The Waste Land Motif
in Jean Raspail’s *Sept Cavaliers* and
Stephen King’s the Dark Tower Series

Ritgerð til M.A.-prófs

Véronique Favéro

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Véronique Favéro
Kt.: 110686-5449

Leiðbeinandi: Martin S. Regal
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Introduction

Jean Raspail is a French writer whose fame has stayed rather confidential and who has attracted more attention for his unconventional political stance as a royalist than for his writings. He received several literary awards, among which the Grand Prix du roman de l’Académie française in 1981, for his novel *Moi, Antoine de Tounens, roi de Patagonie*. But this *succès d’estime* was not followed by popular recognition even though the novel was adapted into a TV mini-series in 1990. Several titles by Raspail are now out of print and only four of them have been translated into English: *Le Vent des Pins* (1958), translated by Jean Stewart as *Welcome Honorable Visitors* (1960), *Le Camp des Saints* (1973), translated by Norman Shapiro as *The Camp of the Saints* (1975), *Qui se souvient des hommes...* (1986), translated by Jeremy Leggatt as *Who Will Remember the People...* (1988) and *L’Île bleue* (1988).

A large portion of Raspail’s literary production is made not of novels but of travel literature in which the author recounts his experience. He is a member of the French Explorers Society and took part in several expeditions and scientific exploration trips. *Terre de feu – Alaska*, “Land of Fire – Alaska” (1952) was co-written with Philippe Andrieu and tells of their driving expedition from one end of the American continent to the other with the “Marquette team”, so-called after Father Jacques Marquette, a seventeenth century French Jesuit missionary who explored the Mississipi area. The first voyage of the Marquette team (1949) was a rowing boat expedition upstream the Saint Lawrence River to the Great Lakes and then to New Orleans via the Mississipi River. Raspail did not publish anything about this first expedition before 2005 when, based on his log from that time, he published *En canot sur les chemins d’eau du roi, une aventure en Amérique*, “Rowing Expedition on the King’s Water Paths: An American Adventure”. Based on his various trips in America he also published books on the native people he met: *Terres et peuples incas*, “Inca Lands and Peoples” (1955), *Journal Peau-rouge*, “Redskin Journal” (1975), *Les Peaux-rouges aujourd’hui*, “Redskins today” (1978). *Qui se souvient des hommes...*, “Who Will Remember the People” (1986) and *Pêcheurs de lune*, “Moon Fishers” (1990) are presented as novels by their publisher, while *Adiós, Tierra del Fuego* (2001) is catalogued as travel writing; however, all three of them are dreamlike pursuits of disappearing people. His other trips to the Middle East, the Antilles, and China were also occasions for travel writing publications: respectively *Terres Saintes et Profanes*, “Lands Holy and Profane” (1960), *Secouons le cocotier*, “Let’s Shake the Coconut Tree” (1966), *Bleu caraïbe et citrons verts : mes derniers voyages aux...*
Most of Raspail’s travel literature publications are now out of print and he is better known for his novels. *Le Camp des Saints* (1973) is the most famous of his works and has probably drawn more attention for its controversial content than its literary quality: this apocalyptical novel relates how a massive immigration from the Third-World destroys Western civilisation and has been called “an odiously racist book”¹ by journalist Daniel Schneidermann (Libération, March 7, 2011). Madeleine Roussel rejects this accusation:

> Accusation *a priori* absurde, certes, si l’on sait que Raspail n’est pas seulement homme de plume et de bureau, mais que, grand voyageur, explorateur et ethnologue, il montre dans plusieurs de ses ouvrages l’intérêt et la sympathie qu’il éprouve pour les peuples « en voie de disparition » : si quelqu’un « se souvient des hommes », de tous les hommes quelle que soit leur race, c’est bien lui.

Dans *Le Camp des Saints*, il ne montre ni haine ni mépris pour les immigrants, mais il prévoit sans peine que, trop nombreux et trop éloignés de notre culture, ces malheureux vont l’anéantir sans en tirer profit.² (Roussel 21)

*Sire* (1990) and *Le roi au-delà de la mer*, “The King Over the Water” (2000) also have a political content as they reflect Raspail’s nostalgia for the monarchic system, a rather unusual view in France. Most of his novels deal indeed with nostalgia for ancient values and a disappearing world order. If Raspail may not necessarily be a “racist writer” or a “far right writer” (Schneidermann) he is without any doubt a profoundly reactionary writer.

At first sight there seems to be little in common between Jean Raspail and the worldwide famous, bestseller author, Stephen King. King’s literary productivity is extremely impressive: to this day, he is the author of fifty-six novels and around two hundred short stories as well as five non-fiction books and several screenplays. He has been deemed “one of the most important and influential writers of the 20ᵗʰ century” (Spignesi, 12). By selling over

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¹ « Le Camp des saints est pourtant un livre racisté. Odieusement racisté. »
² This accusation becomes absurd, however, if we take into account that Raspail is not only a penman, an office man, but a great voyageur, an explorer and an ethnologist who reveals in many of his works interest and sympathy for “endangered” peoples: if someone “remembers the people”, all the peoples, whatever their race may be, it’s him.

In *The Camp of the Saints*, he shows neither hate nor contempt towards the immigrants but he predicts, easily enough, that, being too numerous and too remote from our culture, they are going to crush it without profiting from it.
three hundred million copies of his books he has left an undeniable mark in popular culture. He writes mostly in the suspense and horror genres but sometimes ventures into science fiction and fantasy. His fame developed quickly after his first published novel, *Carrie* (1974), was adapted into a film by Brian de Palma (1976). More than forty film adaptations and over twenty-five television series or mini-series were derived from King’s novels and short stories. Some of them, such as Stanley Kubrick 1980 adaptation of *The Shining* (1977) have been widely critically acclaimed and have reached cult status in popular culture.

Not only in terms of popularity and literary styles are King and Raspail diametrically opposed, but also in terms of their political views. King has been noticed for taking part in a protest against budget cuts proposed by Governor of Florida Rick Scott, and stating he would welcome paying more taxes. Recently, he published an essay on the gun violence issue in the United States and the necessity of gun control. He decided to take his 1977 novel *Rage*, published under the pseudonym of Richard Bachman, out of print when the book was found in the locker of a teenage boy who committed a school shooting massacre in Paducah, Texas in 1977 (Spignesi 118). His 1978 apocalyptic novel, *The Stand*, pointed at what happens when increasingly sophisticated and lethal weapons are massively produced. Those stances clearly put him on the left side of the US political spectrum, very far from Raspail’s reaction ary ideology.

However, some of the works of King and Raspail show an intriguing similarity not only in their underlying themes but also in the way they rely on intertextuality, notably with famous poetry works, to structure their plots. King’s Dark Tower series tells the story of Roland of Gilead, a gunslinger – the equivalent of a knight in this world mixing elements of

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3 Even though Tony Magistrale notes that it is probably due more to *The Shining* being a Stanley Kubrick film than a Stephen King novel (Magistrale xii).

4 As attested by such initiatives as Room 237, a 2012 documentary film directed by Rodney Ascher about *Shining* enthusiasts who discuss various theories about the film.


7 I am here using the currently accepted broader meaning of the term as defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary: “the complex interrelationship between a text and other texts taken as basic to the creation or interpretation of the text”. I will speak in more details about different intertextuality theories in the course of this study.

western and science fiction – who is on a quest for the Dark Tower, the nexus standing at the centre of the universe and where he hopes to restore the balance of a world quickly falling to its doom. Raspail’s *Sept Cavaliers*9 (“Seven Riders” 1993) is also the story of a quest: the colonel-major Silve de Pikkendorff is sent with six companions by the margrave of the City to seek the reason and, if possible, the remedy for the curious illness spreading across the land.10 These two works share a remarkable number of characteristics, apart from their obvious structure of quest tale. The main protagonist is, in both cases, a member of an aristocracy which is rapidly losing its meaning and function. The main plot of both narratives is situated in an imaginary world, but it is revealed later that this world – the Secondary World of fantasy as theorised by Tolkien in On Fairy Stories11 – has connections with our own world – the Primary World of reality –, and that it is possible to pass from one to the other. Some objects have strong symbolic functions in the narrative and these objects happen to be the same in *Sept Cavaliers* and The Dark Tower: roses, doors, trains. Both works weave intertextual references in their narrative in order to reinforce the coherence of their imaginary worlds and place themselves within the literary tradition that inspired them.

Raspail and King are also similar in that they have a globalising literary project. The Dark Tower as a material object is the nexus of Roland’s universe, but the Dark Tower as a literary cycle occupies the same position regarding the whole of King’s creation. Wiater et al. call Stephen King’s universe a “multiverse”, “a cluster of universes existing in parallel dimensions” (xv) and they make clear the implications of said multiverse:

[Any novel by King] exists within the Stephen King Universe, an ever-changing fictional landscape that is constantly being altered because it is all of a piece, for, as noted, King has created—with a large portion of his audience not realizing it at the time of publication—an entire multiverse, a fully realized cosmology wherein every story and book is *somehow connected to every other story and book by the author*. (xvi)

The concept of Multiverse is notably used by fantasy author Michael Moorcock to talk about his creation where different incarnations of the same character, the Eternal Champion

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9 The complete title is *Sept cavaliers quittèrent la Ville au crépuscule par la porte de l’Ouest qui n’était plus gardée*, “Seven Riders Left the City at Dusk by the Western Gate which was No Longer Watched”. I will use its commonly abbreviated form “Sept cavaliers”.

10 The reader can refer himself to the wikipédia page of the Dark Tower for a summary of each volume: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Dark_Tower_(series)#Series>

For a summary of *Sept cavaliers*, see Appendix A.

11 What really happens is that a good story-maker proves a successful ‘subcreator’. He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is ‘true’: it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. (Tolkien 52)
fight to protect the Balance between Law and Chaos across parallel universes. Roland of Gilead’s quest for the Dark Tower, aiming to restore some stability to a world which has “moved on”, is to a certain extent comparable with that of the Eternal Champion. The prominent incarnation of the Eternal Champion in Moorcock’s works is Elric of Melniboné but, interestingly enough, a certain Roland also appears as a manifestation of the Eternal Champion in Stormbringer (1965) and Bane of the Black Sword (1977), conducing Christopher Hart to place Moorcock alongside Dante and Virgina Woolf in the list of authors who reused the heroic figure of Roland in their writings (Hart iii).

King’s works are thus a global creative enterprise in which every text is virtually linked to the other. This is the case even for novels and stories that are not explicitly referred to in any other work; by a process of *mise en abyme*, Stephen King becomes a character of The Dark Tower and this cycle therefore infers all the texts that have ever been produced by King. He himself comments on this in the afterword of the fourth volume as he observes the place taken by The Dark Tower series while he is still in the middle of the creative process:

> I have written enough novels and short stories to fill a solar system of the imagination, but Roland’s story is my Jupiter—a planet that dwarfs all others (at least from my own perspective), a place of strange atmosphere, crazy landscape and savage gravitational pull. Dwarfs the others, did I say? I think there’s more to it than that, actually. I am coming to understand that Roland’s world (or worlds) actually contains all the others of my making. (Wizard and Glass, 843)

From Mid-World, the world inhabited by Roland, there are doors leading to other worlds. One of this world is “ours”, or at least its fictional rendering, and it is there that Roland meets Stephen King. It is also from our world that Roland’s companions come: Jake, Eddie and Susannah, albeit from different times: respectively 1977, 1987 and 1964. But it is also possible to step from Mid-World into other worlds. In *Wizard and Glass*, Roland and his ka-tet – the companions linked to him by fate – are sent by accident to another world. At first they believe that it is the same as the one Susannah, Eddie and Jake came from but they soon discover that a flu epidemic wiped out almost the whole population. As the year is 1986 and no such thing happened by 1987 in Eddie’s world, they quickly understand that they are in fact in a parallel universe, very similar to the one they came from, but sporting a few singularities of its own. The world they stumbled into is in fact the world of *The Stand* (1978), a post apocalyptic novel by Stephen King.

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12 King’s novel *Insomnia* (1994) introduces the existence of two competing forces: the Random and the Purpose, which are reminiscent of Moorcock’s concept of Law and Chaos.

> Après la “reparution des personnages” inventée par Balzac, qui donne cohésion et continuité à la *Comédie humaine*, Raspail invente la reparution d’une famille, qui constitue, à travers temps et lieux, de romans en nouvelles, une sorte de trame qui devient familière au lecteur.13 (Roussel 39)

King and Raspail’s methods to give a sense of unification to their works is thus quite similar: “reappearance of characters” for the former, “reappearance of a family” for the latter.

However, I called both King and Raspail’s literary projects “globalising”, and this goes further than the simple cohesion created by the process of reusing the same characters or characters’ links to one another. Jessica Waller, discussing King’s use of intertextuality and the way he weaves references to “classics” as well as to popular culture in his narrative, argues:

> In this way, King’s challenge to traditional authority presents an interesting version or simulation of postmodernism in which meaning and grand narratives are not so much questioned as transferred into Stephen King, who lies at the center of everything. (Waller 30)

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13 After the “reappearance of characters” invented by Balzac, which gives cohesion and continuity to the Human Comedy, Raspail invents the reappearance of a family, which constitutes, throughout times and places, from novels to short stories, some sort of a thread becoming familiar to the reader.
Philippe Hemsen notes a similar will to present a globalising account of European history within Raspail’s creation.

Traversée du temps, traversée de l'espace, d’est en ouest («confins chilien»), du nord au sud («confins septentrionaux»), mais aussi traversée d’une bonne part des romans de Jean Raspail... Et que la Grande Ancêtre, Zara, remontât aux temps obscurs des barbares — image saisissante par laquelle s'ouvre Hurrah Zara ! — ce n’est évidemment pas un hasard. C’est tout notre monde occidental, toute notre civilisation que traverse de part en part la dynastie des Pikkendorff.14

King and Raspail are thus not only establishing a coherent literary universe but documenting their own history by doing it.

Through their use of intertextuality to give depth and coherency to their creations, King and Raspail display a strong similarity in the literary devices they apply. The most obvious use of intertextuality by King and Raspail is the way they built their narratives around famous poetry works. King’s inspiration for The Dark Tower was a poem by Robert Browning he had read for an assignment as a sophomore student at the University of Maine at Orono in 1967-68 (Wiater et al. 3). The poem, “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came” (1855), presented him both with the title of the series and the name of his main protagonist. In the afterword to the first edition of The Gunslinger (1982), King makes explicit his intentions when he started writing this “first stanza in a much longer work” (136):

I had played with the idea of trying a long romantic novel embodying the feel, if not the exact sense, of the Browning poem. (138)

Raspail also gives a prominent place, inside of his text, to the poetic works of another author: Guillaume Apollinaire. His approach is different from King’s, but they both have a way of making this other text part of their diegesis. They do not simply quote it or refer to it but make it part of the story, through a *mise en abyme* process and the fictionalisation of the author. That author is King himself in the case of the Dark Tower: the main protagonists become aware that a certain Stephen King, living in a parallel world to theirs, is writing books about their story. Raspail, on the other hand, does not fictionalise himself and fictionalises

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14 Crossing through time, crossing through space, from East to West (“Chilean fringes”), from North to South (“septentrional fringes”), but also crossing of most of Jean Raspail’s novels... And the fact that the Great Ancestor, Zara, goes back to the Dark Ages of barbarians – a striking vision which opens *Hurrah Zara!* – is certainly not a random choice. The Pikkendorf’s dynasty covers the whole of our Western world, of our civilisation.
Apollinaire instead. In *Sept cavaliers*, Guillaume Apollinaire becomes Wilhelm Kostrowitsky, “le plus grand poète qu’ait connu la Ville” (20).¹⁵

The Dark Tower series and *Sept cavaliers*, apart from stemming from previous works of poetry, also share the same theme: that of a land being ravaged by inexplicable forces and being deserted by its people. The plot ensuing from this setting is therefore quite similar too in both narratives: a man abiding by chivalric values, followed by a few chosen companions, embarks on a quest and attempt to reach understanding of what causes the land to perish in such way and seek a remedy for it, if it exists. However, one should not infer that Raspail had a direct influence on King, or vice versa: it is indeed quite doubtful that this was the case. *Sept Cavaliers* was published in 1993, between the third and fourth volumes of the Dark Tower: *The Waste Lands* came out in 1991 and *Wizard and Glass* in 1997. *Sept cavaliers* has never been translated into English and considering the very little attention Raspail has gathered outside of France it is unlikely that King ever had the chance to read it in French. And even if he did, the influence this reading would have had on him is rather limited as King started the writing of the Dark Tower in 1970, and gives a prominent place to the waste land motif right from the start of the series.

*The Gunslinger* was translated into French in 1991 under the title *Le pistolero; The Drawing of the Three* came out the same year as *Les trois cartes* and the following year saw the publication of the translation of *The Waste Lands: Terres perdues*. It is thus possible that Raspail had gained access to the first books of the Dark Tower series when he wrote *Sept cavaliers*. However, taking into account the time taken by the writing and editing process, it does not seem materially possible that he read *Terres perdues* (1992) before he set out to write *Sept cavaliers* (1993). As might be expected, it is not before the third instalment of the Dark Tower, *The Waste Lands*, that the waste land motif comes to full fruition in King’s series and that even more parallels with Raspail’s text can be drawn. For instance, in *Sept cavaliers*, the children of the City rebel without apparent reason and attack the adults. In *The Waste Lands*, Roland and his ka-tet enter the city of Lud, which is in the midst of a civil war between “the Grays” and “the Pubes”, i.e. older people and younger people. It is also in *The Waste Lands* that King’s use of literary references steps into the diegesis by a process of *mise en abyme*, just as Raspail does in *Sept cavaliers*. Finally, the Dark Tower cycle and *Sept cavaliers* also share the same type of cyclical structure. The very last paragraph of *Sept cavaliers* is the same than the incipit of the novel:

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¹⁵ The greatest poet that the City has ever known.
Sept cavaliers quittèrent la Ville au crépuscule, face au soleil couchant, par la porte de l’Ouest qui n’était plus gardée. Tête haute, sans se cacher, car ils ne fuyaient pas, ils ne trahissaient rien, espéraient moins encore et se gardaient d’imaginer.16

Just as the first book of the Dark Tower series starts with the same sentence that finishes the last one: “The man in black fled across the desert, and the gunslinger followed.” In both cases, this cyclical pattern is way more than a literary trick: it is what gives the quest its full meaning.

There are thus numerous points of convergence between Stephen King’s Dark Tower series and Jean Raspail’s Sept cavaliers, and those are not explicable by the direct influence one of the author may have had on the other. However, they either used the same sources or the same way of appropriating sources that are similar in spirit. This study aims to examine what these sources are and what unique usage each author makes of them. I will start by examining what use Raspail and King make of different transtextual practices: paratext, intertext and metatext. I will then study the metafictional nature of both Sept cavaliers and the Dark Tower and examine how this allows the author to reverse the hypertextual relationship between the text and its sources. In the second part of this study I will take a closer look at Raspail and King’s common source: the waste land motif as it has been theorised by Jessie Weston in her book, From Ritual to Romance. Finally I will analyse what King and Raspail do with such a motif and what modes take the waste land in contemporary fiction.

16 Seven riders left the City at dusk, facing the setting sun, through the Western gate, which was no longer watched. Holding their head up high, without hiding, because they were not fleeing, they were not betraying anything, were hoping even less and refrained themselves from imagining.
1. Transtextual practices: poetry in the Dark Tower and *Sept Cavaliers*

Julia Kristeva coined the term *intertextuality* and defined it as “the transposition of one or more systems of signs into another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position” (* Desire in language* 15). However, it has soon been taken by the general public as a term designating any kind of influence of one text on another. Kristeva therefore decided to rename her concept *transposition*. In 1981, Gérard Genette reclaimed the term *intertextuality* and made it one of the five types of transtextual relationships. Genette defines transtextuality as “all that sets the text in relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts” and distinguishes between those five types of transtextuality:

- **intertextuality**: the presence of one or more texts within another text, taking the form of quotation, plagiarism or allusion.

- **paratextuality**: the relationship between the text and its paratext (titles, prefaces, postfaces, forewords, notes, epigraphs, illustrations, etc.).

- **metatextuality**: the critical relationship between a text and its commentary.

- **architextuality**: the relationship between the text and the genre to which it is perceived to belong.

- **hypertextuality**: the relationship between a text B (hypertext) and an earlier text A (hypotext).

Naturally, these types of transtextuality frequently intermingle. In the case of the Dark Tower, the numerous quotations of Eliot and Browning are an example of intertextuality: the texts of...

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17 Since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of “study of sources,” we prefer the term *transposition* (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 60).
18 “Tout ce qui le met en relation, manifeste ou secrète, avec d’autres textes” (*Palimpsestes* 7).
19 “Relation de coprésence entre deux ou plusieurs textes” (8). “La relation, généralement moins explicite et plus distante, que, dans l’ensemble formé par une œuvre littéraire, le texte proprement dit entretient avec ce que l’on ne peut guère nommer que son paratexte : titre, sous-titre, intertitres ; préfaces, postfaces, avertissements, avant-propos, etc. ; notes marginales, infrapaginale, terminales ; épigraphes ; illustrations ; prière d’insérer, bande, jaquette, et bien d’autres types de signaux accessoires . . . qui procurent au texte un entourage (variable) et parfois un commentaire.” (9)
20 “La relation, généralement moins explicite et plus distante, que, dans l’ensemble formé par une œuvre littéraire, le texte proprement dit entretient avec ce que l’on ne peut guère nommer que son paratexte : titre, sous-titre, intertitres ; préfaces, postfaces, avertissements, avant-propos, etc. ; notes marginales, infrapaginale, terminales ; épigraphes ; illustrations ; prière d’insérer, bande, jaquette, et bien d’autres types de signaux accessoires . . . qui procurent au texte un entourage (variable) et parfois un commentaire.” (9)
21 “Relation, on dit plus couramment de « commentaire », qui unit un texte à un autre texte dont il parle, sans nécessairement le citer (le convoquer)” (10).
22 “relation tout à fait muette . . . le texte lui-même n’est pas censé connaître, et par conséquent déclarer, sa qualité générique” (11)
23 “J’entends par là toute relation unissant un texte B (que j’appellerai hypertexte) à un texte antérieur A (que j’appellerai, bien sûr hypotexte) sur lequel il se greffe d’une manière qui n’est pas celle du commentaire.” (11-12)
“Childe Roland” and “The Waste Land” are present within the text of the Dark Tower. The paratextuality reinforces this intertextuality by the means of arguments and postfaces where King repeatedly states that Browning was the inspiration for the Dark Tower, and is another place of presence of one text within another, as King reproduces “Childe Roland” fully as an appendix of The Dark Tower. In Sept cavaliers, Raspail also uses the paratext to comment on the intertextual presence of various poems by Apollinaire within the text of the novel. The Dark Tower also has, to some extent, a metatextual relationship with Browning as the characters proceed to a close reading and interpretation of the poem: the Dark Tower becomes a fictional commentary of “Childe Roland”. This fictional commentary leads King to operate a reversal of the hypertextual relationship.

1.1. Intertextuality: poetic presence and the role of the paratext

In the novels I am studying, both Raspail and King quote extensive bits of poetry. As they integrate them directly into their texts, they are exhibiting the type of transtextual relationship that Genette calls intertextuality. Not only are most of the quotes explicitly marked as such, but both authors also make use of their novels’ paratext to acknowledge their borrowings. I have listed the quotes and references to Browning and Eliot in the Dark Tower series and indexed them according to whether they were part of the text or the paratext.24 Raspail transformed Apollinaire in a fictional character named Wilhelm Kostrowitsky, a famous poet in the alternate reality that is the setting of Sept cavaliers. Apollinaire was in fact born Wilhelm Albert Włodzimierz Apolinary Kostrowitsky; he then adopted a gallicised version of his first name and used one of his middle name for his last name. Raspail, therefore, gives Apollinaire’s real name to his character. I have listed all the poems quoted in Sept cavaliers, as well as all the references made to Kostrowitsky as a fictional character.25

Raspail uses paratext but to a lesser extent than King, certainly in part because we deal here with a single book and not a series; this necessarily leaves less space for paratextual occurrences. Outside the irreducible title, the name of the author and the mention “roman”, the paratext in Sept cavaliers is limited to two occurrences: one infrapaginal note and a post-script. The infrapaginal note comments on the mention of Apollinaire’s name at the end of the novel by referring the reader to the post-script: “Apollinaire*, naturellement” (224)

24 See Appendix B.
25 See Appendix C and D.
writes Raspail, and he mentions under the asterisk “*Voir P.-S. en fin de volume”. The post-script reads:

P.-S.

A deux mots près (page 79 où Wilhelm a pris la place de Guillaume et les Tchétchènes celle de ceux que j’aime), tous les vers cités dans ce livre ont été empruntés à Guillaume Apollinaire (Wilhelm Apollinaris de Kostrowitsky, 1880-1918). On en exceptera toutefois, page 75, Épitaphe marine, dont je suis l’auteur, attribué pour la commodité du récit à Kostrowitsky-Apollinaire, qui de là-haut, je l’espère, me le pardonnera.

J. R.26

At the end of the novel, Silve and Maxime, the two characters who were the most interested in quoting poetry, pass, without noticing it, from the alternate reality in which most of the novel is set to another world that seems to be our reality. They have forgotten almost all their memories from “le monde rêvé” (24); however, Maxime keeps his habit of quoting bits of poetry to Silve and commenting on it. Citing the author, he says “Apollinaire, naturellement” (224), giving for the first time the real name of the poet who is referred to as Kostrowitsky in the rest of the novel. Kostrowitsky was the dreamed alter ego of Apollinaire in this alternate reality, but, as the characters cross over to our world, Apollinaire recovers his name. Maxime’s “naturellement” may be taken as the simple remark of a poetry enthusiast or as a nod from the author to the reader, who may have recognised, since the beginning of the novel, the real identity of Kostrowitsky. The number of Apollinaire’s lines quoted by Raspail is massive, especially since Sept cavaliers is a rather short novel. All the quotes are from Alcools (1913), Apollinaire’s most famous and critically acclaimed collection of poems. The table of Apollinaire/Kostrowitsky quotations (Appendix C) allows to visualise the frequency of the poetry quotes within the novel. Some lines are quoted several times, such as:

Un aigle descendit de ce ciel blanc d’archanges
Et vous soutenez-moi
Laissez-vous trembler longtemps toutes ces lampes
Priez priez pour moi…

from the poem “Un soir”, which is said to be the epitaph inscribed on a monument in the memory of Kostrowitsky (32). The first line is then quoted by another character, whom the

26 Except for two words (page 79 where Wilhelm replaced Guillaume and the Chechens replaced the ones I love), all the verses quoted in this book have been borrowed from Guillaume Apollinaire (Wilhelm Apollinaris de Kostrowitsky, 1880-1918). This does not apply, however, to Épitaphe marine, page 75, which I wrote, attributed for narrative reasons to Kostrowitsky-Apollinaire, who – I hope – will forgive me from up there.
hero, Silve, asks if he knows Kostrowitsky. Finally, the poem is quoted again when Silve and his companions find the place where Kostrowitsky was supposedly killed thirty years ago. “Cortège” is also quoted twice, once by the brigadier Vassili, as he remembers his campaign with Kostrowitsky (79), and once by the cornet Maxime Bazin du Bourg, quoting it by heart to honour Vassili after his death. Several stanzas from “La Chanson du Mal-Aimé” are quoted, or rather one stanza from “La Chanson du Mal-Aimé” proper, one from “Les Sept Épées” and one from “Réponse des Cosaques Zaporogues au Sultan de Constantinople”, which are two poems inserted into the larger frame of “La Chanson du Mal-aimé”.

The poems quoted several times are, therefore, rather rare in Sept cavaliers, and Raspail seems to strive to give a reasoned overview of Alcools, quoting from twelve different poems and alternating between lyrical and highly symbolical poems, to others that are “lighter” in tone – “léger” (153) is the adjective used by Silve to describe “La Blanche Neige”. All poems attributed to Kostrowitzky are from Alcools, except for “Épitaphe marine”, that Raspail claims as his own in his postscriptum and the following quote: “Les yeux ne sont jamais aussi flattés que lorsqu’ils contemplent une gai borderie sur un fond triste et sombre…” (118)27. This is not from Alcools and, to the extent of my knowledge, it is not from Apollinaire, even though it is presented as Kostrowitzky’s words in the novel. Raspail asserts that all verses found in the novel are from Apollinaire and this is arguably a piece of prose rather than free verse poetry.

The second column of the Apollinaire/Kostrowitsky quotations table (Appendix C) gives the title of the poem the quote is taken from and shows if some changes have been made to the original.28 In his post-script, Raspail declares that only the text of the poem “Cortège” has been changed; however, a comparison with the poems of Alcools shows that more changes have been made. Changes include replacement of one word by another, suppression or addition of words, change of line order and collage of two poems to form a third one. The change of “Guillaume” to “Wilhelm” in “Cortège” is logical: Raspail actualises the poem to make it fit with the alternate reality he has created. The change of “ceux que j’aime” to “les Tchétchènes” is more profound as it totally shifts the meaning of the poem and transforms it into a poem on Wilhelm Kostrowitsky’s obsession for the mythical Chechens whom everybody is talking about in the novel but nobody ever sees. In “La Blanche Neige”, Raspail

27 “Eyes are never as flattered as when they contemplate a gay embroidery set on a gloomy background.”
28 Raspail systematically adds punctuation that is absent from Apollinaire’s original text. I did not reproduce the entirety of the poems quoted to show the change to punctuation as it would hinder the visual representation of more substantial changes.
changes “cuisinier” (cook) to “brigadier” (153) so that it is more relevant for the young officers who recite it.

The change in the line order is designed to make the comprehension easier. In the original poem, “La Maison des Morts”, the syntax is broken by the insertion of another verb clause:

Nos enfants
Dit la fiancée
Seront plus beaux plus beaux encore
Hélas! la bague était brisée
Que s’ils étaient d’argent ou d’or (Apollinaire 69)

Apollinaire inserts a clause “Hélas! la bague était brisée” between the two elements of a comparison, which is ungrammatical and produces a discordant effect, as if several voices were speaking at the same time. Raspail relocates “Hélas! la bague était brisée” at the end of the poem (186), thus re-establishing the expected syntax. Finally, Raspail aggregates verses from two different poems, “Le Brasier” and “Marizibil” to form a third one. Raspail’s practice of poetic intertextuality is therefore quite different from King's practice, who does not transform the poems he quotes.

It has often been said that Stephen King’s *The Dark Tower* was based on Robert Browning’s poem “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came” and King himself has published notes in which he acknowledged his debt to Browning. This tends to divert the attention from the other poetic inspiration of King: Eliot himself. There seems to be some filiation between the two poets as suggested by the fact critics of Eliot quote Browning in their analyses. 29 King does mention several sources of inspiration in his preface “On Being Nineteen (and a few other things)” and Eliot is not among them. However, King uses another method for acknowledging Eliot’s role in his creation: *The Waste Lands* opens on a triple epigraph. Eliot is the first author quoted by King, followed by Browning and Robert Aickman.

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29 “[The reviewer] will appear to the mental traveller as dubious a guide as Childe Roland’s hoary cripple with malicious eye; he lies in every word, unless by some stroke of luck, some lightning flash of revelation he succeeds in showing forth the tragic sincerity and true power of that mysterious and moving spectacle, ‘The Waste Land’” (Wylie 145).

It is entirely possible that King read this review (first published in 1923) and that it created in his mind a connection between Eliot and Browning.

Other studies have shown the debt Eliot owes to Browning: “Browning's monologue is Eliot's purloined letter, an appropriation so obvious as to have remained hidden in plain view” (Bolton)
Gérard Genette lists three main functions to the epigraph: its serves to clarify the
title; it is a commentary on the text; and finally, it uses the name of the author of the quotation
as an authority in order to profit indirectly from their prestige. The Eliot epigraph
implements clearly these three functions. The title of this third volume of the Dark Tower
series is obviously a reference to Eliot: King picked exactly the same title than the poem, only
modifying it to make it plural. As he introduces the book by that quotation, King asserts that
this similarity is not accidental but is a conscious choice from his part. It also works as an
authority: King places his fantasy novel under the aegis of one of the most celebrated poems
of the twentieth century as if to state that popular writing has its roots in literary classics.
Finally it is a commentary on the text, inviting the reader to appraise not only The Waste
Lands with that reference in mind, but the whole of the series.

King quotes nine lines from the section “The Burial of the Dead”, at the beginning of
the novel:

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow in the morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

The delimitation of the passage chosen is not a chance one. King cuts in the middle of a
sentence “Son of man, / You cannot say, or guess, for you know only / A heap of broken
images, where the sun beats . . .” (Eliot 20-22) so that the quote is exactly circumscribed
between “A heap of broken images” and “fear in a handful of dust”. The Waste Lands is

30 The fourth one, the “epigraph-effect”, at least in the context of this study, is anecdotal.
31 « Fonction de commentaire, parfois décisif – d’éclaircissement, donc, et par là de justification non du texte,
mais du titre. » (Seuils 145)
 « La deuxième fonction possible de l’épigraphe est sans doute la plus canonique : elle consiste en un
 commentaire du texte, dont elle précise ou souligne indirectement la signification. » (146)
 « Dans une épitaphe, l’essentiel bien souvent n’est pas ce qu’elle dit, mais l’identité de son auteur, et l’effet de
cautions indirecte que sa présence détermine à l’orée d’un texte. » (147)
32 Besides, the sixth book of the series features extracts of a fictional writing journal by Stephen King wherein he
comments on his choice for the title of the third book:
“I think I’ll call this one The Wastelands.

October 9th, 1989
No—Waste Lands. 2 words, as in the T. S. Eliot poem (his is actually “The Waste Land,” I think).”
divided in two parts: the first one is called “Jake: Fear in a Handful of Dust” and the second one “Lud: A Heap of Broken Images”. The opening and closing of the epigraph thus contain the programme of the novel.

In the first part of The Waste Lands, Jake navigates constantly between memories of his deaths and his brief passage in Mid-World, and the memories of his life in the primary world where he did not die and went on with his life as a model student. He becomes unable of differentiating what is real and what is not and suffers from split personality, a common motif in horror novels. The Waste Lands also features a haunted house, a trope that King has used in several of his horror stories. The haunted house motif, which owes a lot to Poe, is often the signature of gothic literature, a fact well acknowledged by King who “discusses the haunted house and the archetype of the Bad Place, maintaining that the past is a ghost that haunts our present lives constantly” (Strengell 88). In that context, the Eliot quote that King uses as an epigraph presents itself as an ominous prophecy, taking the focus out of the waste land itself and re-orientating it to the feeling of dread inspired by the “fear in a handful of dust” line. The second part of the novel is centred on the city of Lud and its disjointed aspect: Lud is “a heap of broken images”.

The backbone of the Dark Tower, however, is Browning’s poem “Childe Roland”. The table of direct references to Eliot and Browning (Appendix B) gives a visual indication of the space Browning occupies in the Dark Tower. All the books of the series reference it in their paratexts, either as epigraph, argument, postface or appendix. However, only the last book of the series actually includes extensive parts of the poem in the body of the text. References to Browning are made in The Waste Lands and Song of Susannah, but they are more an allusive play between the author and the reader, who, thanks to the paratext, is well aware of the importance of Browning in the genesis of the Dark Tower. In The Waste Lands, Jake uses a line from Browning as an epigraph for an essay he has written, and in Song of Susannah, he recognises a picture of Browning in a calendar, recalling him because of that essay he has written. Finally, there is the interesting case of “Coda: Pages from a Writer’s Journal”, a piece of writing which oscillates between the text and the paratext. These pages are from “Stephen King”, who is a fictional character of the Dark Tower series, but it is arguable that at least part of the thoughts of the fictional Stephen King on his text – the Dark Tower series itself – reflects exactly the ones of the real Stephen King.

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33 King already exploited the split personality motif earlier in the series with Susannah character who was suffering of severe schizophrenia when Roland first met her.
34 The house on Dutch Hill through which Jake must go to return to Mid-World notably bears a number of similarities with the Marsten House in Salem’s Lot a novel explicitly connected to the Dark Tower series.
1.2. Metatextuality and metafictionality

King’s tribute to Eliot goes much farther than the paratextual references we have examined: title, section title and epigraph. He made both “The Waste Land” and “Childe Roland” part of the Dark Tower’s diegesis. The first mention of Eliot within the story itself occurs when Jake, a student at the highly renowned Piper School hands in his Final Essay for his English class. Deeply disturbed by his memories of Mid-Land, Jake cannot adjust to his “normal” life and his school work is impacted negatively by his issues. The topic of his Final Essay was “My Understanding of Truth” and Jake apparently wrote it in a sense of trance and does not remember doing it. He reads over it just before his teacher collects it and is horrified by what he has written, thinking that “he had finally lost enough of his mind so that other people would be able to tell” (The Waste Lands 134). Instead of an essay, he has produced a piece of creative writing, a free verse poem. The essay also begins with a double epigraph: one quote that Jake credits irreverently to “T.S. ‘Butch’ Eliot” and the other to “Robert ‘Sundance’ Browning” (The Waste Lands 134). King thus inserts, in a literary work that starts with an epigraph of Eliot and Browning, a secondary literary work that starts with an epigraph of Eliot and Browning. This mise en abyme produces a distancing effect, revealing the mechanics of the literary illusion. In the same time it also reinforces the impact of Eliot’s words as repeating the same line over and over again creates a leitmotiv that helps constructing a particular atmosphere.

Jake indeed uses the “I will show you fear in a handful of dust” line that the reader probably recognises from the section title, if not from King’s epigraph. The Browning epigraph is also a one-line quote: “My first thought was, he lied in every word.” It is the first line of “Childe Roland” and throughout the series King seems to apply that description to various antagonists: the man in black from The Gunslinger, Blaine the artificial intelligence in The Waste Lands and Dandelo the vampire in The Dark Tower. By doing so, King shows that poems such as “Childe Roland” or “The Waste Land” are essentially labile and applicable to different situations. However, he seems to warn on the dangers of forcing interpretation on the text by having Jake’s English teacher comment on his poem:

I do not pretend to understand all the symbolism (e.g., ‘Lady of the Shadows’, ‘gunslinger’) but it seems clear that you yourself are ‘The Prisoner’ (of school, society, etc.) and that the educational system is ‘The Speaking Demon.’ Is it possible that both ‘Roland’ and ‘the gunslinger’ are the same authority figure – your father, perhaps? . . .
Or is this name a *double* symbol, drawn both from your father and from Robert Browning’s poem, ‘Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came?’ (*The Waste Lands* 188)

The obvious discrepancy between the interpretation of Ms Avery, who reads Jake’s text as symbolic poetry, and what the reader knows creates a comical effect. What Jake wrote is not symbolical: he simply recounts events that are actual facts. The “Speaking Demon” is not the educational system but a real Speaking Demon that attacked him during his first visit to Mid-World. The reader also knows that the “Prisoner” is not Jake, but Eddie, who was the prisoner of his heroin addiction when he first met Roland. However, not all of Ms Avery's interpretations are so far-fetched: “Roland” is indeed the same person as “the gunslinger”, and albeit not Jake’s father, he is indubitably an “authority figure” and a surrogate father for Jake after he left behind his world and his real father.

Jake’s poem is not stream-of-consciousness merged with symbolic language, as Ms Avery thinks: it is a vision of the waste land. In his trance, Jake managed to mix events that happened to him in an alternate past, and descriptions of things yet to come. The poem thus becomes an outlet after the traumatic situations Jake had to go through: “There were monsters under the mountain. . . . Roland let me die” (*The Waste Lands* 134) but also a warning against the dangers yet to come: “I’m pretty sure Blaine is dangerous, and that is the truth” (135). The Dark Tower multiverse allowing protagonists to pass from one world to another and to travel to different eras of these worlds, it is entirely possible that Jake had access to snapshots of his own future and that is what transpires in his poem. It is coherent with the role that King assigns to the poetry of Browning and Eliot in the Dark Tower: he alludes to the fact that these poets have *seen* Mid-World and that their works are a rendering of their experience.

The main characters are shown several times in the series as living some kind of anamnesis and experiencing realities from the past in a sort of lucid dreaming. It is the case of Susannah who has this vision as she arrives in an almost deserted town:

She looked around the square and again she could almost see how it must have been on market-day – the sidewalks thronged with people, . . . the wagons passing through the town square, the ones on the unpaved road raising choking clouds of yellow dust as the drivers flogged their carthorses

(*oxen they were oxen*)

along. She could see those carts, . . . could see the oxen. . .

*It’s as if I lived here in another life,* she thought. (*The Waste Lands*, 311-12)

King makes use once more of parentheses to transcribe thoughts that are on a different level of consciousness. The reality of metempsychosis becomes very plausible, as it would explain
how the protagonists seem aware of events they had no other way to have knowledge of. This in turn allows for a diegetic explanation of the relevance of Browning and Eliot’s poetry: they had access to Roland’s World either directly as they found a way to cross from one universe to the other, or indirectly, by means of visions and lucid dreams. The fact that the two poets must have seen Mid-World is suggested by three different characters.

Jake is the first of those. Torn between his paradoxical memories and his “real life” he is haunted by Eliot’s poem and words from it occur to him in different situations. He immediately associate “The Waste Land” with this other world for which he is longing. He quoted a line of it in his essay but others come naturally to his mind whenever he is thinking of Mid-World. When discouraged, he puts Eliot’s words in Roland’s mouth in order to reassure himself that he is not losing his mind:

*No, Jake, Roland said. You’re not crazy. You’re lost and scared, but you’re not crazy and need fear neither your shadow in the morning striding behind you or your shadow at evening rising to meet you. You have to find your way back home, that’s all.* (*The Waste Lands* 140)

The two shadows can be interpreted in this context as a metaphor of Jake’s split personality, as he is living in two realities at the same time. Roland is thus telling him he doesn’t need to be scared as both shadows are himself and he only need to reunite them by going “back home”, in Mid-World. To do so, Jake has to find the door that will permit him to cross from one world to the other. That door exists and is situated in a mansion on Dutch Hill that is clearly a haunted house. Extremely scared by the evil presence he can feel there, Jake is once more reminded of Eliot’s poem:

A snatch of poetry occurred to him suddenly, something Ms Avery had read to them. It was supposed to be about the plight of modern man, who was cut off from all his roots and traditions, but to Jake it suddenly seemed that the man who had written that poem must have seen this house: *I will show you something different from either / Your shadow in the morning striding behind you / Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you / I will show you...*

“I’ll show you fear in a handful of dust,’ Jake muttered, and put his hand on the doorknob. (*The Waste Lands* 269)

It is the first time that Jake refers consciously to the poem as, even if he used a line from it in his essay, he was in a state of trance when he wrote it.

Once again, King opposes a traditional type of interpretation of poetry, of which Jake’s English teacher is the embodiment, and what the protagonists know. Inside the Dark
Tower series, “The Waste Land” is not “about the plight of modern man”, as suggested by Ms Avery, or “a concrete image of a spiritual drouth” (Wilson 141). For the heroes of the Dark Tower, “The Waste Land” is about them. The idea expressed by Jake (“the man who had written that poem must have seen this house”) could seem anecdotal if it wasn’t redoubled very carefully by King in a completely different context. As she is about to meet Blaine, the malevolent artificial intelligence which reigns over the city of Lud, Susannah is taken by the same sort of terror as Jake experiences when he approaches the Dutch Hill house. The terror induces a state of trance where they are more sensitive to poetry and Susannah instinctively quotes Eliot:

‘“A heap of broken images, where the sun beats and the dead tree gives no shelter,”’

Susannah murmured, and at these words Eddie felt gooseflesh waltz across the skin of his arms and chest and legs.

‘What’s that, Suze?’

‘A poem by a man who must have seen Lud in his dreams,’ she said. (*The Waste Lands* 475)

The structures are so similar – “the man who had written that poem must have seen this house” versus “a poem by a man who must have seen Lud in his dreams” – that they act as a leitmotiv which persuades the reader of the truthfulness of this assertion. The fact that both Jake and Susannah experienced some level of metempsychosis only serves to reinforce the possibility that Eliot, too, had access to Mid-World in his mind. In the multiverse construction of King, different versions of the same character live on different levels of existence: for example, after Jake and Eddie have died, Susannah returns to alternate versions of them in another world where they are brothers – they did not have any kinship in the original universe.35 Within the narrative coherency, it is therefore possible that an alternate T.S. Eliot lived in Mid-World and that the one who wrote “The Waste Land” shared some of his doppelganger’s memories and took his inspiration from them.

In *The Dark Tower*, Roland comes to a similar conclusion concerning Robert Browning after he was acquainted with the poem “Childe Roland” by Stephen King himself. When Roland and his companions learn that a man named Stephen King is writing their story in the world Eddie, Jake and Susannah come from, they realise that it is vital, for the sake of their quest, that Stephen King stay alive long enough to finish writing their story. Therefore they arrange to pass over to his world in order to save his life when he is involved in a car

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35 One way King uses to signal some action is not taking place in the “core universe” is to give famous products a different name: for instance, in that other life, Jake and Eddie drink Nozz-A-La instead of Coca-Cola.
accident. As a way of thanking his characters for his life, King sets an actual *deus ex machina* for them in the last book of the series: when they are about to be trapped by the emotional vampire Dandeló, they get hints from the author to be suspicious about their dangerous host. Stephen King manages to get them an envelope (addressed to “Childe Roland of Gilead”) in which is encased a photocopy of Browning’s poem, with certain stanzas circled by Stephen King. Roland and Susannah – who, at that time, is Roland’s last living companion – understand that the poem is about them and Roland supposes that Browning had access to their world and was a direct witness of their adventures. Susannah, shows once more her talent as a medium and has “a sudden inspiration, one that blazed too bright to be anything but the truth: "It was this poem that got King going! *It was his inspiration!*” (*The Dark Tower* 562). Roland and Susannah then proceed to a literary exegesis of Browning’s text, deciphering it in regards of what happened to them.

Stephen King circled stanzas I, II, XIII, XIV and XVI, signalling them as being particularly relevant to their situation. Stanza I had already been quoted in the narrative as Jake used the first line of the poem as an epigraph for his “My Understanding of the Truth” essay. At that moment of the plot, the line “My first thought was, he lied in every word” was to be understood as a warning against Blaine, but here Roland interprets it differently:

> “Collins,” Roland said. “Whoever wrote that spoke of Collins as sure as King ever spoke of our ka-tet in his stories! ‘He lied in every word!’ Aye, so he did!” (561)

This close reading of the poem goes on as Roland and Susannah examine the second stanza. The words of the poem seem to describe exactly what they just experienced:

> What else should he be set for, with his staff?
> What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
> All travellers who might find him posted there,
> And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
> Would break, what crutch ‘gin write my epitaph
> For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare. (561)

Using Roland and Susannah as his voice, King demonstrates how carefully he transfigured Browning’s symbolism into a narrative:

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36 That accident is a real life event which happened in 1999 and left King seriously injured, but also made him realise that, “having built the Dark Tower in the collective imagination of a million readers, I might have a responsibility to make it safe for as long as people wanted to read about it” (“On being Nineteen” 12). This was determining for him and pushed him to finish and publish the last three books in the span of only a few years.

37 This creature does not feed himself on blood but on the emotions of his victims.

38 “He must have seen what just passed. A version of it anyway.” (*The Dark Tower* 561)

39 It is the fake name Dandeló, the emotional vampire, gave them.
“Does thee remember his stick, and how he waved it?” Roland asked her.

Of course she did. And the thoroughfare had been snowy instead of dusty, but otherwise it was the same. Otherwise it was a description of what had just happened to them. The idea made her shiver. (561)

King has indeed used Browning’s stanza to construct the character of Dandelo who stands at a crossroad, leaning on his stick, waiting to “ensnare all travellers”.

By this _mise en abyme_ process, King turns around the relationship between the hypertext and the hypotext as defined by Gérard Genette. In the Dark Tower case, Browning’s poem is the hypotext, the text that, according to the palimpsest metaphor, is _under_ the hypertext. But Roland and Susannah’s exegesis of “Childe Roland” offers another perspective on the relationship between the two texts: in their view, King was not so much inspired by Browning than Browning was inspired by what they just went through. Yet they are perfectly aware that their lives are entirely dependent on the books Stephen King is writing, to the extent that they sacrificed one of their companions to preserve Stephen King’s life. This means that Browning was corollary inspired by Stephen King’s Dark Tower series.

I would therefore call the relationship between “Childe Roland” and the Dark Tower one of _autometafictional_ reverse hypertextuality. Reverse, because it permutes the statuses of the text: it presents the original text as the one that is derived from the text derived from the original. Autometafictional, because what makes this reversal possible is the realisation by the protagonists that their existence is the product of a literary creation. Metafiction is defined by Genette as a fiction in the fiction and applies to any kind of narrative encased in a frame narrative. In the case of the Dark Tower, the metafiction is autoreferential as, through a _mise en abyme_ process, it is the Dark Tower narrative itself that is encased in the Dark Tower series. It is that autometafictionality and the fact that the protagonists establish that their story is a story, with a recognisable author, that allows this reversal of the hypertextual relationship as the characters assume the story they find themselves in has inspired another work of literature – whereas in fact it is this other work which has inspired their story. The same

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40 The term is used by Marc Chénetier to describe a similar setting:

“[In LETTERS,] Barth’s entire _oeuvre_ is represented at the conclusion of a truly hallucinatory labor of internal intertextuality: all of the characters from Barth’s earlier works reappear there in conversation with one another, and for good measure, so does the figure of the Author himself, engaged in a permanent debate with his past creatures. This kind of book would not seem to authorize a disjointed reading of the rest of the _oeuvre_. In order to describe this work, we would have to coin a term even more barbaric than “metafiction” and speak then of “autometafiction”.” (Chénetier 73)

41 “Le préfixe _métat_ connote évidemment ici, comme dans « métalangage », le passage au second degré : le _métarécit_ est un récit dans le récit.” (Genette “Figures III” 239)
taxonomy applies to the relationship between “The Waste Land” and the Dark Tower: it is not stated as directly by the characters than it is for “Childe Roland” but it is implied that Eliot’s model for writing his poem was Mid-World and thus that King was the inspiration for Eliot, rather than Eliot was the inspiration for King. This reversal creates a paradox that the characters have difficulties grappling with: “It was too confusing. Like trying to figure out which came first, the chicken or the egg. Or being lost in a hall of mirrors. Her head was swimming.” (*The Dark Tower* 562)

King and Raspail are therefore both using metafictionality by having authors appear in their works as characters and stressing the fictional status of the narrative the reader is reading. The difference is that, with King, the author featured in the novel is himself or rather a fictionalised rendering of himself. The Dark Tower is as much a literary work about the writing of the Dark Tower than it is the story of a quest. King pushes the autoreferentiality to its limit: he writes about himself writing that he writes the Dark Tower. With the first appearance of Stephen King as a character of the Dark Tower, the narrator and the author become one in the diegesis.42 *Sept cavaliers* is also highly autoreferential but splits the writing act between several different auctorial figures. One of them is of course Wilhelm Kostrowitsky, who is as much of a character as the seven riders of *Sept cavaliers are*. Appendix D provides a list of the passages dealing with that alternate version of Guillaume Apollinaire43 and shows how much textual space “Kostrowitsky” takes. The other instance of auctorial presence is to be found in two of the seven riders.

Mgr Van Beck informs Silve that he has been keeping a journal since they left and reads what he wrote to him:

“Sept cavaliers quittèrent la Ville au crépuscule par la porte de l’Ouest qui n’était plus gardée. Tête haute, sans se cacher, car ils ne fuyaient pas, ils ne trahissaient rien, espéraient moins encore et se garder d’imaginer. Ainsi étaient-ils armés, le coeur et l’âme désencombrés scintillant froidement comme du cristal, pour le voyage qui les attendaient...”44 (*Sept cavaliers* 60)

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42 Of course, the physical person of the author is never the same as the diegetical author who appears in the narrative, no matter the level of autoreferentiality at play.

43 The quotes I selected do not pretend to be exhaustive as for some of them I only reproduced part of the passage concerned with Kostrowitsky.

44 Seven riders left the City at dusk, facing the setting sun, through the Western gate, which was no longer guarded. Holding their heads up high, without hiding, because they were not fleeing, they were not betraying anything, were hoping even less and refrained themselves from imagining. Thus were they armed, heart and soul cleared, shining coldly like crystal, for the journey that was awaiting them.
This is the exact same paragraph than the incipit of the novel (7) and the first sentence is of course the one that suggested its title to Raspail. This repetition does not necessarily entail that Van Beck’s journal is the text of Sept cavaliers by the same mise en abyme process that makes what Stephen King writes as a character from the Dark Tower universe the text of the Dark Tower itself. However, it strongly suggests that, if it is not the same text, Van Beck’s journal contains at least a narrative that is parallel to the one of Sept cavaliers. After the death of Vassili, Van Beck notes: “Six riders went down the Mountain at dusk.” 45 The more the company dwindles, the more laconic are the reports of Van Beck: “‘Five riders...’ wrote Mgr Van Beck in his notebook.” 46 When Van Beck decides to leave the rest of the group, he hands over his notebook to Silve, who takes over and writes “Four riders left Zurfenberg at dusk. The fifth one had already forgotten them.” 47 The literacy of the riders seems to decrease as their number diminishes and no report is made in the notebook of Vénier and Abaï quitting. As Silve stops writing, the narration then takes over and follows the same pattern, using sentences from the incipit. The horses of the last two riders are stolen, and they are relieved that the robbers took their equipment as well, as they do not think they would have had the force to carry it, but were unwilling to leave it behind, like deserters would do. The narrator then reminds the reader that “they were not fleeing. By order of the hereditary margrave, simply, they were going.” 48 The second sentence is the one that follows “they were not fleeing” in the novel’s incipit. The mise en abyme is reinstituted at the end of the novel: Silve leaves behind him the “dreamed world” and his memories of it, but one day, Maxime asks him if he found Myriam. This evokes a vague souvenir and he is seized by an urge of buying a black notebook. This is unusual for him 49 and it is clearly a way to reconnect with his forgotten past and the black notebook of Van Beck. What he starts writing in it is naturally the incipit of Sept cavaliers: the narrator has come full circle.

Although the character and the author are two different entities – Silve is maybe the narrator but he is certainly not Jean Raspail – the novel is highly autoreferential, albeit not to the same extent as the Dark Tower is. The protagonists of Sept cavaliers are often very close to discover that they live in an illusion, that they are indeed characters in a novel. The first

45 “Six cavaliers descendirent de la Montagne au crépuscule.” (159)
46 “Cinq cavaliers... » écrivit Mgr Van Beck sur son calepin.” (197)
47 “Quatre cavaliers quittèrent Zurfenberg au crépuscule. Le cinquième les avait déjà oubliés...” (206)
49 “Pourquoi un calepin? D’ordinaire il se servait de rames de papier-machine. Pourquoi noir? Une idée comme ça.” (224)

“Why a notebook? Usually, he was using reams of paper. Why black? Just an idea.”
one to have this intuition is the hereditary margrave\textsuperscript{50}: when he summons Silve, he is taken by a fit of melancholy as he peruses his puppet collection. It is a very large collection, representing real people living in the City, from all social classes. Of course, there is also a puppet representing the margrave, and, as he plays with it, he confides in Silve, saying:

Il y a des moments où je me demande, dit-il, quel est le vrai côté de ma vie. Là, dans cette vitrine, au milieu d’un peuple qui m’est attaché, qui me ressemble et partage avec moi les mêmes rêves? Ou bien quand je tente de gouverner en m’accomodant de la vérité? Le vrai Welf III, Silve, c’est celui-là (et la marionnette, habilement manipulée, salua). Voilà pas mal de temps que je le sais. J’espère que vous le retrouverez en rentrant, ainsi que ses fidèles sujets. L’autre n’est plus qu’une apparence.\textsuperscript{51}

The hope expressed by the margrave that Silve may find the puppet again at the end of his journey is somehow realised when Silve, having crossed to the other reality, starts writing in the black notebook:

Suspendues avec infiniment de grâce dans une vitrine éclairée, des marionnettes vénitiennes l’observaient. Nanti d’un ballon de genièvre glacé et environné d’un nuage de fumée, il commença à écrire.\textsuperscript{52}

This can be interpreted as a reminder that, even if Silve crossed to a world that is “more real”, he is still a character from a novel, trapped in a fictional universe.

\textit{Sept cavaliers} is therefore metafictional on several levels: through the realisation by the protagonists that their reality is fictional and through the \textit{mise en abyme} of the text. Finally, it exhibits a third level of metafictionality by making a fictional character out of Guillaume Apollinaire, the author of the numerous poetic quotes that are dotting the novel. Kostrowitsky, Apollinaire’s alter ego in the world of \textit{Sept cavaliers}, really is the eighth rider of the company. Even though he died thirty years prior to the events related in \textit{Sept cavaliers}, his presence still lingers as they follow the same route he used with Vassili, one of the rider, just before he disappeared. As the novel unfolds, Silve’s quest seems to be more and more about following in the tracks of Kostrowitsky than about finding the answers the margrave is waiting for, or about being reunited with Myriam, the margrave’s daughter, whom he loves. As he chose his companions, he is naturally drawn to Bazin du Bourg, who is reading

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\textsuperscript{50} Though it can be argued that the rebellion of the City’s children, who wreak havoc on the castle at the occasion of the Christmas puppets show, is a reaction to the same realisation.

\textsuperscript{51} At times I wonder where the real side of my life is. There, in that glass showcase, among a people attached to me, similar to me, sharing the same dreams than me? Or when I attempt to rule and put up with the reality? The true Welf III is this one, Silve (and the cleverly manipulated puppet bowed), I have known it for a while. I hope you will find him there when you come back, and his faithful subjects, too. The other one is just a shell now.

\textsuperscript{52} Hanged with infinite grace in a lit showcase, Venitian puppets gazed at him. Equipped with a snifter of ice-cold Dutch gin, surrounded by a cloud of smoke, he started to write.
Kostrowitsky during his service hours and is able to finish the quote Silve starts (20). Silve then selects Vassili on the grounds that he was serving in the same company than Kostrowitsky when the poet disappeared. Finally, as he hesitates about taking the cadet Vénier with him, he asks:

La question surprit le jeune homme.
- Euh… naturellement… un peu…
Il récita la célèbre épitaphe gravée sur la stèle du jardin public dédiée au poète nationale.

Silve l’interrompit.
- Tout le monde la connaît. Autre chose ?
Le garçon hésita. Silve insista.
- Eh bien, Le premier vers qui vous vienne à l’esprit ?53 (43)

This is an actual test, and as Vénier passes it by quoting a line from Kostrowitsky/Apollinaire, Silve decides to let him come with him.

With so many Kostrowitsky enthusiasts in the company, their journey is constantly interrupted by bits of poetry as Bazin du Bourg finds appropriate quotations for every situation they find themselves in. Just like the Dark Tower, Raspail’s Sept cavaliers is thus not only metafictional but also metatextual. It presents indeed a double textual commentary: the poetic quotations form a commentary on the action of the novel, but at the same time the novel provides a commentary on the poems. This goes from concise judgement on the poems quoted54 to the construction of a sort of origin myth in which Bazin du Bourg recounts the many adventures, probably half fantasized, that led Kostrowitsky to write his poems:

C’est un de ses plus anciens poèmes, dit Bazin du Bourg. Il l’avait écrit il y a trente-cinq ans, un 7 juillet, précisément. Savez-vous que Kostrowitsky était né un 7 juillet ? Voilà pourquoi il avait écrit cela. C’était la vision de sa mort… . . .

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53 Do you read Kostrowitsky? Silve said finally.
The young man was surprised by the question.
- Well... naturally... a little...
He recited the famous epitaph engraved on the headstone of the national poet in the park.
Silve interrupted him.
- Everyone knows this one. Something else?
The boy hesitated. Silve insisted.
- Come on. The first line coming to your mind?
54 “léger” (light) (153); “C’est frais, non ? reprit-il. Les mots volent.” (Isn’t it refreshing? he pressed. The words are flying.) (224)
La conversation roula sur Kostrowitsky. Cet homme qui avait choisi de disparaître aux frontières extrêmes de la Montagne avait autrefois parcouru le monde de port en port :
« De grands vaisseaux passent et repassent... Je trempe une dernière fois mes mains dans l'Océan. » Lors d'un séjour aventureux à Constantinople, à la suite d'une histoire de femme – « La tzigane savait d'avance Nos deux vies barrées par les nuits... » –, le sultan l'avait enfermé au fond d'un infecte cachot. Revenu à l'air libre, il s'était vengé, et Bazin du Bourg récita :
« Poisson pourri de Salonique…
« Ta mère fit un pet foireux
« Et tu naquis de sa colique… »

Raspail thus interprets Apollinaire’s poems in the light of fictive events said to have been lived by Apollinaire’s alter ego. The transtextual relationship between Raspail’s novel and Apollinaire’s poems is therefore similar to the one existing between the Dark Tower and Browning and Eliot’s poems. Raspail also operates a reversal between the hypertext and the hypotext: *Sept cavaliers* is inspired by the poems of *Alcools*, but the narrative pretends the poems were inspired by the fiction it presents.

2. The waste land in the Dark Tower and *Sept cavaliers*

King and Raspail share similar transtextual practices: they both use paratext to draw attention to the poetic intertextuality that is taking place inside the Dark Tower and *Sept cavaliers*. Both texts are also highly autoreferential and use *mise en abyme* to point at the literary illusion they create. They are also metatextual in that they provide a fictional commentary on the poems they quote and through that commentary, they reverse the relationship between hypotext and hypertext in the diegesis. However, the twentieth century does not lack of literary works which play with their textual statuses, as Linda Hutcheon pointed.

Therefore, I specifically selected these two works, not merely because they share

55 This is one of his oldest poems, said Bazin du Bourg. He wrote it thirty-five years ago, on a seventh of July, precisely. Did you know that Kostrowitsky was born on a seventh of July? That’s why he wrote this. It was a vision of his death...
The conversation kept on Kostrowitsky. The man who had chosen to disappear at the extreme fringes of the Mountain had once upon a time roamed the world from harbour to harbour. [. . .] During a hazardous stay in Constantinople, because of a woman [. . .] the sultan had locked him in a foul dungeon. When he was free again he got his revenge and Bazin du Bourg recited : [. . .]

56 “An increasingly large international band of writers of novels and short fiction—Borges, Barth, Sanguineti, Fowles, Sollers—does indeed often transform the formal properties of fiction into its subject matter. Perhaps this is because they have discovered that these literary entities are as real, or unreal, as any external, empirical raw materials.” (Hutcheon 18)
common transtextual features but because they are based on the same hypotext: the waste land motif as defined by Jessie Weston in *From Ritual to Romance*.

2.1. Hypotexts: under the Dark Tower and *Sept cavaliers*

*From Ritual to Romance* is an essay published in 1920 by Jessie Weston in which she argues that the Grail romances are a resurgence of former religious rituals. This was not her first book on the Arthurian matter: in fact, she had published a monograph on *The Legend of Sir Gawain: Studies upon its Original Scope and Significance*. But she was mostly a translator and was instrumental in making available in English a number of Arthurian texts: the Middle High German *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach, Old French *Lais* by Marie de France and the Middle Dutch *Moriaen*. Her translations may have been criticised but Norris Lacy stresses how important they have been in their time:

Yet, problematic as her translations are, we should not forget that she was producing English-language versions of some texts many decades or (as with the Middle Dutch *Moriaen*) even a century before anyone else would undertake to translate them. Even as Arthurians take a justifiably dim view of her translations, they must acknowledge, with gratitude, her pathbreaking efforts. (Lacy 53)

*From Ritual to Romance* was thus a well-documented essay, based on texts to which Weston had access in their original language.

*From Ritual to Romance* stems from Weston’s interest in Arthurian literature and her reading of James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1890) as she took his study of the vegetation cult as her model. Weston’s main argument is that the Grail episodes in Arthurian literature are the echoes of an ancient fertility cult that was largely predating Christianity. This is the question she asks in her introductory chapter:

I finally asked myself whether it were not possible that in this mysterious legend—mysterious alike in its character, its sudden appearance, the importance apparently assigned to it, followed by as sudden and complete a disappearance—we might not have the confused record of a ritual, once popular, later surviving under conditions of strict secrecy? (4)

She starts her study by reviewing the task of the hero in the Grail quest in the Old French sources but also in Old High German (*Parzival*) and Middle High German (*Diù Crône*) as well as Middle Welsh (*Peredur*). From there, she concludes that:
we have solid grounds for the belief that the story postulates a close connection between
the vitality of a certain King, and the prosperity of his kingdom; the forces of the ruler
being weakened or destroyed, by wound, sickness, old age, or death, the land becomes
Waste, and the task of the hero is that of restoration. (23)

She then proceeds to draw parallels between the image of the Grail King and the Freeing of the Waters myth from the Indo-Aryan Rig-Veda. She goes on to examine the figures of the Sumerian god Tammuz and the Greek Adonis and how their presence or disappearance impact the land’s fertility. In a chapter on the modern forms of nature ritual, she discusses the tradition of the Shilluk people (Southern Sudan) regarding their king, who is put to death when the first signs of weakness show “lest, with the diminishing vigour of the ruler, the cattle should sicken, and fail to bear increase, the crops should rot in the field and men die in ever growing numbers” (59). Weston stresses the similarity between this practice and the Fisher King legend and concludes that the figure found in the Grail romances is, like the Shilluk king, not a mere mortal but the incarnation of a god on which the fertility of the land depends. Weston’s work further takes anthropological aspects as she discusses the sword dance tradition and the medicine man figure. She also analyses the function of the symbols found in the Grail tradition: the Cup, the Lance, the Sword and the Stone or Dish, and show how they have been preserved as tarot suits.

The conclusions of From Ritual to Romance are now rather controversial, but they had a massive impact on Arthurian scholarship, inspiring for example R. S. Loomis to look into ancient pagan traditions to explain the Grail romances. One rebuttal made was that she overdeveloped themes that were minor in the texts she was studying in order to make her point. According to Richard Barber, this is what she has done with the waste land motif:

She emphasises the Waste Land, which is a minor theme in all but the very late romances; and even in these romances it becomes important only because the writer was anxious to tie up the loose ends left by his predecessors. Weston takes it as crucial evidence for the Grail’s origin in the ritual of death and rebirth through which the land was revived each year. (“The Search for Sources” 30)

It is possible to go further and argue that Weston downright invented the literary motif of the waste land, taking bits and scratches from Arthurian romances and aggregating them together

57 “The ideas she set forth in From Ritual to Romance had a significant impact in the field of Arthurian studies, with much twentieth-century criticism responding to her work. Whether any present-day scholars agree with her view of the ritual roots of the Grail myth and the centrality of motifs representing sexuality and regeneration (and “Who does?” asks Norris J. Lacy), they often still feel the need to raise and respond to her work. (Brookman 120)
to form a coherent whole. My aim here is not to decide whether Weston was justified in making the waste land such a central motif in her study of the Arthurian corpus, but to examine the impact her study had on literary creation, starting with T.S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land” and reaching to works as diverse as Raspail’s *Sept cavaliers* and King’s the Dark Tower.

“The Waste land” has become a canonical work of English poetry, “famous even before it appeared in 1922, . . . it has continued to be the most prominent, though not by any means the most popular, poem of the twentieth century” (North ix). It is no mystery that Eliot’s text draws heavily on Jessie Weston work, as he himself has directed his readers to it, stating in the poem’s notes:

Not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston’s book on the Grail legend: *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge). Indeed, so deeply am I indebted, Miss Weston’s book will elucidate the difficulties of the poem much better than my notes can do; and I recommend it (apart from the great interest of the book itself) to any who think such elucidation of the poem worth the trouble. (Eliot 21)

However, even with Weston as a guide, the meaning of “The Waste Land” stays obscure and the poem plays out as a collage, mixing together elements from various sources, among which Dante, Shakespeare, Gérard de Nerval and Baudelaire. As such, some parts of the poem can be read as meta-descriptive, as Eliot effectively combines “a heap of broken images” (22). However the waste land theme brings unity to the whole, tying together the different parts, even though Eliot transposes it to different types of landscape: the desert, the mountain, but also the urban waste of “Jerusalem Athens Alexandria / Vienna London” (374-75).

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58 See Appendix E for a quick review of how the waste land is depicted in the medieval Grail tradition.
59 That impact can also be measured by looking at another powerful creative media: cinema. Umland argues that Weston – via Robert Johnson’s *He: Understanding Masculine Psychology* – was the inspiration for the 1991 Terry Gilliam and Richard LaGravanese’s *The Fisher King* film (Umland 16-17). *From Ritual to Romance* also had a huge impact on John Boorman interpretation of the Arthurian legend in *Excalibur* (1981). “Shichtman discounts Boorman’s frequently made claims that his film is based on Malory and convincingly argues that the film’s real source can be found in the works of Jessie Weston.” (Harty, 259) Finally, Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance* as well as her inspiration, Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, appear on the desk of Colonel Kurtz in Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* (1979), allowing for a Fisher King interpretation of that character. The influence of Jessie Weston on authors of fiction is also very perceptible in contemporary popular literature with such examples as Dan Brown’s bestseller thriller novel: *Da Vinci Code* (2003).
60 And the way the poem is edited takes this collage effect one step further: Michael North presents, together with the text of the poem itself, several essays by Eliot, excerpts of his acknowledged sources, reviews from the time of the publication and recent scholarly papers. North’s edition thus successfully reproduces the kaleidoscopic feel of the poem by creating a critical polyphony.
Weston’s conclusions that the Grail romances are only the remainder of an ancient fertility cult are essential to Eliot’s poem. Weston has made the waste land and the Fisher King’s character central to her study, displacing the point of focus from the Grail’s quest and its hero. Eliot follows this model and gives a voice to the Fisher King: “I sat upon the shore / Fishing, with the arid plain behind me / Shall I at least set my lands in order” (423-25). To the reader of Weston, familiar with the concept of identification between the land and the king, the reference is clear. The Fisher King, here, does not await the providential coming of a knight to alleviate his woes but seems decided to take the matter into his own hands. This concurs with Weston’s thesis: by equating the Fisher King from the Arthurian romances with semi-divine or divine figures from vegetation rituals, she dismisses the role of the Grail hero (be he Perceval, Gawain of Galahad) since it is the sacrifice and rebirth of the king that will guarantee the rejuvenation of the land. The titles of the sections III (The Fire Sermon) and IV (Death by Water) of “The Waste Land” are reminiscent of this notion of sacrificial king and they expose two kinds of ritualistic deaths.

The last section of “The Waste Land”, “What the Thunder Said” may be explained by the episode of the Perilous Chapel which is to be found in some of the Grail romances:

What the Thunder Said recalls the terrible storm that leads the Grail Knight to the Chapel Perilous as well as the loud noise inside the chapel. (Ullyot 24)
For Weston, this episode is the sign of an esoteric ritual being conducted: the Grail quester stumbles upon a mysterious dead body in the Chapel, but the body disappears thereafter. Jean-Paul Rosaye goes further in the superimposition of Arthurian scenes on Eliot’s poem:

Le fait que Mrs Porter et sa fille se lavent les pieds dans de l’eau mélangée à du bicarbonate de soude mérite d’être souligné : les pieds lavés au printemps sont, dans les anciens mythes, un prélude à la résurrection du Roi Pêcheur et c’est bien ce qu’Eliot a en tête lorsqu’il écrit plus loin « Et O ces voix d’enfants, chantant dans la coupole » puisque ce sont des enfants qui chantent lorsque Parsifal lave les pieds du Roi Pêcheur pour régénérer la terre gaste. (176)

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61 In the First Continuation to the Conte du Graal, for example.
62 O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water
Et O ces voix d’enfants, chantant dans la coupole ! (Eliot 199-202)
63 Rosaye seems to translate mistakenly “soda water” by “eau mélangée avec du bicarbonate de soude”, which would be “water mixed with bicarbonate of soda”.
64 The fact that Mrs Porter and her daughter wash their feet in soda water should be insisted upon: washing one’s feet at spring is, in the ancient myths, a prelude to the resurrection of the Fisher King, and this is what Eliot was
Finally, the Tarot imagery used by Eliot is also derived from Weston, who associates the objects of the cortege of the Grail with the Tarot suits: Cup, Lance, Sword, Pentangle (Dish). Eliot’s use of the Tarot cards is programmatic: it sets up the plan of the rest of the poem. At the end of *The Gunslinger*, King makes exactly the same usage of a Tarot reading, announcing with the cards the three sections of *The Drawing of the Three*.

The scenery in *The Gunslinger* is reminiscent of Eliot’s poem, and I argue that this is not a chance fact. On the contrary, although direct intertextual relationship with “The Waste Land” does not occur in the Dark Tower series before the third book, the opening volume, *The Gunslinger* is suffused with imagery from Eliot’s poem. *The Gunslinger*’s incipit immediately establishes the novel’s main scenery:

The man in black fled across the desert, and the gunslinger followed. The desert was the apotheosis of all deserts, huge, standing to the sky for what looked like eternity in all directions. It was white and blinding and waterless and without feature save for the faint, cloudy haze of the mountains which sketched themselves on the horizon and the devil-grass which brought sweet dreams, nightmares, death. An occasional tombstone sign pointed the way, for once the drifted track that cut its way through the thick crust of alkali had been a highway. (*The Gunslinger* 3)

This description immerses the reader in a universe that seems very close to the one of Eliot:

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. (Eliot 22-24)

The point could be made that some of these images are generic images that can be applied to all deserts. However, King and Eliot both stress the ominous hallucinatory quality of the desert “heap of broken images”; “the devil-grass which brought sweet dreams, nightmares, death” made more effective by the absence of shelter and water. The plot of *The Gunslinger* then moves on to the mountains that are also mentioned in Eliot: “In the mountains, there you feel free” (Eliot 17). This alone would not be enough to support the idea that the settings of *The Gunslinger* were inspired to King by “The Waste Land”, however King himself does make that association by using Eliot’s verses as the mental picture Jake gets of the desert he had to cross with Roland.

But the most prominent sign that King drew on “The Waste Land” to write *The Gunslinger* is the place he gives to tarot in his plot. The novel ends when Roland catches the thinking about when he wrote further down “*Et O ces voix d’enfants, chantant sous la coupole*”, since children are singing when Parsifal washes the Fisher King’s feet in order to regenerate the waste land.
man in black, whom he has been chasing across the desert and the mountain. The man in black is Roland’s antagonist, but also the means for him to get closer to the Tower so Roland makes the choice to listen to the man in black rather than to try to exert his revenge on him. The man in black does not speak openly but gives him hints that may guide him on his quest and announces that he will tell him his future and turns seven cards for him (The Gunslinger 218) : the Hanged Man, the Sailor, the Prisoner, the Lady of the Shadows, Death, the Tower and Life. Some of these are actual tarot cards: the Hanged Man, Death, the Tower. Others seem to have been invented by King for the purpose of his story. However, these non-official tarot cards find their model in Eliot’s own appropriation of the tarot: King’s Sailor stems from Eliot’s Phoenician Sailor (Eliot 47) and the Lady of Shadows from Eliot’s “Lady of the Rocks / The lady of situations” (49-50). Critics have not deemed Madame Sosostris, Eliot’s “famous clairvoyante” (43) worthy of trust: Ullyot, for instance, claims that she is a “charlatan”, not even able to predict her own cold (Ullyot, 19). In the same manner, the man in black is not trustworthy as he has been known to trick Roland before.

Eliot has explained in his notes that he is “not familiar with the exact constitution of the Tarot pack of cards, from which [he has] obviously departed to suit [his] own convenience.” (Eliot p. 22) He does not use the tarot cards according to their traditional meaning but to the one he arbitrarily sets: he associates the Hanged Man with Frazer’s Hanged God, and the Man with Three Staves with the Fisher King. The tarot reading defines the rest of the poem: the drowned Phoenician Sailor announces “Death by Water”. Stephen King follows this example and provides his own interpretation of the cards. Just like Eliot’s, his tarot episode plays a programmatic role for the following part of his work. The man in black announces indeed that the Hanged Man is Roland himself, and the Tower is associated with him. He identifies the Sailor with Jake, that Roland let died in the name of his quest for the tower: “Note the clear brow, the hairless cheeks, the wounded eyes. He drowns, gunslinger, and no one throws out the line. The boy Jake.” (The Gunslinger, 219). This leaves four cards to account for: the Prisoner, the Lady of Shadows, Death, and Life. The man in black comments on both the Death and the Life cards with the same words: “‘Death,’ the man in black said simply. ‘Yet not for you.’ (220) and “‘The seventh card is Life,’ the man in black said softly. ‘But not for you.’” (221). The first “not for you” seemed to imply that Roland was not concerned by the Death card, but the duplication of that statement with the Life card indicates on the contrary that they are both meant to describe him: although it is unbeknownst to him, he is trapped in an eternal return cycle and is therefore in a liminal state, unable to live really, but untouched by death. This leaves out two cards: the Prisoner and the Lady of Shadows and the meaning of
both cards is given in the following book: the Prisoner is Eddie, captive of his heroin addiction, and the Lady of Shadows is Susannah, who lives in the shadow of her schizophrenia. The plan of the serie’s second book, *The Drawing of the Three* is modelled on the tarot reading episode, as the first part is called “The Prisoner” and the second “The Lady of Shadows”. Following the model set up by Eliot, King is thus using the tarot arbitrarily as a foreshadowing of what is to come in his work.

King does not only appropriate Eliot’s use of the tarot symbolism but also some of his structural and stylistic methods. Eliot takes his title and section titles from images he found in Weston’s book; King reproduces exactly the same method by picking lines from Eliot to form his titles, as we have seen in the study of the Dark Tower’s intertext. On the stylistic level, “The Waste Land” is a polyphonic poem in which voices and languages are intermingled, making it difficult to assess who is speaking. The use of parentheses and italics reinforces that sensation of mingled voices, giving a stream of consciousness effect to the poem. King makes a similar usage of parenthesis and italics to represent the sometimes contradictory inner voices of his characters. This technique is predominant in books such as *Gerald’s Game* (1992), centred on the inner life of one character but King still uses it in some extent in the Dark Tower series:

‘You have a cut on your forehead,’ Marten said, still smiling, and pointed a negligent finger at the mark of Cort’s latest

(Thank you for this instructive day)

bashing. (*The Gunslinger* 176)

This allows King to synchronise in the same sentence the voice of an external narrator and the voice of one of his characters. This splitting of voices finds its model in “The Waste Land” and a comparable use of parentheses is to be found in the passage selected by King for his epigraph:

There is shadow under this red rock,

(Come in under the shadow of this red rock) (Eliot 25-26)

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65 At that time, she is actually still Odetta Holmes/Detta Walker.
66 In *Gerald’s Game*, as she is trapped in a secluded house, Jessie has no choice but to revisit her past until she unfolds a traumatic event she had suppressed for many years: her father sexually assaulting her when she was ten years old. The suppressed thoughts of Jessie are expressed in parentheses: “It had been her fear — fear that if she didn’t do something with that ugly green froth of anger and embarrassment, it would (put out the sun) cause her to explode.” (23)

“Put out the sun” refers to the solar eclipse that occurred the day her father abused her, but at this moment of the story she is not yet able to remember it.
In this example, the voice is arguably the same in and outside of the parentheses but the mode is changing, the speaker going from mere description to command. This strong suggestion that seems to be made on the subconscious level by means of the parentheses has a tone of uncanniness which fits extremely well the atmosphere of a horror novel. “Jake: Fear in a Handful of Dust” is in many ways a horror story and King uses Eliot’s poem to increase the emotional unease of both his characters and his readers.

The transtextual relationship of the Dark Tower with “The Waste Land” therefore goes much further than the mere fact of citing the poem. Eliot’s poem is as much the intertext of the Dark Tower than it is its hypotext. This is also the case for Brownie’s “Childe Roland”. It is possible to find many ways in which The Dark Tower series draws on Browning’s poem, the text that King often cited as the source of his work.: for instance, van der Bel notes the structural similarity of the poem and King’s books, which both start with a description of the antagonist rather than of Roland, the hero (van der Bel 17). From there King follows, loosely but in an undeniable manner, the narrative offered by Browning: “Childe” Roland is doubtful of the directions given by the man in black (“My first thought was, he lied in every word”) (Browning 1) but follows them in his hope to find the Dark Tower (“If at his counsel I should turn aside / Into that ominous tract which, all agree, / Hides the Dark Tower.”) (13-15). His quest for the Tower is interspersed with flashbacks of his younger years, dealing mostly with the memory of lost friends. The poem also shows a non-linear timeline and makes use of analepses. It even provides King with the name of one of Roland’s fallen friends, Cuthbert, in a passage that clearly states the importance of memories: “As a man calls for wine before he fights, / I ask’d one draught of earlier, happier sights” (86-87).

Browning himself got his inspiration from Shakespeare, as a line in King Lear gave him the title of his poem: “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came” (Act 3, scene 4). Van der Bel (22) shows that King was well aware of that reference as he named three characters in The Dark Tower Feemalo, Fimalo and Fumalo, which seems to be a play on the line following the Dark Tower one in King Lear:

Childe Roland to the dark tower came,
His word was still “Fie, foh, and fum,
I smell the blood of a British man.” (Act 3, scene 4)

By using the line “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came”, King consciously places himself in a prestigious tradition of literary borrowings. The name Roland itself, the archaic
use of the word “childe”, the medieval motif of the quest and the horn that his character blows at the end of the poem all trace a link between Browning’s creation and the French epic poem *The Song of Roland*. The horn is also present in King’s Dark Tower although Roland lost it before coming to the end of his quest, in a battle where he and his companions were largely outnumbered, as an echo of *The Song of Roland* famous battle.

Using “Childe Roland” in the Dark Tower allows for a rich hypotext as it places the series in the direct filiation of the Roland literary tradition. Using “The Waste Land” has a similar effect as it draws a link, through Weston’s book and all the powerful imagery that she convoked in it, between the Dark Tower and the Arthurian tradition. There are numerous references to the Arthurian cycle within the series. Gunslingers, such as Roland and his friends, are essentially knights in a western mixed with science-fiction universe: they are members of the aristocracy in a feudal society and wander around the land, bringing help and justice to the people in need. The quest for the Tower, an inaccessible ideal whose exact nature is unknown, is of course mirrored on the Grail quest. But the identification between the gunslingers and the Knights of the Round Table goes much further than that as it is explicitly stated that Roland is the descendant of Arthur Eld, the alter ego of King Arthur in Mid-World: “gunslingers were forbidden to take reward. Supposedly because they descend from the line of Arthur Eld.” (*Wolves of the Calla* 33). Roland is thus more than Arthur’s spiritual heir: he has a real filiation with him, on a symbolical level too, as it is revealed that Arthur’s sword Excalibur was passed to him in a different form: his sandalwood guns which are “handed down from father to son, with barrels made from Arthur Eld’s great sword, Excalibur” (*The Dark Tower* 492).

Arthur Eld certainly differs from the King Arthur of the medieval romances on many points but King made sure that the identification of the two figures would be obvious by keeping some key elements from the legendary narratives such as the sword Excalibur. He also reuses the motif of the magician who helps the king to rule, as Marten did with Roland’s father, Steven. It stays unclear whether Marten, Roland’s sworn enemy, who changes name and looks and appears in a number of books by King as the archetypal antagonist, is Merlin (Maerlyn) himself, a wizard who would have succumbed to the evil nature of power, or whether he is a completely different character. Roland certainly wonders about it: “Walter

67 “I have a book. *Tales of Arthur*, it’s called.” Roland’s eyes gleamed. “Do you? Do you, indeed? I would like to see such a book. I would like it very well.” “Perhaps you shall,” Callahan said. “The stories in it are certainly not much like the tales of the Round Table I read as a boy, but…” (119)

68 He is, for instance, the same character as Randall Flagg in *The Stand*.
was Flagg and Flagg was Marten and Marten…was he Maerlyn, the old rogue wizard of legend? On that subject Roland remained unsure.” (Wolves of the Calla 443) even though Marten himself seems to deny it: “I have been called the Ageless Stranger. . . . I have also been called Merlin or Maerlyn—and who cares, because I was never that one, although I never denied it, either. I am sometimes called the Magician... or the Wizard...” (The Waste Lands 538-39). However, this is not a conclusive proof that Marten is not Merlin/Maerlyn, as the Ageless Stranger “lies in every word”: he even denies being Merlin in a sentence in which he states that he has never denied being Merlin. Finally, another Arthurian echo is taking place in the Dark Tower with the figure of Mordred. Roland is forced to have sexual intercourse with a demon in The Gunslinger and a child is born of it. He is an evil creature, half human and half spider and he tries to kill his father. He is called Mordred, like the incestuous son of Arthur who kills his father in Le Morte Darthur.

The Dark Tower is thus suffused with hypotexts that all have in common to be linked to the waste land motif. Jean Raspail does something similar: although he does not quote them in Sept cavaliers, Apollinaire wrote poems featuring Arthurian characters, with a special focus on Merlin. One of them “Merlin et la vieille femme” is part of the Alcools collection and presents a waste land imagery: “Une vieille sur une mule à chape verte / S’en vint suivant la berge du fleuve en aval / Et l’antique Merlin dans la plaine déserte / se frappait la poitrine en s’écriant Rival” (Apollinaire, 88) as well as the motif of nature’s decay and reverdie that is at the core of the Fisher King myth, according to Weston. Alcools occupies such a huge space in Sept cavaliers that the novel virtually contains the whole collection of poems and Apollinaire’s visions of Merlin and the Arthurian waste land thus creep their way into the novel.

However, Apollinaire is not the only hypotext of Sept cavaliers. The plot, the characters, the themes and the general pace of the novel are very reminiscent of Julien Gracq’s Le rivage des Syrtes (1951). Genette distinguishes two types of hypertextual relationship: one is a transformation, the other an imitation (Palimpsestes 14). King 69 Maerlyn appears as a character distinct from Marten (he is actually his fiercer opponent) in The Wind in the Keyhole but this is not conclusive either as The Wind in the Keyhole is a fairy tale encased in larger narrative. Roland is the narrator of that tale and this happens chronologically before Roland wonders if Marten and Maerlyn are not one and the same.

69 The links of Eliot’s poem and the Arthurian corpus with the waste land are self-evident. As for Browning, even if the text of “Childe Roland” is prior to Weston’s essay, it also presents visions of a waste land: “I think I never saw / Such starved ignoble nature” (“Childe Roland” 55-56); “As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair / In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud / Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.” (73-75).

71 He also wrote three poems featuring Gawain, Vivian and Merlin in “Triptyque de l’homme” in Poèmes retrouvés and L’enchanteur pourrissant (1909).
transforms Browning: he transposes a poem into a prose text (prosification) and a short piece of writing into a seven volumes epic (amplification). On the other hand, Raspail imitates Gracq, appropriating the motif of the wait for an improbable enemy, using a similar political context, focusing his narrative around military characters. Orsenna in *Le rivage des Syrtes* is an imaginary city-state, just like the City in *Sept cavaliers*. The Farghestan, with whom Orsenna did not have any contact for three centuries, but against whom they are still considered to be at war, plays the same role of mythical enemy as the Chechens of *Sept cavaliers* – although it should be noted that the Chechens have another literary ancestor in the guise of the Tartars of Dino Buzzati in *The Tartar Steppe* (1940).\(^{72}\)

This imitation is well acknowledged by Raspail, who includes several references to Gracq in his text. Some are just fleeting mentions such as the “caviar de Syrte” (*Sept cavaliers* 44), while others shed light on the common history of the Syrtes and the City:

La plus lointaine avancée, à l’est, des armées de l’empereur Hadrien, en 135-136 après J.-C., lors d’une campagne avortée contre les Syrtes qui avaient aussitôt rembarqué dans leur canots de cuir goudronné.\(^{73}\) (78)

But the most interesting parallel established with *Le rivage des Syrtes* occurs at the beginning of the novel, when the margrave sums up the situation to Silve:

L’un de nos derniers bateaux de pêche, qui cherchait refuge chez les Syrtes, a vu flotter le pavillon de quarantaine au grand mât de leur semaphore, tandis qu’on lui tirait dessus au canon.\(^{74}\) (24)

This report mirrors exactly the key episode of *Le rivage des Syrtes*, when Aldo and his companions, getting too close to the Farghesian shore, come under canon fire.\(^{75}\) This blunder is understood to have reanimated the old enmity between Orsenna and the Farghestan but *Le rivage des Syrtes* does not develop the consequences of this action. Raspail thus sets his own plot directly in the continuity of Gracq’s narrative, seemingly implying that his story takes place in the aftermath of the political unrest that struck Orsenna after the canon shots. This connection between *Sept cavaliers* and *Le rivage des Syrtes* is extremely meaningful in the

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\(^{72}\) Raspail cites Buzzati in another novel: “Buzzati, quant à lui, ne donnait aucune explication. Il se bornait à constater.” (*Le Camp des Saints* 235)

\(^{73}\) The furthest point reached eastward by the emperor Hadrien armies, in 145-136 AD, during an aborted campaign against the Syrtes who had immediately set sail in their coracles.

\(^{74}\) One of our last fishing boats, which was seeking a refuge by the Syrtes, saw the quarantine flag on their semaphore, while he was shot at with a canon.

\(^{75}\) “Un froissement lourd et musical déchira l’air au-dessus du navire, et, réveillant le tonnerre caverneux des vallées de montagne, on entendit se répercuter trois coups de canon.” (Gracq 217)
context of the waste land as Gracq’s works are also concerned with this motif. Gracq is indeed the author of a theatre play called *Le Roi Pêcheur* (1948), which tells of Perceval’s failure at the castle of the Fisher King. The waste land is a leitmotiv in Gracq’s works as his obsession for ruins shows – one whole chapter of *Le rivage des Syrtes* is devoted to the description of the Sagra ruins. Gracq actually uses the phrase “terres gâtes” (*Les Eaux Étroites* 66), which is an archaic French equivalent to “waste lands” and Jean-Yves Magdelaine shows how this poetics of the waste land is a common theme in several of his works (Magdelaine 64).

2.2. The modern waste land

*Sept cavaliers* and the Dark Tower are both inspired by texts dealing with the waste land. The texts chosen are not the same (“Childe Roland” by Browning, and “The Waste Land” by T.S Eliot for King; *Alcools* poems by Apollinaire for Raspail) and reflect the different cultural environments Jean Raspail and Stephen King have evolved in as they are both using works that are considered “classics” of, respectively, French and English literature. Their works themselves are very different too: one is a short piece of literary fiction, the other a lengthy fantasy epic running through eight books. However the Dark Tower and *Sept cavaliers* offer a surprisingly similar interpretation of the waste land motif in a modern context.

The waste land motif in the twentieth century is necessarily showing the mark of the trauma generated by Hiroshima and Chernobyl. Thinking of devastated lands and annihilated landscapes immediately brings to mind the terror of a nuclear apocalypse. This is most noticeable in the Dark Tower, in which King devotes long passages to the description of life forms that have been hideously altered but it is not completely absent from *Sept cavaliers* where the land is mysteriously emptied of its inhabitants although the buildings still stand proud. However, it is only logical that the idea of nuclear destruction should not be showcased as clearly in Raspail’s novel as in the Dark Tower: *Sept cavaliers* describe a world that is visibly equivalent to our nineteenth century in terms of technology and any direct mention of nuclear attacks would be anachronistic. On the contrary, the Dark Tower universe is contemporary from Stephen King’s time of writing but it also implies that Mid-World has known a superiorly technologically advanced era that resulted in a cataclysm. Little is known about the people who lived there prior to the cataclysm, but the “Great Old Ones” left a few

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76 The modern word is “gâtées”. See Appendix E for a discussion of the terms “terre gaste” and “waste land”.
technological gadgets behind them, that the current population generally does not know how to use. Hints that a nuclear disaster happened in Mid-World are dropped consistently throughout the series but it is in *The Waste Lands* that the theme is the most fully developed.

Jake, Eddie and Susannah first come across the evidence of the nuclear cataclysm when they travel to Lud. Hearing the sound of a beehive they rejoice at the thought of collecting some honey. However they quickly understand that the bees are not healthy:

He caught sight of the hive, bulging tumourously from the hollow of a tree in the center of the clearing, and broke off.

“What’s the matter with them?” Susannah asked in a soft, horrified voice. “Roland, what’s the matter with them?”

A bee, as plump and slow-moving as a horsefly in October, droned past her head. Susannah flinched away from it.

Roland motioned for the others to join them. They did, and stood looking at the hive without speaking. The chambers weren’t neat hexagons but random holes of all shapes and sizes; the beehive itself looked queerly melted, as if someone had turned a blowtorch on it. The bees which crawled sluggishly over it were as white as snow. (*The Waste Lands* 390)

King emphases the feeling of wrongness caused by the bees by showing how the characters are revolted by them: Susannah is “horrified” and “flinched away”, Jake “duck[s] away with an expression of loathing” and Eddie is feeling unrationally angry at Roland: “‘You had a nuclear war, didn’t you?’ he asked – almost accused.” (391) Roland does not know much about it as it obviously happened long before his time:

I’ve heard it called the Old War, the Great Fire, the Cataclysm, and the Great Poisoning. Whatever it was, it was the start of all our troubles and it happened long ago, a thousand years before the great-great-grandfathers of the River Crossing folk were born. The physical effects—the two-headed buffalo and the white bees and such—have grown less as time passes. (390)

The deformed bees are however only a foretaste of what is to come after the city of Lud. King is primarily a writer of horror and certainly shows some degree of indulgency in writing apocalyptic visions such as the ones the company witnesses after they leave Lud:

But these lands, though poisoned, were not entirely dead. From time to time the travellers caught sight of figures below them—misshapen things which bore no

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77 For example in *The Gunslinger*, with the “slow mutants” under the mountains, or in *Wizard and Glass* in which farmers are shown having to deal with degenerated livestock.
resemblance to either men or animals—prancing and cavorting in the smouldering wilderness. Most seemed to congregate either around the clusters of cyclopean chimneys thrusting out of the fused earth or at the lips of the fiery crevasses which cut through the landscape. It was impossible to see these whitish, leaping things clearly, and for this they were all grateful. (564-65)

That kind of description, designed to disturb the reader, certainly owes a lot to Browning and his “ignoble nature” and King seems to pick some of his vocabulary directly in the poem: King’s bees crawl “sluggishly” whereas Browning’s river is a “sluggish tide”. The waste land in the medieval romances had a magical explanation. Magic has been replaced by science in the Dark Tower universe, but the cause of the disaster is still the same: transgression, be it Balaain’s ungodly Dolorous Blow or some scientific experiment gone terribly wrong.

Weston has shown how the land and the royal figure were linked to one another and how the decline of one brought upon the weakness of the other. In both Sept cavaliers and the Dark Tower, the devastation of the land is strongly connected to political unrest and it is unclear which one predates the other. In Sept cavaliers, the margrave loses all his authority over his subjects and he dies immediately after the last men faithful to him are gone. For Silve, suicide is out of question – “Certainement pas.” (Sept cavaliers 69) – but he does not seem to think that the margrave was killed either. Most probably the state of his land affected him so much that he fell in a kind of lethal languor and did not wake up from it. In the Dark Tower, the aristocracy to which Roland belongs fell in disfavour and the country is ravaged by civil war. Political chaos necessarily results in a ravaged landscape as crops are burned to the ground, cattle slaughtered and people driven out of their homes. The spiritual devastation that goes hand in hand with the destruction of the social structures is illustrated by the way youths turn against their elders. In The Waste Lands, Roland and his companions travel through Lud, where two factions are constantly warring: the Greys and the Pubes, i.e. the old ones and the less old ones, as no more children are born in this moribund society. The ravage of the City in Sept cavaliers starts when the children invited in the margrave’s palace for a Christmas party collectively lose their minds and violently attack the adults. At several occasions, youths are shown as dangerous in Sept cavaliers. The bishop killed an intruder that had found his way into his cathedral:

- Un gamin, remarqua tristement le comte Silve
- Une bête fauve, répondit l’évêque. (Sept cavaliers 13)

78 See Appendix E.
79 - A kid, observed the count Silve sadly.
Later, Silve and his companions are attacked by children in the deserted train station. It is Vénier, the youngest member of the company – he is not even sixteen – who eliminate them. Because of their common young age, Vénier seems to be taking it personally and reinforces the idea that the children are warring against the adults.

However I argue that the particularity of King and Raspail’s waste land is that it is ultimately a disruption of the fabric of space and time. In the Dark Tower it is announced in the very first page that the world has “moved on” (The Gunslinger 3); this expression could merely indicate regular change, but it indicates something more fundamental than that: the physical world in which Roland lives is actually moving and the characters can experience distances and places morphing. Roland has been wandering for years on his quest when the reader first meets him, and yet, he seems confused by the geography of this world. As he is on the trail of the man in black, Roland asks for information and gets this answer: “I don’t know. Time’s funny out here. Distance and direction, too.” (The Gunslinger 11). Time is also behaving strangely indeed. Different eras seem to coexist on the same level: the Dark Tower’s world is mostly a western universe, with very few technological features, but from time to time, Roland and his friends stumble upon objects which come from a reality more advanced than ours: a giant bear cyborg, the monorail train Blaine and its artificial intelligence, the robots from Wolves of the Calla... Our world and the one of Roland actually have several points of contact and some things cross from one to the other, creating a disturbing feeling of disjointment: the Beatle’s song “Hey Jude”, a plane from World War II, the skyline of the city of Lud which looks just like a derelict New York... act as signs of the porosity of the two universes. This can be interpreted as the consequence of the slow fall of the Dark Tower, which causes all worlds to collapse into the others. The fact that the three protagonists from “our” world come from three different “when” only adds to this temporal confusion.

While travelling in the monorail train Blaine, the announced travel time to the last stop does not match the reality at all, to the distress of the voyagers who need to win a riddle contest with Blaine before the end of the trip if they want to live. But as they do win, Blaine’s rage results in a weird phenomenon: the train let them cross to another world. That world is not the one Eddie, Jake and Susannah come from, but a parallel one in which almost the whole world population has been wiped out by a flu epidemic. This is the world from The Stand, another novel by King. This suggests that there might be an infinity of worlds existing next to each others, some with only minor differences between them, other as foreign as Mid-

- A wild beast, answered the bishop.
World appears to the New York protagonists. This hypothesis is later confirmed by Father Callahan,\(^{80}\) who has found the “highways in hiding” which give him the possibility to cross from one world to an infinity of parallel ones:

> Not just one America, perhaps, but a dozen...or a thousand...or a million. If that’s Leabrook over there instead of Fort Lee, maybe there’s another version of New Jersey where the town on the other side of the Hudson is Leeman or Leighman or Lee Bluffs or Lee Palisades or Leghorn Village. Maybe instead of forty-two continental United States on the other side of the Hudson, there are forty-two hundred, or forty-two thousand, all of them stacked in vertical geographies of chance.

And he understands instinctively that this is almost certainly true. He has stumbled upon a great, possibly endless, confluence of worlds. They are all America, but they are all different. There are highways which lead through them, and he can see them. (Wolves of the Calla 322)

Father Callahan gets this glimpse of the multiple universes existing next to each other as he stands on one side of the George Washington Bridge and, as he walks to the other side, he effectively steps into a parallel world. Roland and his friends cross to another world unbeknownst to them as they ride a train. In Sept cavaliers Maxime and Silve start to cross a bridge walking, and by the time they are on the other side, they find themselves in a train, in another world, having forgotten all their memories of the other world. Both authors consider trains and bridges as special places that allow crossings from one world to the other. It is a theme they have used in other works: Philippe Hemsen compares Raspail’s novel Septentrion and a short story by Stephen King, “The Langoliers” which also offer stories of parallel dimensions.\(^{81}\)

The quests of Roland and Silve end in the same manner: they find themselves starting over, reliving the narrative from the beginning, trapped in an eternal return cycle. They were both trying to restore the waste land to its former fertility. Roland, by finding the Dark Tower that holds together all worlds and setting it right, Silve by “searching where the life went”. However, the modern nature of the waste land makes it impossible for them to achieve their quests: the waste land as envisioned by Raspail and King is indeed a fractioned reality in which the fabric of space and time are collapsing on themselves. Roland should have understood from the beginning that he was condemned to resume his quest forever, as he is

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\(^{80}\) Father Callahan is a character from another novel by King, ‘Salem’s Lot, a fact which reinforces the idea of multiple parallel universes.

well aware that “ka is a wheel”.\textsuperscript{82} Therefore, when he reaches the highest room of the Tower, it is only to topple over in the desert where the reader first met him. Silve is also forced to relive his whole quest as he starts writing the same story from the beginning. In the modern waste land, there is no Fisher King willing to sacrifice himself to restore the land: the questing hero faces an aporia.

\textsuperscript{82} “Ka” is a word for “destiny” in the Dark Tower world.
Conclusion

Stephen King’s the Dark Tower and Jean Raspail’s Sept cavaliers, although belonging to rather different literary genres, tell a narrative that is, on the whole, quite similar. It is the story of a man belonging to an aristocratic class that is slowly losing its privileges, who sets on a quest to discover the reasons why his world is falling apart and to set it right if possible. Along the way, he loses all his companions one after the other, until he comes upon the cruel realisation that he is nothing but a mere literary creation. Having sacrificed everything for his quest, he finally understands that he is caught in the wheel of eternal return and will have to go through the same losses and sufferings again and again.

King and Raspail both give a coherency to their imaginary worlds by placing them in a web of carefully interconnected literary references. Sept cavaliers and the Dark Tower thus display similar transtextual relationships with other works of literature. Intertextuality is the most obvious one, as both texts display within themselves pieces of other literary works. The works used as intertextual references by King and Raspail – Robert Browning’s “Childe Roland”, T.S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land” and Apollinaire’s Alcools – share common features: they are pieces of poetry which have acquired “canonical” status and which offer a vivid imagery and a vast range of interpretations. Raspail and King also make a similar use of the paratextual space to acknowledge their debt to these poets. The relationship between the Dark Tower, Sept cavaliers and these poetic works is also metatextual as both narratives propose a commentary on the poems they quote, claiming to explain by the invention of fiction the true meaning of these texts.

The Dark Tower and Sept cavaliers also share a common hypotext: the Arthurian waste land motif as defined by Jessie Weston in her seminal work, From Ritual to Romance. This hypotext is declined in different ways in the poems by Browning, Eliot and Apollinaire and also surfaces in King’s narrative via direct Arthurian references and in Raspail’s novel through allusions to Julien Gracq’s Le Rivage des Syrtes. Although their sources are different, Raspail and King share a common vision of the modern waste land. Caused by nuclear cataclysm, political chaos or civil war between the youth of the country and their elders, the modern waste land as explored by King and Raspail is ultimately a distortion of the fabric of space and time. The hero who tries to restore fertility to the waste land gets caught in an infinity of parallel universes and the author uses the metafictional process of mise en abyme to trap him in the same narrative again and again, in an eternal return.
Appendix

A. Plot summary of *Sept cavaliers*

As the City is getting mysteriously devoid of its inhabitants and anarchy slowly takes over, the hereditary margrave summons the colonel-major Silve de Pikkendorff and asks him to embark on a quest to find out where life went. The tacit aim of the journey is to join Sépharée where Myriam, the daughter of the margrave, was sent. Silve is in love with her and therefore personally interested in this quest. Silve leaves with six other riders: four military members, the lieutenants Richard Tancrède and Maxime Bazin du Bourg, the brigadier Clément Vassili and the cadet Stanislas Vénier; the bishop Osmond Van Beck and the margrave’s squire, Abaï, from the Oumiâte people. Upon leaving the City, they discover the damage the train station has suffered from armed groups that roamed the surroundings of the City. From a distance, they hear the bell ring to announce the death of the margrave and understand they will not come back to the City.

In Saint-Aulick, they meet Gustavson, the officer in charge of a semaphore that is now useless, and they observe that his son displays the same kind of destructive rebellion which seized the children of the City and marked the beginning of the inexplicable events.

In the Mountain, they meet Alramane, commandant of the local militia. He presents himself as their ally but they soon understand he hates them. Tancrède spends the night with a mountain girl, Natalia, who tells him she would be severely punished if her people were to find out about their affair.

Vassili lives in the memory of his campaign with the Capitain Kostrowitsky – who was also a famous poet, greatly admired by Bazin du Bourg – thirty years ago, with whom he thought they spotted Chechens, a people of warriors supposedly defeated by the margrave Aulick-Frédéric V two hundred and fifty years ago, and whom nobody has seen since. Kostrowitsky returned to the Mountain shortly after his campaign with Vassili and was never seen again. In the Mountain, Vassili and his companions find a sign left by Kostrowitsky just before he disappeared. Vassili rides apart from the others for a while. They find him dead, with his throat slit. In the plains on the other side of the Mountain, they spot countless peoples they thought had disappeared along with the Chechens.

The riders leave the Mountain to attempt to join Sépharée by the Forest. Tancrède abandons them to return to Natalia. Van Beck, who has lost his faith, decides to stay in Zurfenberg church where he hopes to find God again. When they arrive in the family domain of Vénier, he also decides to stay back and rule this land by himself. Abaï disappears in the Forest where he hopes to find his people, the Oumiâtes.

Only two riders, Bazin du Bourg and Pikkendorf, arrive to the frontier post of Sépharée. There they discover a new bridge over the River, much more modern than the one they knew. While they cross it they lose all their memories and the bridge becomes a train station.

Later, they meet again in a train. They don’t recognise each other, but Bazin du Bourg is still reading Kostrowitsky, or rather, Apollinaire.
B. References to Browning and Eliot in the Dark Tower series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Browning</th>
<th>Eliot</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Gunslinger</em></td>
<td>First Edition: Afterword I had played with the idea of trying a long romantic novel embodying the feel, if not the exact sense, of the Browning poem. (138) Second Edition: x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Drawing of the Three</em></td>
<td>Argument The Drawing of the Three is the second volume of a long tale called The Dark Tower, a tale inspired by and to some degree dependent upon Robert Browning’s narrative poem “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came” (3)</td>
<td>x^83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Waste Lands</em></td>
<td>Argument Epigraph Afterword It is with this terrible and enigmatic figure that Robert Browning begins his epic poem (584)</td>
<td>Title Epigraph Section Titles: - Jake: Fear in a Handful of Dust - Lud: A Heap of Broken Images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Text x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Epigraph to Jake’s poem (134)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epigraph to Jake’s poem (134)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- No, Jake, Roland said. You’re not crazy. You’re lost and scared, but you’re not crazy and need fear neither your shadow in the morning striding behind you nor your shadow at evening rising to meet you. (140)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- a world that smelled of heat and purple sage and fear in a handful of dust (150)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Or is this name a double symbol, drawn both from your father and from Robert Browning’s poem “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came”? (188)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- “I’ll show you fear in a handful of dust,” Jake muttered, and put his hand on the doorknob. (269)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- “A heap of broken images, where the sun beats and the dead tree gives no shelter, ’” Susannah murmured (474)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^83 Although it is arguable that the use of tarot for the sections’ title are inspired by Eliot.

^84 I do not reproduce all the quotes from the arguments as they are all variations on the same sentence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paratext</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>x</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wolves of the Calla</strong></td>
<td>The Final Argument</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>There was a calendar with some nineteenth-century guy on the May sheet. Jake didn’t recognize…and then he did. Robert Browning. Jake had quoted him in his Final Essay. (70)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Song of Susannah</strong></td>
<td>Coda: Pages from a Writer’s Journal</td>
<td>I kept thinking about Roland, my gunslinger from the Robert Browning poem (412)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paratext</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda: Pages from a Writer’s Journal</td>
<td>I think I’ll call this one <em>The Wastelands</em>. <strong>October 9th, 1989</strong> No—Waste Lands. 2 words, as in the T. S. Eliot poem (his is actually “The Waste Land,” I think). (422)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Epigraph</td>
<td>“Childe Roland” full poem</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Dark Tower</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paratext</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>- Lying on the coffee-table is one that came via FedEx from his office in Bangor just this morning: <em>The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Browning</em>. It contains, of course, “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came,” the narrative poem that lies at the root of King’s long (and trying) story. (442) - It was a photocopy of a poem by Robert Browning. King had written the poet’s name in his half-script, half-printing above the title. Susannah had read some of Browning’s dramatic monologues in college, but she wasn’t familiar with this poem. (560) - [Quote and comment of stanzas I, II, XIII, XIV and XVI of “Childe Roland”] (561-63) - He reached into his back pocket and brought out the photocopy of the Robert Browning poem that had been left for them in Dandelo’s medicine chest. (582) -Lippy (probably named after another, and better-known, Browning poem called “Fra Lippo Lippi”) had been a sick animal herself (612) - He remembered a line from Browning’s poem: One taste of the old times sets all to rights. (663)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Susannah had a fragmented memory of T. S. Eliot (hollow men stuffed men headpiece filled with straw) (53)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Apollinaire/Kostrowitsky quotations in *Sept cavaliers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation in <em>Sept Cavaliers</em></th>
<th>Original poem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| J’ai hiverné dans mon passé  
Revienne le soleil de Pâques  
Pour chauffer mon cœur glacé…  
Mon beau navire ô ma mémoire  
Avons-nous assez navigué  
Dans une onde mauvaise à boire… (21) | « La Chanson du Mal-Aimé »  
J’ai hiverné dans mon passé  
Revienne le soleil de Pâques  
Pour chauffer un cœur [plus] glacé  
[Que les quarante de Sébaste  
Moins que ma vie martyrisés]  
Mon beau navire ô ma mémoire Avons-nous assez navigué  
Dans une onde mauvaise à boire |
| Un aigle descendit de ce ciel blanc d’archanges  
Et vous soutenez-moi  
Laissez-vous trembler longtemps toutes ces lampes  
Priez priez pour moi… (32) (145) | « Un soir »  
Un ciel descendit de ce ciel blanc d’archanges, et vous soutenez-moi… (43) |
| Une femme une rose morte  
Merci que le dernier venu  
Sur mon amour ferme la porte  
Je ne vous ai jamais connue (43) | « Les sept épées » (La Chanson du Mal-Aimé) |
| Épitaphe marine  
Ci-gisent l’amiral des phoques du Sud, lion de mer de Patagonie  
Et la princesse Lionne son épouse.  
Dieu les conduisit de la Croix du Sud à la Polaire sur la route des contresens.  
Ils ne firent rien comme personne puisqu’ils moururent à l’envers comme les hommes du Nord, naguère, lorsqu’ils allaient mourir au cap Horn.  
Ils n’avaient rien à faire ici, pas plus que les marins là-bas, sinon trouver un sens à la vie.  
Car il n’est pas nécessaire d’être un homme pour découvrir enfin, en mourant,  
Où se trouve la Patagonie… (75) | x |
| Je me disais Wilhelm il est temps que tu viennes  
Et d’un lyrique pas s’avançaient les Tchétchènes… (79) (152) | « Cortège »  
Je me disais Guillaume il est temps que tu viennes  
Et d’un lyrique pas s’avançaient ceux que j’aime |
| Les yeux ne sont jamais aussi flattés que lorsqu’ils contemplent une gaie borderie sur un fond triste et sombre… (118) | ? |
| De grands vaisseaux passent et repassent…  
Je trempe une dernière fois mes mains dans l’Océan. (146) | « Je flambe dans le brasier » |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>La tzigane savait d’avance</th>
<th>« La tzigane »</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nos deux vies barrées par les nuits… (146)</td>
<td>« Réponse des Cosaques Zaporogues au Sultan de Constantinople » (La Chanson du Mal-Aimé)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poisson pourri de Salonique…</td>
<td>« La blanche neige »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ta mère fit un petit foireux</td>
<td>Les anges les anges dans le ciel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et tu naquis de sa colique… (146)</td>
<td>L’un est vêtu en cuisinier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les anges les anges dans le ciel</td>
<td>Et les autres chantent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’un est vêtu en officier</td>
<td>« La maison des morts »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’un est vêtu en brigadier</td>
<td>« Le brasier »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et les autres chantent (153)</td>
<td>« Marizibill »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nos enfants</td>
<td>Je connais des gens de toutes sortes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dit la fiancée</td>
<td>Ils n’égalent pas leurs destins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seront plus beaux plus beaux encore</td>
<td>« Le vent nocturne »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Que s’ils étaient d’argent ou d’or</td>
<td>« A la fin les mensonges ne me font plus peur »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D’émeraude ou de diamant</td>
<td>« L’Émigrant de Landor Road »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seront plus clairs plus clairs encore</td>
<td>« Le brasier »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Que les astres du firmament</td>
<td>« Marizibill »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Que la lumière de l’aurore</td>
<td>Je connais des gens de toutes sortes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hélas! la bague était brisée (186)</td>
<td>Ils n’égalent pas leurs destins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« La maison des morts »</td>
<td>« Le brasier »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J’ai jeté dans le noble feu</td>
<td>« Le brasier »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Que je transporte et que j’adore</td>
<td>« Marizibill »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De vives mains et même feu</td>
<td>Je connais des gens de toutes sortes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ce passé ces têtes de morts</td>
<td>Ils n’égalent pas leurs destins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flamme fais ce que tu veux…</td>
<td>« Le vent nocturne »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je connais gens de toutes sortes</td>
<td>« A la fin les mensonges ne me font plus peur »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils n’égalent pas leurs destins (202)</td>
<td>« L’Émigrant de Landor Road »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La forêt fuit au loin comme une armée antique… (214)</td>
<td>« Le vent nocturne »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A la fin les mensonges ne me font plus peur</td>
<td>« A la fin les mensonges ne me font plus peur »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C’est la lune qui cuit comme un œuf sur le plat (215)</td>
<td>« L’Émigrant de Landor Road »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le chapeau à la main il entra du pied droit</td>
<td>« Le brasier »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chez un tailleur très chic et fournisseur du roi… (223)</td>
<td>« Marizibill »</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. Wilhelm Kostrowitsky as a character in Sept cavaliers: quotes

- Que lisez-vous mon petit ? demanda Silve.
- Kostrowitsky, monsieur le colonel.
Wilhelm Kostrowitsky, le plus grand poète qu’ait connu la Ville. (20)

- . . . Mais le capitaine Kostrowitsky nous a proposés tous les cinq [pour une décoration]. Silve sursauta.
- Kostrowitsky ! Le capitaine Kostrowitsky ? Le poète ?
- Je ne sais pas s’il était poète, monsieur le colonel-major, mais c’est bien lui qui nous commandait. Il semblait connaître les Tchétchènes. Il nous en parlait le soir, au bivouac, et c’est vrai qu’il en parlait bien. Nous l’aurions écouté pendant des heures.
- Il inventait.
Le brigadier le regarda sans comprendre
- Pourquoi aurait-il trompé de pauvres soldats comme nous ? Et pourquoi serait-il reparti seul, dès notre retour à la Ville ? Il a demandé une permission au colonel pour motifs personnels, mais à moi il a dit : « J’y retourne. » Il est mort là-bas, aussi sûr que je suis vivant. Monsieur le colonel-major, on ne meurt pas pour quelque chose qu’on invente.
Le mystère de la disparation trente ans plus tôt de Wilhelm Kostrowitsky n’avait jamais été éclairci et nul n’avait fait allusion aux Tchétchènes. On n’avait pas retrouvé son corps. Sans doute ne l’avait-on pas trop cherché, de sorte que cela lui avait évité des funérailles officielles avec fanfares et discours pesants. Probablement était-ce mieux ainsi. Il faut se garder de débusquer les poètes de l’autre côté du miroir où ils s’en sont allés sur la pointe des pieds. Une stèle à son effigie avait été élevée au milieu d’un bouquet de bouleaux dans le jardin public de la cité. Les enfants des écoles apprenaient par cœur les quatre premiers vers d’un de ses poèmes qui en guise d’épitaphe y étaient gravés. (31-32)

La question surprit le jeune homme.
- Euh… naturellement… un peu…
- Tout le monde la connaît. Autre chose ?
Le garçon hésita. Silve insista.
- Eh bien ? Le premier vers qui vous vienne à l’esprit ?
L’autre articula lentement, comme si les mots lui coûtaient. (43)

- . . . Emportez-vous ce livre qui ne vous quitte jamais ?
- Kostrowitsky ? (46)

Vassili retrouvait ses vingt ans, ceux du temps du capitaine Kostrowitsky. (69)

Des savants avaient étudié ce phénomène sans lui trouver d’explication. Puis les poètes s’en étaient mêlés, en dernier lieu Kostrowitsky, qui avait peut-être approché la vérité. (73)
Et pour citer le nom de l’auteur, il lança fièrement cet alexandrin inconscient :
- Wilhelm Kostrowitsky, qui fut mon capitaine !
En plus cela rimait ! Il y eut un moment d’intense saisissement. . . .
- D’où sortait vous cela, brigadier ? dit [Silve].
- De là-dedans ! répondit Vassili en se frappant la tête du poing. J’ai de la mémoire. . . .
- Qu’en pense notre spécialiste de Kostrowitsky ? reprit Silve.
Bazin du Bourg feuilletait fébrilement son petit livre.
- Je le sais presque par cœur, dit-il, mais je n’y trouve rien, aucune référence. Et cependant, monsieur le colonel-major, cela semble assez dans sa manière.
- Dans sa manière ! Et comment ! s’exclama le brigadier Vassili. Le capitaine Kostrowitsky nous a sorti cela comme ça, d’un coup d’un seul, un soir, au soleil couchant, tandis qu’un fort parti de Tchétchènes galopait au flanc de la montagne, ses étendards déployés… (79-80)

- Des marchands ? Qu’est-ce que Monsieur le cornette nous raconte avec ses marchands ? est-ce qu’on oublie que je faisais partie il y a trente ans du peloton du capitaine Kostrowitsky lors de sa campagne chez les Tchétchènes ? Croit-on que ce sont des marchands que lui et moi nous avons aperçus en formation de combat avec leurs étendards déployés ? Ah, vous ne savez pas quel homme était le capitaine ! Moi qui l’ai connu, qui ai partagé ma gamelle avec lui, qui l’ai même entendu parler en rêvant, au bivouac, est-ce que je pourrais admettre une seconde que c’est pour s’intéresser à des marchands qu’il est retourné là-haut tout seul se faire tuer ?
Il s’en étouffait d’indignation. On finissait par oublier que le brave brigadier Vassili n’avait probablement vu de très loin que des ombres, de vagues silhouettes non identifiées. Trente ans après il embellissait, il brodait. Naïf cavalier du peloton Kostrowitsky, il avait été à bonne école. (114)

Des torrents tombaient des sommets en une succession de vasques d’un vert émeraude intense qui arrachèrent au cornette Bazin du Bourg des exclamations d’admiration assorties d’une citation de Kostrowitsky. (118)

Le romantique Bazin du Bourg abordait chaque nouveau matin avec un bonheur non déguisé comme s’il découvrait une page inédite de Wilhelm Kostrowitsky (130-31)

Vint le jour de gloire du brigadier Vassili. Cela commença au pied d’un torrent où après avoir examiné les lieux en affectant une extrême attention, il déclara d’un ton solennel qu’il était déjà passé par là il y a trente ans avec le fameux peloton du capitaine Kostrowitsky et qu’ils y avaient même abreuvé leurs chevaux. . . . Il remit ça. Cette fois il s’agissait d’un rocher dont la forme rappelait celle d’une femme agenouillée, « même que le capitaine Kostrowitsky avait dit en la découvrant… ». Malheureusement il ne s’en souvenait plus, en dépit de ses efforts désespérés pour repêcher dans sa mémoire les paroles sacrées tombées de la bouche auguste de son illustre capitaine. (142)
Silve la gratta au couteau, découvrant une inscription qu’il déchiffra au fur et à mesure qu’elle apparaissait sous ses doigts : W. K. cap. 3/2/1 cav. 10/VI/… Wilhelm Kostrowitsky, capitaine 3° peloton du 2° escadron du 1er régiment de cavalerie, 10 juin, année…

Il se remit à gratter la mousse, dégageant une seconde inscription : W. K. cap. 7/VII/… ad. . . . C’était donc bien Kostrowitsky qui avait signé lui-même son deuxième passage, ajoutant l’abréviation Ad., probablement : Adieu.

- Vous m’avez bien dit, Vassili, que le capitaine Kostrowitsky avait rebroussé chemin seul presque aussitôt après votre retour à la Ville ? Justement, les dates concordent. Il est revenu le 7 juillet de la même année. S’il était redescendu ensuite de là-haut, j’imagine qu’il aurait signé une troisième fois. C’est donc bien là-haut qu’il a disparu… (144)

C’est un des ses plus anciens poèmes, dit Bazin du Bourg. Il l’avait écrit il y a trente-cinq ans, un 7 juillet, précisément. Savez-vous que Kostrowitsky était né un 7 juillet ? Voilà pourquoi il avait écrit cela. C’était la vision de sa mort… (145)

La conversation roula sur Kostrowitsky. Cet homme qui avait choisi de disparaître aux frontières extrêmes de la Montagne avait autrefois parcouru le monde de port en port : « De grands vaisseaux passent et repassent… Je trempe une dernière fois mes mains dans l’Océan. » Lors d’un séjour aventureux à Constantinople, à la suite d’une histoire de femme – « La tzigane savait d’avance Nos deux vies barrées par les nuits… » –, le sultan l’avait enfermé au fond d’un infecte cachot. Revenu à l’air libre, il s’était vengé, et Bazin du Bourg récita. . . . (146)

Sur le seuil de l’éternité, on peut être désespéré à moins. Avait-il songé à Kostrowitsky ? Avait-il eu le temps de se demander si son vénéré capitaine à la tête perdue dans les nuées ne l’avait point trompé aussi ? Hommes de Dieu, les pètes mentent et cela peut exercer des ravages, mais il se mentent d’abord à eux-mêmes. (152)

Lui revint un léger quatrain de Wilhelm Kostrowitsky que de jeunes aspirants romantiques récitaient naguère, un peu ivres, au mess du régiment de cavalerie. (153)

A voir le poil gris de ton gibier, Abaï, il a pu tout aussi bien nous assassiner Kostrowitsky il y a trente ans. Cette haine nous arrive de loin. (154)

Silve se dressa sur le parapet et hurla, ses deux mains en porte-voix : - A la mémoire du capitaine Wilhelm Kostrowitsky ! Le prix du sang ! (159)

Le cadet lui jeta un regard venimeux.
- Au diable Kostrowitsky ! cria-t-il, hors de lui. Qu’on ne me parle plus jamais de Kostrowitsky ! Il est mort ! Vassili est mort ! Vous aussi vous êtes mort, cornette de mes deux ! (186)

Parfois Pikkendorff demandait :
- Et que peut pour nous Kostrowitsky ?
Ce soir-là le cornette Bazin du Bourg, préposé à l’intendance et à la poésie, versa dans les quarts l’ultime réserve de genièvre, et ouvrant son petit livre, récita. (202)

- Et que dit Kostrowitsky ? demanda Silve en s’essuyant la bouche d’un revers de main. Ouvrant son petit livre et s’éclairant à la lueur du feu, le cornette Bazin du Bourg chercha, de page en page, lisant. (214)

Silve avait tout de même demandé, comme une sorte de rite ultime quand tous les autres sont devenus vains, comme un pied de nez au destin :

- Et que dit Kostrowitsky ?
- Rien, monsieur le colonel-major, avait répondu Bazin du Bourg, mais d’une voix si faible et si lasse qu’elle semblait avoir parcouru d’énormes distances avant d’arriver à se faire entendre. (220)

- C’est frais, non ? reprit-il. Les mots volent. On s’en va. On s’en va très loin. Apollinaire, naturellement… (224)
E. The Grail tradition and the Waste Land

The first occurrences of the waste land motif appear in Old French narratives so we can start by examining the French word *gast* to understand what “waste land” exactly means. This word has practically disappeared nowadays and is only used with an archaic connotation in the specific phrase “terre gaste” even though it still exists under the form *gâté. Dévasté “devastated” and *vaste “vast” are also related to *gast*. Greimas’ Old French dictionary gives several meanings for both the adjective and the noun *gaste*, as well as the verb *gaster. Gaster* comes from the Latin *vastare*, which became *wa* under Germanic influence. Greimas lists the following meanings for this verb: “devastate, ravage, destroy, damage” but also “rape” and “lose”. As an adjective, *gast* means “devastated, ravaged, destroyed”, as well as “ruined, abandoned, deserted” and “sterile, arid, dry”. As a noun, it takes the following meanings: “ravage”, “looting”, “squandering”, and “devastated, uncultivated country or land”.

Most of these meanings transfer to the English *waste*. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “in early Middle English the word adopted from Old French took the place of the cognate native *wester* of the same meaning”. The verb *to waste* has several meanings that range around the idea of squandering. However the ones that interest us here are the ones that have a link with the land. The first meaning given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is “uninhabited (or sparsely inhabited) and uncultivated country; a wild and desolate region, a desert, wilderness.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* has a separate entry for “wasteland” in one word and gives the following definition for it:

1. Land in its natural, uncultivated state.
2. Land not used or unfit for cultivation or building and allowed to run wild.
3. Waterless or treeless region, a desert.
4. Transf. and fig. sometimes with allusion to T. S. Eliot’s poem *The Waste Land*.

It is interesting to see that Eliot’s poem contributed to shape the word’s signification to the point that it is mentioned as a separate meaning in the dictionary.

The waste land as a literary motif finds its origin in Arthurian romance, especially the texts concerned with the Grail. The first text to mention the Grail is *Perceval ou le Conte du Graal*, by Chrétien de Troyes at the end of the twelfth century. Chrétien de Troyes took the “historical” material provided by Geoffrey of Monmouth’s chronicle, the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, and turned it into romance. “Our conception of the Arthurian legends was molded by Chrétien’s pen; he transformed brutal warriors into elegant statesmen and lovers,” notes Lambdin (37). The *Historia Regum Britanniae* was translated into Anglo-Norman by Wace as *Le roman de Brut*. It is in that text that the Round Table is mentioned for the first time. Chrétien reused this motif and made it the centre of the chivalric life: Arthur’s knights gravitate around it and regularly come back to it to share their adventures with the court. This is the main structuring element in Chrétien’s romances: each focuses on a different knight –

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85 *La terre gaste* is for instance the title of a novel by Michel Rio (2003) dealing with the waste land motif. *The Waste Land* poem by T. S. Eliot, however, has been translated as *La terre vaine*, probably because the term “gaste” would not be understood by the general public.

86 It is generally dated from between 1180 and 1190. “[Le conte du Graal] was written for Philip, count of Flanders, and was probably started before Philip went on crusade in 1191.” (Barber “The Holy Grail” 10)
Lancelot, Yvain, Erec and Perceval – who leads a certain type of quest but always goes back to Arthur’s Table to give his companions a full account of his doings.

Perceval’s quest is first and foremost a self-discovery one. He spent all his young life in the “Gaste Foret” with his mother, until the day he learns that he was destined to be a knight but that his mother prevented it as she did not want him to be killed in the same way than his father and older brothers were. He then decides to leave her and seeks Arthur’s court to be dubbed as a knight. Arthur agrees to it on the condition that he defeats a knight that has offended him, and Perceval passes the test. The newly made knight then leaves the court and goes seeking adventures to prove himself. He arrives at the castle of the Fisher King, who sports a mysterious wound but grants hospitality to Perceval. There the young knight becomes witness to a curious scene: a damsel and her cortege walk through the room where he is eating, carrying a bleeding lance, a silver trencher, candelabrum, and a grail. Perceval wonders why the lance is bleeding and who is served from the grail. However, as he has been lectured several times about not asking too many questions for fear of making a fool out of himself, he stays silent. The morning after, he wakes up in a deserted castle and leaves. He soon meets a damsel who declares herself to be her cousin and reveals that, had he not refrained from asking the questions he was so curious about, he would have cured the “roi mehaignié”, the Maimed King, and given him back power over his kingdom, but that Perceval’s silence will bring waste and disaster to the land. These points, immensely intriguing, have proved very inspiring for twentieth century authors:

Already at this point all the features of the story so resonant with archetypal implication for Jessie L. Weston and, following her, for T. S. Eliot are there – the Waste Land, the Fisher King, the Hidden Castle with its Solemn Feast, the mysterious Feeding Vessel, the Bleeding Lance and the Cup. (Pearsall 45)

Le conte du Graal was the last text written by Chrétien and is unfinished. It is arguable that its incomplete state prompted the vast literary fortune of the Grail as it left the narrative open and intriguing. Four continuations were produced by different authors as an attempt to finish the story where it was left by Chrétien. But the desire of writers to unveil the Grail mysteries did not stop there and the Grail figures in a number of Old French texts, such as Perlesvaus, Le roman de l’estoire dou grail by Robert de Boron, the Lancelot-Graal wrongly attributed to Gautier Map and the Post-Vulgate Cycle. Through the Fisher King persona, the Grail was from the beginning on linked to the waste land motif as it is suggested that the misery of the land is inherent to the misery of the king, and that both could have been healed if Perceval had not failed to ask his question.

The exact nature of the Grail stays obscure and different interpretations coexist among the various medieval texts featuring it. Chrétien de Troyes uses the indefinite pronoun “un” when he talks about it, implying that it is only one object of this kind among others: “grail” in Le Conte du Graal is still a simple substantive. Richard Trachsler argues that, with Chrétien, the grail was still a dish used to serve food (Trachsler 53), which is the first meaning given by

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87 The word gaste is thus associated from the beginning with Perceval’s character, here with the meaning of “deserted” or “isolated” to describe the forest where he was brought up.
88 This vast prose cycle is also called the Prose Lancelot, the Vulgate Cycle or the Pseudo-Map Cycle.
89 Un graal entre ses .II. meins / Une damoisele tenoit” (Chrétien de Troyes 3157-58) “A damsel was holding a grail between her two hands.”
Alain Rey’s *Dictionnaire Culturel en langue française*, but that it is in this text that “a grail” becomes “the Grail”. And in fact, if Perceval sees “un graal” during his stay in the Fisher King’s castle, when he meets with his cousin she asks about “le graal”. This interpretation of the Grail as a dish renders the “qui l’on en sert?” question much more sensical. Associated with the Maimed King figure and the theme of the sterile land, the Grail therefore takes on the trait of a cornucopia that manages to keep a fatally wounded person alive. In later narratives the Grail is associated with the vessel in which Joseph of Arimathea collected the blood of Christ after the crucifixion.

In the great prose cycles from the thirteenth century the Grail becomes the main element of the quest, the symbol of the divine Grace that only those who have achieved spiritual perfection can find. This change of focus can be easily explained by the fact that Chrétien was a courtly poet while the compilers of the prose cycles were “inspired by ascetic and other-worldly ideals” (Pearsall 45). This shift also leads to a displacement of the waste land motif. *La Suite Merlin*, a section of the Lancelot-Grail cycle, follows the adventures of Balaaïn, the knight of the two swords. Embarking on a series of twists and turns, he presents himself at the court of King Pellehan and, seeking revenge for an injustice, kills Garlan, the king’s brother. Pellehan thus attacks Balaaïn who flees across several rooms to find a weapon and defend himself, until he comes across a mysterious room where is kept a vessel, and in that vessel stands a lance. Balaaïn seizes the lance and deals Pellehan a blow with it, thus piercing both his thighs. This is called the Dolorous Blow (*le Coup Douloureux*) and it had been prophesised by Merlin, who warned Balaaïn that he would cause three realms to perish by his blow.

An earthquake immediately follows the Dolorous Blow and when Balaaïn leaves the castle he discovers a devastated landscape:

> Et li chevaliers, ensi comme il s’en aloit par jouste la ville, trouva dalés les murs son hoste mort d’un creniel de mur qui est cheus sor lui. . . . Quant il a la grant pieche regardé, il se remet en son chemin. Et ensi comme il chevauchoit par la terre, il trouva les arbres a travers et les blés destruis et toutes les choses si degastees comme se effoudres fus courus en chacun lieu, et sans faille coure i estoit elle en plusieurs liex, ne mie par tout. Il trouvoit par mi les viles la moitiet des gens mort et des bourgeois et des chevaliers, et par mi les champs trouvoit il les labourans mors. Que vous diroie jou? Il trova si dou tout destreuit le roiaume de Listinois qu’il fu puis de tous apielés li roiaumes de Terre Gasteet et li roiaames de Terre Foraine pour chou que si estraigne et si agastie estoit devenue trestoute la terre. (*La Suite du Roman de Merlin*, 167)

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90 He notes that *grail* means originally “hollow dish” and is a Franco-Provençal or Occitan form coming from the medieval Latin *gradalis* “large and hollow dish”.

91 “Et veïstes vos lo graal?” (Chrétien de Troyes, 3494) “And did you see the grail?”

92 This lance, standing in the vessel without any support, reminds us of the bleeding lance featured in *Le conte du Graal*. Loomis identifies it as the same than the lance appearing in another Grail text: *L’Estoire del Saint Graal*, the first section of the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle. “The lance with which Balaaïn dealt the dolorous stroke is surely the bleeding lance which Gawain saw in the Grail castle, since Pelleam is the name given in the *Estoire del Saint Graal* to the King maimed in the thighs by a lance”. (Loomis 78)

93 “And as the knight was going through the town he found under the ramparts his host who had been killed by a crenel that had fallen down . . . After having contemplated the scene for a while, he took the road again. And as he was riding through the land, he found trees lying on the ground, and the corn had been ravaged and everything had been devastated in such a way as if the whole place had been struck by lightning, which was
Perceval is only guilty of not putting an end to the devastation of the land because of his ignorance. The waste land was a state of things prior to his coming whereas Baalain is actively causing it.

Barber also notes that in the former Grail narratives (Le conte du Graal, but also the First Continuation and the Perlesvaus) the ravage of the land does not seem magical but simply a consequence of the inability of the king to rule:

There are many references to the desolate state of the kingdom of Logres; however, there is no magic about this desolation, for it is the simple consequence of this disorder [the king’s weakness]: we only have to recall the words of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle about the anarchy of Stephen’s reign in England – ‘you could easily go a whole day’s journey and never find anyone occupying a village, nor land tilled’ – and it is clear that what the author of Perlesvaus is portraying is a land ravaged by civil war. (“The Holy Grail” 206)

This differs from La Suite du Roman de Merlin in which the desolation of the land is directly caused by the action of the hero and is described as the punishment of a transgression. The waste land, in that case, is magically caused and not the result of bad politics. However the transition between this mundane and this magical cause for the waste land is already in germ in Chrétien’s text: after hearing of Perceval’s failure at the Grail castle, Gawain sets on a quest to find the bleeding lance himself and is told that:

Et s’est escrit qu’il iert une ore
Que toz li realms de Logres,
Qui jadis fu la terre as ogres,
Sera destruiz por cele lance. (Le conte du Graal, 6094-6097)...

This prediction foreshadows the one made by Merlin to Balaain and gives a sense of coherency to the corpus in spite of all the rewritings that the waste land motif underwent.

A clearer picture of the waste land appears from these different texts. Loomis also stresses the existing parallels between some aspects of it and Celtic mythology, noting for example the likeness of the lance standing by itself in the vessel in La Suite du roman de Merlin and the spear of Lug, kept in a special room in a cauldron (Loomis 78). In any case, it is clear that the waste land is intrinsically linked with a royal figure and that the waning of the king impacts the land and conversely. The waste land is intimately related to symbols such as the bleeding lance and the Grail who are both strongly associated with Christian eschatology. As the consequence of a fault, be it from the Fisher King himself or from the hero who did not act appropriately, the waste land becomes the main object of the quest: uncovering the Grail will restore the land to its former glory and all the adventures become signs on the path to the Grail.

From the Old French texts the motif passed to Anglo-Saxon literature through the works of Thomas Malory in the fifteenth century:

partly the case. In the cities he found half of the people dead, burgheers as well as knights, and in the countryside he found the peasants dead. What else can I say? He found everything so devastated in the kingdom of Listinois that since then everyone called it the Kingdom of Waste Land or the Kingdom of Foreign Land because it had become so strange and peculiar.”

94 “And it is written that the hour will come where all of Logres kingdom, which used to be the country of ogres, will be destroyed because of that lance”.
And hit was in the realme of Logris, and so befelle there grete pestilence, and grete harme to bothe realmyns; for there encresed nother corne, ne grasse, nother well-nye no fruyte, ne in the watir was founde no fyssh. Therefore men call hit—the londys of the two marchys—the Waste Londe, for that dolerous stroke. (987)
Works Cited


