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## UCLA FRENCH DEPARTMENT PUBLICATIONS AND DISSERTATIONS

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Stephen Werner. *Socratic Satire. An Essay on Diderot and Le Neveu de Rameau*. Birmingham: Summa Press, 1987.

*Le Neveu de Rameau*, Diderot's greatest (and most elusive literary work), is a parody of *philosophe* satire in the manner of Voltaire's *Candide*. Two influences spark this re-writing and give it dramatic movement and relief. They are dialogues in a Socratic, or self-critical, vein and Italian comic opera. Both are conceived as agents of a dialectical kind — what Diderot was to call *grains de levain*. The presence of these agents effects many parts of the story from subject matter (conversations that touch on aesthetics as well as philosophy) and narration in a first-person mode, to the delirious “operatic” style that emerges in the key scene of *l'homme orchestre*. But the larger point of Diderot's “Second Satire,” as he was to call this work, bears on comic irony. Here is the essence of the *philosophe* literary world (and Diderot's as well). In *Rameau's Nephew* Diderot was able to modernize and deepen the properties of comic irony and bring off a revolution not unlike the one that took place with the coming of the *buffoni* to Paris. Comic irony is no longer to be taken as a mere ornament synonymous with contradiction and *badinage*. It is now a major comic mode whose properties are those of a visionary and totalizing kind. The seeds of “romantic irony” are clearly present in this conversation between Lui and Moi. And its brevity — a mere sixty pages or so — is, in the best tradition of Socrates, Diderot's *maître à penser* here as in so many other parts of the *oeuvre*, a strategic deception.

Nicole Marie Mosher, *Le Texte visualisé: le calligramme de l'époque alexandrine à l'époque cubiste* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Hassan El Nouty, Chair, UCLA, 1988)

The technique of "technopaignia," employed during the Alexandrine period, reappears in the *Calligrammes* of Apollinaire. Apollinaire incorporates a new language of signs into an old poetic form.

After translations and analyses of certain Greek and Latin visual poems in the first two chapters, a third chapter is devoted to the visual poetry of the Renaissance. In each chapter the relation between the content and the image is studied in the light of the same relation in Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*. Before the nineteenth century, the visual image resembles the poem's content, but this metaphorical link becomes progressively weaker as one moves from the Classical Greek period to the 1800's. At this point literary history reveals a metonymic relation between content and image in the poetry of Mallarmé ("Un coup de dés") and especially in Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*.

This discussion of the metaphorical and metonymical relations is supplemented by a consideration of the visual poem's connection with the social, cultural, or literary life of an era despite the visual poem's apparent marginal status. The Greek poet remains a prisoner of the object he imitates, being condemned to respect the limits imposed on his poem by the contours of the object on which his inscription is engraved. A Latin poet like Porphyrius struggles with the rigidity of classical verse form while trying to please the Emperor Constantine. The poets Fortunat or Raban Maur use visual poetry to spread their religious fervor.


During the Renaissance Rabelais' calligramme in the *Ve Livre* does not bear on language itself, as do Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*, but rather on the way of making language create something useful for humanity.

In certain of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*, the title and the form of the poem recall objects familiar to Greek or Latin poets, but in Apollinaire no visual image corresponds to the poem's content, because under this content, which is rendered abstract by the illogical combination of the words, is hidden a sense or a nonsense different from the visual form of the image.

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Ce serait le moment de philosopher et de  
rechercher si, par hasard, se trouverait  
ici l'endroit où de telles paroles déglent.

Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*

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