque chose' (2009, p.91). For him, this was the best feeling; the anxious expectation that something would happen, that contact would be made. Even when faced by discord and absence, the sense of immanent possibility sustained him.

The religious connotations of this expectation are even more evident in *Siloé* and *L'Avenue*. Simon describes the periods of waiting for Ariane to appear:

Et la conscience de vivre cela, de posséder en lui une pensée capable de s'égaliser à toute l'étendue du ciel et du jour, le comblait à tel point qu'il aurait voulu en rester là, rester au centre de cette merveilleuse attente, de cette attente qui ne faisait pas souffrir et au sein de laquelle il trouvait la plénitude (1974, p.365).

Antoine echoes these words from the earlier novel and takes them one step further:

... il savait assurément... que tout ce qui compte vient toujours à nous parce que nous avons attendu et cherché, et peut-être souffert, - et il commençait à se demander si, en de certains moments, l'attente n'était pas déjà une plénitude, - si notre attente, ce n'était pas déjà l'éternité (1984, p.99).

In such moments of blissful certainty, Antoine combines the three modalities of Augustinian time. His previous doubts and trials have been the necessary precursors to the present moment, in which hopeful expectation gives tantalising access to that which is beyond time.

It is perhaps not surprising that this synthesis of past, present and future might be achieved in the three most optimistic novels in Gadenne's output, on which I have just commented.

Attente takes on a positive value in a context in which that expectation may be fulfilled.

What could it signify, however, in such an apparently pessimistic work as *Le Vent noir*? In his review of the novel in *Le Monde*, Albert Béguin considered its evocation of the world of crime and fear equal to the writing of Julien Green. For him, Gadenne was, 'Un romancier qui parvient à donner cette impression du gouffre, sans que rien semble voulu ou forcé' (Béguin, 1947). The epigraph Gadenne chose for this novel is taken from Kafka's *The Castle*.

It ostensibly points to the ultimate futility of *l'attente*:

- Je manquerai la personne que j'attends, dit K. en hochant la tête...- Vous la manquerez de toute façon, que vous attendiez ou non, dit le Monsieur...- Alors, j'aime mieux la manquer en l'attendant, dit K (1983a, p.15).

In *Le Vent noir*, Luc does indeed miss that person Edith, the absent presence whose image of perfection dominates the work. He pursues Marcelle as a surrogate and kills Mme Monge in a vain effort to blot out the memory of Edith she conjures up to torment him. The meaning Gadenne found in the epigraph was more complex. Initially he felt that it conveyed a sense of despair. However, Balso quotes from his notebooks of the period in which he makes it clear that even this *attente* could be subsumed into the positive category to which it belongs in Augustine's thinking:

Je suis content de la phrase que j'ai mise en exergue au *Vent noir*. ... dont je n'avais d'abord vu que le désespoir, c'est l'expression même de la *foi*. La foi qui ne peut

jamais dire : je suis la foi, j'ai la foi, la foi qui est en même temps question, angoisse et repos, problème et résolution (dans les deux sens de *décision* et de problème *résolu*) (2007, p.100).

This chapter has explored some of the complexities of Gadenne's depiction of time in his novels. Though two of his later novels deal more with the contemporary, his focus is always upon the individual's experience of time, whether it involves the enjoyment of moments of bliss or the anguish of their irretrievable passing. The personal is, however, only one level of the significance accorded to time. His protagonists are engaged in a metaphysical narrative of lost Paradise and the hope of regaining it. While their guilt is felt in relation to the failure of relationships, as children of Cain they are inevitably marked by sin and their own efforts at lucidity cannot cleanse them. Symbols of harmony, such as the sea-washed pebble, hint at the possibility of purity and reconciliation. Faint echoes of the Word from the dawn of creation may be heard in nature and in memory. The example of donors such as Ariane, Irène and Laura may suggest that the joy of Augustine's eternal present might be accessible in life. Ultimately though, the fusion of *mémoire*, *attention* and *attente*, to use Ricœur's translation of Augustine's terms, depends upon faith and Grace. Even Sophie Balso, whose arguments against Gadenne being considered a religious writer will be examined in the Conclusion, concedes:

Paul Gadenne possède cette foi, qui fait de l'impossible un de grands enjeux de l'existence. Foi en ce miracle : que l'impossible devienne possible. Les revers, le doute voire le désespoir sont seulement l'autre face de la foi, et Gadenne les accepte également (2007, p.101).

It is indeed this dialectic of faith and despair which drives his characters, even when they are not fully aware of it, and conditions their experience of time.

Gadanne's concentration, in his novelistic technique, upon the consciousness of his protagonists, draws the reader into the interplay of past, present and future which rules their lives. In *Le Vent noir* and *La Plage de Scheveningen*, in particular, we share in their moments of perplexity and confusion, deprived of the guiding hand of a narrator, and the writing anticipates some of the challenges to the reader associated with *le nouveau roman*, while maintaining the author's unwavering belief in the novel's ability to signify.

INTERTEXTUALITY AND INTERPRETATION: *LES HAUTS-QUARTIERS*

Although I have not made frequent use of the terminology of intertextuality, the reading of Gadenne's novels against the background of mythic and religious intertexts has been at the core of this analysis. Whether it is a question of the myth of the Labyrinth or the narratives of the Fall, the reader cannot fail to engage with these texts, which form part of the inherited culture of Europe. Gadenne specifically encourages us to do so through his use of epigraphs. In the six novels which employ them, there are no fewer than thirteen examples. Five are drawn from the Bible, two from Rimbaud, with single examples taken from Dante, Kafka, Hölderlin, Eckhart, Eliot and an anonymous Anglo-Saxon chronicle. This represents an eclectic range of sources, aside from the numerous more covert references to Kierkegaard and Kafka, for example, to which attention has been drawn in the preceding chapters. Does the use Gadenne makes of them change in the course of his output and do any changes imply a development in narrative technique?

A severe critic might dismiss them as a self-conscious display of the breadth of the author's knowledge. Their purpose, however, is to impose, to reinforce or to suggest particular readings of the novels. While the intention of the Vulgate quotation used in *Siloé*, 'Et abii, et lavi, et video', is to impose a monologic interpretation of Simon's physical and spiritual journey in the context of an overtly didactic novel, Gadenne uses the epigraph from Eliot, 'Leaving disordered papers in a dusty room', in *L'Invitation chez les Stirl* with much greater subtlety. This line from *Animula* stands outside the novel as epigraph, but also exists within it as Olivier discovers the full text among Allan Stirl's books. It is in tune with the setting and tonality of the novel, which defies easy interpretation, and yet, in recalling Eliot's source,

Dante's depiction of the journey of the soul, it invites a metaphysical reading of the work. The epigraph thus holds in tension bewilderment at the lack of a unifying vision and the possibility that such a vision might be attained. *L'Invitation chez les Stirl* immediately precedes *Les Hauts-Quartiers*; does the same complexity, which leaves open the possibility of plural interpretations, prevail in Gadenne's final novel?

This question is of particular significance as critics have tended to link *Siloé* and *Les Hauts-Quartiers*, due to their autobiographical inspiration and overtly religious content, in order to diminish their literary importance. Bruno Curatolo sums up one strand of criticism from André Le Vot's review of *Les Hauts-Quartiers* in the April 1973 edition of *Esprit*: 'Il en déplore le caractère trop didactique, trop pamphlétaire, trop gloseur, pas assez purement romanesque en somme, ainsi que le supposait l'esthétique de ses livres précédents' (2010, p.321). Le Vot does recognise the merits of the final section of the novel, in which can be heard, 'une voix nouvelle, grave et déchirante, la voix qui eût sans doute dominé le livre si la mort n'avait pas empêché la révision du manuscrit' (1973, p.1028). The charge remains, however. In this final work does Gadenne revert to the use of intertexts to impose an interpretation, as in *Siloé*, or might they merely suggest a reading, as in his mature writing?

Exceptionally, Gadenne makes no use of epigraphs in *Les Haut-Quartiers*, but Didier's studies allow him to introduce quotations from and references to Eckhart, Tauler, St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa d'Avila, Thomas à Kempis, Kafka, Kierkegaard, Solovyov, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. Bruno Curatolo lists many more in his article "*Les Hauts-Quartiers* ou le livre en creux" (2004, pp.69-82), examining Didier's unfinished treatise, which lies within the novel. While there are many voices here, the common theme is that of suffering and its possible

significance. Any one of these could be analysed in terms of its contribution to the ideology of the novel. I will take the example of Tolstoy, whom Curatolo does not mention, as there are interesting parallels and contrasts between *Resurrection* and *Les Haut-Quartiers*, not only on in terms of ideas, but also in relation to plot and narrative.

Gadenne encourages such a comparative reading, as Didier imagines a potential relationship between two minor characters in the novel:

Quel beau thème pour un roman! L'inverse de *Résurrection* : le bagnard ramenant à la vie, par son contact, la jeune fille sur le point de se perdre dans un monde médiocre : la vraie perdition (1973, p.98).

Western criticism has often downplayed the importance of *Resurrection* in Tolstoy's oeuvre, dismissing it as 'a tendentious social problem novel' (Greenwood, 1975, p.143). Tolstoy denounces, in particularly vehement tones, the cruel and arbitrary functioning of the legal and prison systems, as well as the moral bankruptcy of the upper classes. He also portrays the Orthodox Church as having abandoned Christ's teaching and formed an un-holy alliance with the State. Similar themes can be found in *Les Hauts-Quartiers*, where justice is only available to the rich, local government and press are controlled by ex-collaborators and the Church is dominated by petty-minded spinsters, when it has not sold its soul to Mammon. Didier suffers from the way property is exploited by those who own it, echoing the criticism of the landowning classes in *Resurrection*. The struggle of workers in dangerous factories is another expression of the rampant materialism exposed by Gadenne in *Les Hauts-Quartiers*. Social comment in the rest of Gadenne's work is limited and allusive; therefore its central importance here represents a significant departure and striking parallel with *Resurrection*.

A brief summary of the plot of *Resurrection* will help to establish the basis for comparison of character and action. Prince Nekhlyudov seduces Maslova, a servant girl, who becomes pregnant and is dismissed. Ten years later he is on a jury trying Maslova, now a prostitute, for her part in the murder of a client. Though innocent, she is condemned to hard labour in Siberia. Nekhlyudov recognises his guilt, renounces his class, and follows Maslova to Siberia wishing to marry her in order to 'save' her. She refuses him. Nekhlyudov expiates his guilt by sharing in the suffering of the poor and, at the end of the novel, is on the verge of being reborn as a new man.

If we substitute Flopie for Maslova, and Didier for Nekhlyudov, significant similarities and contrasts emerge. Both girls were orphans, servants in a household, and were raped by a member of their employer's family, whether due to physical force or disparity of power. They both have a child as a result. Didier is not the perpetrator, unlike Nekhlyudov, in fact he had tried to protect Flopie in a previous incident. Both men offer to 'save' the women; in Didier's case by recognising the child as his own, in Nekhlyudov's by his influence with the authorities and an offer of marriage. Maslova refuses Nekhlyudov whereas Didier marries Flopie; though it is she who instigates it. Both men appear to renounce their respected social position and associate more with those whom society has rejected. With Didier this process is worked out through his moves from one inadequate lodging to another still smaller one, further removed from the heights of 'les Hauts-Quartiers'. Nekhlyudov's journey takes him from the comforts St. Petersburg to the privations of Siberia.

For Ewa Thompson, Nekhlyudov initially represents the evil world but then evolves to conform to the Russian literary archetype of the *strannik*, or 'one who wanders for God's or

spirituality's sake' (Thompson, p.246). It is true that Nekhlyudov is ruled by a strong ethical code, which has replaced the aimless pursuit of pleasure, but he lacks any sense of the transcendent. He seeks to expiate his guilt, but any suffering he may experience is not subsumed into a wider significance. Besides, he has not fully surrendered the advantages of wealth and position. Maslova justly accuses him of not loving her in a spirit of self-sacrifice, but rather of regarding her as an instrument of his own salvation. In my view the term *strannik* can more aptly be applied to Didier, as the nature of suffering and sacrifice is worked out more fully in his characterization. Betty castigates him for similar failings to those of Nekhlyudov:

Oui, tu es un bourgeois de la souffrance. Tu veux des souffrances qui te rapportent, comme aux bourgeois leur argent... Tu es tout tendu vers l'avoir, vers la possession... Tu te crois des mérites parce que tu es pauvre. Mais cette pauvreté, tu ne l'as pas voulue, tu ne l'as pas désirée, tu ne l'as pas encore faite tienne, épousée (1973, pp. 450-451).

The radical espousal of poverty, humiliation and suffering will come in his marriage to Flopie and their subsequent death from gas poisoning in a miserable rented room. Nekhlyudov's journey takes him to verge of rebirth, reminiscent of the ending of *Siloé*; Didier's life seems to end in crushing defeat, as the values of materialism and exploitation are victorious.

'L'inverse de *Résurrection*' (1973, p.98) indeed.

The portrayal of a Eucharist has a particular significance in both novels. It was the most controversial scene in Part 1 of *Resurrection*, with the censor allowing only the first line of the whole chapter, 'The service began' (Tolstoy and Edmonds, 1966, p.180), to appear in the first edition. As E. B. Greenwood puts it, 'Tolstoy combines an attack on the association of Church and State... with savage ridicule of the symbolism of the Eucharist' (1975, p.144). In

the introduction to her translation, Rosemary Edmonds claims that in every description of ritual, Tolstoy 'disfigures and caricatures with such obvious tendentiousness and vehemence that art goes by the board' (1966, p.14). For Tolstoy, the Church had abandoned the simplicity of Christ's teaching and replaced it by authoritarian obscurantism.

The depiction of the Eucharist following a marriage ceremony in *Les Hauts-Quartiers* makes some similar points to Tolstoy's version, but with greater subtlety and a radically different outcome. Didier and Flopie have been married the previous day by an official in a Catalan bar, Didier being too weakened by illness to reach the *mairie*. Though Flopie is delighted to have had her future child's status regularized, she feels cheated of the church wedding of which she had dreamed. The couple therefore slip into the back of the cathedral where a society wedding has just been celebrated. Unlike *Resurrection*, where the point of view is resolutely that of the author, two different focalizers present their impressions of the mass. Flopie looks on in wonder and incomprehension, asking Didier to explain to her the significance of what is going on. Didier feels a sense of nostalgia for the secure faith of his childhood, while being cynically aware that the marriage they are witnessing is no more than a crude financial alliance between members of the *haute bourgeoisie*. This cynicism turns to revolt when he realises the mass is being conducted by the abbé Singler, the high priest of materialism. The Latin words of the Mass jar, particularly the prayer of humble access: 'Domine, non sum dignus, ut intres sub tectum meum: sed tantum dic verbo, et sanabitur anima mea'⁵. Didier is effectively homeless and these words are being pronounced by the priest whose advice to him had been 'Devenez propriétaire! Enrichissez-vous' (1973, p.761)!

⁵ 'Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed'.

As Singler utters the words 'Corpus Christi', a moment Tolstoy describes as literal cannibalism, Didier's eyes fill with tears and he drags Flopie out of the cathedral in revolt at what he is witnessing.

Once outside in the open air, he regains some composure and the parallels with Tolstoy are renewed. He talks to Flopie and, for her, his voice recalls the soaring notes of the organ she has just heard, but he interrupts her:

Il ne pouvait écouter, dans un pareil moment où il était soulevé au-dessus de lui-même par une force toute neuve, gigantesque, un pouvoir de résurrection... Tu verras comme un homme peut renaître, poursuivit-il, exalté... Je t'aime parce que tu n'es rien..., parce qu'on t'a humiliée (1973, p.765).

Is he then on the point of rebirth, like Nekhlyudov, thanks to his love for Flopie who is unjustly condemned by society? There are important differences, however between the two men. Nekhlyudov offers to marry Maslova out of guilt and a desire to 'do the right thing', despite the prevailing opinions of his class, but the suspicion remains that she is an instrument of his ethical advancement, rather than someone he actually loves. Didier, however, has heeded Betty's criticism about him expecting a return on his suffering. There is no advantage to Didier in marrying Flopie. He surrenders himself in an act of solidarity with Flopie's suffering. It does not matter that she could be using him to get her hands on a *livret de famille* and the benefits which may accrue. Didier's sacrifice is unmotivated and complete. Nekhlyudov may follow the prisoners on their march to Siberia, but he travels in a carriage and stays in inns.

Gadonne places Didier's suffering, in his last few days of life, into a context which Tolstoy does not claim for his hero. Didier's *via dolorosa* is arguably transformed into a mystical sharing in Christ's Passion. As he sits in a bar waiting for the officials from the *mairie* to

arrive and conduct his marriage to Flopie, Didier watches a north African worker struggling to tip the gravel from his lorry at the roadside. The task involves manually turning a crank to raise the hopper. Didier describes it as, 'le dialogue de Sisyphe avec les tonnes de gravier' (1973, p.722). The man is reduced to exhaustion. His broken body gives no hint of his age: he could be thirty or sixty, 'comme s'il portait toute la misère du monde' (1973, p.722). Despite his own infirmity, Didier is driven to join him and to add his limited strength to the man's efforts. The worker's face is scratched and scarred, his brow beaded with sweat: 'Didier crut voir le linge de Véronique' (1973, p.723). Placing his hands upon the iron crank, Didier does what he can to aid the man in this apparently senseless task: 'Ses paumes luisaient, toutes rouges, comme enflammées. Un peu de sa sueur, de sa peau, de son travail, de son amour était resté sur la poignée' (1973, p.723). The details of this incident are all explicable in physical and psychological terms. There is no need to see in Didier's bloodied hands the stigmata of Christ's wounds. The subjectivity of the focalization is emphasised in the language used. The man's task, too, can be taken as an image of the absurd. Didier's identification with Saint Veronica who, according to church tradition gave her veil to Christ so that he could wipe his face on the way to Golgotha, could be a product of delirium and excessive concentration on mystic texts. Both realistic and metaphysical readings are possible and, unlike *Siloé*, guidance from an authoritative narrator is lacking.

At the end of *Resurrection* Tolstoy hints at a sequel which will describe Nekhlyudov's life as a new man. Didier's experience of the 'power of resurrection' is merely a prelude to a squalid death beside his new wife. Does this brutal contrast with Tolstoy's narrative conclude the novel on a note of profound despair, indicating a complete reversal of the optimism apparent at the end of *Siloé*, Gadenne's novel of rebirth? A further reference to the

Eucharist, again recalling Tolstoy's description, suggests a more nuanced judgement. As the crisis of his tuberculosis reaches its height, Didier sleeps uneasily, half delirious, half dreaming. His mind is flooded with images from the past few days and he remembers the celebration of the mass:

Soudain, tous en même temps, du même geste, ils brandissaient dans leurs mains quelque chose, quelque chose qui se mettait à vivre d'une manière insoutenable – l'impossible se réalisait : « Corpus Christi... » disaient-ils... « Oui ! Oui ! disait une voix en lui. Oui !... » Il entrouvrit les lèvres. « Son Corps. Quelqu'un a-t-il jamais senti cela ? Ou l'a-t-il cru ?... Vécu ?... Le Corps du Christ ! Pas en image, mais...Il aurait voulu ôter ce voile qui lui brouillait la vue. Soudain sa bouche se remplit de sang (1973, p.772).

Has Didier been granted an experience of the Real Presence, or is the blood the result of severe hemoptysis, symptomatic of the terminal phase of his disease? Will he soon see 'beyond the veil', or is this a troubled vision, the product of delirium? Has Didier's life become an imitation of Christ, in response to writings of the Christian saints and mystics, to whom he has devoted so much time? Have the Beauchamps and Singlers extinguished the divine spark and will Didier's magnum opus, *Taudis et Vie spirituelle*, moulder, unread, in a provincial library?

At the end of *Les Hauts-Quartiers*, the reader is left with questions, rather than answers. It reflects the fourth term in Gadenne's later definition of the novel: '1. Temps, 2. Dialogue, 3. Silence, 4. Ambiguïté' (Sarrou, 1999, p.75). In *Siloé* the intertexts of the Labyrinth and the healing of the blind man by the pool of Siloam impose a structure on narrative development, characterization and metaphor which allows only a single reading of the text. In *Les Hauts-Quartiers* multiple readings are encouraged and set against each other. The example of the creative interplay between *Resurrection* and this final novel shows how the intertext, one of

several I could have chosen, generates complexity. Simon achieves clarity of vision, as he gains true insight through the mediation of Ariane. Didier's vision is necessarily clouded. His experience encompasses despair, felt in an earlier bout of fever, at 'le scandale de l'absence monstrueuse de Dieu' (1973, p.683), as well as an intimation of the Real Presence. A clear evolution is thus evident in Gadenne's use of intertextual references. Gadenne echoes elements of the *Resurrection* narrative and also diverges from it. He affirms ideas expressed and criticisms made by Tolstoy, while at the same time presenting challenging alternatives. The intertextual relationship now resembles the mirrors found in *Le Vent noir* and *La Rue profonde*, sending back multiple distorted images for the reader to contemplate and attempt to integrate. Natural and supernatural are not in simple opposition. As Stephen Schloesser puts it:

Dialectical images suggest other possible modes of interrelating: one thing can point to, participate in, bear within, carry, actualize, perfect, translate, transpose, transform – or even become – something else (2005, p.7).

CONCLUSION

How does Gadenne's work stand in relation to the various currents prevalent in mid-twentieth century French literature? Was he really a 'solitaire', as Marcel Arland suggested in the quotation at the start of this dissertation? Two opposing approaches, which bear upon his possible status as a religious writer, are evident in recent criticism of his novels. In his book *Paul Gadenne: l'écriture et les signes* (2000), Bruno Curatolo states categorically that Christian faith underpins Gadenne's literary expression (p.10). While this book arguably does not exploit the full implications religious belief as one of the keys to understanding the structure, characterization and imagery of Gadenne's novels, it is notable that Curatolo gives much greater weight to Biblical and mystical allusions in his more recent articles on *Les Hauts-Quartiers* (2004) and *Baleine* (2007), a short story which lies outside the scope of this study.

The opposing view is represented by Sophie Balso in *Pensée et écriture romanesque dans l'œuvre de Paul Gadenne* (2007) and her subsequent articles. While she concedes that he had a faith, she struggles to define in what that might be. For her, his work must be seen in the context of three facts: '«Dieu est mort», la fin de la métaphysique, la guerre' (2007, p.12).

While I hope that my argument has shown that Gadenne was a metaphysical novelist, and indeed that is how he saw himself, it is important to consider in more detail Balso's objections to placing Gadenne as a religious/Catholic writer in the succession of Mauriac, Bernanos and Green, for this is, in my view, his rightful home.

Balso suggests that the image of religious experience which emerges from the novels is so unorthodox as to be a challenge to conventional believers. Didier Sarrou echoes the same

idea: 'Pour un esprit religieux sa foi est tellement atypique qu'il est contrairement à d'autres indéfinissable' (2003, p.8). Even if this were the case, it is wise to remember that challenging representations of religious ideas, beyond the comfort zone of ordinary churchgoers, do not disqualify a writer such as Bernanos from being considered a Catholic novelist. Balso then points out that Gadenne was relatively unconcerned with religious practice in his novels and that whatever picture does emerge, such as in *Les Hauts-Quartiers*, is entirely negative. Such criticism of narrow-minded, hypocritical religion is of course part of the stock in trade of Catholic writers such as Mauriac and Bernanos. Gadenne himself made the distinction between 'les faux-semblants de la chrétienté' (Balso, 2007, p.270) and true belief. He was also familiar with Kierkegaard's swingeing attack upon Christendom and his suggestion that it was inimical to genuine Christianity. Finally Balso says that Gadenne would have repudiated the label of Catholic novelist, had it been applied to him. In this she is no doubt correct, but it is a term even those accepted as belonging to that tradition, such as Mauriac and Green, did their best to avoid. The formula used by a contemporary Catholic writer, François Taillandier, 'Romancier, je ne suis plus d'aucune religion' (2007), would have been claimed by several generally considered to belong to the Catholic canon.

Any discussion over the attribution of a label to an extent misses the point. The novels speak for themselves. My analysis has shown how the seven novels, despite the variety of their forms, relate to foundational Christian narratives of the Fall or the Greek myth of the Labyrinth. In each work the protagonist is driven by a sense of isolation, loss, failure and guilt. This feeling of exclusion is articulated in the spaces depicted in the novels and in the characters' relation to time. They are not alienated creatures, dominated by despair, however. Animated by the desire for forgiveness and the need to start afresh, Gadenne's

protagonists maintain a hope that coherence and unity can be attained, and work towards them through intellectual enquiry and artistic endeavour. Revelation does not come from their own efforts, but the intervention of supernatural donors is required for them to advance in their quest for meaning in existence, in a working out of the classic theological dialectic between works and grace. Triumphal intrusions of the divine do not belong in Gadenne's fictional world though, particularly in his final, and ostensibly most pessimistic, novel *Les Hauts-Quartiers*. The experience of doubt and even the absence of God is, arguably, just as authentic a religious experience in his aesthetic, which takes in his studies of philosopher theologians as distant in time from each other as Meister Eckhart and Simone Weil. Weil's statement in *La Pesanteur et la Grâce*, which Gadenne read in 1953, 'Dieu ne peut être présent dans la création que sous la forme de l'absence' (1988, p.126), may have had particular resonance for him in the post-war years. Paul Ricœur echoes Karl Jaspers, in a quotation used in my introduction, when he suggests that in the face of the risk of destruction a society is compelled to return to 'that mythical nucleus which ultimately grounds and determines it' (Ricœur and Valdés, 1991, p.484). The centrality of the foundational Christian narrative of sin and redemption in Gadenne's work suggests that he felt this compulsion with particular acuity. He records, in explicitly Christian terms, a visit made to a Paris exhibition commemorating the *Déportation* and the activities of the *Résistance*: 'C'est là que nous pouvons, que nous devons aller faire notre chemin de croix. Nous sommes ici au carrefour de toutes les douleurs' (Gadenne and Sarrou, 2004, p.132). While Gadenne's focus, throughout his work, may be upon the anguish of human failings and the suffering they cause, there remains an underlying hope in a new start and the possibility of transcendence, achieved in *Siloé* and in *L'Avenue*, glimpsed in *La Rue profonde*

and *La Plage de Scheveningen*, which marks Gadenne, definitively, as belonging to the tradition of French twentieth century Catholic writing.

My analysis of narrative form in Gadenne's novels has shown an analogous tension between the clarity of vision implied by the traditionally crafted *Siloé*, with its omniscient narrator and evident symbolism determined by the Biblical hypotext, and the play of reflections and distortions found in the majority of the later novels. The use of multiple narrators, some of them unreliable, shifts in chronology and the subversion of the expected, convey the anguish of his characters in a world of shifting appearances, when the comprehensive vision they crave is repeatedly denied them. In this Gadenne is a writer in tune with contemporary trends, even if he condemned the more avant-garde experimentation of Beckett, for example.

The individual's search for a sustaining truth is at the heart of all seven novels. The search may involve an interrogation of past actions, intellectual or artistic efforts, but without aid it cannot guarantee the meaning of existence. While the mature Gadenne may hint at the nature of that truth, he increasingly steps back to leave the reader to discern what it might be and to judge its validity. Bruno Curatolo notes that the reader of *Les Hauts-Quartiers* is never given the conclusion of Didier's thesis, elaborated in the course of the novel, but his observation may apply to Gadenne's work as a whole: 'Il nous laisse cette liberté suprême, qui consiste à choisir entre la défaite de la Pensée et le triomphe de l'Esprit' (2007, p.4).

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