

## Publication

## Sex, Wine and Statelessness: Apollinaire's Verse without Borders in 'Vendémiaire'

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Guillaume Apollinaire is a perfect stateless European. Originally a subject of the Russian Empire, born Wilhelm Kostrowicky in Rome to a Finland-born, Polish-Italian single mother, later becoming a prominent French poet and a soldier and eventually being granted much-desired French nationality, his biography reads like a novel. His 174-line poem 'Vendémiaire' (Alcools, 1913) is titled after the French Revolutionary Calendar's windy month of grape harvest, and as such centres on wine. In this 'chanson de Paris', a personified Paris' thirst for wine is met by the enthusiastic response of multiple towns and rivers, their water changed to wine, offering themselves to the capital in an orgy-like feast. This glorification of Apollinaire's adoptive city mixes sexual double meanings with religious references, founding a half-parodic new religion. It also touches on the poet's own painful strangeness, which leads him to dream of a liberated, borderless world of 'universelle ivrognerie', in which a godlike poet creates the world anew from primordial wine, and which also links to issues of national and cultural identities. This exceptionally dense poem, in which several meanings, tones and verse forms overlap, provides an exemplary specimen of Apollinaire's daring versification, which bears an important role in the construction and circulation of meaning, and is foundational to his prominence as a modernist poet. Its disorienting blending of old alexandrines with free verse places Apollinaire both within and without a metrical tradition that he enjoys and transgresses. Ultimately, rather than a world without borders, Apollinaire offers the image of a world full of borders, and the exhilaration comes not from their abolition but from crossing them. The poet's orphic power overrules boundaries, alters the world order: rivers of wine flow up towards Paris; a new religion allows him to create the world anew, and to gear it towards poetry, with a form of verse described as 'tordu', deliberately and richly imperfect.

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