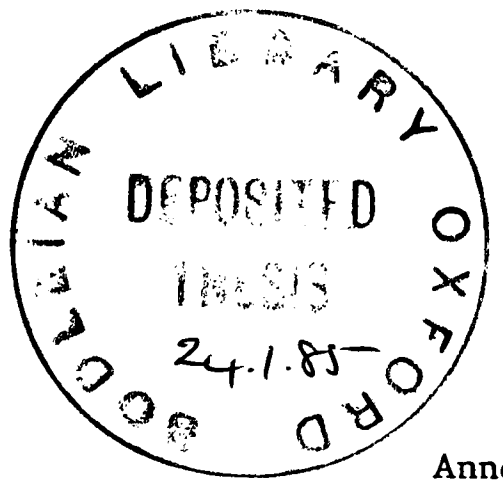
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Maurice Maeterlinck and English and Anglo-Irish Literature. A Study of Parallels and Influences.



by

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford.

Linacre College

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ABSTRACT

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Maurice Maeterlinck fulfilled a unique role in England at the end of the nineteenth century. He interpreted the symbolist vision for the English. His symbolist plays established the expressive power of a very simple style and offered an alternative to melodrama and realism. The mystical direction of his art appealed to the writers of the Celtic Renaissance. W.B. Yeats drew on Maeterlinck's theory and practice until the end of his career. During the 1890s, it was Maeterlinck's translation of the symbolist aesthetic in terms of the dramatic form which appealed to Yeats. The Shadowy Waters is Yeats's most extended exercise in a style indebted to "Symbolisme". During the years of Yeats's involvement in the Irish Literary Theatre, Maeterlinck's dramatic theories took over from his plays as the prime source of interest to Yeats. In addition, Yeats was strongly interested in the scenic innovations associated with Maeterlinck's work.

The second chapter deals with the important speculations about anti-illusionist modes of dramatic presentation which were developed in France and England at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth centuries, and which were anticipated in the prose writings of Charles Lamb.

Chapter three consists of a discussion of Arthur Symons's unpublished play, Barbara Roscorla's Child, which registers Maeterlinck's influence.

Chapter four examines Harley Granville Barker's encounter with Maeterlinck. It shows that Barker was particularly impressed by Maeterlinck's stress on inwardness. Barker's writings on acting and dramatic theory reflect his familiarity with Maeterlinck's Le Trésor des humbles, in particular the essay "Le Tragique quotidien". The chapter includes a discussion of Barker's unpublished play, A Miracle.

Finally, the chapter on Henry James concentrates on the manner in which Maeterlinck provides one of the chief contexts of The Wings of the Dove. The frequent invocation of Maeterlinck's theory and practice is one of the important ways in which James suggests meaning and shapes the reader's response.

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INTRODUCTION

Although Maeterlinck's name continues to appear regularly in critical studies of the 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century, there can be no doubt that he has receded into relative obscurity. His plays, at one time at the centre of an intense polemic about the nature and function of drama, are now hardly read, let alone produced. The titles of three of his numerous works - Pelléas et Mélisande, L'Oiseau bleu, and La Vie des abeilles - still set up ripples of associations, but the first of these has become identified with the name of Debussy, the second is chiefly remembered as a Christmas show in the Peter Pan vein and the third belongs to the realm of the natural sciences. Nor is this conspiracy of silence likely to come to an end in the immediate future. Working against a revival of Maeterlinck's plays is not only the modern theatre-goer's preference for a more vigorous mode of drama than that which "Symbolisme" is believed to epitomize; more serious is the fact that the English translations of Maeterlinck's work, which were already inadequate at the time of their first appearance,[1] are almost unreadable today.

However, at the turn of the century Maeterlinck had many disciples and made a considerable impact on English drama and dramatic theory. There can be no doubt that he fulfilled a unique role in England. The English had for some time been aware of the literary agitations in France but desperately needed someone to interpret the symbolist vision. Maeterlinck was particularly attractive to them because of his choice of the dramatic form, so much more obviously translatable than poetry, as

his medium.

If Maeterlinck the artist offered the English public a gateway into the world of "Symbolisme", Maeterlinck the man assuaged the apprehensions kindled by the reports about corrupted and sordid lives that had been coming from Paris. Since no piquant or scandalous associations were attached to his name, he came to represent the acceptable face of the new school. Far from being intent on shocking the bourgeois sense of propriety or living on the fringe of society, he hankered after middle-class comfort and respectability. His literary iconoclasm notwithstanding, he never lost an aura of decency and gentility, retaining until the end of his life a very Belgian distrust of eccentricity and gratuitous experiment. His interest in the spiritual dimension of existence was wholly devoid of the "lascivious mysticism and Platonic hocus-pocus" [2] found in the works of some of the more extreme members of the movement, such as Joséphin Péladan. It is typical of his cautious attitude that he held back from a full espousal of symbolist doctrine until he was able to assimilate it to a tradition that was neither foreign nor new-fangled - that of medieval Flemish mysticism.[3]

Discussions of Maeterlinck in the British press offered scant information about the complexities of his personal and cultural situation, other than the name of his flamboyant companion, Georgette Leblanc.[4] The general feeling seemed to be that since it was far from clear what the distribution was of French, Flemish and French-Belgian elements in Maeterlinck's cultural make-up, the less said on the subject

the better. As a result, few people in England were aware that Maeterlinck was born in a well-to-do Ghent family and as such was a representative of the French-speaking ruling class in Flanders. He was educated in a local Jesuit college, where French was the only language permitted both inside and outside the classroom. Although he occasionally spoke of the Flemish people and of Flemish culture with the condenscension typical of the social and linguistic group to which he belonged, by and large he keenly appreciated the centrality of his Flemish and Germanic roots to his art. To Maeterlinck, "Symbolisme" was the vindication of "le Germanisme" [5] - with all that this phrase stood for in terms of the importance attached to intuition, to the mystical communion with nature and the universe, and to popular and legendary literature - as against the French love of order, restraint and analytical precision, reflected in the chiselled and impersonal poetry of the Parnassians.[6]

It is hardly surprising that Maeterlinck's reaction to his "discovery" by Octave Mirbeau in a hyperbolic article in the Figaro for August 1890 was deeply ambivalent.[7] He did not need to be told by cynical reviewers that the description of La Princesse Maleine as "supérieure en beauté à ce qu'il y a de plus beau dans Shakespeare...plus tragique que Macbeth, plus extraordinaire de pensée que Hamlet",[8] was wildly excessive. However, there is no denying that Mirbeau's article assured him of instant critical, if often quizzical, attention, first in France and Belgium,[9] and soon after in England.[10] In retrospect it is clear that the most serious consequence of Mirbeau's immoderate praise was not the sarcasm with which Maeterlinck was greeted

but the fact that the comparison to Shakespeare introduced an inappropriate perspective on his symbolist plays. The ensuing verdict was as unanimous as it was predictable: Maeterlinck's drama, his supporters and detractors were united in saying, were neither meant for nor suited to the stage[11] - an opinion which, as we shall see, was not retracted until the late 1890s.

The publication in 1891 of L'Ornement des noces spirituelles and the subsequent appearance in English of selections from Ruysbroeck's writings,[12] gave Maeterlinck's mystical propensities impeccable credentials. But what was not appreciated in England at the time was the fact that Ruysbroeck had not merely affected Maeterlinck's outlook but had also convinced him of the validity of the symbolist theory of language. As Maeterlinck never tired of repeating, Ruysbroeck had shown that what is most profound in man resides in the deeps of the soul, "où toute explication s'anéantit dans son expression".[13] The ultimate truths elude definition and analysis; they are found in works which nearly merge with silence, pierced by the sudden illumination of "d'imprévisibles, exactes et révélatrices analogies".[14]

In Maeterlinck's mind, the theories of the Symbolists and the spiritual outlook and symbolism of Ruysbroeck coalesced in a single aesthetic system. Ruysbroeck had demonstrated that mystical flights and highly complex emotions do not require for their expression a style artificial in its studied workmanship and its search for the unusual word. In direct opposition to the call of Anatole Baju, the editor of the periodical Le Décadent, for the elaboration of a "style...rare et

tourmenté",[15] Maeterlinck followed Ruysbroeck's example of developing a style immensely effective in its startling simplicity. Both in his plays and in his poetry, Maeterlinck emulated Ruysbroeck's "étrange insistance sur certains mots ordinaires, de manière à en faire apparaître les aspects inconnus et parfois effrayants".[16]

A few months after the publication of Maeterlinck's first article on Ruysbroeck, his volume of poetry Serres chaudes[17] appeared. The most striking thing about these poems was the constant use of what Maeterlinck had described in his study of Ruysbroeck as "similitudes inouies".[18] In addition to a large number of poems in regular verse, Serres chaudes comprises seven pieces in free verse. It is to these poems, which have a visionary quality and operate the principle of free association, that the Surrealists were to acknowledge a profound indebtedness. They also elicited from Antonin Artaud the comment that "Maeterlinck a introduit le premier dans la littérature la richesse multiple de la subconscience".[19]

But there can be no doubt that it is in Maeterlinck's symbolist plays, published between 1889 and 1894,[20] that the fruits of his encounter with Ruysbroeck's thought and style can be seen in their purest and most striking form. An interview given to L'Art Moderne in 1890 leaves no doubt as to the causal connection: Maeterlinck's statements are suffused with terms either drawn from mystical and devotional literature or developed in response to Ruysbroeck's work. Manifestly not interested in those "Drames où l'on voit l'intégral développement d'un caractère ou d'une passion, entretenu, arrosé et élevé comme une plante très sage",[21]

Maeterlinck was working towards a different conception of drama and character, in closer accord with Ruysbroeck's orientation. He explained that he felt drawn to the idea of catching in his plays "l'être énigmatique, réel et primitif".[22] To this end, he turned away from the literature concerned with the moral dimension of life and from the conception of literature as a criticism of society. Instead, he focused on

> ...l'instinct...les pressentiments...les facultés et les notions inexpliquées, négligées ou éteintes, ...les mobiles irraisonnés,...les merveilles de la mort.[23]

Just as the mystic searches for the universal and the divine in the furthest recesses of the soul, so Maeterlinck hoped to achieve a greater understanding of the human condition by ignoring the accidents of existence in favour of the exploration of the "profondeurs les plus inconnues et les plus secrètes de l'homme".[24] Maeterlinck's greatest claim and most daring ambition was to unlock that most secret area in the mind, variously described as "une chambre de barbe-bleu, qu'il ne faut pas ouvrir" [25] or as "une effrayante et véritable mare tenebrarum".[26] It was there, Maeterlinck said, that "les étranges tempêtes de l'inarticulé et de l'inexprimable" [27] rage. Consequently, the Maeterlinckian character is entirely given over to the promptings of subconscious fears and feelings and is forever listening to "son angoisse d'homme".[28] This practice has drawn from the psychiatrist Etienne De Greeff the reflection that Maeterlinck was able to catch, "par son génie propre, dans la Psyché occidentale du moment, toute la matière à laquelle Freud devait donner un peu plus tard une forme

scientifique".[29]

In the programmatic statements made during the Art Moderne interview , the entire course of Maeterlinck's symbolist drama, from La Princesse Maleine to Alladine et Palomides, is charted. Maeterlinck's subsequent theoretical reflections, principally in Le Trésor des humbles and the preface to the collected edition of his plays,[30] mainly elaborate on these early views and suggest ways of realizing them.

At an early stage in his career, Maeterlinck grasped that the form in which the eternal aspirations and emotions of primitive man had been most clearly expressed, was that of folk art. It was his specific achievement to have realized that in addition to adapting the folk convention to modern times - as his compatriots Max Elskamp, Albert Mockel and Charles Van Lerberghe, and the French Symbolists Francis Jammes, Henry de Régnier and Henri Bataille were presently to do[31] - the tradition of popular poetry could also be extended to include the dramatic mode.

Until the late 1890s the theoretical speculation engendered in England by Maeterlinck's twin debts to popular art and mysticism was minimal. In most reviews, Maeterlinck's use of the spirit and certain of the trappings of the old ballads was only mentioned in passing, if at all. The only important writer to be strongly impressed by this aspect of Maeterlinck's work was Synge, as can be inferred from his enthusiastic discussion of the revitalizing effect of the assimililation of oral to modern art in an unpublished essay "On Literary and Popular

Poetry".[32]

On the other hand, if the mystical dimension of Maeterlinck's art was widely noticed, it was rarely understood. It is clear that the English public was largely unprepared for the arrival of Maeterlinck on the dramatic scene. Whereas in France Maeterlinck's application of the symbolist aesthetic to drama had been preceded by innumerable articles about the theory of "Symbolisme" and the practice of writers such as Rimbaud, Verlaine, Villiers and Mallarmé, England had seen very few discussions of the movement. George Moore's Confessions of a Young Man (1888; rpt. 1892), hardly counts as a critical study; his collection of essays about the Symbolists was not published until 1891.[33] The first serious attempt at explaining Mallarmé to the English public, Edmund Gosse's review of Vers et Prose, appeared in 1893.[34] Moreover, Maeterlinck's works started to appear at at a time when the critical debate about Ibsen was still in full swing and the English were still trying to come to terms with work containing a symbolical dimension without wholly forsaking naturalistic verisimilitude.[35]

The response in England to Maeterlinck's mystical intent was one of bewilderment. This is hardly surprising, considering that the English mode of aesthetic thinking does not easily encompass anti-materialist and anti-positivist propensities. Even a writer as closely associated with the symbolist movement as Arthur Symons had to undergo a radical transformation of outlook before he was suited to the task of interpreting the symbolist vision. A look at An Introduction to the Study of Browning will clarify this point. In this work, Symons

develops the idea that in order to achieve his purpose of "reveal[ing] the soul to itself" [36], Browning had to define (as Pater had put it) "in a chill and empty atmosphere the focus where rays, in themselves pale and impotent, unite and begin to burn".[37] This definition presents an obvious analogue with Pater's celebrated exhortation to "be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy".[38] On a superficial view, this formulation seems to point forward to a number of the most representative "Symboliste" conceptions of the literary symbol, such as that propounded by Maeterlinck, according to whom "Le symbole du poème" is "un centre ardent dont les rayons divergent dans l'infini",[39] and Albert Mockel's similar definition as "le faisceau convergent" of a number of lines "dont le sommet est l'infini".[40] But when one goes beyond the verbal echoes to look at what these writers are actually saying, then one cannot fail to realize that the differences are much more significant than the similarities. The chief distinction consists of Pater's fundamentally humanistic stance as opposed to the transcendental orientation of the "Symboliste" writers. One should be similarly careful when discussing Symons's relation to Symbolism. There is considerable evidence to suggest that in the early nineties, Symons's general outlook was much closer to that of Pater and of Browning than to that of the French Symbolists. The letters and poetry written by Symons during these years leave no doubt as to his anti-metaphysical stance: "the charm of the lighter emotions and the more fleeting sensations" [41] and "the variable, most human, and yet most factitious town landscape" [42] were all important to him.

It was not until about 1895, when he shared a flat with Yeats in Fountain Court, that Symons became susceptible to the mystical and transcendental dimension of "Symbolisme". The benefits of Symons's increased understanding of this important aspect of the new literature were apparent even before the publication in 1899 of The Symbolist Movement in Literature, with its dedication to Yeats: the first article reflecting Symons's fuller grasp of the French school was his review of Maeterlinck's Le Trésor des humbles,[43] which exhibits a keen appreciation of the pertinence of mysticism both to Maeterlinck's subject-matter and to his technique.

There can be no doubt that the publication in England of Maeterlinck's first collection of essays overcame the remaining resistance to his drama. It established him as a "serious" writer and as the chief opposition to on the one hand the still influential convention of melodrama and society comedy and on the other the realism of Ibsen. In addition, the essays from Le Trésor des humbles, especially that extraordinarily seminal and prophetic paper "Le Tragique quotidien", indicated the critical perspective from which to view Maeterlinck's plays. Le Trésor des humbles contained or suggested the important notions of "static drama", "theatre of silence" and "interior drama".

None of Maeterlinck's subsequent prose works equalled Le Trésor des humbles in impact or influence. La Sagesse et la destinée, published at the close of Maeterlinck's symbolist period, caught the imagination of a few writers - Fiona MacLeod discusses it in

The Winged Destiny and Joyce recalls it in the library episode of Ulysses - but its theories never became household words in criticism.

Like Katherine Worth in her enthusiastic discussion of Maeterlinck's relevance to modern Irish drama,[44] I am therefore chiefly concerned with those works which are part of the symbolist venture in the theatre. But whereas Worth looks at the playwrights affected by Maeterlinck's development of a new dramatic mode from the point of view of the modernist theatre, I am primarily interested in the actual encounter of a number of important authors with Maeterlinck's theory and practice. The necessity of keeping the work within prescribed compass made a selective approach inevitable. I would have liked to say more about Symons and Craig than I have done, and I had hoped to include a discussion of Wilde's Salomé. But my ultimate choice of material was dictated by the wish to explore three very different kinds of encounter with Maeterlinck's work. Yeats, we shall see, chiefly turned to Maeterlinck for confirmation of views already formed and took the extension of the frontiers of drama started by Maeterlinck to lengths which Maeterlinck is unlikely to have envisaged. In the case of Granville Barker, the lessons learnt from Maeterlinck's experimental work were brought to bear on a mode of drama that was in many ways much more conventional than what Maeterlinck had achieved. The chapter on Henry James deals less with a mode of "influence" than with the manner in which Maeterlinck provides one of the chief literary contexts of The Wings of the Dove. As I hope to show, the frequent invocation of Maeterlinck's theory and practice is one of the important ways in which James suggests meaning and shapes the reader's response. In addition, I

have included discussions of two unpublished plays, Symons's Barbara Roscorla's Child and Granville Barker's A Miracle, which register Maeterlinck's influence. The texts of both plays are given in the appendices. Finally, there is a chapter on the important speculations about anti-illusionist modes of dramatic presentation which were developed in France and England at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth centuries, and which were anticipated in the prose writings of Charles Lamb.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

[1] On 26 June 1898 J.T. Grein complained in his review of Forbes Robertson's production of Pélleas et Mélisande about "the unmelodious translation" of the play; rpt. Dramatic Criticism (London: John Long, 1899), p. 174.

[2] A.E. Carter, The Idea of Decadence in French Literature 1830-1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), p. 104.

[3] As Maeterlinck put it, "Il est heureux que nous ayons eu [Ruysbroeck], et depuis que l'ai vu, notre art ne me semble plus suspendu dans le vide. Il nous a donné des racines"; as quoted in Joseph Hanse, "De Ruysbroeck aux Serres Chaudes", Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Langue et de Littérature Françaises de Belgique, XXXIX (1961), 97.

[4] She was incorrectly believed to be his wife. Maeterlinck met her on 11 January 1895. He remained associated with her until 14 December 1918. In March 1919 he married a young French woman, Renée Dahon. Georgette Leblanc represented the only mildly scandalous aspect of Maeterlinck's life.

[5] For Maeterlinck's conception of "Germanisme", consult the Cahier bleu, ed. and introd. J. Wieland-Burston, Annales de la Fondation Maurice Maeterlinck, XXII (1976), 7-184. It is a copy-book in which Maeterlinck noted ideas and copied extracts from the books he was reading. The

Cahier bleu was written between the spring of 1889 and the spring of the following year. On "Germanisme", see for instance the following comment, p. 101: "le Germanisme est...proprement une sympathie complète avec les choses".

[6] In Art Moderne (23 February 1890), Maeterlinck severely criticized the Parnassians; as mentioned in Herman Braet, L'Accueil fait au Symbolisme en Belgique 1885-1900 (Brussels:Palais des Académies, 1967), p. 27.

[7] See his letters to Mirbeau, as quoted in Guy Doneux, Maurice Maeterlinck. Une poésie - Une sagesse - Un homme (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1961), p. 32.

[8] Joseph Hanse, "Histoire d'une Gloire", Maurice Maeterlinck 1862-1962 (n.p.: La Renaissance du Livre, 1962), p. 50.

[9] Mirbeau's article was reprinted in the September 1890 issue of La Jeune Belgique; as mentioned in Braet, p. 28.

[10] On 28 October 1890, the Manchester Guardian carried an unsigned article, "A New Shakspeare" (sic). It was written by Gerard Harry, as is indicated by Maeterlinck's word of thanks in a letter of 31 October, kept in the Fondation Maurice Maeterlinck in Ghent.

[11] For instance, William Sharp, an admirer of Maeterlinck from the earliest days, wrote in his review of La Princesse Maleine and L'Intruse, Academy, XLI (January-June 1892), 271: "No one could expect

Les Aveugles to be effective on the stage; and...the ill-advised performances of {L'Intruse and Les Aveugles} must have convinced the most uncritical". Compare also Arthur Symons, "The Decadent Movement in Literature", Harper's New Monthly Magazine (November 1893), p. 865: L'Intruse is "too faint in outline, with too little carrying power for scenic effect".

[12] Maeterlinck, Ruysbroeck and the Mystics: with selections from Ruysbroeck, trans. Jane Stoddart (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1894). For a discussion of Maeterlinck's articles on Ruysbroeck, see Hanse, "De Ruysbroeck aux Serres chaudes".

[13] Maeterlinck, Introd., L'Ornement des noces spirituelles, de Ruysbroeck L'Admirable, traduit du Flamand (Brussels: Lacomblez, 1891), p. XVIII.

[14] Maeterlinck, L'Ornement, p. XLIX.

[15] As quoted in A.E. Carter, The Idea of Decadence, p. 136

[16] Maeterlinck, "Ruysbroeck L'Admirable"; as quoted in Hanse, "De Ruysbroeck aux Serres chaudes", pp. 99-100.

[17] Maeterlinck, Serres chaudes, illustrated George Minne (Ghent: Vanier, 1889). The fullest discussion of this work can be found in Joseph Hanse, Introd., Poésies complètes, by Maurice Maeterlinck (Brussels: Renaissance du Livre, 1965), pp. 1-52.

[18] Maeterlinck, L'Ornement, p. IX.

[19] Antonin Artaud, Preface, Douze Chansons, by Maurice Maeterlinck (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1923); as quoted in Stefan Gross, "Maeterlinck, père prodigue du surréalisme", Annales de la Fondation Maurice Maeterlinck, XXVI (1980), 128.

[20] See the Bibliography.

[21] Maeterlinck, Cahier bleu, p. 165.

[22] [Maeterlinck], "Confession de poète", Art Moderne, 10 (23 February 1890), 62.

[23] Maeterlinck, "Confession", p. 62.

[24] Maeterlinck, "Confession", p. 61.

[25] Maeterlinck, "Confession", p. 61.

[26] Maeterlinck, "Confession", p. 61.

[27] Maeterlinck, "Confession", p. 61.

[28] Etienne De Greeff, "L'Intelligence de Maeterlinck", Revue Générale Belge, LXXXIX (15 January 1953), 354.

[29] De Greeff, p. 354.

[30] Maeterlinck, Préface, Théâtre, I (Brussels: Lacomblez, 1901; rpt. Paris: Fasquelle, 1925).

[31] See Herman Braet, pp. 73-88.

[32] Synge MSS, Trinity College Dublin, MS 4382. Declan Kiberd, in his Synge and the Irish Language (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 160-161, refers to this essay but wrongly attributes to Synge a number of statements which are translations of comments made by Robert de Souza in his La Poésie populaire et le lyrisme sentimental (Paris: Mercure de France, 1899). Synge comments on de Souza's theories and gives extensive quotations, in a rough translation, from his book.

[33] George Moore, Impressions and Opinions (London: David Nutt, 1891).

[34] Edmund Gosse, "Symbolism and M. Stéphane Mallarmé", Academy, XLIII (7 January 1893), 5-7; partly rpt. Questions at Issue (London: William Heinemann, 1893).

[35] See John Stokes, Resistible Theatres (London: Paul Elek, 1972), pp. 152-166 et passim.

[36] Arthur Symons, An Introduction to the Study of Browning (London: Cassell, 1886), p. 9.

[37] Symons is quoting Pater's comment on Browning: Walter Pater, Studies in the History of the Renaissance (London: Macmillan, 1873), p. 187.

[38] Pater, Renaissance, p. 210.

[39] Maeterlinck, "Menus propos: Le Théâtre", La Jeune Belgique, IX (September 1890), 334.

[40] Albert Mockel, "Chronique littéraire", La Wallonie, V (June-July 1890), 216.

[41] Arthur Symons, Prèface, Silhouettes, 2nd. ed. (London: Leonard Smithers, 1896), p. XV.

[42] Symons, Preface, Silhouettes, p. XV.

[43] Arthur Symons, "Maeterlinck as a Mystic", rev. of Le Trésor des humbles, Contemporary Review, LXXII (1897), 349-354.

[44] Katherine Worth, The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett (London: Athlone Press, 1978).

CHAPTER ONE: W.B. YEATS

I. Journey from Ireland to Europe

The history of Yeats's literary and aesthetic development abounds with apparent contradictions. During the late 1880s and the 1890s, Yeats was concerned to vindicate the position of Irish literature. This concern is evidenced by the many articles he wrote in which he tried to define what he meant by an Irish national literature, to establish a literary pedigree both for himself and for Irish writers generally, and to encourage the composition of works true to his conception of Irish national literature.[1] He exhorted his countrymen to uncover, by collection and translation, the half-forgotten Irish mythological and legendary traditions; savagely attacked those who, like Professor Edward Dowden, turned for preference to English and Continental literature; and never tired of repeating, "There is no great literature without nationality, no great nationality without literature".[2]

On the other hand, in 1897 Yeats devoted two highly appreciative articles to Maeterlinck's work,[3] hailed him as one of the topmost representatives of the coming of symbolic art, and left no doubt as to the fact that he had been eagerly awaiting its advent for a considerable time.

On the surface of it, a gulf separates these two positions, the former centering on a sense of belonging to a specific country, Ireland, the latter implying an interest not so much in an outer as in an inner world. But beneath it all, it is possible to discern a natural

progression from Yeats's commitment to national literature to his involvement with a symbolist writer such as Maeterlinck.

Even during the late 1880s and the early 1890s, when he was working tirelessly as a propagandist for the Irish literary cause, he had a strong partiality for a mode of writing that abjured externals in favour of "man's inner nature,...the vague desires" (UP I, 114). He was not only interested in Irish literature for its own sake: negatively, he turned his literary aspirations for Ireland into a stick with which to beat England. Irish literature was to be free from all the defects that marred the Victorian tradition. In his earliest extant review article, "The Poetry of Sir Samuel Ferguson", published in the Irish Fireside of 9 October 1886, we can already detect an interest in a fusion of Irish and anti-English interests. Ireland's young writers are urged to draw upon the Irish cycles of legends lest they be "lost in a world of mere shadow and dream" (UP I, 81) and, concurrently, Yeats makes the first of an endless series of refutations of Matthew Arnold's dictum that art is "a criticism of life" (UP I, 84). Yeats vehemently objected to the Victorian concept of art as an instrument of morality; he held that literature was not liable to moral evaluation.

About the same time, we find in his writings the beginnings of what was to become one of the central themes of his literary philosophy: the doctrine of the universal moods. His support for a national literature with a wide popular appeal led him to make a rough distinction between sophisticated coterie poets who "investigate what is obscure in emotion" (UP I, 105), such as Coleridge, Shelley and

Wordsworth, and bardic poets like Homer, Hugo and Burns, who "sing of universal emotions" (UP I, 105) and whose work exhibits a noble simplicity. Ferguson, he argued, belongs to the latter class, appealing as he does

> ...to all natures alike, to the great concourse of the people, for [his poetry] has gone deeper than knowledge or fancy, deeper than the intelligence which knows of difference - of the good and the evil, of the foolish and the wise, of this one and of that - to the universal emotions that have not heard of aristocracies, down to where Brahman and Sudra are not even names . (UP I, 101)

At this stage Yeats's conception of the "universal emotions" was still largely confined to the reductive meaning of "simple" emotions, emotions which peasant and educated man alike can understand. But presently the fact that the universal emotions of bardic poetry are commonly found in conjunction with the "Legend dear to the Celtic heart...ever desiring the things that lie beyond the actual" (UP I, 108), caused him to make the important connection that those universal passions are found in legendary contexts because it is in the nature of both the legends of the remote past and of peasant folklore to embody them. Yeats came to believe that the appeal of the Irish past is twofold: by drawing on it the poet's work would achieve associations of great emotions and of resonant experiences; moreover, he was convinced that there is "no passion, no vague desire, no tender longing that cannot find type or symbol in the legends of the peasantry or in the traditions of the scalds and the gleemen" (UP I, 285).

The force of Yeats's persistent conviction that there is a direct relation between nationality and literature emerges most vividly from a

"letter" to the "New Island", dated 22 February 1888. According to Yeats, the poet William Allingham

> ...had the making of a great writer in him, but lacked impulse and momentum, the very things national feeling could have supplied. Whenever an Irish writer has strayed away from Irish themes and Irish feeling, in almost all cases he has done no more than make alms for oblivion. (New Island, 103)

Irish poets must be alive to this cultural heritage compounded of "the most moving legends and a history full of lofty passions" (UP I, 250) because they are the expression of "the most lyrical, the most subjective moods" (UP I, 250). By 1893 the word moods had replaced the earlier emotions. It is a concept which Yeats was henceforth to stick to and whose meaning he was to sharpen, to deepen and to refine. In 1895 the moods acquired the epithet "Immortal", and they became capitalized, to indicate their ascent from their original humble place among the countryfolk to a lofty pedestal. They now occupied a position of eminence as "the true builders of nations, the secret transformers of the world" (UP I, 361). Although Yeats did not publish a comprehensive definition of the Eternal Moods until 1895, evidence of his preoccupation with the aesthetic and artistic concerns informing his theory of creation can be found in his essays from about 1892 onwards. The earliest pertinent article is "Hopes and Fears for Irish Literature". It opens with what is ostensibly an attack on recent manifestations of "art for art's sake" in France and England but ends with a tribute to the craftsmanship of the writers from whom Yeats, under the impulse of his loyalty to the nationalistic ideals of O'Leary, now felt constrained to distance himself. It is not until the final paragraph that Yeats tackles his main argument. It is clear that his

reading of Blake has set him brooding about a new Golden Age and the role which Ireland might hope to play in this revival. He appears fairly confident that the Irish may be able to "deliver that new great utterance for which the world is waiting" (UP I, 250) provided they can be brought to see where their real strength lies and how to compensate for their weaknesses. As Yeats never stopped emphasizing, their particular asset consists of their legendary past. But he warns that Irish writers will only be able to turn those legends into "dramas, poems, and stories full of the living soul of the present" (UP I, 250) if they succeed in equalling the Decadents' and Aesthetes' "skill, ... devotion to form ... [and] hatred of the commonplace and the banal" (UP I, 250). However, it is not until the following spring that his esoteric motive for exhorting Irish writers to learn their trade becomes apparent. In "Nationality and Literature", a lecture given in May 1893, several of Yeats's observations, couched in uncharacteristically straightforward terms and manifestly geared to the audience he is addressing, point forward to the aesthetic he was to formulate two years later. As against those who fall back on the concept of heavenly inspiration to absolve themselves from the task of learning their trade, he emphasizes that "the inspiration of God, which is, indeed, the source of all which is greatest in the world, comes only to him who labours at rhythm and cadence, at form and style, until they have no secret hidden from him" (UP I, 274). The link with "Hopes and Fears for Irish Literature", published the previous year, is evident in the conclusion: "We must learn from the literature of France and England to be supreme artists and then God will send to us supreme inspiration" (UP I, 367). It is clear that in 1893 Yeats was beginning to apprehend the ideas

which two years later were further developed and defended in a series of four articles entitled "Irish National Literature". In these articles, the conception of inspiration as originating outside the poet's mind, more precisely, in the metaphysical realm, continues to be adhered to, but the language in which it is couched becomes more abstruse and esoteric. In the second essay in the series Yeats expounds the following theory:

> Literature differs from explanatory and scientific writing in being wrought about a mood, or a community of moods, as the body is wrought about an invisible soul; and if it uses argument, theory, erudition, observation, and seems to grow hot in assertion or denial, it does so merely to make us partakers at the banquet of the moods. It seems to me that these moods are the labourers and messengers of the Ruler of All ... (UP I, 367)

Throughout Yeats's discussions of Moods, the poet is depicted as a kind of priest, or as a mage, using facts and ideas as "the body and the symbols for his art, the formula of evocation for making the invisible visible" (UP I, 380). He officiates in a sacred ritual aimed at the revelation of the supersensual world. The tools and skills required by the poet/priest to discharge his sacred office are "a subtle, appropriate language or a minute, manifold knowledge" (UP I, 361) - that is to say, the artistry and technical excellence singled out for effusive praise in Yeats's comparative discussion of the relative merits and demerits of Irish, French and French-inspired literature in "Hopes and Fears for Irish Literature".

Yeats's metaphorical statements make it clear that although the moods are vehicles of heavenly inspiration they are transmuted into emotions in the poet's heart: as he put it, "the great Passions are

angels of God" (UP I, 376), which it is the poet's task "to embody" (UP I, 377) in his work - hence his need for craftsmanship and knowledge. Or, as Yeats also phrased it, through his "mysterious instinct" (UP I, 367) the poet is able to "discover immortal moods in mortal desires, an undecaying hope in our trivial ambitions, a divine love in sexual passion" (UP I, 367).

The doctrine of the universal moods, in addition to lending dignity to humble folk art, also enabled him to extend his area of literary interest from Ireland to England and especially to the Continent. While it remained true that the poet had to write of what he was closest to and of what he knew best, there was no reason why he should be barred from foreign literatures. All imaginative literature was concerned with making the invisible visible, and to the moods or to the invisible no considerations of nationality apply.

Beside being cosmopolitan, the moods were a-temporal, and as such constituted a bridge between the past and the present. As Yeats stated very clearly, "imaginative literature wholly, and all literature in some degree, exists to reveal a more powerful, a more divine world than ours" (UP I, 408). As we shall see, this concern for making the invisible visible is one of the factors accounting for Yeats's interest in Maeterlinck's early work.

In "Hopes and Fears for Irish Literature", Yeats had expressed a connoisseur's appreciation of the careful workmanship of French "Decadent" poetry. At the same time, he dissociated himself from this

movement's aesthetic, the belief that "Poetry is an end in itself; it has nothing to do with thought, nothing to do with philosophy , nothing to do with life, nothing to do with anything but the music of cadence, and beauty of phrase" (UP I, 248). Yeats's articles of the 'nineties increasingly stress the need for Irish literature to combine the strength of the "school of the sunset" (UP I, 248) with that of the literature of "dawn" (UP I, 250). He became more and more intolerant of artistic incompetence and sloppiness. But he also insisted that while literature must steer clear of rhetoric, castigated as "the false coin of a glittering or noisy insincerity" (UP I, 404) and of opinions, a term he associated with "newspaper hacks" (UP I, 407) and "the passions and the blindness of the multitude" (UP I, 404), it very much depends on ideas. As he declared in a review article of 1893, "The belief ... that you can separate poetry from philosophy and from belief, is but the phantasy of an empty day" (UP I, 266). Literature must not be divorced from philosophy or from belief on pain of being transformed into work that "affects the nerves" (UP I, 265) and the senses but has no impact on either the heart or intellect. What won Yeats over to symbolist literature was the combination of its devotion to craft/manship and the metaphysical foundation of its aesthetic. Moreover, the work of the Symbolists sprang from a unified sense of life which, as Yeats had been insisting since 1888, was a crucial requirement for artistic excellence: as he had declared in a criticism of the poetry of "charming accidents and momentary occurrences" (UP I, 260), in true art

> ... nothing is an isolated artistic movement; there is unity everywhere, everything fulfils a purpose that is not its own; the hailstone is a journeyman of God, and the grass blade carries the universe on its point (UP I, 260).

In the growing tendency among English poets to scorn philosophy and make art an end in itself, he detected French influence at its worst. French influence at its best, by contrast, took the form of a thrust towards symbolic art. In February 1894 Yeats had made a trip to Paris, where he was taken to a performance of Villiers's Axël by Maud Gonne. His account of this event, published in the Bookman for April 1894, proclaimed the imminence of a new order of art of which Axël was but one manifestation. In a portentous style, the practitioners of naturalism and realism were dismissed, to make way for those writers who "have returned by the path of symbolism to imagination and poetry, the only things which are ever permanent" (UP I, 323). With characteristic abandon, Yeats announced his intention to throw in his lot with

> Those among the younger generation whose temperament fits them to receive first the new current, the new force, [and who] have grown tired of the photographing of life...(UP I, 322-323)

Both Maeterlinck and Villiers were cited as heralds of the new movement that was about to turn the literary world upside down.

The idea that literature is a divine revelation had been a firm conviction of Yeats's for many years. Now the writings of Villiers and of Maeterlinck reinforced his belief that "Art is a revelation, and not a criticism" (UP I, 377).

In 1897, Yeats contributed two important reviews of work by Maeterlinck to the Bookman. While the general tendency of the writers of his time was to contract the limits of their art, Yeats had been

continually widening his interests. His study of old legends and myths, of occult systems and of the work of William Blake had given him an increased awareness of the physical fact's potential for expressing and symbolising the supernatural. The doctrine of the moods had enabled him to extend his field of vision from Ireland to Europe and to encompass both the past and the present. Concurrently, he had become excited by the rumours, coming from France, of the new symbolist movement that had been gathering momentum over a number of years. In his review of the translation of Maeterlinck's book of essays, Le Trésor des humbles, he announced:

> We are in the midst of a great revolution of thought, which is touching literature and speculation alike...(UP II, 45)

This revolution, it seemed to him, was fundamentally

> ...an insurrection against everything which assumes that the external and material are the only fixed things, the only standards of reality. (UP II, 45)

Quite apart from literary considerations, Maeterlinck's importance stemmed from the leading part played by him in the new spiritualist movement.

But whilst Yeats had to acknowledge the important role of Maeterlinck and other French writers in the preparation for the new Golden Age in art, he hoped that the movement in its fully-fledged form would be an eminently Irish affair. In a long article on contemporary Irish poets, he wrote:

> It seems to a perhaps fanciful watcher of the skies

> like myself that this age of criticism is about to pass, and an age of imagination, of emotion, of moods, of revelation, about to come in its place; for certainly belief in a supersensual world is at hand again...(UP I, 376)

This general remark was followed by the hopeful comment,

> This revolution may be the opportunity of the Irish Celt, for he has an unexhausted and inexhaustible mythology to give him symbols and personages, and his nature has been profoundly emotional from the beginning. (UP I,377)

George Russell and Fiona Macleod were examples of what the Irish Celt and the Scottish Celt respectively could achieve by associating a "subtle rhythm, precision of phrase, an emotional relation to form and colour" (UP I, 380) with "ancient legend and mythology" (UP I,423). In addition, they focused on the internal world and its laws. Yeats had come to abjure the vagueness and extravagance of emotions "expressed under the influence of modern literature" (UP I,423). He believed that by projecting emotions on a background of legend or of myth, born "out of man's longing for the mysterious and the infinite" (UP I,423), they would acquire symbolic potency and universal relevance. To Yeats, symbols steeped in the living mythological and legendary traditions of the Celtic race were patently the most effective means of externalizing the life of the soul. In view of his lofty aspirations for the literature of his native country, the many signs of "the beginning of a franker trust in passion and in beauty than was possible to the poets who put their trust in the external world and its laws" (UP I,422) were omens of great felicity. He sought to "make our work a mirror, where the passions and desires and ideals of our own minds can cast terrible or

beautiful images" (UP I,422). Yeats was saying, in terms carrying distinctly Shelleyan overtones, that he wished to proceed from inward to outward, and that the ideal world of the spirit is reflected in a sensuous form in the work of imagination. This aesthetic quality had been realized in the writings of Maeterlinck, who epitomized "A movement which never mentions an external thing except to express a state of the soul" (UP II,52).

It is interesting to observe at this point that Yeats's evocations of Maeterlinck's art were strikingly similar to the terms in which the aims and achievements of the writers belonging to the pan-Celtic movement had been defined. This suggests that in addition to being a possible source of inspiration, Maeterlinck's writings supplied Yeats with a confirmation of what he had already sought before becoming acquainted with his work.

Before we can begin to chart the various ways in which Maeterlinck's theoretical and creative writings affected Yeats, we must establish a few points of reference. It is important to know when Yeats first heard about Maeterlinck, and when he read his books .

II Yeats and Maeterlinck : the first phase.

From the early 1890s onwards, prominent critics, in whose views Yeats was undoubtedly interested, devoted pieces of considerable length to Maeterlinck's work. William Archer's "A Pessimist Playwright", the

first perceptive full-length essay on Maeterlinck in England, appeared in the Fortnightly Review for September 1891. About the same time, Yeats would have heard about Maeterlinck from Symons, who started writing about him in 1892. Symons came to know Maeterlinck quite well, and in the years following 1894, he saw him on a regular basis. Yeats himself first mentioned Maeterlinck in writing in 1894 (UPI, 323), and it is evident from his observations that he was by then familiar with his work. He almost certainly read Maeterlinck in translation: his two reviews are based on translations of Le Trésor des humbles and of Aglavaine et Sélysette. There was in fact no need for him to try and work his way through the French texts, since the translations of Maeterlinck's writings were almost contemporaneous with their publication in the original language: The Princess Maleine and The Intruder, translated by G. Harry, published in 1892; Pelleas and Melisande and The Sightless, translated by L.A. Tadema, 1894; The Seven Princesses, translated by W. Metcalfe, 1909; Alladine and Palomides, Interior and The Death of Tintagiles, three "little plays for marionettes", translated by W. Archer and A. Sutro, 1899; Aglavaine and Selysette, translated by A. Sutro, 1897. In addition, The Treasure of the Humble, which Yeats read with great assiduity and which, for a time, became one of his 'golden books', came out in 1897. Another prized possession was a selection from Ruysbroeck, translated, edited and discussed by Maeterlinck - the only book by Maeterlinck which is still part of Yeats's library at his daughter Anne's house. However, contrary to what is commonly believed, it is not this work which provided him with the phrase "I must rejoice without ceasing, even though the world shudder at my joy" (UP I, 420). Maeterlinck had himself been directed to Ruysbroeck's work by this very quotation, encountered

on the title-page of A Rebours.[4] Where Yeats came across Ruysbroeck's ecstatic cry is a matter for some speculation. As early as 1884 discussions of this "Curious Book" [5] appeared in the English press, but the work itself was not translated until 1922. However, the first long article which Symons devoted to Huysmans, a survey of his career published in the Fortnightly Review for March 1892, carries the full French text of the motto.[6] It seems therefore likely that Symons's essay was the source of Yeats's frequently used quotation from Ruysbroeck.

Particularly at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, Yeats seemed to be constantly echoing Maeterlinck's views. The fact that Maeterlinck was not just any Symbolist but specifically a symbolist dramatist was not devoid of importance. Not only was Yeats's personality profoundly histrionic; the desire to be a playwright can be traced to late adolescence, when he started writing "poetry in imitation of Shelley and of Edmund Spenser, play after play ...".[7] At the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin, where he studied from May 1884 to July 1885, he met George Russell, with whom he began to compete in composing plays.[8] In 1889 he admitted to Katherine Tynan, "To me the dramatic is far the pleasantest poetic form".[9] His perpetual desire to be a dramatist led him to experiment ceaselessly with dramatic form, not for experiment's sake, but in order to realize his aesthetic vision. Before his literary encounter with Maeterlinck he had already been inveighing against melodrama and commending poetic drama. Dr. Todhunter's play A Sicilian Idyll, which had been performed in Bedford Park in 1889, was profusely praised on account of its unity of acting, scenery and verse, its solemnity, and

its reduction of action (New Island, 112-118). Similarly, Todhunter's The Poison Flower was extolled for being an alternative to the play of "commonplace sentiments uttered in words which have at the very best no merit but successful mimicry of the trivial and unbeautiful phraseology of the streets and the tea table" (New Island, 217). But more interesting than the lavish praise bestowed on Todhunter's plays and on poetic drama in general, is the revealing disavowal found at the centre of Yeats's eulogy: "If we had a poetic drama I should probably be more critical" (New Island, 220). This was said in July 1891, the year in which Yeats almost certainly heard of Maeterlinck and shortly before he started reading him. Even at so early a stage, Yeats realized that he was praising Todhunter's plays not so much for what they were, as for what they were not: they were laudable because they were not in the naturalistic or in the commercial tradition, but their intrinsic merit was not great. Years later, when asked to write a preface to the Letters to the New Island, Yeats was thrilled to find that he "had in later life worked out with the excitement of discovery things known in [his] youth as though one forgot and rediscovered oneself" (Preface, New Island, VII). Yeats's conception of an ideal drama underwent certain changes in the course of his life. But the tenets of his dramatic theory that were most dominant were also most constant. For instance, he never ceased opposing the inroads made on the theatre made by commercial plays, the "common drama of murder and sentiment" (New Island, 112). He saw the commercial theatre as the bastion of "that movement towards externality in life and thought and art" [10], and bitterly complained that "vulgarity and triviality have an almost perfect possession of the theatre" (UP II, 139), which was indeed an accurate description of the

state of the theatre in England. Ireland's predicament was hardly more enviable. The licensed theatres, principally the Theatre Royal, the Gaiety Theatre and the Queen's Theatre, depended almost entirely on English touring companies.[11] The fare consisted largely of musical comedies, farce and melodrama, with occasionally some Shakespeare thrown in. From time to time a famous performer such as Coquelin or Sarah Bernhardt would make a brief appearance. Irish work was largely confined to Boucicault and "patriotic melodramas ... turn[ed] out according to the Boucicault formula ... a mélange of thrills, laughter, pathos and patriotism".[12] The second problem facing the serious Irish artist was the general inability to draw a line between art and politics. Ireland was so opinion-ridden, so suspicious of writing not inspired by a didactic purpose, so partial to rhetoric and to "bog wisdom", that literary talent, if not always nipped in the bud, was unlikely to be allowed to develop in the normal way. As Yeats wrote in 1903,

> A community that is opinion-ridden, even when those opinions are in themselves noble, is likely to put its creative minds into some sort of a prison.[13]

Yeats's own experience in the theatre was to prove that in order to survive and to maintain artistic standards in Irish literary society a more than usually combative disposition was required.

During the years when Yeats was first reading Maeterlinck, he was interested in writing that could be seen as a form of revelation, the product of the artist's communion with the Eternal Memory through the imagination, and yearned for works of art that might bring about a new spiritual age. Maeterlinck's works accorded with his hopes; the most

common form of Irish literature, which was still marked by the aftermath of the Young Ireland movement, did not. Young Ireland literature was

> ...an exposition of certain opinions about which they were agreed and hoped to make others agreed, and of certain types of character which all men might be expected to admire, and not a capricious inspiration coming with an unforeseen message out of the dim places of the mind (UP II, 34).

Maeterlinck's plays, by contrast, brought a revelation of beauty, and were concerned with mystic truths, with "truths come out of a solitary and mysterious ideal" (UP II, 34), and dealt with the inner life. Maeterlinck's work revolved round "invisible and impalpable things" (UP II, 45) and approximated religious art. Like Yeats, Maeterlinck totally rejected rhetoric, didacticism and materialism. Most of his plays concentrated on the situation of man in the universe and the enigmatic relations of the visible and the invisible. In Maeterlinck's work Yeats found a drama of intuition, of feeling, of mystery, and of subjectivity. Moreover, Maeterlinck believed that "Il est certain que le domaine de l'âme s'étend chaque jour davantage" (Trésor, 29) and that "nous approchons d'une période spirituelle" (Trésor, 29).

After reading Le Trésor des humbles, Yeats embarked on a concerted effort to alert his countrymen to the new spiritualism of which signs could be discerned everywhere in Europe: the mission of art, he claimed

> ...is to bring us near to those powers and principalities, which we divine in mortal hopes and passions, although we cannot see them or feel them, and which M. Maeterlinck has told us in his beautiful "Treasure of the Lowly" are pressing in upon us to-day with a patient persistence, perhaps unknown since the founding of Christendom. (UP II, 45)

Yeats felt confident that imaginative writers all over the world had begun to recover "the ancient trust in passion and in beauty" (UP II, 42-43) and the "constant and tranquil belief in the divinity of imagination" (UP II, 42), and that these values were to foster a new drama. He sought to stimulate the creation of the Irish equivalent of Maeterlinck's "new drama of wisdom" (E&I, 199). Maeterlinck's plays constituted a desirable alternative not only to the commercial theatre but also to what Yeats called "the machine-shop of the realists" (E&I, 267). Yeats's review of Axël begins with a sharp indictment of the effects of the scientific movement in the field of the arts:

> The scientific movement which has swept away so many religious and philosophical misunderstandings of ancient truth has entered the English theatres in the shape of realism and Ibsenism, and is now busy playing ducks and drakes with the old theatrical conventions. (UP I, 322)

The philosophical assumptions underlying the materialistic and realistic conventions were utterly alien to Yeats. They were the product of the spirit of scientific enquiry, of rationalism and of materialism, all of which he had repudiated at an early age. Realistic art denied the claims of the unconscious, the validity of dreams and of intuition, and it asserted the supremacy of the cogitating mind. Yeats recoiled from the intrusion of mechanistic science into art. His often reiterated statement that art is art because it is not life, implies a complete rejection of the mode of composition aimed at a "tranche de vie" effect. The realistic writer incurs the opprobrium of exteriority and of superficiality. Realistic art resulted from the exclusive preoccupation with the objects of sense impression, with the contingent and the

accidental.

Yeats's denunciation of realism extended to Ibsen's work, except for the early verse dramas. There is no doubt that Yeats found Ibsen a source of considerable embarrassment. He could never bring himself to admire him wholeheartedly, but had to recognize that his drama was a reaction against the commercial theatre. In his Autobiographies he candidly admitted that

> As time passed Ibsen became in my eyes the chosen author of very clever young journalists, who, condemned to their treadmill of abstraction, hated music and style; and yet neither I nor my generation could escape him because, though we and he had not the same friends, we had the same enemies. (Aut., 279)

Maeterlinck did not feel the need to escape Ibsen. To him, Hilda and Solness from The Master Builder were

> ... les premiers héros qui se sentent vivre un instant dans l'atmosphère de l'âme, et cette vie essentielle qu'ils ont découverte en eux, par delà leur vie ordinaire, les épouvante. (Trésor, 177)

He also admired Rosmersholm, in which Yeats detected nothing more than "symbolism and a stale odour of spilt poetry" (Aut, 290). But what Maeterlinck found and Yeats failed to find in Ibsen, figured prominently - as Yeats was well aware - in Maeterlinck's plays. Yeats admired Maeterlinck for setting out to tap the unconscious levels of the mind which had been anathema to the realists and the symbolists. Moreover, Maeterlinck was finely attuned to the existence of an ideal world and restored the mystical sense to the prominent position from which it had

been excluded since the Romantic age. Most important of all, in Maeterlinck's hands the drama had once again become a sacred rite. In his theatre of mystery and suggestion, a new, intense effect of spiritual truth had been attained. Thus Maeterlinck's theory and practice accorded with the following theory promulgated by Yeats from the 1890s onwards:

> The more a poet rids his verses of heterogeneous knowledge and irrelevant analysis, and purifies his mind with elaborate art, the more does the little ritual of his verse resemble the great ritual of Nature, and become mysterious and inscrutable. He becomes, as all the great mystics have believed, a vessel of the creative power of God ...(E&I, 201-202)

To Yeats, the serious artist belonged to "the priesthood of an almost forgotten faith" (E&I, 203). He emphasized that in the work of Maeterlinck "what seems literature becomes religion" (E&I, 267). As such it was a perfect antidote to the vulgarisation and the secularisation of drama brought about by the materialists and the realists.

III. Yeats's Theory of Drama

There is an essential continuity in Yeats's pronouncements on the nature of the drama he wished to see produced in Ireland. Both before and after the inception of his work for the Irish Literary Theatre, he advocated a return to a mystical form of art. He wanted a poetic drama, not necessarily a drama in verse, but certainly a drama in an elevated language, a drama of the soul written out of a keen awareness of "the overshadowing mysteries of life" (UP I, 233). He would have liked to see an Irish equivalent of Villiers's Axël, a play "in which all the

characters are symbols and all the events allegories" (UP I, 323). Villiers's personages were "metaphors in that divine argument which is carried on from age to age, and perhaps from world to world, about the ultimate truths of existence" (UP I, 325).For many years to come, Yeats's theory of art was marked by its strong emphasis on the soul: "Literature ... does not deal with problems of the hour, but with problems of the soul" (UP II, 264), he declared. And more specifically, drama "describes the adventures of men's souls among the thoughts that are most interesting to the dramatist" (UP II, 298); the proper subject of the drama is "the hidden life of the soul" (UP II, 301). Maeterlinck too thought that what mattered in a play was the sense of submission of a soul to the all-pervasive mystery of the universe, to its metaphysical reality. As Yeats acknowledged in his review of Aglavaine et Sélysette, Maeterlinck's drama was essentially a soul-drama: his characters had been pared of all externalities, of arbitrary conditions, of the contingent.

These statements would lead one to expect that Yeats had the greatest admiration for Maeterlinck's early work. And it is certainly the case that he welcomed Maeterlinck's plays as evidence that the movement against externality was gaining momentum. But he also drew attention to what he described as "the serious fault of his best plays, even of Les Aveugles and L'Intruse" (UP II, 53), namely the fact that

> ... they have not the crowning glory of great plays, that continual revery [sic] about destiny that is , as it were, the perfect raiment of beautiful emotions.(UP II, 53)

This criticism, frequently quoted as a way of dismissing the subject of

Yeats's indebtedness to Maeterlinck's drama, is not as straightforward as it looks. In the first place, it seems to be contradicted by a much later statement to the effect that Maeterlinck had developed an original method for "obtain [ing] time for reverie" (E&I, 333) and for giving "direct expression to reverie, to the speech of the soul with itself" (E&I, 333).

Yeats's fullest discussion of the meaning of the concept reverie was not published until 1910. This article, "The Tragic Theatre" [14] contains an unmistakable link with Maeterlinck in that its celebrated definition of tragedy was inspired by a comment in Le Trésor des humbles. In "The Tragic Theatre", Yeats summed up ideas which had been developing since the late 1890s. The article's key concepts are: character as opposed to personality; reverie; tragic ecstasy. Character is used as a criterion to distinguish between tragedy and comedy. It refers to individual characteristics, to idiosyncracies; it is dictated by the accidents of a man's life and hence does not relate to his essential being. Consequently,

> To express character, which has a great deal of circumstance, of habit, you require a real environment; some one place, some one moment of time...(UP II, 398)

Personality, by contrast, concerns the core of a human being, his essential self, which transcends accidental circumstances. All human beings are linked by the fact that they experience passions, "one person being jealous, another full of love or remorse or pride or anger" (UP II, 386). The universal passions as they find expression in man constitute the subject-matter of tragedy. Tragedy is not concerned with

what is socially or historically determined but with what pertains to the universal human condition.

Comedy, by contrast, is founded on the concept of character, in other words, on the conflict between idiosyncracies as embodied in several personages. Thus action is engendered. Action, according to Yeats, is wholly involved with character, it does not bring the personality into play. In his Autobiographies he explained that tragedy relates to the soul and

> The soul knows its changes of state alone, and I think the motives of tragedy are not related to action but to changes of state. (Aut, 471)

Passions and motives, which appertain to the personality, unite men; character divides them. Hence, Yeats could define tragedy as "a drowning and breaking of the dykes that separate man from man" (UP II, 386). Comedy, by contrast, "keeps house" (UP II, 386) on these dykes.

The image of the dykes derived from Maeterlinck, who used it twice in Le Trésor des humbles. It made its first appearance in the definition of "active silence", the vehicle and necessary condition of the communion between "souls". Maeterlinck described the consequences of the operation of active silence in the following terms:

> Deux âmes vont s'atteindre,les parois vont céder,
> des digues vont se rompre... (Trésor, 13)

But the passage which Yeats appears to have remembered is the following

comment on the tragedies of Racine:

> Les personnages de Racine ne se comprennent que par ce qu'ils expriment; et pas un mot ne perce les digues de la mer. (Trésor, 32-33)

Maeterlinck's words, while manifestly underlying the terms of Yeats's definition of tragedy as "a drowning and breaking of the dykes that separate man from man" (UP II, 386), appear at first sight to indicate a fundamental opposition in views. It is certainly the case that Maeterlinck did not share Yeats's admiration for Racine. Maeterlinck's opinion of Racine is epitomized in the following rhetorical question:

> ...si Racine est le poete infaillible du coeur de la femme, qui oserait nous dire qu'il aît jamais fait un pas vers son âme? (Trésor, 32)

Maeterlinck perceived Racine as the dramatist of externality. As he saw it, Racine's characters "ne peuvent pas se taire, ou ils ne seraient plus. Ils n'ont pas de principe invisible" (Trésor, 33). On the other hand he shared Yeats's view of tragedy as soul drama.

One would imagine that Yeats's susceptibility to personality as opposed to character constituted common 'ground with Maeterlinck. Maeterlinck too sought to purge his personages of accidental

characteristics. He was not interested in the socially or historically determined individual but in universal man. As Yeats pointed out in his review of Aglavaine et Sélysette, the usual information pertaining to the characters' worldly status is completely omitted:

> We do not know in what country they were born, or in what period they were born, or how old they are, or what they look like, and we do not always know whether they are brother and sister, or lover and lover, or husband and wife. (UP II, 52)

Maeterlinck exhibits, as Yeats pointed out, "souls [that] are naked" (UP II, 52). His plays, far from being a mere chronicle of circumstance, portray characters in the grip of the forces of destiny. The anecdotal and the individual are reduced to the bare minimum and many of the plays use a legendary framework to achieve the necessary distance and generalization.

But if Yeats agreed that Maeterlinck's plays were untainted by character, he still accused them of lacking reverie. Neither in his review of Aglavaine et Sélysette nor in the letter of April 1895 to Olivia Shakespear which restates this charge (Letters, 255) does Yeats explain what he means by reverie. In "The Tragic Theatre", on the other hand, the term is much worked around and brought to a sharp focus. The starting-point of his meditation is the recollection of Deirdre's cry of the heart, "Is it not a hard thing that we should miss the safety of the grave and we trampling its edge?" (UP II, 385). These words mark the "outset of a reverie of passion that mounts and mounts till grief itself has carried her beyond grief into pure contemplation" (UP II, 385). Clearly, reverie is not in any way a form of escapism; it has nothing to

do with fancy. It is the passionate contemplation by an individual of his intensely personal suffering, which paradoxically enables him to surmount the strictly private and eventually attain to the apprehension and understanding of the eternal problems of the human condition.

But even more important to Yeats was the fact that reverie cannot be defined with reference to the scenic action only. For the real test is not merely whether "the player ... [can] ascend ... into that tragic ecstasy which is the best that art ... perhaps that life ... can give" (UP II, 385), but whether the audience is drawn into this process. In the case of the performance of Russell's Deirdre, Yeats clearly thought the play's affective power a triumphant achievement, as is conveyed by the repetition of "we too" in

> ... we too were carried beyond time and persons to where passion living through its thousand purgatorial years, as in the wink of an eye, becomes wisdom; and it was as though we too had touched and felt and seen a disembodied thing. (UP II, 385)

Actor and audience must be united in a transfiguring and individuality-erasing experience; an underlay of thought and feeling binds the stage and the auditorium together, if only for a brief moment of passionate and high-pitched intensity. It is over this issue that Yeats's reservations about Maeterlinck's art arose.

The importance attached by Maeterlinck and by other French Symbolists to the evocation of the unchanging destiny of "l'Homme" rather than of the particular situation of an individual, is likely to

have been a confirmatory, if not a nourishing, source of Yeats's views. But it appears that Yeats entertained grave doubts about the affective power of Maeterlinck's plays. His comments about Maeterlinck's personages, admittedly made before he saw how the plays worked in the theatre, epitomize his views. Maeterlinck's characters, Yeats states again and over again, have no passion, no intensity; they neither reflect nor rebel, they can "but tremble and lament" (UP II, 52). The characters most unreservedly admired by Yeats were those of Shakespeare, who,

> ...when the last darkness has gathered about them, speak out of an ecstasy that is one-half the self-surrender of sorrow, and one-half the last playing and mockery of the victorious sword before the defeated world. (E&I, 254)

In Maeterlinck's plays, by contrast, the characters do not attempt to transcend their circumstances: they passively submit to the mysterious forces that are pressing in on them. Consequently, they appear to be sapped of vitality and substantiality. In the face of death, they are frozen into whimpering inaction and incapable of raising the "heroic cry in the midst of despair". (Letters, 837) With them, pain is not converted through contemplation into something something beyond itself, the assertion that "life is greater than the cause" (E&I, 260). They cannot surrender their fear and pain, except in death, which is an unheroic and passive death. Because the plays contain no struggle, the characters experience no gaiety, only dread. Maeterlinck's dramatic universe is bleak and sad, with few redeeming gestures of faith. It seems to belong to a totally different world of thought and feeling from that which brought forth Ruysbroeck's cry "I must rejoice, I must

rejoice without ceasing, even if the world shudder at my joy" (UP II, 464). Maeterlinck's characters

> ... go hither and thither by well-sides, and by crumbling towers, and among woods, that are repeated again and again, and are as unemphatic as a faded tapestry... (UP II, 52)

Maleine, Mélisande, Sélysette, Pelléas are hardly more than "shadows and cries" (UP II, 53). They are mere puppets and, like Ibsen's protagonists, elicited from Yeats the comment that they

> ... moved here and there in the middle of that great abyss. Why did they not speak out with louder voices or move with freer gestures? What was it that weighed upon their souls perpetually? Certainly they were all in prison, and yet there was no prison. (Expl. 169)

They cannot generate the energy to set us, the audience, "to reverie, by alluring us almost to the intensity of trance" (UP II, 389). Yeats added,

> It was only by watching my own plays upon the stage that I came to understand that this reverie, this twilight between sleep and waking, this bout of fencing, alike on the stage and in the mind, between man and phantoms, this perilous path as on the edge of a sword, is the condition of tragic pleasure ...(UP II, 389)

The following year he wrote down further reflections on the subject of tragedy, this time substituting "ecstasy" for "reverie". The term ecstasy was fed into a number of the formulations previously used in "The Tragic Theatre". Tragedy, Yeats argued, is created out of the soul, "which is alike in all men" (Aut., 471). It has ecstasy "which is from the contemplation of things vaster than the individual and imperfectly seen, perhaps, by all those that still live" (Aut., 471). He tentatively

defined ecstasy as "some fulfilment of the soul in itself, some slow or sudden expansion of it like an overflowing well" (Aut, 471).

Yeats's continuing and growing emphasis on ecstasy, or, as he said in a letter to his father, the "impersonal" joy (Letters, 586-587) which he saw as the end of tragic art, points forward to his later dramatic development. His formal experiments were dictated by the desire to take the play to the top note of intensity, the moment of overwhelming passion at which the audience identifies with the fate of all men. Since Yeats did not think Maeterlinck's plays equal to this purpose, he cast, as time went by, a colder and colder eye on Maeterlinck's achievement.

But the waning of Yeats's enthusiasm about Maeterlinck's drama began as early as the turn of the century, and was intimately tied up with the reasons for his gradual disenchantment with The Shadowy Waters, published in its "poetic version" in 1900. This play was undoubtedly Yeats's most extended experiment of "Symbolisme".

IV. The Shadowy Waters and Maeterlinck

Yeats was alternately attracted to and repelled by the Maeterlinckian conception of drama. If he had not at times felt attracted to a theatre of disembodied figures, a mystical and ethereal drama, he would not have spent as much effort as he did on a number of versions of The Shadowy Waters, each with its own degree of insubstantiality. This play exhibits a number of striking parallels with the works of Maeterlinck and Villiers.

Maeterlinck attended the only performance to be given of a production by Florence Farr of the poetic version of the play in London on 8 July 1905.[15] It was produced as part of an international Theosophical congress. Maeterlinck appears to have left no account of this performance, on which he would have been well placed to comment.

The Shadowy Waters occupied a special place in Yeats's life, as is indicated by the level of correspondence about it and by the many revisions, spread over several decades, devoted to it. A time-span of more than fifteen years separates the conception of the play from the publication of its first version. Now that the various drafts have become readily available, it is possible to appreciate the many changes to which Yeats's raw material was subjected before being submitted to public scrutiny. All the manuscript versions are well removed from the three distict versions that went into print, namely the dramatic poem of 1900, the poetic version of 1906 and the so-called acting version of 1907.

A comparison of the manuscript with the printed versions shows that Yeats's absorption in Irish myth and folklore in the late 1880s and early 1890s, which from the early 'nineties onwards became allied to his growing interest in the occult, is evident in the versions predating 1896 and sustained in all the manuscript versions. In the published versions, by contrast, the Irish and occult symbols were pruned and to a certain extent they gave way to symbolism that was less specifically Irish. Of the Firbolgs, Fomorians, Milesians, Danaans, who peopled the

worlds of the manuscript versions and would have been unfamiliar to all but a few initiated readers, only the merest vestiges remain. With the removal of the fantastic eagle-headed Fomors, and the corresponding reduction in violence in the play, Yeats brought The Shadowy Waters into closer accord with Maeterlinck's early work. The poetic version of 1900[16] is, as I hope to demonstrate, much closer to a Maeterlinck play than any of the other versions.

Its first stage direction already establishes the need to interpret the play in symbolic terms: on a mist-shrouded sea a galley can be seen, its large sail decorated with three rows of hounds, the first dark, the second red and the third white with red ears. Richard Ellmann has argued that they "signify, in terms of the play, Forgael's death-wish, Dectora's life-wish, and their fusion in 'some mysterious transformation of the flesh'".[17]

The sailors' first speech reinforces the impression that this is no ordinary ship, and that its crew is no ordinary crew: all ties with ordinary life appear to have been severed, and the sailors, though on the verge of mutiny, accept the reality of Forgael's magical powers and take the interlocking of the natural and the occult worlds for granted. They believe in magic harps and are hardly perturbed by the sight of "something that was bearded like a goat" (l.11) walking on the waters. Nonetheless, their aspirations for the future are manifestly more mundane than Forgael's. They wish to return to the world of man and are unequivocally committed to life. Forgael, by contrast, is animated by a vision of an ideal and supernatural existence. This opposition is taken

up again and elaborated in the exchange of views between Aibric and Forgael, the former intent on love as experienced by ordinary human beings, who have never loved "otherwise/Than in brief longing and deceiving hope/And bodily tenderness" (11. 64-66), the latter aspiring to the

> ... love that the gods give,
> When Aengus and his Edaine wake from sleep
> And gaze on one another through our eyes,
> And turn brief longing and deceiving hope
> And bodily tenderness to the soft fire
> That shall burn time when times have ebbed away.
> (11. 56-61)

Forgael's search for a love that partakes of the eternal and that constitutes a permanent resolution of all contraries, is to Aibric nothing but a recipe for disaster:

> ... he who longs
> For happier love but finds unhappiness,
> And falls among the dreams that drowsy gods
> Breathe on the burnished mirror of the world
> And then smooth out with ivory hands and sigh.
> (11. 66-70)

To him, Forgael's ambitions belong to the realm of the unrealisable and the illusory - they are both futile and dangerous. Aibric's speech testifies to the play's underlying assumption of the interference of the supernatural in the human sphere. The occult forces that direct man's actions can delegate supernatural powers to him but they are equally capable of impelling him towards destruction. Aibric's warnings are to no avail, however. Forgael's belief that he is fated to a more-than-human love remains unshaken and prepares us for the appearance of Dectora. Her ship is described as looming up in the fog. It is promptly captured by Forgael's sailors; all the men on Queen Dectora's

ship are killed and she is brought before Forgael. His first reaction is largely dismissive:

> She seems both young and shapely;
> Give her to Aibric, if he will. I wait
> For an immortal woman, as I think. (11.171-173)

But an instant later, he goes closer to her, gazing intently and silently at her face. It is during this moment of silence that he realises that his fate has been sealed. He motions the sailors to go away and, in a voice charged with barely controlled emotion, declares:

> All comes to an end.
> The harvest's in; the granary doors are shut;
> (11. 176-177)

His subsequent words develop the idea that destiny has done its work; the resolution of all antimonies has been accomplished:

> The topmost blossom on the boughs of Time
> Has blossommed, and I grow as old as Time.
> For I have all his garden wisdom. (11.178-180)

He also expatiates on the inevitability of their meeting: the gods, he explains to Dectora,

> ... have lured you hither
> And lured me hither, that you might be my love.
> Aengus looks on you when I look: he awaits
> Till his Edaine, no longer a golden fly
> Among the winds, looks under your pale eyelids.
> (11.207-211)

But it takes some persuading before Dectora falls in with Forgael's theory that they embody the spirit of Edaine and Aengus, the divine lovers. For a while she persists in trying to talk the sailors into killing Forgael and into taking her home. The matter is clinched,

however, when Forgael picks up his magic harp and throws "a druid dream upon the air" (1.237). The sailors drop their swords and retire to the other ship. Dectora falls into a trance and when she emerges from it, she has forgotten all that happened to her. She expresses herself in a language heavily charged with symbolic meaning:

> ... the red hound is fled.
> Why did you say that I have followed him
> For these nine years? O arrow upon arrow!
> My eyes are troubled by the silver arrows;
> Ah, they have pierced his heart! (11.266-270)

Forgael's idealizing love has affected her and has supplanted all other attachments. The apple blossoms which she imagines seeing on the water, signalize a new beginning and a transfiguration; they are, according to Yeats's gloss, "symbols of dawn and of air and of the earth and of resurrection".[18] Dectora accepts Forgael as her predestined lover. But she still has to embrace unreservedly his commitment to what Yeats described as "the death-desiring destiny",[19] an absolute state beyond life. At first, she is reluctant to surrender the life impulse: the only certain thing, she argues, is "this poor body that reddens and grows pale" (1.341). She recoils from Forgael's vision of eternal wandering "Among the winds and waters" (1.331) or of the journey towards "the streams where the world ends" (1.334). She counters his dream with the words: "All dies among those streams" (335). Her position is summed up as follows:

> ... Love was not made for darkness and the winds
> That blow when heaven and earth are withering,
> For love is kind and happy. O come with me!
> Look on this body and this heavy hair;
> A stream has told me they are beautiful.
> The gods hate happiness, and weave their nets
> Out of their hatred. (11.394-400)

She fails to understand why his love exacts the immolation of the self, why it demands the annihilation of that on which it feeds.

These opposing views serve the purpose of characterizing the complementary personalities of Forgael and Dectora. At the same time, they highlight the importance of their consciously choosing what they have already recognized as Fate - as Yeats would say, choice and chance must become one. Forgael and Dectora have fallen into the nets which the Gods have woven for them - that much they both realize. But Dectora still proposes to attempt an escape from these nets:

> Beloved,
> We will go call these sailors, and escape
> The nets the gods have woven and our own hearts,
> And, hurrying homeward, fall upon some land
> And rule together under a canopy. (11.381-385)

It is not until she announces "I will follow you / Living or dying" (11.412-413) and, suiting the action to the words, cuts the rope that links the two ships, that she has chosen her own destiny and that Forgael has concurrently achieved his quest. Her final ecstatic speech, which consists of a concatenation of symbols, highlights their rejection of the world of man:

> Bend lower, O king
> O flower of the branch, O bird among the leaves,
> O silver fish that my two hands have taken
> Out of a running stream, O morning star
> Trembling in the blue heavens like a white fawn

> Upon the misty border of the wood, -
> Bend lower, that I may cover you with my hair,
> For we will gaze upon this world no longer.
> (11.423-430)

There are a number of significant differences between the 1906 and 1907 versions, which show great similarity, and the version of 1900. The symbolical machinery of the later versions is slightly less intricate; the roles of the sailors and especially of Aibric acquire greater prominence. The characters in the 1906 and 1907 versions of The Shadowy Waters appear to be situated on two mutually exclusive planes of existence: the unworldly Dectora and Forgael, who speak in a hieratic and dreamy manner and whose movements are slow and deliberate, strongly contrast with Aibric and the sailors, intent on booty and a comfortable life ashore, whose language is grounded in everyday existence and at times assumes a pronounced coarseness and crudeness. Two levels of consciousness are entangled with each other, and they pull in opposite directions. This conflict is especially clear in the acting version, in which the sailors are made to speak in Kiltarnese prose, whereas the other characters express themselves in verse. Yeats's revisions after 1900 aimed at "making the groundwork simple and intelligible" (Letters, 453) and at "getting rid of needless symbols, making the people answer one another." (Letters, 453). In 1905 he wrote to John Quinn:

> I have altogether re-written my Shadowy Waters. There is hardly a page of the old. The very temper of the thing is different. It is full of homely phrases and of the idiom of daily speech. I have

> made the sailors rough, as sailors should be, characterized all the people more or less, and yet not lost any of my lyrical moments. (Letters, 462)

Yeats attempted the impossible in the acting version; he wanted his sailors to enact colloquial speech, but at the same time he wanted them to express alternately crude and poetic ideas. The result of these contradictory intentions is, not surprisingly, unsatisfactory. The realistic touch provided by certain of the sailors' speeches undermines the unity of expression and violently clashes with the arcane nature of the symbolism and with the tenor of the plot. The humorous note that enters into the 1906 and 1907 versions undercuts the play's idealism and renders it altogether less convincing. Bringing in a naturalistic dimension created an effect of disharmony: it made one question the validity of Forgael's and Dectora's vision, whereas the very remoteness of the 1900 version forced the reader into accepting the play on its own terms.

The versions of 1906 and 1907 - and especially the former - exhibit a number of close verbal correspondences with Axël. Many of these have been charted by Goldgar in an article of 1953.[20] There can be no doubt about the influence of Axël on these revisions - Dectora's attempt to kill Forgael before falling passionately in love with him, the riches contained in her galley, her initial reluctance to give up a comfortable existence, her subsequent decision to relinquish the world, Forgael's dabbling in magic, their joint decision that living is for the lower orders (the sailors), not for themselves, and the very terms of Dectora's final speech - all these recall Villiers's play. The poetic

version of 1900, on the other hand, whilst containing some of these features, appears to be much closer to Maeterlinck's work than to that of Villiers. It shares the atmospheric delicacy of Maeterlinck's early plays and it has their somnambulistic, metaphysical and mystical qualities. More significantly, in the earlier version Yeats strictly adheres to the idea of the inner drama, the drama of the soul.

In 1904 Yeats made the following comment on the play:

> ... I would not now do anything so remote, so impersonal. The whole picture as it were moves together - sky and sea and cloud are as it were actors. It is almost religious, it is more a ritual than a human story. It is deliberately without human characters. (Letters, 423)

To Russell he had said that he was "getting the whole story of the relation of man and woman in symbol" (Letters, 324). External elements have been rigorously excluded: the personages are presented in terms of personality, not in terms of character. In common with Maeterlinck's plays, The Shadowy Waters sets out to show us the essence of man, which can only emerge when he is taken out of a temporal context. By situating the action somewhere on a sea, and by leaving out precise time indications, Yeats liberates his protagonists from the contingent and from the demands of a material existence. Dectora and Forgael share the Maeterlinckian character's freedom from external trappings. In the later versions, however, the temporal world encroaches on the ideality of the play: cart-horses, riding to hurley, the life in cottages and in the hills provide a naturalistic dimension and conflict with Forgael's and

Dectora's love, which has an other-worldly flavour. The Shadowy Waters, like Maeterlinck's plays, centres not on the world of man but on the mystery of the universe and on the ultimate truths. A very Maeterlinckian sense of the "au-delà" pervades the text of 1900 from first to last. There is a persistent impression that the events are taking place on the frontiers of consciousness. In The Shadowy Waters we become aware of what Maeterlinck described as " le chant mystérieux de l'infini, le silence menaçant des âmes ou des Dieux, l'eternité qui gronde à l'horizon, la destinée ou la fatalité qu'on aperçoit intérieurement sans que l'on puisse dire à quels signes on la reconnaît" (Trésor, 162). Since there is no character in this poetic version, there is next to no external action either. The play has the immobility of Maeterlinck's most static drama , and far exceeds Villiers's Axël in this respect. Like Maeterlinck's plays in a legendary setting, The Shadowy Waters centres on a recognition scene: Forgael and Dectora must recognize each other as the predestined beloved. The only physical action - the capture of Dectora's ship - takes place off stage. In the later versions there is much more verbalization of the concept of Destiny. But precisely because the 1900 text exhibits a far greater passivity and dreaminess, its sense of ineluctability and of fate is much stronger. In this version, Dectora and Forgael have a ghostliness and an ethereality that are more pronounced than in the revisions of 1906 and 1907. The ritualistic and the quasi-religious elements are also much more distinct. This version goes back to a time when Yeats firmly believed that poetic drama should be as far as possible removed from the "play of common realities" (Letters, 280), and that this could be achieved by insisting on a non-naturalistic setting, stylized acting,

poetical speech, and a plot hinging on a mystical apprehension of life. He rejected the kind of play that dealt "merely [with] human tragedy" (Letters, 280). Because in the 1900 text there is unity of impression, the language being perfectly integrated with the symbolism and the subject, it engenders, as I think, a far more poetical effect than the later revisions.

Yeats's continuing dissatisfaction with the play is itself an indication of his intense preoccupation with problems of dramaturgy at the end of the nineteenth century and during the first decade of the twentieth century. Commenting on the 1900 version, he wrote to Arthur Symons in September 1905:

> I am getting ready the one volume edition of all my poems since '95 ... You will hardly recognize not only The Shadowy Waters but ... Baile's Strand and a good deal of The King's Threshold. They have all been rewritten after rehearsal ... one thing I am now quite sure of is that all the finest poetry comes logically out of the fundamental action, and that the error of late periods like this is to believe that some things are inherently poetical, and to try and pull them on to the scene at every moment. It is just these seemingly inherently poetical things that wear out. My Shadowy Waters was full of them, and the fundamental thinking was nothing, and that gave the whole poem an impression of weakness. There was no internal life pressing for expression through the characters. (Letters, 460)

The last sentence is an apt evocation of Forgael and Dectora, and one that connects them with Pelléas and Mélisande and with other Maeterlinckian heroes: there was indeed no sense of a strong inner conflict in the version of 1900, and the characters had the puppet-like

quality typical of Maeterlinck's personages. Just as in Maeterlinck's plays Death or Destiny is the real protagonist, so in The Shadowy Waters we are constantly aware that it is the occult forces dictating Forgael's and Dectora's behaviour that stand at the dramatic centre and that are in control of the characters.

Yeats's remarks in the letter to Symons also indicate the direction of his thought: he was moving towards a more active conception of plot and towards the dramatic use of conflict.

V Yeats and Maeterlinck's Theory of Drama

Before his repudiation of The Shadowy Waters Yeats had argued that poetry and literature generally should dispense with "those energetic rhythms, as of a man running, which are the invention of the will" (E&I, 163). This general slowing down would, so he thought, result in "wavering, meditative, organic rhythms" (E&I, 163), in a literature not only spiritual and ideal but also unemphatic, "too delicate for any but an almost bodiless emotion" (E&I, 191). The desired effect was, at that time, one of "faint colours and faint outlines and faint energies" (E&I, 191). In practical terms, the stylistic principles Yeats adhered to in the 1890s engendered the ethereality and lyricism of The Shadowy Waters, a play which risked being spiritualized out of existence. Yeats's work for the Irish Literary Theatre led him to believe that the 'nineties aesthetic outlook had made his art impersonal. He came to the conclusion that there were two forms of literature, "upward into ever-growing subtlety, with Verhaeren, with Mallarmé, with Maeterlinck, until at last, it may

be, a new agreement among refined and studious men gives birth to a new passion, and what seems literature becomes religion" (E&I, 266-267); or, alternatively, "downward, taking the soul with us until all is simplified and solidified again" (E&I, 267). Yeats, who in the 1890s had inclined towards disembodied and impersonal passion and beauty, moved, as a direct result of his work with an actual stage, towards a dramatic mode still rooted in mystery but no longer obsessed with "purif[ying] and subdu[ing] all passion into lyrical and meditative ecstasies" (E&I, 201). He did not repudiate his interest in the occult world but set out to work towards greater inclusiveness, believing as he now did that like Shakespeare's plays his drama should not only exemplify life pitched at an exceptional level but also include a perspective on the ordinary, everyday world. Now as before he refused to make concessions to the Paudeens of this world, but for the first time in his career, he was anxious to be seen to express the whole man:

> ... we should ascend out of common interests, the thoughts of the newspaper,of the market-place, of men of science, but only so far as we can carry the normal, passionate, reasoning self, the personality as a whole. (E&I, 272)

This aim, which he set out to achieve in the "plays of transition", effectively cut his imagination off from the Maeterlinckian mode. Maeterlinckian echoes persisted, but they were overshadowed by the often antithetical qualities of Yeats's new and increasingly individual style. For instance, On Baile's Strand is basically an exploration of two very Maeterlinckian themes: the encounter with destiny, seen as one of the few fundamental experiences of the human condition and entailing the recognition that tragedy is built into the fabric of man's life; and the apprehension, through suffering, of the relation between man and the

infinite. Yet although the subject of On Baile's Strand could be stated in Maeterlinckian terms, one's actual experience of this play is quite different from that of Maeterlinck's work. It is tempting to emphasize that to Cuchulain, the killing of his son is the catalyst in a process giving rise to the mental state in which the darkness is lifted and the universe can be momentarily glimpsed "dans l'ombre de la mort ou de l'eternité" (Trésor, 260); that, very much like L'Intruse and Intérieur, On Baile's Strand explores various modes of relating to the unknown; that the extreme form of willed patterning in Yeats's play parallels the intricate net of symbolical correspondences, verbal echoes and configurations of images of Maeterlinck's symbolist work; that its setting - an assembly-house near the sea - has Maeterlinckian overtones; and that in On Baile's Strand as in Maeterlinck's drama doors are perceived as the gateway between the occult and the material realms. But despite these similarities, On Baile's Strand, like virtually all of Yeats's plays written after The Shadowy Waters, is crucially divided from Maeterlinck's work by its tone and structure of feeling.

Yeats's theoretical writings about drama, on the other hand, continued to invoke Maeterlinck - no volume contains stronger echoes of "Le Tragique quotidien" than Discoveries, written in 1906. There is no real contradiction here. Whereas in the 1890s it was chiefly the mystical side of symbolist drama which had appealed to Yeats, from the turn of the century onwards the invigorating influence came from Maeterlinck's notes towards a symbolist dramaturgy. To appreciate the difference in outlook that had occurred in Yeats between these dates, all one has to do is compare his review of Le Trésor des humbles with

the section entitled Discoveries in The Cutting of an Agate. In 1897 Yeats warmly welcomed the appearance of Maeterlinck's volume of essays. But he concentrated on the book's speculative and mystical dimension to the exclusion of its contribution to dramatic theory. The essays he responded to had tell-tale titles such as "Le Réveil de l'âme" and "La Vie profonde". "Le Tragique quotidien" was neither mentioned nor drawn on in Yeats's review article.[21] His most serious criticism of this work - that it "lacks the definiteness of the great mystics" (UP II, 46) - also testifies to the rather narrow perspective from which he viewed and assessed it.

But by 1906 Yeats had outgrown his exclusive interest in Maeterlinck as a harbinger of the great spiritual revolution which he had believed to be imminent. Instead, it was "Le Tragique quotidien", the seminal essay in which Maeterlinck had outlined his vision of a new theatre, which started setting up reverberations in the reflections on drama which Yeats himself was writing down. Discoveries illustrates the extent to which he had absorbed the ideas and formulations of "Le Tragique quotidien", first encountered a decade earlier. In this essay Maeterlinck had set out to demonstrate that there is a form of tragedy which is "pas simplement matériel ou psychologique" (Trésor, 161). He argued that tragedy has nothing to do with the melodrama so popular in the modern theatre, and complained that too often, on going to the theatre,

> ... il me semble que je me retrouve quelques heures au milieu de mes ancêtres, qui avaient de l'existence une conception simple, sèche et brutale, que je ne me rappelle presque plus et à laquelle je ne puis plus prendre part. J'y vois un mari trompé

> qui tue sa femme, une femme qui empoisonne son amant, un fils qui venge son père, un père qui immole ses enfants...et tout le sublime traditionnel, mais, hélas! si superficiel et si matériel, du sang, des larmes extérieures et de la mort. (Trésor, pp. 166-167)

Yeats was in full agreement with Maeterlinck's views. The mode of dramatic writing rejected by Maeterlinck in this passage is the equivalent of what Yeats described as art that offers only a "superficial appeal to the nerves and to vulgar appetites" (UP II, 140). Maeterlinck's deep dissatisfaction with this form of drama prompted the following theory:

> Il m'est arrivé de croire qu'un vieillard assis dans son fauteuil, attendant simplement sous la lampe, écoutant sous sa conscience toutes les lois éternelles qui règnent autour de sa maison... il m'est arrivé de croire que ce vieillard immobile vivait en réalité, d'une vie plus profonde, plus humaine et plus générale que l'amant qui étrangle sa maîtresse, le capitaine qui remporte une victoire ou "l'époux qui venge son honneur". (Trésor, 169)

This statement links up with Maeterlinck's claim in "Le Silence" that "dès que nous avons vraiment quelque chose à nous dire, nous sommes obligés de nous taire " (Trésor, 11).

Yeats clearly recalls the image of Maeterlinck's motionless old man in "The Play of Modern Manners". He stated the problem confronting the writer of this kind of work in the following terms:

> ... the play about modern educated people ... cannot become impassioned, that is to say vital, without making somebody gushing and sentimental. Educated and well-bred people do not wear their hearts upon their sleeves, and they have no artistic and charming language except light persiflage and no powerful language at all, and when they are deeply moved they look silently into the fireplace. (E&I, 274)

He went on to say that:

> The happiest writers are those that ... keep to the surface, never showing anything but the arguments and the persiflage of daily observation, or now and then, instead of the expression of passion, a stage picture, a man holding a woman's hand or sitting with his head in his hands in dim light by the red glow of a fire. (E&I, 276)

In the section headed "The Subject-Matter of Drama", further correspondences can be found. Maeterlinck's drama sought to convey an apprehension of man's relation to the universe. Maeterlinck explained that he went to the theatre

> ... dans l'espoir de voir mes jours rattachés à leurs sources et à leurs mystères par des liens que je n'ai ni l'occasion ni la force d'apercevoir à tout instant. (Trésor, 167)

It was his declared aim to highlight the mysterious position of man in the universe in a mode of drama in which external action occupies a secondary and subservient position, and which he defended in the following terms:

> Je ne sais s'il est vrai qu'un théâtre statique soit impossible. Il me semble même qu'il existe. La plupart des tragédies d'Eschyle sont des tragédies immobiles. (Trésor, 169)

In his view, the eternal laws of life can only fully emerge in silence:

> ... ces lois lentes, discrètes et silencieuses, comme tout ce qui est doué d'une force irrésistible, ne s'aperçoivent et ne s'entendent que dans le demi-jour et le recueillement des heures tranquilles de la vie. (Trésor, 171)

Maeterlinck's ideas appear to be echoed in Yeats's observation that "The more religious the subject-matter of an art, the more will it be, as it

were, stationary" (E&I, 285). As he had said in a lecture in 1899:

> Nothing at all happened in many of the greatest of Greek plays, and it was Hamlet's soliloquies and not his duel that were of the chief importance in the play. (UP II, 156)

This last extract is very close to Maeterlinck's comment on Aeschylus, and the link with Maeterlinck becomes even more evident when we see it in conjunction with the following statement:

> J'admire Othello, mais il ne me paraît pas vivre de l'auguste vie quotidienne d'un Hamlet, qui a le temps de vivre parce qu'il n'agit pas. (Trésor, 168)

VI Scenic Innovations in the Idealist Theatre

The two most obvious channels through which Maeterlinck affected the course of literature were his plays and his prose writings. But the performances of his dramatic work, especially those by the French art theatres, extended his audience. The name most closely associated with the productions of Maeterlinck's plays is that of Lugné-Poe,[22] the founder of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. His celebrated rendering of Pelléas et Mélisande in 1893 has been described as "une date dans l'histoire du théâtre et plus particulièrement du décor".[23] This production caught the imagination of a great many British critics, engendering theoretical speculation about the methods of mise-en-scène and scene-painting required by symbolist drama. It confirmed and reinforced Yeats's interest in decorative scenery, in simplified production techniques and in the superiority of the poet. In addition,

it prepared Yeats and Symons for Gordon Craig's productions at the start of the twentieth century. Finally, the striking similarity between the vocabulary and images found in English and French speculations about the radical revision of stage-craft required for the realization of the symbolist aesthetic in the theatre, highlights the existence of a significant anti-illusionist tradition, cutting across strict boundaries in time and space.

In March 1895 the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre brought plays by Ibsen and Maeterlinck to London for a short season. In staging Pelléas et Mélisande, Lugné-Poe decided to keep the proscenium as bare as possible; he abolished the footlights, used a dark backcloth with an indefinite pattern and hung a gauze between the stage and the auditorium. The purpose of the curtain was to heighten the sense of unreality. In addition, Lugné-Poe prescribed a style of acting that was slow, stylized, deliberate, even hieratic, and a chanting declamation.

Contrary to what many critics and commentators have said, Yeats did not see this production. At the time, he was staying with relatives in Thornhill, Ireland.[24] But he manifestly received reports of it, as can be inferred from a letter he sent to Lady Gregory just before seeing l'Oeuvre's production of Monna Vanna, in a private performance sponsored by the Stage Society on 20 June 1902.[25] He explained that his eagerness to see Maeterlinck's play "done by his French company" (Letters, 375) had led him to postpone his planned return to Ireland, adding that he was "less anxious to see the play than to see the method of performance" (Letters, 375). The phrase "done by his French company"

indicates that Yeats was aware of the close link between the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre and Maeterlinck. In fact, Lugné-Poe's interpretation of Pelléas et Mélisande had been given wide coverage in the British press and had been attended by several of Yeats's close friends and associates, including Florence Farr and Shaw.[26] Shaw had argued in his regular column in the Saturday Review that this performance of Pelléas et Mélisande had "settled the artistic superiority of M.Lugné-Poe's company to the Comédie Francaise".[27] He warmly praised the French actors for their "vigilant artistic conscience in the diction, the stage action, and the stage picture, producing a true poetic atmosphere". [28]

Lugné-Poe's interpretation received renewed attention in the early summer of 1898, on the occasion of Forbes Robertson's production of Pelléas et Mélisande with Martin Harvey and Mrs Campbell in the title-roles. This rendering was widely criticised on account of its substitution of the trappings of "an ordinary romantic drama" [29] for the remoteness, the delicate mystery and the "softening of colour and of outline" [30] of Lugné-Poe's representation. J.T.Grein similarly complained that

> ...from beginning to end the actors - with the sole exception of Mr Martin Harvey - stood in direct opposition to the meaning and the rhythm of the work. They all acted as if this were an ordinary costume play peopled with characters of flesh and blood...[31]

He contrasted it with Lugné-Poe's rendering, in which "the illusion and enchantment were complete".[32] Clearly, Lugné-Poe's production had conveyed the crucial point that symbolist drama required non-naturalistic staging techniques. As such, it provided a much needed

corrective to the first English production of a play by Maeterlinck, namely Beerbohm Tree's performance of L'Intruse in 1892, which had prejudiced critical opinion against the stageworthiness of his work for some years.[33] Lugné-Poe's interpretation, on the other hand, appears to have been an important factor in establishing that what was at fault in that first unsatisfactory performance was the incompatibility between the symbolist mode of the text and the realistic style of the rendering.

In addition to its atmospheric delicacy, three aspects of Lugné-Poe's scenic representation were constantly discussed: the gauze curtain that had been stretched between the auditorium and the stage; the backcloth; and the unity of effect.

Comments on the effectiveness of the gauze as an atmospheric device figured in the reviews, both in 1895 and in subsequent years. As late as 1902 Frank Fay, who was not personally present at the performance, referred to it in a letter to Joseph Holloway. Fay's words prove that it is possible to be inspired by a production which one has not personally seen. Discussing his own production of George Russell's Deirdre, he asked,

> Had you the good luck in 1895 to see Lugné-Poe's "Théâtre de l'Oeuvre" when they played Pelléas et Mélisande at the Opéra Comique?...They had a gauze; indeed I think they gave us the idea.[34]

Beside the gauze, the feature of the production which elicited a good deal of comment was the backcloth. The reviewer of the Star

described it as "An 'impressionist' daub representing a forest",[35] and the Era tried to detract from the production's value by ridiculing it:

> ...what seemed to be a large diagram representing a coal or other mine, the seams of "metal" being depicted in dull buff on a dark ground. A reference to the book informed us that this was meant to indicate a forest.[36]

On the other hand, the opponents of the realist theatre hailed Lugné-Poe's backcloth as a break-through in non-representational techniques of staging. For instance, Yeats's friend John Todhunter, responded warmly to the simplicity of the acting and the austerity of the décor. He appears to have instantly grasped that this production constituted a landmark in the history of stage-craft. On several occasions, he remarked in writing and verbally, the latter at least once in Yeats's presence,[37] on the "severely conventionalized scenery" [38] and the use of "A backcloth represent[ing] a wood painted in a merely decorative manner".[39]

Exactly when accounts of Lugné-Poe's scenery came to Yeats's attention cannot be established. But by 1897 he knew enough about the activities of the Théâtre de L'Oeuvre to identify with its aims in his announcement of the foundation of the future Abbey Theatre in 1899. As he put it, he and his friends wished "to do for Irish dramatic literature...what the Théâtre Libre and the Théâtre l'Oeuvre [sic] have done for French dramatic literature" (UP II, 138).[40] The same year, he was able to particularize his vision of a new art of the stage by means of an implicit reference to Lugné-Poe's performance of Pelléas et Mélisande. As he explained to Fiona Macleod,

> My own theory of ...drama is that it should have no realistic, or elaborate, but only a symbolic and decorative setting. A forest, for instance, should be represented by a forest pattern and not by a forest painting. One should design a scene which would be an accompaniment not a reflection of the text. (Letters, 280)

It is difficult not to be reminded by Yeats's example of Lugné-Poe's rendering, which had used precisely this kind of backcloth for its outdoor scenes. Moreover, the same idea was restated several years later in an article in which Yeats invoked Craig's experiments to focus his argument. Commenting on the Irish National Theatre's production of Russell's Deirdre, he wrote:

> The scenery of a play as remote from life as Deirdre should, I think, be decorative rather than naturalistic. A wood, for instance, should be little more than a pattern made with painted boughs. (UP II, 292)

Several conclusions can be drawn from this reiteration of Yeats's plea for non-representational scenery, manifestly inspired by Lugné-Poe's practice with Maeterlinck. In the first place, it refutes the exaggerated claims for Craig's influence on Yeats's dramatic theory made by a number of critics. It seems clear that just as the practice of the French symbolist theatres had offered Yeats confirmation and encouragement, so Craig's productions of 1900 and 1901[41] reinforced existing views. In addition, the fact that Yeats had made what was fundamentally the same observation twice - first shortly after hearing of Lugné-Poe's artistic rendering of Pelléas et Mélisande and again after attending The Masque of Love and the revival of Dido and Aeneas - indicates his clear and swift apprehension of the kinship of purpose

between the French Symbolists and Craig. Finally, these two very similar statements are themselves suggestive of the closeness between Yeats's and Craig's dramaturgy and the theoretical speculations out of which l'Oeuvre's production of Pelléas et Mélisande grew. Yeats's and Craig's calls for the replacement of naturalistic by symbolic and decorative décor accorded with the theories put forward from the mid-1880s onwards by Mallarmé, Albert Mockel,[42] Pierre Quillard[43] and Camille Mauclair[44] (the apologists of the Théâtre d'Art and the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre respectively), and realized in Lugné-Poe's production.

Yeats's early intimation of the congruence between the French Symbolists and Craig was followed by Symons's unequivocal assertion of the connection in "A New Art of the Stage". In this article, part of which was composed after Craig's ideas had been further clarified in his theoretical writings, Symons praised him for taking the audience "beyond reality" by "replac[ing] the pattern of the thing itself by the pattern which that thing evokes in his mind, the symbol of the thing".[45] This anti-illusionist device resulted in "The eye [being] carried right through or beyond these horizons of canvas, and the imagination with it, instead of stopping entangled among real stalks and painted gables".[46] He went on to claim that Craig's success in overcoming the discrepancy between the material nature of the scenic representation and the imaginative world evoked by the words, eminently qualified him for the production of Maeterlinck's work:

> For the staging of Maeterlinck, especially for such a play as La Mort de Tintagiles, [Craig's] art, just as it is, would suffice. Here are plays which exist

> anywhere in space, which evade reality, which do all they can to become disembodied in the very moment in which they become visible. They have atmosphere without locality, and that is what Mr Craig can give us so easily.[47]

Yeats manifestly agreed with this perception of Craig's suitability as a producer of Maeterlinck's work, as can be inferred from a letter, dated 29 January 1903, which he received from Craig: "You want me to do a Maeterlinck play. Why Belgian when there is British?".[48]

"Atmosphere without locality" is what all the symbolist directors and dramatists, both French and English, had wanted to achieve. Whereas the realists were concerned with "une anecdote et un individu",[49] the Symbolists sought to evoke "l'histoire éternelle de l'Homme".[50] Consequently, the naturalist theatre required décor which was, or pretended to be, "a perfectly deceptive imitation" [51] of a particular "milieu" at a specific moment in time. For the symbolist venture in the theatre, by contrast, it was essential that the material aspect of the presentation should be devoid of "tout concret rappel, tout détail immédiat qui rendrait à chacun des auditeurs la notion de son individualité".[52] Rather, in the idealist theatre décor was used to suggest "l'infinie multiplicité du temps et du lieu" [53] and to secure the "complicité attentive" [54] of the audience. It is the symbolist conception of the play as a "prétexte au rêve" [55] - found from Mockel and Maeterlinck to Yeats and Symons[56] - which lay at the root of the enormous difficulties facing the anti-realistic stage-designer. For as Yeats's experience in the theatre was to show him, there is nothing more difficult to sustain than "the proud fragility of dreams" (UP II, 389).

Any jarring note, any disruption of the atmosphere,[57] is fatal to the symbolist endeavour. This peculiarity of the symbolist situation accounts for the general concern for the theatrical performance as a unified experience.

The symbolist concern for unity of expression - the harmony of colour, light, shapes, and movement - accounts for the remarkable frequency of analogies drawn from music and painting in symbolist theory. Thus Albert Mockel defined the scenic representation as a fusion of "art musique" and "art plastique".[58] Mauclair, one of the founders of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre and its chief theoretician, characterized the scenery of Pelléas et Mélisande as "une sorte d'accompagnement musical".[59] We have seen that as early as 1897 Yeats used the musical metaphor "a scene which would be an accompaniment...of the text" (Letters, 280). Symons, in turn, resorted to a musical analogy in his description of the art of the stage as "the art of pictorial beauty, of the correspondence in rhythm between the speakers, their words, and their surroundings".[60]

The general opposition to the inartistic effect of mimetic scenery had a number of practical consequences. It entailed the advocacy of décor that was simple,[61] decorative and symbolical. In addition, it brought about the rehabilitation of the spoken word, considered to be the prime evocative source of the art of the theatre. Thus Pierre Quillard declared that "la parole crée le décor comme le reste",[62] and Yeats never ceased stressing the importance of simplified scenery, which

must not "overwhelm ...the idealistic art of the poet" (UP II, 250).

Both before and after seeing Craig's productions, Yeats voiced his opposition to the predominance of the visual element in the staging of the play. In a letter written a year before Craig's appearance on the theatrical scene, he argued that "elaborate costumes and scenery silence the evocation completely, and substitute the cheap effects of a dressmaker for an imaginative glory" (Letters, 309). He firmly believed that the theatre "cannot come to its greatness again without recalling words to their ancient sovereignty" (E&I, 170).

This view was not altered by his artistic collaboration with Craig, and it is precisely over this issue that the two men were to part company. Yeats's strictures on elaborate scenery were in fact equally pertinent to Craig. If Yeats never tired of stressing the pre-eminence of the words, Craig was, by his own admission, strongly inclined to making the poetry secondary and subservient to movement and light. It did not take Yeats long to grasp this fact: as he pointed out to Lady Gregory in April 1903, "Craig's scenery is amazing but rather distracts one's thoughts from the words" (Letters, 398). Two years later he again implied that Craig was given to over-elaborate settings: as he said to Florence Farr about the décor for The Shadowy Waters, "You will I think prefer it to Craig. It is more noble and simple" (Letters, 456). He was even prepared to criticize Craig publicly. In Samhain for 1904 he wrote,

> Mr. Gordon Craig has done wonderful things with the lighting, but he is not greatly interested in the actor, and his streams of coloured direct light, beautiful as they are, will always seem, apart from certain exceptional moments, a new externality. (Expl., 179)

As early as 1902 Yeats himself accurately and succinctly summed up the role of Craig in his own development. Yeats's words make clear that the encounter with Craig had not been the beginning and the end of his interest in non-naturalistic modes of dramatic presentation. The significance of Craig's productions had been of a predominantly practical nature: as he explained to Frank Fay,

> Two years ago I was in the same state about scenery that I am now in about acting. I knew the right principles but I did not know the right practice because I had never seen it. I have now learnt a great deal from Gordon Craig. (Letters, 371)

It is important to realize that Yeats was not suggesting that the French art theatres had failed to achieve their ideals in production. His words must be interpreted in the most literal sense: he had never attended a representative performance by the symbolist companies - he was not in London in March 1895 when the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre brought Pelléas et Mélisande and L'Intruse over and the production by Lugné-Poe's actors which he attended was not of a symbolist play. Yet Yeats was undoubtedly eager to see Maeterlinck produced. The following year Yeats was finally able to attend the performance of a Maeterlinck play, namely Pelléas et Mélisande with Sarah Bernhardt and Mrs Campbell, which, as he explained to Lady Gregory, he went to see in the company of Florence Farr.[63] He was clearly impressed by the production, for when in January 1907 he was looking for a theatrical man to run the business side of the Abbey Theatre he wrote to Lady Gregory suggesting the name of Burchill, who had been Mrs Campbell's stagè manager for six years:

> I do hope Fay will decide soon or somebody decide

> for him, for the man must be got at once and there is no time to waste. Burchill sounds like a piece of luck as he must have the very best tradition there is, for the Maeterlinck play was a beautiful piece of quiet, stately arrangement, the best I have seen after the French Phaedre.[64]

The conclusion to be drawn from these minor but persistent references to Maeterlinck productions is that long after his own plays had ceased to be cast in a Maeterlinckian mould, and well after his encounter with Craig's art, Yeats continued to show a keen interest in the stage innovations associated with his work.

VII Yeats and Maeterlinck: the final phase.

When Yeats laid the theoretical foundations of the plays of his maturity in the programmatic essay "Certain Noble Plays of Japan" (1916), he was as much reacting against the majority of his efforts in the theatre in the past twenty-odd years as building on his own creative and critical work. The Irish Literary Theatre in particular had turned out to be a perennial source of conflict and exasperation. It is instructive to have a look at Samhain for 1901, in which Yeats discussed the theoretical and practical aims of the Irish Literary Theatre. Its original ideal had been to promote drama that could be described as "remote, spiritual and ideal" (E&I, 166). The company would produce works in Gaelic and English as well as translations of the masterpieces of the world. The reality was somewhat different, however. For commercial reasons they were forced to concentrate on plays evoking the Irish country life, which were most accessible to and therefore most popular with the majority of the theatre-going public. This entailed an

over-riding concern with the "objective" element and involved frequent concessions to the popular taste. By 1906 Yeats had become sick and tired of this state of affairs and urged the Irish National Theatre to broaden its interests to include a more spiritual kind of drama:

> We are now fairly satisfied with the representation of peasant life, and we can afford to give the greater part of our attention to other expressions of our art and of our life. (Expl., 222-223)

But it was not until 1919 that Yeats, in an open letter to Lady Gregory, expressed the full extent of his disenchantment with the achievements of the Irish National Theatre. He conceded that he had been sadly out in his reckoning. He had hoped that they

> ... could bring the old folk-life to Dublin, patriotic feeling to aid us, and with the folk-life all the life of the heart, understanding heart, according to Dante's definition, as the most interior being ... (Expl., 252-253)

Instead, it had become clear that "the modern world is more powerful than any propaganda or even any special circumstance" (Letters, 253). This state of affairs had resulted in a "Theatre of the head", (Letters, 253) and their success had been that they

> ... persuaded Dublin playgoers to think about their own trade or profession or class and their life within it, so long as the stage curtain is up, in relation to Ireland as a whole. For certain hours of an evening they have objective modern eyes. (Expl., 253)

At this the Irish Literary Theatre excelled. But its very success was to Yeats "a discouragement and a defeat" (Expl., 250), since it represented the exact opposite of what he had set out to create. At no

time had it been his intention to wholly surrender the view of art as a lamp for that of a mirror. What he ardently desired was a form of drama in which the sensuous and external were vehicles for the spiritual. Realizing the virtual impossibility of achieving this ideal within the context of the Irish Literary Theatre, and dejected by his own inability to successfully fuse objective and subjective, spiritual and naturalistic, Yeats resolved on a volte-face which in a sense took him back to where he had started: to an art truly mysterious and remote from ordinary life, beyond the everyday world, the expression of what he could find in the furthermost recesses of his own psyche; in short, an art which could be described as the theatre's anti-self. In the Noh drama he found a form eminently suited to his foremost strength, concentration. Most important of all, the Noh tradition suggested ways out of the 'nineties impasse. Far from placing undue stress on the intoning of self-consciously poetical dialogue, heavily overlaid with a symbolism that was excessively willed, abstruse and esoteric - as Yeats had done in The Shadowy Waters - the Noh availed itself of all the arts of the theatre to achieve a form of total drama of great intensity and compactness. The consummate integration of masks, songs, music, dance, poetry and scenery precluded the stasis flawing so many of the "Symboliste" exercises without sacrificing their ceremonious, ritualistic and incantatory effect . In addition to accommodating Yeats's main strength, concentration, the Noh form enabled him to draw on Celtic myth. Only marginally interested in Irish legendary material for its own sake, he set out to follow the steps of Goethe by naming the creations of his own mind after legendary heroes. Just as Shakespeare had one day decided that Richard II would be a "good image for an

accustomed mood of fanciful, impracticable lyricism in his own mind" (Expl., 145), so Yeats resolved to create figures who were given legendary names but were in reality projections of warring principles within his psyche. By doing so, he hoped to bring to life a viable mode of drama that was at the same time a personal myth. Since Yeats believed that mental images are forms existing in the general vehicle of Anima Mundi, the universal mind, it follows that there was no need for him to fear that his plays using the Noh form would err on the side of excessive solipsism. Like Maeterlinck he had come to the conclusion that by exploring the individual subconscious, communion with the general mind can be established and works with a universal appeal can be written. Plays based on this kind of theory also obviated the need for naturalistic plausibility, which had been one of Yeats's most intractable problems since the turn of the century. By turning his mind into a stage he was able to jettison naturalistic requirements and dispense with realistic settings. He evolved a drama appealing to the imagination alone and prompted a style of acting which exhibited "an equivalent distance to that of the play from common realities" (Letters, 280).

By the time he embarked on the composition of At the Hawk's Well he had assimilated everything there was to be learnt from Maeterlinck and decisively outstripped him. From then onwards, it is still possible to be struck by the affinity between the Yeatsian and the Maeterlinckian imaginations provided one restricts oneself to carefully selected passages taken out of their proper contexts. But, as we shall see, if one looks carefully into the complete plays the number of significant

correspondences goes down dramatically. Yeats saw At the Hawk's Well as an attempt to create "heroic or grotesque types that, keeping always an appropriate distance from life, would seem images of those profound emotions that exist only in solitude and in silence".[65] The play actualizes Maeterlinck's dream of finding ways of embodying the descent into the subconscious and methods of supplanting actors of flesh and blood by "un être qui aurait les allures de la vie sans avoir la vie" or "une ombre, un reflet, une projection de formes symboliques".[66] Maeterlinck had a fairly clear idea of the ultimate effect he wished to achieve but was very much in the dark about the practical means which would enable him to do so. He longed for a timeless universe peopled by figures moving beyond the senses and grasped the essential fact that the mode of drama which could accommodate this vision would be non-naturalistic and non-representational. But the execution of his dream lacked the daring to make it an unqualified success and a theatrical revolution. He never completely severed all connections with the realistic theatre. By failing to ban the human figure and representational scenery from the stage he continued to equivocate between wholly symbolical and partly realistic drama. The penalty for this lack of courage was extremely heavy. As contemporary reactions to his work show, his intentions were frequently misunderstood. Had he created a dramatic universe that was at several removes from the recognizable world of everyday life, his plays might have been judged on their own merits. As it was, they were frequently measured by standards only applicable to naturalistic drama and as such they were found wanting. Whether the audience correctly understood his drama depended to an excessive extent on the talent of the individual director. For

example, in his most characteristic plays, Maeterlinck was concerned with human types and mental states and sought to disrupt the dramatic illusion. But even in a play such as Intérieur, where the stage-directions specify that the movements of the characters in the living-room, set off by the surrounding obscurity, must seem "graves, lents, rares et comme spiritualisés par la distance, la lumière et le voile indécis des fenêtres",[67] it was left to the skill of the director to bring out the text's full symbolical potential. It was still possible to approach the play with the wrong expectations and interpret it from a naturalistic view-point. Until the Four Plays for Dancers, Yeats often created similar difficulties of interpretation. As long as his difficulties remained recognizably human and inner personality states had to be inferred from external ones it was inevitable that a large section of the theatre-going public should find his work puzzling. The turning-point came when he realized the pressing need for a total and overt congruence between form and content. After many years of tirelessly experimenting with different forms of scenic representation, he set out to free his drama from the last vestiges of naturalism. He made his intention of creating a drama of psychic essences explicit by evoking a completely and utterly symbolical world for his personages to move in. The human element was ruthlessly excised and replaced by stylized characters. The principal characters wore masks capturing a distilled and inhuman quality. The almost total elimination of scenery engendered a revaluation of the text which, together with music and movement, carried the entire burden of the play. The gains were enormous. At last it was no longer possible for the public to misunderstand his work as an inconsistent treatment of a realistic

theme. Unity of effect could finally be achieved. Maeterlinck's and the later Yeats's widely diverging approaches to scenic representation produced results in which the remaining similarities on the textual level dwindle to insignificance. It is vital to bear this in mind as it is tempting to claim more instances of parallel-ism than sober evaluation warrants. For instance, one could easily fall into the trap of attaching undue significance to the parallel between the peevish and querulous Old Man in At the Hawk's Well, embittered by fifty years of vain waiting for something that never happens, and the equally elderly, fretful and unprepossessing men among the blind in Les Aveugles. The point is that in production these similarities are obscured by the astonishingly modern effect of Yeats's drama as opposed to the relative traditionalism of Maeterlinck. This contrast is most clearly reflected in their uses of scenery. In order to conjure up a sense of spiritual desolation Maeterlinck arranged in Les Aveugles a group of near-immobile and drably dressed figures in a setting suggesting death and barrenness. The blind men and women and the environment in which they seem to have taken root must be understood as a stage-metaphor of the spiritual qualities that constitute the play's real centre of interest. There is, however, a risk that the audience will fail to interpret the almost lifeless characters, and the stony landscape strewn with broken trees, rubble and withered plants in those terms. In Yeats's At the Hawk's Well, by contrast, a naturalistic reading is out of the question. The setting is not physically represented but replaced by verbal evocation and supplemented by a black and blue cloth, the latter suggesting a well. Three musicians, their faces made up to resemble masks, set the action in the psyche with the opening line, "I call to

the eye of the mind".[68] It is made absolutely clear that the scene is not an ordinary place but an emblem of the aridity and lifelessness of the old Man's choice. He could not possibly be mistaken for an ordinary human character either since, in addition to wearing a mask, his movements suggest those of a marionette. Form and content have become one. It is this identity, which is only fully appreciated in production, that mark Yeats's later plays so decisively off from Maeterlinck's work.

Yet Yeats was to return a final time to Maeterlinck, namely in The King of the Great Clock Tower. The King of the Great Clock Tower, started in late 1933, exists in two principal versions - one in a mixture of verse and prose, the other one in prose only. Neither version left Yeats entirely satisfied, and towards the end of 1934 he decided to start afresh and simplify his material. The result of this endeavour was indisputably a much more coherent and vigorous work. Still Yeats did not like it, but a comment in a letter to Dorothy Wellesley suggests that it had produced the desired cathartic effect: it was, he said, "a fragment of the past I had to get rid of" (Letters, 843).

The name first to spring to mind in connection with these plays is not that of Maeterlinck but of Wilde. There is no denying that Wilde's presence is felt much more strongly than Maeterlinck's. All the same, The King of the Great Clock Tower contains a very powerful evocation of the second scene of Pelléas et Mélisande, which revolves round the arrival of the letter in which Golaud analyzes his relationship with the young bride whom he is shortly to take to the family seat. In the

following pages two questions will be dealt with. The first one, which concerns the function of the Maeterlinck segment in The King of the Great Clock Tower, requires a discussion of the theme and of the way in which the scene in question has been incorporated into the overall structure of the play. A brief comparison with A Full Moon in March will then suffice to show why Pelléas et Mélisande lost its pertinence to Yeats's thought in the reworking of his material.

1933 seems very late for Yeats still to be under the spell of Maeterlinck and Wilde. Yet there is nothing inexplicable or bizarre about the fact that he had a use for Maeterlinck and Wilde at this stage of his career. As we have seen, during the early years of the twentieth century, Yeats decisively moved away from symbolist poetics, turning towards a more colloquial register of language and expressing "delight in the whole man" (E&I, 266). But his encounter with the Japanese Noh-drama around 1913 and his subsequent development of new theatrical techniques were fundamentally a return to the ideals of symbolism. In addition to bringing him confirmation of ideas vaguely apprehended as early as the late 1880s and the 1890s, the Noh provided him with a method for realizing his spiritual aesthetic in an intensely concentrated and highly dramatic form, capable of generating great affective power. Yeats's first few experiments using a structure derived from Noh drama were fairly closely modelled on Pound's transcriptions of the Noh plays translated by Ernest Fenollosa. But by 1933 Yeats was evidently ready to widen his work's scope to include a perspective on compatible Continental modes. Not only did French symbolist drama present no major obstacles to Yeats's desire for assimilation, it had

actually preceded the Noh drama in offering him his first experience of total symbolical theatre, a fusion of text, music, dance and scenery.

In his preface to the edition of The King of the Great Clock Tower and A Full Moon in March published in 1935, Yeats acknowledged his debt to Wilde: "The dance with the severed head", he said, "suggests the central idea in Wilde's Salomé".[69] Both The King of the Great Clock Tower and A Full Moon in March are rooted in the tradition which uses the theme of Salomé as an emblematic equivalent of what Frank Kermode calls "the Romantic Image" and defines as "a radiant truth out of space and time", entailing "the necessary isolation or estrangement of men who can perceive it".[70] The theme fuses the topos of the dance, representative of perfect unity of being, or the indissoluble one-ness of form and content, with the notion of its cost. If "The beauty of a woman, and particularly of a woman in movement, is the emblem of the work of art or Image",[71] its association with the figure of Salomé shifts the emphasis to the price in terms of life exacted by the artistic sensibility.

The King of the Great Clock Tower requires five players: two Attendants, a King, a Queen and a Stroller. The Stroller is explicitly identified as a poet (l. 37)and "a sacred man" (l. 74). The Queen represents the original of what the Stroller describes as "The image in my head" (l. 60), which he seeks to embody and celebrate in his poetry. If Queen and Stroller are emblematized, the King's behaviour, speeches and reactions are consistently grounded in naturalistic psychology. It is therefore appropriate that whereas the Queen wears "a beautiful

impassive mask" (ll. 991) and the Stroller "a wild half-savage mask", the King's face should be entirely uncovered: he is natural man, confronted with a horrifying ritual which he cannot comprehend and which alternately repels and frightens him. Only at the end of the play is he drawn into the rite and does he surrender to its mysterious power.

The King of the Great Clock Tower is a ritual enactment of the Poet/Stroller's self-immolation in the service of art. The Stroller displays the artist's arrogance, single-mindedness and indifference to the niceties of polite behaviour. His self-sacrifice makes possible the perfect union with the muse required to produce the permanence and miraculous power of art which the closing lyrics describe. In the prose-and-verse version of the play even the King grasps that "it is plain that he wishes to sacrifice his life", to lay it down at [the Queen's] feet" (ll. 106-107). The vagrant poet seeks death, knowing that the reward of this ultimate form of self-sacrifice will be the fructifying union with the Image. But the fact that it is, strictly speaking, the King who orders the Stroller's beheading hints at a secondary meaning contained in this act, that of society's rejection and condemnation of the artist's absolutism. The poet's repudiation of social conventions is paralleled by the Queen's utter obliviousness of the world. She is entirely cut off from the universe of time and death over which the King reigns. Hers is the expressionless and "immovable" [72] face of the supremely beautiful woman, in whom the "body thinks" (Aut., 292) and abstract thought and mechanical intellect are kept at bay - her unseeing, unfocused eyes are like "vague Grecian eyes gazing at nothing, Byzantine eyes of drilled ivory staring upon a

vision".[73] Being a representative of the Image, she is "separate from everything heterogeneous and casual, from all character and circumstance, as some Herodiade of our theatre" (Aut., 321); she is "ideal form" (E&I, 243), wearing "a mask from whose eyes the disembodied looks" (E&I, 243). Her movements and the few lines spoken by her are dictated, not by the demands of naturalistic verisimilitude but by those of the ritual in which she plays a preordained part. For we are informed that the events are not conditioned by situation and character, but have been divinely appointed: the Stroller emphasizes the God Aengus has uttered the prophecy, "On stroke of midnight when the old year dies,/ Upon that stroke the tolling of that bell,/ The Queen shall kiss your mouth" (11. 83-85). With remarkable insouciance and gaiety, and nothing daunted by the prospect of a violent death, the Stroller restates the ineluctability of this prophecy:

The Stroller I go; but this must happen:
[Counting on his fingers]
First the Queen
Will dance before me, second I shall sing.

The King What, sing without a head?

The Stroller Grateful I sing,
Then, grateful in her turn, the Queen will kiss
My mouth because it sang.

(11.90 - 94)

Appalled by the Stroller's insolence and utter disrespect for worldly authority, the King orders him to be led away and executed. At the

instant of his death the Queen lapses into a trance-like song on the consequences of the union of opposites. The song, which is incomprehensible to the King, issues into a dance in front of the Stroller's decapitated head. As his dance comes to an end, the Head's lips begin to move, and an eerie tune issues from them. The Queen picks up the head, dances with it, and at the final stroke of the clock presses her lips to its lips. In a gesture recalling Herod's revulsion at the sight of the beloved kissing a decapitated head, the King raises his sword. But, unable to carry out his intention , and suddenly overwhelmed by the miraculous power of the act he has witnessed, he kneels before his Queen and the Stroller's head.

Though an "emblem of the moon" (prose-and-verse version, l. 187) and therefore in theory complete, the Queen needs to descend from "emblematic niches" (prose-and-verse version, l. 182) in search of "desecration and the lover's night" (l. 185). The fusion of the unearthly perfection of the Image and the "mire and blood" [74] of the poet in the creative act generates a moment of transcendence in which images partaking of eternity are created.

In 1935 Yeats wrote, "In The King of the Great Clock Tower there are three characters, King, Queen and Stroller and that is a character too many; reduced to the essentials, to Queen and Stroller, the fable should have greater intensity".[75] Yeats's criticism is no doubt to the point. Yet it is easy to see why he originally believed the inclusion of the King to be justified: the King's perceptions epitomize society's view of the absolutism, the artistic withdrawal and the "otherness" of

the artist. The character of the King can be made integral to the particularization of the Image, her resistance to discursive analysis and explication, her lack of "character", her ability to inspire passion.

Maeterlinck's pertinence to The King of the Great Clock Tower springs from the suggestive analogue which Yeats perceived between the relationship of Golaud and Mélisande and that of his own King and Queen. The Queen combines Mélisande's separateness with a total indifference to the King's works and actions. Her marriage to the King resembles Mélisande's in so far as it is a mock-union, a relation of incompatibles between whom communion is impossible. It is, significantly, Golaud's most lucid and extensive discussion of the anomaly at the heart of his marriage which is recalled in The King of the Great Clock Tower. Yeats's play incorporates what is not simply an echo but almost a transcription of the basic situation of Act I, Scene 3 of Pélleas et Mélisande. The King's first speech reflects his growing exasperation at living with a woman cultivating an air of separateness and aloofness:

> A year ago you walked into this house,
> A year ago to-night. Though neither I
> Nor any man could tell your family,
> Country or name, I put you on that throne.
> And now before the assembled court, before
> Neighbours, attendants, courtiers, men-at-arms,
> I ask your country, name and family
> And not for the first time. Why sit you there
> Dumb as an image of wood or metal,
> A screen between the living and the dead?
> All persons here assembled, and because
> They think that silence unendurable,
> Fix eyes upon you. (ll. 17-29)

This speech is closely modelled on the letter sent by Golaud to his

family to inform them of his marriage to Mélisande - a passage which Yeats manifestly re-read, rather than vaguely remembered, during the composition of The King of the Great Clock Tower:

> Un soir, je l'ai trouvée tout en pleurs au bord d'une fontaine, dans la forêt où je m'étais perdu. Je ne sais ni son âge, ni qui elle est, ni d'où elle vient et je n'ose pas l'interroger, car elle doit avoir eu une grande épouvante, et quand on lui demande ce qui est arrivé, elle pleure tout à coup comme un enfant et sanglote si profondément qu'on a peur. ... Il y a maintenant six mois que je l'ai épousée et je n'en sais pas plus qu'au jour de notre rencontre. (Pelléas et Mélisande, Act I, sc. 3)

Hoping that in the course of time he will gain the affection and confidence of his wife, Golaud is prepared to accept Mélisande on her own, indisputably harsh terms. But when it emerges that it is his half-brother Pelléas who has the effect of thawing her icy manner, he changes from a tolerant and patient husband into a maniacal brute and finally a murderer. In the horrifying scene in Act IV in which he drags the terrified Mélisande by the hair over the floor, Golaud raves and storms without attempting to curb the cruelty of his words or acts. Mélisande's passive submission, far from having a mollifying effect on him, seems to goad him to utter frenzy:

> ...je suis moins loin des grands secrets de l'autre monde que du plus petit secret de ces yeux! ... Une grande innocence! Plus que de l'innocence! On dirait que les anges du ciel s'y baignent tout le jour dans l'eau claire des montagnes! ... Je les connais ces yeux! Je les ai vus à l'oeuvre. Fermez-les! fermez-les! ou je vais les fermer pour longtemps! ... (Pelléas et Mélisande, Act IV, sc. 2)

In The King of the Great Clock Tower the Queen's stubborn refusal to answer the King's questions and gratify his yearning to see her unbend a

little ("Do something, anything, I care not what/So that you move", ll. 105-106) recalls Mélisande's similar unwillingness to accommodate Golaud's craving for a little human warmth. In both plays, the frustration thereby engendered causes uncontrollable violence. Golaud and the King kill the men whom they fear are or have been their wives' lovers.

But Yeats's decision to eliminate the King from A Full Moon in March meant that he no longer had any use for his Maeterlinckian speech. If there is still a hint of Maeterlinck's universe in the later play it is in a general sense, through the continued reliance on the folklore motif of the impossible test carrying death as penalty for failure, the hand of the Queen as the recompense for success. In addition, the "surrealist nursery rhyme from the depths of the unconscious" [76] which is allocated to the Swineherd's head, recalls Maeterlinck's practice of inserting weird little songs into his plays for atmospheric purposes and to provide a gateway into the hidden area of the mind. But there can be no doubt that all the major changes introduced in the theme - the assignation of an active role to the Queen; the increased emphasis on her "virgin cruelty" [77]; her love for the Swineherd; the linking of the plays's ritual to the phases of the moon - resulted in moving the play further away from Maeterlinck and much closer to Wilde's Salomé.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

[1] This material can be consulted in Yeats, Uncollected Prose, I, ed. John P. Frayne (London: Macmillan, 1970). Reviews and articles originally published between 1897 and 1939 can be found in Uncollected Prose, II, ed. John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson (London: Macmillan, 1975). Further references will be given in the text as (UP I, x) and (UP II, x) respectively.

[2] Yeats, Letters to the New Island, ed. Horace Reynolds (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1934), pp. 103-104. Further references to this volume will be given in the text as (New Island, x).

[3] Yeats, rev. of Le Trésor des humbles, Bookman, July 1897; rpt. in UP II, 45-47. Yeats, rev. of Aglavaine et Sélysette, Bookman, Sept. 1897; rpt. in UP II, 51-54.

[4] Maeterlinck sent Huysmans a copy of his translation of L'Ornement des noces spirituelles, by Ruysbroeck, with the inscription: "A Joris Karl Huysmans au Maître profondément admiré qui m'a mis sur la voie de Ruysbroeck"; as quoted in Raymond Pouilliart, "L'Orientation religieuse de Maeterlinck en 1887 et 1888", Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Langue et de Littérature Françaises, XL (1962), 208.

[5] George Moore, "A Curious Book", St. James's Gazette, VIII (2 Sept. 1884), 6-7.

[6] Arthur Symons, "J.K. Huysmans", Fortnightly Review (March 1892), p. 407: "Il faut que je me réjouisse au-dessus du temps ... quoique le monde ait horreur de ma joie et que sa grossièreté ne sache pas ce que je veux dire".

[7] Yeats, Autobiographies (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1955), p. 66. Further references to this work will be given in the text as (Aut., x).

[8] Richard Ellmann, Yeats: The Man and the Masks (London: Faber and Faber, 1961; 1949), p. 33.

[9] Yeats, Letters, ed. Allen Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 122. Further references will be given in the text as (Letters, x).

[10] Yeats, Essays and Introductions (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1961), 169. Further references will be given in the text as (E&I, x).

[11] See Robert Hogan and James Kilroy, The Irish Literary Theatre 1899-1901 (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1975), pp 9-24.

[12] Hogan and Kilroy, The Irish Literary Theatre, p. 17.

[13] Yeats, Explorations, (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 115. Further references will be given in the text as (Expl., x).

[14] Yeats, "The Tragic Theatre", The Mask (Oct. 1910); rpt. UP II, 384-392.

[15] Druid Craft. The Writing of The Shadowy Waters: Manuscripts of W.B. Yeats, transcribed, ed. and introd. by Michael J. Sidwell, George Mayhew and David R. Clark (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1972), p. 302.

[16] Yeats, The Shadowy Waters, North American Review (May 1900); rpt. Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats, ed. P.Allt and R.K. Alspach (New York: Macmillan, 1940), pp. 745-769.

[17] Richard Ellmann, The Identity of Yeats (London: Faber and Faber 1964, 1954), pp. 81-82.

[18] Yeats, unpublished diary, 13 July 1899; as quoted in Ellmann, Identity of Yeats, p. 83.

[19] Yeats, Programme note, Inis Fail, August 1905; as quoted in Ellmann, Identity of Yeats, p. 81.

[20] Harry Goldgar, "Axël de Villiers de l'Isle-Adam et The Shadowy Waters de W.B. Yeats", Revue de Littérature Comparée, XXIV (1950), 563-574.

[21] In "The Return of Ulysses" (1896), Essays and Introductions, pp. 198-202, Yeats did quote from Le Trésor des humbles. He must have seen Sutro's translation in advance of its publication for the quotations follow the English text faithfully.

[22] Lugné-Poe founded the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre in 1893. Its predecessor was the Théâtre d'Art, founded in 1890 "en vue de combattre le Naturalisme": Fort, Mes Mémoires (Paris: Flammarion, 1944), p 29. On these theatres, see especially Jacques Robichez, Le Symbolisme au théâtre: Lugné-Poe et les débuts de l'Oeuvre (Paris: L'Arche, 1957); Denis Bablet, Esthétique générale du décor de théâtre de 1870 à 1914 (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1965).

[23] Bablet, p. 160

[24] Wade's edition of Yeats Letters includes several letters written in Ireland during this period. The person probably responsible for launching this error is Lugné-Poe, who included Yeats in the list of people attending a party in honour of Yeats: in Lugné-Poe, "Mes confidences sur Maeterlinck", Conférencia, XXVII (15 September 1933), 365.

[25] Monna Vanna had been refused a licence by the Lord Chamberlain. A private performance, under the auspices of the Stage Society, was given on 20 June 1902. Yeats was one of the signatories of a letter protesting against the Lord Chamberlain's decision: unpublished letter to the Editor of the Times, 20 June 1902.

[26] Letter of Frank Fay to Joseph Holloway, 6 Nov. 1902:
"Had you the good luck in 1895 to see Lugné-Poe's `Théâtre de l'Oeuvre' when they played Pelléas et Mélisande at the Opéra Comique? ... George Bernard Shaw went into raptures over that performance and Miss Farr told me it was wonderful"; as quoted in Robert Hogan and James Kilroy, The

Modern Irish Drama: A Documentary History, II, Laying the Foundations 1902-1904 (Dublin: Domen Press, 1976), 41.

[27] G.B. Shaw, "Théâtre de l'Oeuvre de Paris", Fortnightly Review (30 March 1895); rpt. in Our Theatres in the Nineties, I (London:Constable, 1931), 80.

[28] Shaw, p. 80.

[29] W[illiam] A[rcher], rev. of Pelléas et Mélisande, World, 29 June 1898, p. 31.

[30] Archer, p. 30.

[31] J.T. Grein, Dramatic Criticism, p. 73.

[32] J.T. Grein, p. 73.

[33] In a lecture given before the production, Tree attacked Maeterlinck's dramatic mode and questioned the stageworthiness of L'Intruse: "Some Interesting Fallacies of the Modern Stage"; rpt. in Thoughts and After-Thoughts (London: Cassell, 1891), pp. 167-176.

[34] As quoted in Hogan and Kilroy, Laying the Foundations, p. 41.

[35] Star, 27 March 1895; as quoted in John Stokes, Resistible Theatres.

[36] Stokes, p. 169.

[37] During the discussion following Yeats's lecture, "Ideal Theatre" (23 April 1899), reported in the issue of June 1899 of the Irish Society Gazette; rpt. UP II, 153-158. Todhunter's discussion of Lugné-Poe's production of Pelléas et Mélisande is reported in UP II, 156-157.

[38] John Todhunter, "Poetic Drama, and Its Prospects on the Stage", Fortnightly Review, LXXVII (1902), 724.

[39] Todhunter, p. 724.

[40] Compare Frank Fay, Letter to W.B.Yeats, 25 July 1902: "I look on our work as pioneer work. We, even in a stronger measure than 'L'Oeuvre', represent the protest against commercialism; of course I don't mean to compare our acting with theirs, but both have something of the same aim"; as quoted in Hogan and Kilroy, Laying the Foundations, pp. 30-31.

[41] Dido and Aeneas, performed by the Purcell Operatic Society, in May 1900. The Masque of Love, March 1901. Yeats saw the revival of Dido and Aeneas, which appeared on the same playbill as The Masque of Love, in March 1901.

[42] Albert Mockel, Belgian poet and critic. He was the editor of La Wallonie, the Belgian Symbolist periodical (1886-1892).

[43] Pierre Quillard, French poet and critic. He wrote one of the principal theoretical texts about symbolist scenery. Paul Fort, the director of the Théâtre d'Art identified to such an extent with the ideas set forth in Quillard's "De l'inutilité absolue de la mise en scène exacte", that he appropriated its theories. See Paul Fort, Mes Mémoires, p. 31.

[44] Camille Mauclair, French poet, playwright and critic, and one of the founders of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. He wrote two articles in which he discussed the style of décor required by Pelléas et Mélisande: see Robichez, pp, 166-167.

[45] Symons, "A New Art of the Stage", Studies in Seven Arts (London: Archibald Constable, 1906), p. 352.

[46] Symons, "The Price of Realism", Plays Acting and Music, rev. ed. (London: Archibald Constable, 1909), p. 165.

[47] Symons, "A New Art of the Stage", p. 358.

[48] Unpublished letter indicating that Yeats requested Craig to produce a play by Maeterlinck. Yet Craig was interested in Maeterlinck's work and, as his son Edward has confirmed to me in a letter of 12 March 1982, he continued to hope to produce them some day.

[49] Albert Mockel, "Chronique littéraire", La Wallonie, V, (June-July 1890), 209.

[50] Mockel, p. 209.

[51] Symons, "The Price of Realism", p. 165.

[52] Mockel, p. 213.

[53] Pierre Quillard, "De l'inutilité absolue de la mise en scène exacte", Revue d'Art Dramatique, 1 May 1891; rpt. in the appendix to Rachilde, Théâtre (Paris: Albert Savine, 1891), p. 216.

[54] Mockel, p. 212.

[55] Quillard, p. 217. Compare Mockel, p. 211, for whom the performance was "le rêve représenté".

[56] Symons, Plays Acting and Music (1909), p. 164: argues that the right way to experience a performance is by "abandoning ourselves to a new, strange atmosphere, to the magic of the play itself".

[57] As Yeats saw it, "If an actor becomes over emphatic ... or if he stresses his lines in wrong places, or even if an electric lamp that should have cast but a reflected light from sky or sea, shows from behind the post of a door" (UP II, 389), the dream is destroyed.

[58] Mockel, p. 216.

[59] As quoted in Robichez, pp. 167-168, note 52.

[60] Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature (London: William Heinemann, 1899), p. 159.

[61] Compare Quillard, p. 216: "Il suffit que la mise en scène ne trouble point l'illusion, et il importe pour cela qu'elle soit très simple".

[62] Quillard, p. 216.

[63] Unpublished letter, [early July 1904].

[64] Typed copy of unpublished letter, [3 January 1907].

[65] Yeats, Preface, Harper's Bazaar, March 1917; rpt. Variorum Plays, p. 416.

[66] Maeterlinck, "Menus propos", p. 335.

[67] Maeterlinck, Intérieur, Théâtre, II (Brussels: Lacomblez, 1902; rpt. 1922), 233.

[68] Yeats, At the Hawk's Well, Variorum Plays, p. 399, l. 1.

[69] Rpt. in Variorum Plays, p. 1311. All quotations from The King of the Great Clock Tower are taken from Variorum Plays. References will be given in the text.

[70] Frank Kermode, Romantic Image (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 2.

[71] Kermode, p. 57.

[72] Compare Kermode, pp. 9-10 and pp. 48-80.

[73] Yeats, A Vision; as quoted in Kermode, p. 55.

[74] Yeats, "Byzantium", Collected Poems, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan 1950), p. 281.

[75] Yeats, Preface, A Full Moon in March (London, 1935); rpt. Variorum Plays, p. 1311.

[76] Worth, p. 118

[77] Yeats, A Full Moon in March, Variorum Plays, l. 157.

CHAPTER TWO:ANTI-ILLUSIONIST MODES OF DRAMATIC PRESENTATION

During the 1890s and at the beginning of the twentieth century, Maeterlinck's name was closely associated with the theatre of marionettes. This connection went back to the appearance in 1889 of his first play, La Princesse Maleine, which became known as a work "pour un théâtre de fantoches" [1]. Maeterlinck's link with puppets was reaffirmed in 1894, by the publication of the collected edition of Intérieur, Alladine et Palomides and La Mort de Tintagiles, which bore the sub-title "trois petits drames pour marionnettes". The term "puppet" constantly appears in the critical and review articles devoted to Maeterlinck's work in the 1890s. More often than not, it is used in a derogatory sense, to indicate the Maeterlinckian character's failure to achieve naturalistic plausibility and fullness of presentation.

But a few critics, notably Sharp and Symons, were intrigued by his radically new conception of character. In Symons's case, an explanation for his receptivity to Maeterlinck's experiments immediately springs to mind. As Symons's autograph letters to Edmund Gosse indicate,[2] the publication of Maeterlinck's first plays coincided with Symons's growing absorption in cabaret, the music hall, shadow plays and other forms of non-literary theatre. This interest is reflected in the following comment about the protagonists of La Princesse Maleine:

> ...it is with the effect of marionettes that these sudden, exclamatory people come and go. Maleine, Hjalmar, Uglyane - these are no characters, these are no realisable persons; they are a masque of shadows, a dance of silhouettes behind the white sheet of the "Chat Noir", and they have the fantastic charm of these enigmatical semblances...[3]

However, Symons's articles of the early 1890s contain little theoretical speculation about the significance of Maeterlinck's reliance on the puppet theatre. It is not until the publication of Le Trésor des humbles in 1896 and its translation the following year that he started commenting on the relation of the experiments with non-human stage devices to the symbolist aesthetic.

If the appearance of Le Trésor des humbles constituted a landmark in Symons's appreciation of Maeterlinck's achievements, this was due to two reasons. Firstly, Le Trésor des humbles was published at a very opportune time. By 1896, Symons had embraced the symbolist aesthetic and definitively moved away from realism and impressionism. He was preparing himself for the task of becoming England's champion of the internalization of movement through the revaluation of the non-verbal arts of the theatre.

Moreover, Le Trésor des humbles, above all "Le Tragique quotidien", clarified Maeterlinck's position. It established that his interest in marionettes was connected with his wish to move the actor farther off and throw the play's metaphysical substratum into greater relief (Trésor, pp. 161-169). The English representatives of the anti-illusionist theatre eagerly espoused this aim. Edward Gordon Craig, for example, quoted the pertinent passages from "Le Tragique quotidien" in his long article "On the Art of the Theatre" to corroborate the point that only by de-emphasizing the external aspect of Shakespeare's plays will the director be able to preserve their full imaginative force. As he put it, the artist of the theatre must

> ...raise the action from the merely material to the psychological, and render audible to the ears of the soul if not the body "the solemn uninterrupted whisperings of man and destiny", point out "the uncertain dolorous footsteps of the being, as he approaches, or wanders from his truth, his beauty or his God", and show how underlying King Lear, Macbeth and Hamlet, is "the murmur of eternity on the horizon", and he will be fulfilling the poet's intention...[4]

In the articles on the non-verbal arts of the theatre written during the late 1890s and at the beginning of the twentieth century, the name of Maeterlinck constantly figures. Another author commonly invoked in this context is Charles Lamb. Symons and Craig in particular were struck by the coincidence in method and aesthetic outlook between both writers. In his discussions of the anti-illusionist theatre, Symons persistently referred to Lamb and Maeterlinck to focus his arguments.[5] A few years later Craig's name was added to his list of pioneers in the non-mimetic theatre. Craig's innovative productions at the turn of the century had convinced him that his anti-materialist ideals were about to be realized. In "A New Art of the Theatre", the names of Craig and Maeterlinck were linked - together they represented, as Symons believed, the theatre of the future. Craig, in his turn, drew on Lamb and Maeterlinck, as well as on Symons, in his onslaughts on the representational theatre.[6]

However, neither Symons nor Craig realized that the resemblance between the ideas of Maeterlinck and Lamb was not fortuitous but the result of Maeterlinck's profound debt to Lamb. Maeterlinck's involvement with Lamb's speculative writing about dramatic presentation dates from

1889. But if Lamb nurtured, sharpened and crystallized Maeterlinck's growing reservations about staging, he did not engender them. It seems likely that during his stay in Paris in 1886-1887 Maeterlinck was introduced to the arguments against the production of literary drama.[7] For some time, the place of the actor in the theatre had been questioned in the Revue Wagnérienne. Thus the issue of 8 April 1886 contained a description of actors as "des hommes nécessairement difformes, incapables de faire admettre qu'ils sont les dieux qu'ils singent".[8] In addition, Mallarmé's programmatic essays on the theatre were appearing in the Revue Indépendente in 1886 and 1887. Mallarmé too inveighed against the actor, complaining about "le déplaisir d'un visage exact penché, hors la rampe, sur ma source ou âme".[9] His chief objection concerned the fact that "ce pur résultat" achieved by the words "pour ma délectation noble, s'effarouche d'une interprète".[10]

The following year, the opposition to the reductive effect of the stage-performance issued into a practical achievement in the form of the transformation of the puppet theatre, which was taken into the sphere of literature by Felix Larcher and Henri Signoret.[11] Signoret's highly successsful Petit Théâtre was active between 28 May 1888, when it presented to the public work by Cervantes and Aristophanes, performed by puppets, and 30 January 1894, when a production of Maurice Bouchor's Mystères d'Eleusis, a play of classical inspiration, marked the end of its existence. A by-product of their endeavour was an influential review article by Anatole France, published in Le Temps in 1888,[12] which, as we shall see, constitutes a link between the theories of Lamb, the French Symbolists, Symons and Craig. France argued, as Maeterlinck, Mockel,

Symons and Craig were presently to do, that the overwhelming physical presence of the living actor interferes with the spectator's reception of the play.

In 1889 Charles Kent's edition of The Works of Charles Lamb: Poetical and Dramatic Tales Essays and Criticism (London: Routledge, 1889), was published.[13] It was acquired, read and annotated by Maeterlinck. Between 29 January and 26 February 1890, Maeterlinck jotted down in his diaries ideas and notes towards an article, "Un Théâtre d'androïdes", composed between the end of February and the summer of 1890,[14] which clearly registers the impact of Charles Lamb. During these months, Albert Mockel's "Chronique littéraire" in La Wallonie presented arguments against naturalistic verisimilitude on the stage and called for greater abstraction.[15]

"Menus propos", Maeterlinck's principal article about new modes of dramatic expression, appeared in La Jeune Belgique in September 1890.[16] It was followed by the publication of the "Petits drames pour marionnettes" four years later, and of Le Trésor des humbles, which represents the final stage of Maeterlinck's reflections about the dilemma facing the symbolist dramatist, in 1896.

But if Maeterlinck's writings on acting and production indicate an awareness of the theories of Mallarmé and of a number of the other early French Symbolists, the fact remains that the author he drew most directly on was the English Romantic Charles Lamb.

There is no scarcity of evidence of Lamb's impact on Maeterlinck's thinking. Maeterlinck's personal copy of Lamb's works, Charles Kent's edition of the political and dramatic tales, essays and criticism, published in 1889, constitutes a guide to his interest in Lamb. Several of the critical essays are thickly covered with pencil marks. However, there can be no doubt that it was "On the Tragedies of Shakspeare, Considered with Reference to their Fitnesss for Stage Representation" (1811) which impressed him most strongly.

The text published during Maeterlinck's lifetime which registers Lamb's influence most clearly is "Menus propos", which constitutes the distillation of the many ideas jotted down in a copy-book to which Maeterlinck gave the title "Un Théâtre d'androïdes". Lamb's essay "On the Tragedies of Shakspeare" supplied virtually all the arguments of "Un Théâtre d'androïdes" and provided "Menus propos" with a number of theories and several quotations. The principal difference between the two articles is that whereas the former stops at the analysis of the problem confronting the symbolist dramatist, the latter goes on to map out tentatively a number of possible solutions.

The astonishing pertinence of Lamb's cogitations to symbolist thinking derives from his reflections, similar to those of the Symbolists, about the clash between the presence of a human being, a bundle of accidents and acquired characteristics, in a context which calls for abstraction and generalisation. It is this preoccupation which earned Lamb symbolist consecration and accounts for his popularity at

the end of the nineteenth century. Ultimately, the fear of the risk posed to the "frémissement illimité du chef-d'oeuvre" [17] by the "too close pressing semblance of reality", [18] common to Lamb and the Symbolists, can be reduced to the question of "psychical distance" [19] - the prerequisite for aesthetic appreciation. As Edward Bullough has argued,

> ...theatrical performances eo ipso run a special risk of a loss of Distance owing to the material presentment of its subject-matter. The physical presence of living human beings as vehicles of dramatic art is a difficulty which no art has to face in the same way.[20]

There is no absolute consistency in the many observations and speculations about the dehumanization of the stage found at the end of the nineteenth century and after. But in spite of some apparent contradictions and individual differences in perception and formulation, there is considerable consistency in the main preoccupations. The shared premise of Lamb and the modern representatives of the anti-illusionist theatre - the insuperable conflict between the world of the senses and that of the imagination - entailed strong opposition to the actor as an intermediary between the work of art and our reception of it. From Lamb to Craig, we find objections to the actor on the grounds that his name and personality obscure and confine the imaginative potential of the dramatic character. One of the earliest and best-publicized French statements to this effect was made by Anatole France, who wrote in his review of Signoret's puppet theatre, "S'il faut dire toute ma pensée, les acteurs me gâtent la comédie. J'entends les bons acteurs.... Leur talent est trop grand: il couvre tout. Il n'y a qu'eux. Leur personne efface l'oeuvre qu'ils représentent".[21] The representatives of the anti-illusionist theatre immediately realized that they had found an

articulate and respected champion of their cause in Anatole France. Paul Margueritte, Mallarmé's nephew, quoted his repudiation of the actor of flesh and blood in his brochure for the Petit Théâtre, adding that "le nom et le visage trop connu d'un comédien de chair et d'os imposent au public une obsession qui rend impossible ou très difficile l'illusion".[22] Craig too was struck by France's words, and reported them in the first issue of the Mask, in support of his own disavowal of the actor.[23] In 1890, Mockel and Maeterlinck both contributed to the debate. Mockel stated tersely and pointedly, "Je ne veux voir ni Mounet-Sully ni Van Dyke, mais Hamlet ou Parsifal".[24] Maeterlinck too expressed himself in similar terms. Commenting on the effect of watching a performance of Hamlet, he complained that the Danish prince loses his imaginative power when seen on the stage: "Le spectre d'un acteur l'a détrôné, et nous ne pouvons plus écarter l'usurpateur de nos rêves" (Menus Propos, 332). Mallarmé had preceded him in saying that staging this play was tantamount to "trouer de sa réalité, ainsi qu'une vaporeuse toile, l'ambiance que dégage l'emblématique Hamlet".[25]

All these critics are elaborating variations on a view already put forward by Lamb: that on viewing a realistic rendering of a play on the stage,

> ... we are apt...to identify in our minds in a perverse manner, the actor with the character which he represents. It is difficult for a frequent play-goer to disembarrass the idea of Hamlet from the voice and person of Mr.T. ("Tragedies", 114)

Looking into the reasons for this confusion, Maeterlinck, Craig and

Symons arrived at virtually identical conclusions. Maeterlinck introduced the concept of the symbol to clinch his point. He started from the premise that the symbol is essential to imaginative literature: "s'il n'y a pas de symbole il n'y a pas d'oeuvre d'art".[26] His argument hinged on the irreconcilability of the condition of art and the antithetical qualities of the interpreter: "La scène est le lieu où meurent les chefs-d'oeuvre, parce que la représentation d'un chef-d'oeuvre à l'aide d'éléments accidentels et humains est antinomique" ("Menus propos", 334).

In "An Apology for Puppets", an article at once harking back to Lamb's and Maeterlinck's views and pointing forward to Craig's theories, Symons too dwelt on the accidental nature of the actor's rendering. He argued that

> The living actor, even when he condescends to subordinate himself to the requirements of pantomime, has always what he is proud to call his temperament, in other words, so much personal caprice, which for the most part means wilful misunderstanding, and in seeing his acting you have to consider this intrusive little personality of his as well as the author's.[27]

In "The Actor and the Über-Marionette", Craig similarly, if even more forcefully, derided the accidental nature of the actor and his performance. As he declared,

> Acting is not an art. It is therefore incorrect to speak of the actor as an artist. For accident is an enemy of the artist. Art is the exact antithesis of pandemonium, and pandemonium is created by the tumbling together of many accidents. Art arrives only by design. Therefore in order to make any work of art it is clear we may only work in those materials with which we can calculate. Man is not

one of these materials. (Theatre, 55-56)

In "Menus propos", Maeterlinck went on to account for the unsuitability of the actor in terms of the symbolist aesthetic. He argued that "le symbole ne supporte jamais la présence active de l'homme. Il y a divergence ininterrompue entre les forces du symbole et celles de l'homme qui s'y agite" ("Menus propos", 334). Invoking the metaphysical basis of the symbolist aesthetic, he declared that

> Le symbole du poème est un centre ardent dont les rayons divergent dans l'infini, et ces rayons..ont une portée qui n'est limitée que par la puissance de l'oeil qui le suit. Mais voici que l'acteur s'avance au milieu du symbole. Immédiatement se produit, par rapport au sujet passif du poème, un extraordinaire phénomène de polarisation. Il ne voit plus la divergence des rayons, mais leur convergence..."Menus propos", 334)

These contrasting forces - one centripetal, the other centrifugal - of Maeterlinck's antithetical pair consisting of man and symbol, are foreshadowed in the opposition set up by Lamb between the "free conceptions" of the mind when reading a great play and the "measure of a strait-lacing actuality" to which they are "crampt and pressed down" ("Tragedies", 115) when the same work is subsequently seen on the stage.

Moreover, the performance and the text use diametrically opposed methods. Maeterlinck stated that "L'art semble toujours un détour et ne parle jamais face à face. On dirait l'hypocrisie de l'infini" ("Menus propos", 331). The scenic representation, by contrast, has the effect of giving a tangible and visible form to the dramatist's vision. Hence, Maeterlinck concludes, there appears to be an insuperable conflict between the direction and techniques used in the literary work and those

characteristic of the theatrical performance. The complaint that the specificity of the production destroys "La densité mystique de l'oeuvre d'art" ("Menus propos", 331) is wound up with the following words:

> Et c'est ainsi qu'on est obligé de reconnaître que la plupart des grands poèmes de l'humanité ne sont pas scéniques. Lear, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Antoine et Cléopâtre ne peuvent être représentés, et il est dangereux de les voir sur la scène. Quelque chose d'Hamlet est mort pour nous, le jour où nous l'avons vu mourir sur la scène ... ("Menus propos", 331-332)

Passages of similar purport occur in "On the Tragedies of Shakspeare", where Lamb states that "the plays of Shakspeare are less calculated for performance on a stage, than those of almost any other dramatist whatever" ("Tragedies", 115). Maeterlinck' view that something of Hamlet dies for us the day we see him perish on the stage corresponds to Lamb's conviction that an excellent performance is undeniably a gratifying experience, but

> ...dearly do we pay all our life for this juvenile pleasure, this sense of distinctness. When the novelty is past, we find to our cost that instead of realizing an idea, we have only materialized and brought down a fine vision to the standard of flesh and blood. ("Tragedies", 114-115)

Craig, in his turn, restates Lamb's argument in The Art of the Theatre. He declares that "Hamlet has not the nature of a stage representation. Hamlet and the other plays of Shakespeare have so vast and complete a form when read, that they can but lose heavily when presented to us after having undergone stage treatment" (Theatre, 143).

Lamb repudiated stage-performances on the grounds that at the final curtain's fall we realize that "We have let go a dream, in quest of an unattainable substance" ("Tragedies", 115). Maeterlinck's objections to the actor and the performance were based on similar considerations: he too saw the actor as the "usurpateur de nos rêves" ("Menus propos", 332), the invader of "le temple du rêve" ("Menus propos", 331). If these complaints sound rather esoteric, the analyses of the cause are considerably less so. Lamb had preceded Maeterlinck in pointing out that so long as we see the characters of drama with the mind's eye only, they retain the infinite suggestivity which is the hallmark of great literature; but as soon as they are given a distinct outline and a material form by actors of flesh and blood, they lose the ability to take on a myriad shapes. As he put it in "On the Tragedies of Shakspeare",

> ... those characters in Shakspeare which are within the precincts of nature, have yet something in them which appeals too exclusively to the imagination, to admit of their being made objects to the senses without suffering a change and a diminution ..."Tragedies", 126)

Maeterlinck followed Lamb's example in attempting to pin down the difference between the play as read in the seclusion of one's study and the acted play, by describing their contrasting relations to the senses. He explained that

> Le poème veut nous arracher au pouvoir de nos sens et faire prédominer le passé et l'avenir, l'homme n'agit que sur nos sens et n'existe que pour autant qu'il puisse effacer cette prédomination du passé et de l'avenir par l'envahissement du moment où il parle. ("Menus propos", 335)

These objections to the actor raise the question of the stageability of plays of a superior imaginative order, and of the position of the actor in the theatre. The answer to this question, which stands behind all theoretical speculations about the symbolist venture in the theatre, had, as Maeterlinck must have appreciated, a decisive effect on the future of the idealist theatre. For implicit in the dilemma confronting the symbolist playwright were two negatives, two courses to be avoided lest the realization of his ideal be jeopardized. On the one hand he had to steer clear of the defeatist attitude, in practice espoused by Mallarmé and some of his acolytes, which despaired over the intractable difficulty of reconciling the symbolist concern for the invisible and the illimitable with the physical character of stage productions. The other negative option was that often resorted to by directors belonging to the conventional theatre, who turned down the non-representational direction of symbolist drama, assimilating it within the framework of the traditional, realistic theatre and hence negating the very assumptions on which it relied.

In his gloomier moods, Maeterlinck was inclined to think that "Il faudrait peut-être écarter entièrement l'être vivant de la scène" ("Menus propos", 335). Craig too was given to advocating similarly drastic measures. As he put it,

> Do away with the actor, and you do away with the means by which a debased stage-realism is produced and flourishes. No longer would there be a living figure to confuse us into connecting actuality and art; no longer a living figure in which the weakness and tremors of the flesh were perceptible. (Theatre, 81)

Maeterlinck refrained from laying down any one solution for the problems posed by the presence of the actor of flesh and blood in the idealist theatre, but there was no doubt in his mind that it was necessary to create a radically new art of the stage. The actor, he conjectured, could perhaps be replaced by "une ombre, un reflet, une projection de formes symboliques ou un être qui aurait les allures de la vie sans avoir la vie" ("Menus propos", 335). Alternatively, he was willing to consider the possibility of allowing the actor back into the theatre, through the back door as it were, provided "sa voix, ses gestes et son attitude" were "voilés par un grand nombre de conventions synthétiques" ("Menus propos", 335).

Symons and Craig likewise arrived at the conclusion that the marionette answered the strictures passed on the the actor's limitations as executant. As Symons said,

> The marionette may be relied upon. He will respond to an indication without reserve or revolt; an error on his part ... will certainly be the fault of the author; he can be trained to perfection. As he is painted, so will he smile; as the wires lift or lower his hands, so will his gestures be; and he will dance when his legs are set in motion. (Plays . . .Music, 193)

In "The Actor and the Über-Marionette", which took as its motto a quotation from Symons's Studies in Seven Arts, Craig similarly derided the lack of control of the human body. He proclaimed the actor's inability to correctly execute the director's instructions. His proposed solution was to replace the living actor by the über-marionette, through which the author is able to regain complete control over his material. Unlike the actor,

> The über-marionette will not compete with life - rather will it go beyond it. Its ideal will not be the flesh and blood but the body in trance - it will aim to clothe itself with a death-like beauty while exhaling a living spirit. (Theatre, 84-85)

Superficially regarded, Craig's executants, endowed "with a death-like beauty while exhaling a living spirit", are the antithesis of Maeterlinck's ideal of "un être qui aurait les allures de la vie sans avoir la vie". But the underlying concern is the same as that which led Maeterlinck to dictate that he would only tolerate the actor in the theatre provided his gestures, movements and facial expressions were ruled by artistic principles rather than naturalistic verisimilitude. As Bablet has pointed out, the über-marionette is "the actor who has acquired some of the virtues of the marionette and thus released himself from servitude".[28]

The Symbolists saw the marionette as not only an improvement on the actor in terms of technical accomplishment but also as a means of enhancing the play's sense of mystery and releasing powerful emotions of fear, wonder and awe in the spectator. Paul Margueritte grasped this important point as early as 1888. He emphasized that where the actor destroys the illusion, "les fantoches impersonnels, êtres de bois et de carton, possèdent une vie falote et mystérieuse. Leur allure de vie surprend, inquiète. Dans leurs gestes essentiels tient l'expression complète des sentiments humains".[29] Maeterlinck followed him in praising the uncanny effect of "tout être qui a l'apparence de la vie sans avoir la vie" ("Menus propos", 336). He also agreed with Margueritte and with France that the anti-illusionist convention which he hoped to establish was a new application of old techniques; it was, as he put it, "un art

mort ou nouveau" ("Menus propos", 335).

The English representatives of the anti-materialist theatre continued this line of thinking. Symons emphasized that puppet and mask - whose skilful deployment he saw as two anti-illusionist procedures of equal effectiveness - constituted a revival of ancient and well-proven techniques. He pointed out that the puppet was

> ... a fantastic, yet a direct, return to the masks of the Greeks; that learned artifice by which tragedy and comedy were assisted in speaking to the world with the universal voice, by this deliberate generalising of emotion. (Plays. . . Music, 195)

In "The Actor and the Über-Marionette" Craig too attempted to invest the marionette with the dignity of an immemorial and illustrious lineage. Like Symons, he went on to extol the puppet's artificiality as the principal source of its artistic power. He voiced the hope that the marionette, that grave and calm "descendant of the stone images of the old temples" (Theatre, 82) and by nature a "symbolic creature" (Theatre, 84), would come to occupy a position of steadily increasing importance in the modern theatre - the ultimate aim being, as he put it, to "gain once more the `noble artificiality' which the old writer speaks of" (Theatre, 84). The strikingly similar labels applied by Symons and Craig respectively to the effect created by the marionette - Symons's term "learned artifice" paralleling Craig's "noble artificiality" - testify to both men's disenchantment with "a debased stage-realism" (Theatre, 81) and their shared longing for a poetical and symbolical art.

Symons's comments on Maeterlinck's ability to avail himself of the

unique qualities of the marionette also point to another use to which the puppet can be put: that of a criterion for distinguishing between on the one hand the drama of accident and circumstance and on the other hand that of the most interior being:

> Maeterlinck wrote on the title-page of one of his volumes "Drames pour marionnettes", no doubt to intimate his sense of the symbolical value, in the interpretation of a profound inner meaning, of that external nullity which the marionette by its very nature emphasises. And so I find my puppets, where the extremes meet, ready to interpret not only the "Agamemnon", but "La Mort de Tintagiles"; for the soul, which is to make, we may suppose, the drama of the future, is content with as simple a mouth-piece as Fate and the great passions, which were the classic drama. (Plays . . .Music, 196)

There was a general consensus of opinion that puppets were the ideal vehicle for relaying what is universal and essential in the human condition. Their appeal to the idealist theatre also derived from their ability to instil into the audience an awareness of metaphysical issues, to go beyond the "here" and "now" into a mysterious realm, frequently touching the religious sphere.

But what had the most decisive and far-reaching consequences for the development of modern theatrical conventions was the fact that his interest in non-naturalistic forms of dramatic expression spilled over into the theatres employing actors of flesh and blood. In Intérieur Maeterlinck specified that the characters in the house, who are being watched by a group of people from the garden, must aim at a non-naturalistic effect. As it is put in the first stage-direction, "Il semble que lorsque l'un d'eux se lève, marche ou fait un geste, ses mouvements soient graves, lents, rares et comme spiritualisés par la

distance, la lumière et le voile indécis des fenêtres" (Théâtre, II, 233). In the wake of Maeterlinck's adaptation of the techniques of mime in Intérieur and the creation of characters vaguely looking and behaving like marionettes, Lugné-Poe, for a long time Maeterlinck's chief interpreter in France, created a distinctive style in his Théâtre de l'Oeuvre by directing his actors to emulate the rigidity and hieratic slowness of puppets. The attempt at approximating the distinctive movements of puppets was carried to its most notorious extreme in Lugné-Poe's 1896 production of Alfred Jarry's Ubu Roi, which shocked and outraged both Symons and Yeats, striking the former as "a sort of comic antithesis to Maeterlinck",[30] and eliciting from the latter the comment that after the Symbolists in poetry and painting, after "all our subtle colour and nervous rhythm" (Aut., 349), the only further development that has proved to be possible is "the Savage God". But in spite of his derogatory remarks about the actors in Ubu Roi, who are, as he put it, "supposed to be dolls, toys, marionettes ... hopping like wooden frogs" (Aut., 348), Yeats himself had a keen interest in puppets. He attended two of the productions of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre and, possibly under the impetus of the various recent examples of the assimilation of popular traditions to literary drama, founded the movements of his actors on those of marionettes in At the Hawk's Well.[31]

Maeterlinck's desire to replace the actor by "une ombre, un reflet" or "une projection de formes symboliques" ("Menus Propos", 335); Craig's belief that by making the actor wear a mask he becomes a symbol of man; Symons's perception of Maeterlinck's characters as superior to

actors of flesh and blood because they are at once "more ghostly" and "more mechanical than living beings" [32]; Craig's yearning for the über-marionette, a cross between a rational being and a wooden puppet; Yeats's fascination with states representing "death-in-life" and "life-in-death" [33] - all these testify to a common preoccupation with finding ways of bringing on the stage works of art that can highlight life yet at the same time be greater than it and remain uncontaminated by its "complexities", its "mire and blood" [34]. Instead, these artists were interested in a process described by Symons in "The Russian Ballets" as the need for "reality" to "fade into illusion, and then illusion must return into a kind of unreal reality".[35]

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

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[1] This description, which originated with Maeterlinck himself, was included in Mirbeau's article: see Robichez, p. 67, note 173.

[2] The Brotherton Collection, Leeds University Library.

[3] Arthur Symons, rev. of La Princesse Maleine and L'Intruse, Athenaeum (23 April 1892), p. 525.

[4] E.G. Craig, On the Art of the Theatre (London: William Heinemann, 1911), pp. 268-269. Further references will be given in the text as (Theatre, x).

[5] "On Hamlet and Hamlets", Dramatis Personae (London: Faber aand Gwyer, 1925), pp. 309-316; "The Sicilian Actors", Plays Acting and Music, 2nd rev. ed., pp. 213-225; "A New Art of the Theatre", Studies in Seven Arts, pp. 349-367. Compare also Lawrence W. Markert, "The Art of the Theatre: Charles Lamb, Arthur Symons and Edward Gordon Craig", English Literature in Transition, XXV (1982), 147-157.

[6] Towards a New Theatre: Forty Designs for Stage Scenes with Critical Notes by the Inventor (London: 1913) pp. 41-42; "On the Ghosts in the Tragedies of Shakespeare", Theatre, 264-280; "The Actor and the Über-Marionette", Theatre, 54-94.

[7] Compare Evelyne Capiau-Laureys, introd., "Un Théâtre d'Androïdes",

Annales de la Fondation Maurice Maeterlinck, XXIII (1977), 15-16.

[8] "Chronique du mois". La Revue Wagnérienne, p. 65.

[9] Mallarmé, "Notes sur le théâtre", Revue Independante; rpt. Oeuvres complètes, Bibliotheque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 318.

[10] Mallarmé, Oeuvres complètes, p. 318.

[11] J.A. Henderson, The First Avant-Garde (London: George G. Harrap, 1971).

[12] Anatole France, "Les Marionnettes de M. Signoret"; rpt. La Vie littéraire, II (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1899), 148.

[13] Maeterlinck's personal copy is kept at the Fondation Maurice Maeterlinck, Ghent.

[14] Evelyne Capiau-Laureys, pp. 7-12.

[15] Mockel, La Wallonie, V (June - July 1890), 207-251.

[16] "Menus propos: le théâtre", La Jeune Belgique, IX (September 1890), 331-336. Further references will be given in the text.

[17] Albert Mockel, Propos de littérature; rpt. Esthétique du Symbolisme, ed. Michel Otten (Brussels: Palais des Academies), 1962, p. 92.

[18] Charles Lamb, "On the Tragedies of Shakspeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation"; in Lamb, Charles and Mary, Miscellaneous Prose, ed. E.V. Lucas (London: Methuen, 1912), p. 124

[19] Edward Bullough, " `Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle", British Journal of Psychology, V (June 1912), 87-118.

[20] Bullough, p. 97.

[21] Anatole France, p. 148.

[22] Margueritte, Le Petit Théâtre; as quoted in Henderson, p. 123.

[23] Craig, "A Note on Masks", The Mask, I (March 1908), 9-12.

[24] Mockel, "Chronique littéraire", p. 211.

[25] Mallarmé, Oeuvres complètes, p. 301.

[26] Maeterlinck, in Huret, Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire (Paris: Fasquelle, 1913), p. 126.

[27] Symons, "An Apology for Puppets", Plays, Acting, and Music (London: Duckworth, 1903), p. 193. Further references will be given in the text as (Plays. . .Music, x).

[28] Bablet, Denis. The Theatre of Edward Gordon Craig, trans. Daphne Woodward (London: Heinemann, 1966; rpt. London: Eyre Methuen, 1981), p. 109.

[29] Margueritte; as quoted in Henderson, p. 123.

[30] Symons, "A Symbolist Farce", Studies in Seven Arts, p. 374.

[31] Yeats's stage-direction is very explicit on this count. As he puts it, the masked Old Man's movements, "like those of the other persons in the play, suggest a marionette" (Variorum Plays, 401).

[32] Symons, "Maeterlinck as a Mystic", p. 349.

[33] Yeats, "Byzantium", Collected Poems, p. 280.

[34] Yeats, Collected Poems, p. 280.

[35] Symons, "The Russian Ballets", Dramatis Personae, p. 287.

CHAPTER THREE: ARTHUR SYMONS

Barbara Roscorla's Child* + **

With the publication of The Symbolist Movement in Literature in 1899 Symons achieved the reputation of being England's foremost interpreter of the aims and achievements of the symbolist movement in France. Shortly afterwards, he decided to stake out a claim for himself in an area of literary symbolism into which he had as yet not ventured: the composition of a symbolist play. The only tangible product of this new ambition was Barbara Roscorla's Child, a one-act play. He was never able to bring it to publication or production, but it registers the powerful influence of Maeterlinck on him. There are several drafts, the most finished of which is a nineteen-page typescript dated 1902, now at Princeton University Library. The library also holds two undated typed carbon copies of a manuscript version, exhibiting minor differences from the principal typescript. Their format is different, the Nurse is called Asenath instead of Vecchan and the period is specified as being 1808.

The title refers to the unborn child of Barbara and Peter Roscorla - the Roscorla heir whose imminent birth is dreaded by his mother, awaited with passionate longing by his father. The play contains virtually no overt conflict or "action" in the traditional sense; only at the very end is the initial situation changed by Barbara Roscorla's sudden and self-inflicted death. Until that moment the text consists of

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* For the complete text of this unpublished play see Appendix 1.

** Since submitting this thesis the compilers of a Symons bibliography (in progress) have drawn my attention to the existence of a variant version in print of this text in the Little Review October 1917, pp. 25-36. This fact does not affect my argument, however.

an exposition of and ruminations about the events leading up to the present crisis. The chief source of information is Vecchan, the old nurse who has looked after three generations of Roscorlas. From her we learn that the Roscorlas are a degenerate race whose scions are at best afflicted with an unstable and excitable personality, at worst with incurable insanity. From the conversation between Vecchan and Sister Agatha, one of two medical nurses hired to look after the dangerously sick Barbara, it emerges that Peter's principal motive in wanting a son is to prevent his younger brother Gregory from inheriting Roscorla Manor. Vecchan claims that the hatred between the brothers is as gratuitous as it is fierce, and as such a perfect illustration of the old local saying "to hate like a Roscorla". In the second half of the play her words are confirmed by Peter himself, who explains, on being asked by the doctor what wrong his brother has done him to deserve his loathing, "Wrong? None. He exists".

In the course of the exchange of confidences between the characters it becomes clear that the young woman's physical collapse dates from the day when she was enlightened about the terrible legacy she was liable to pass on to her child. Instantly, her joy at the prospect of becoming a mother changed into unrelieved horror, and her attitude to her husband underwent a similar transformation.

There can be no doubt that situation, scene and characters exhibit a startling resemblance with Maeterlinck's work. Hardly surprisingly, Symons set out to emulate those aspects of Maeterlinck's drama which he had singled out for special praise in his review articles: the

characteristic doom-laden atmosphere of Maeterlinck's plays, the child-like simplicity of the dialogue, the ghostliness of the characters.

Two of Maeterlinck's pseudo-legendary plays, La Princesse Maleine and Pelléas et Mélisande, supplied a considerable number of echoes of a verbal and situational kind. A further source was L'Intruse, the first play by Maeterlinck which Symons had seen in performance. From L'Intruse he appears to have derived the inspiration for the precipitating context, the setting and some of the characters of Barbara Roscorla's Child. In L'Intruse as well as in Barbara Roscorla's Child a number of people are gathered in a large room, listening to the sounds outside and talking about a young woman who is never seen but who engrosses their minds from first to last. Both women are gravely ill, Barbara preceding labour, the heroine of L'Intruse following childbirth. Consequently, the conversation revolves round man's painful and inevitable confrontation with the great mysteries of birth, death and love. The two sets of onstage characters seem to be waiting for something to happen. They have been promised further medical assistance: Peter Roscorla has been told that the doctor will call later that evening, and the personages of L'Intruse expect a relative, a nun, and the doctor to make an appearance. But to the audience it is clear that both groups are in reality waiting for death to strike. In L'Intruse the first intimation of death's approach is contained in the stage-direction "Un peu de vent s'élève dans l'avenue", which is followed by a succession of mainly auditory signs of the steady progress of the uninvited guest. In Barbara Roscorla's Child too the

wind adds a preternatural dimension to the action. The dreaded event is hinted at in the play's opening line, which follows the stage direction reading,

"Vecchan and Sister Agatha are seated by the fire, the old woman drowses. The wind is heard as the curtain rises":

> Sister Agatha (with a start). Vecchan, Vecchan, is that only the wind?

The adverb "only" in this question establishes the nurse's unease and simultaneously hints at the possibility that a preternatural force is at work. Sister Agatha's nervousness recalls the disquiet of L'Intruse's blind Grandfather, who is finely attuned to sounds and movements, invariably discerning omens in them. Thus Sister Agatha and the Grandfather are spokesmen for the non-materialistic individual, who listens to the inner music. Both characters play a crucial part in the creation of a mood of fearful anticipation and impending catastrophe. They prepare the reader/spectator for the dénouement, which is fundamentally the same in both plays: the door of the sick-room is opened and someone appears through it to announce the death of the unseen heroine.

The scene of Barbara Roscorla's Child exhibits a remarkable resemblance to the setting of L'Intruse. Instead of situating the events in a dark castle somewhere in northern Flanders, Symons laid his scene in a manor near the sea-coast of his native Cornwall. But apart from this distinction, the initial direction, describing the room in which

the stage-action takes place, reads very much like its counterpart in L'Intruse. In each case the room contains a fireplace and a number of chairs round a table, and there are three doors, one of which opens into the room where the sick woman is being looked after by a nurse. Moreover, Barbara Roscorla's Child and L'Intruse begin at dusk and end when the night has completely closed in. Roscorla Manor is firmly in the tradition of Maeterlinck's castles inspired by a conception of the Middle Ages that is wholly conventional rather than historically exact. Two of Symons's typescripts indicate that the events take place in 1808, but in actual fact the universe of Barbara Roscorla's Child is as timeless as that of Maeterlinck's legendary plays. It contains no hint of couleur locale or of historical reconstruction. Like Maeterlinck's castles, in particular that to which Mélisande is taken as a young bride, Roscorla Manor is an exceedingly oppressive place. It is not only by Symons's and Maeterlinck's high-strung heroines that a menacing quality is discerned in the surroundings - even the robust Golaud and Peter Roscorla are alive to this aspect of the places to which they have taken their respective brides. They react in an identical manner to the confusion and mental strain from which their wives are manifestly suffering. Golaud instantly imputes Mélisande's depression to the bleakness of the castle in which he has forced her to live, admitting "Il est vrai que ce château est très vieux et très sombre .... Il est très froid et très profond ... la campagne semble triste aussi" (Act II, sc. 2). Similarly, Peter Roscorla initially blames his ancestral home for his wife's condition: "It's wild here in the winter, the house is gloomy, it's too near the sea".

On the stylistic level too Maeterlinck's example is strongly in evidence. Already in the opening lines, we are reminded of Maeterlinck's characteristic patterns of verbal reiterations, echoes, elliptical constructions and short exclamatory sentences interwoven with expressive silences. Symons strove to emulate Maeterlinck's skilful creation of potent atmosphere through the process of repeating words of considerable affective power or symbolical resonance. Thus the dialogue at the beginning of Barbara Roscorla's Child revolves round a rapid succession of short, near-identical questions and answers about the wind and its significance:

> ...is that only the wind?
> ...
> Is that the wind?
> ...
> It is the wind from the sea
> ...
> There's always been wind at sea when the Roscorlas were born; they bring trouble.

The last sentence in this series confirms that in Barbara Roscorla's Child the wind is more than a natural force - it is a harbinger of disaster, a messenger of the beyond. The play stands or falls by the reader's willingness or refusal to go along with Vecchan 's assertion of a indissoluble link between the birth of a Roscorla and a violent disturbance in nature. There is certainly no denying that Symons made a sustained effort at imbuing his play with mounting tension through the cumulative effect of the persistent repetition of words and nouns containing the sememe "fear". This practice recalls the incessant reiteration of the plaintive exclamation "J'ai peur" in La Princesse Maleine and the centrality of words such as "inquiétude" and "peur" in L'Intruse. In Barbara Roscorla's Child too fear is the

dominant emotion. It has paralyzed the heroine and steadily builds up in the secondary characters as well. Vecchan's claim that in Peter Roscorla's family death is a lesser evil than birth is followed by an incantatory sequence of variations on the reason for Barbara's lost peace of mind:

> Sister Agatha (nodding her head towards the closed door). Do you think she is going to die?
>
> Vecchan. It isn't death I'm fearing; it's being born.
>
> Sister Agatha. Is that what she is afraid of?
>
> Vecchan. It's a poor gift, being born; if they that come could think twice, not many of them would take it.
>
> Sister Agatha. Is that what she is afraid of? I have never seen any woman who seemed to dread so what was going to happen. She lies there all the time as if she were seeing a ghost.
>
> Vecchan. The wives of all the Roscorlas feared what they were going to bring into the world. Peter Roscorla's wife is only like all the others.
>
> Sister Agatha. I have never seen any woman who was so afraid of being a mother.

Barbara is evoked in terms that are reminiscent of Maeterlinck's heroines. Vecchan describes her as "A little and sweet thing, like a young child that I could take in my arms". She agreed to marry Peter without knowing anything about him or his family history. The shattering of her illusions breaks her will to live and undermines her fragile constitution. She is reported to be lying in bed, her hair spread over the pillow, her eyes wide open, looking as though "she were seeing a ghost". She utters hardly any words but from time to time "cries a little, very quietly". Sister Agatha's pitying comment, "She is such a

little thing, and so young, and sometimes she trembles all over" brings to the mind the murder scene of La Princesse Maleine, in which Queen Anne asks

> ... Mais pourquoi me regardes-tu ainsi, Maleine?... Tu trembles comme si tu allais mourir. - Mais tu fais trembler tout le lit. (Act IV, sc. 5)

Peter Roscorla too is modelled on a Maeterlinckian character: when he makes his abrupt entry the resemblance to Golaud springs to the eye. Like Golaud, the hunter, Peter appears in riding-gaiters, spotted with mud, and carrying a whip. The parallel is carried further in his passionate and violent temperament, his precarious self-control, his jealous hatred of his younger brother, his obsequious attitude to the doctor. Again like Golaud and like the characters in L'Intruse, he has been ordered to stay away from the sick-room. The doctor's enquiry,

> You have left her quite alone? Not disturbed her in any way? Not let her know that you have any anxiety?

is reminiscent of the death scene in the final act of Pelléas et Mélisande. In Pelléas et Mélisande too, the dying heroine's husband is entreated to leave her alone and refrain from doing anything that might worry her. In spite of his verbal assurances to leave his wife in peace, Peter is no more capable of keeping his promise than was Golaud in similar circumstances. He forces his way into the bedroom, where he follows his literary predecessor's example by losing his temper and shouting at his dying wife. He triggers off what is probably the most unequivocally derivative speech of the play - that in which Dr. Trevithick sums up his views about Barbara's case and its relation to the so-called "Roscorla legacy". It is preceded and introduced by

Vecchan's scathing comment at the doctor's appearance: "It's not the doctor that's wanted, but the power of God." Her words are borne out by what Dr. Trevithick explains painstakingly to the headstrong and sullen Peter. What is required, and is lacking, is "the power of the priest", that is to say, "the power of getting at the truth, the real inner truth of our patients". This formulation is among the most significant ones in the text. It establishes that Symons still subscribed to the praise which he had lavished on Browning in his critical study of 1886 for evolving "a drama of the interior, a tragedy or comedy of the soul".[1] In the second place, it recalls Symons's definition in "The Decadent Movement in Literature" of "Impressionism" and "Symbolism" as two branches of Decadence linked by their common search for what he tended to define as "la vraie vérité".[2] Lastly, it appears to hark back to the closing scene of Pelléas et Mélisande, where Golaud is portrayed as a man tormented by his overwhelming and everlastingly frustrated need to know the truth - "truth" meaning not just whether Mélisande has been guilty of adultery but also what has been going on in her innermost self. The doctor's subsequent elaborations bring Barbara Roscorla's Child even closer to Maeterlinck's text. He labours the point that

> The body is so often little more than the slave of the mind. And yet all we can say is "Do you feel a pain here, a pain there?" the mere ache of the body. We dare not pry into the soul.

His diagnosis that "Something has been preying on [Barbara's] mind; the mind has helped to take its own revenge on the body" recalls a similar exchange of views between Golaud and the doctor at Mélisande's

death-bed. In Pelléas et Mélisande too the doctor is positive that the heroine is not dying from the tiny scratch inflicted on her by her jealous husband. Once again only a full understanding of the secret movements in Mélisande's soul could account for her sudden and mysterious death. There can be little doubt that Maeterlinck stands behind the rather clumsy speech delivered by Dr. Trevithick. Both his actual words and the spirit informing them are fully in keeping with the tenor of certain reflections of Maeterlinck's wise men, such as King Arkël and the doctor in Pelléas et Mélisande and the two Grandfathers in L'Intruse and Intérieur. Arkël's admonition to Golaud,

> L'âme humaine est très silencieuse ...
> L'âme humaine aime à s'en aller seule....Elle souffre si timidement ... (Act V, sc. 2)

would be a perfect epigraph for Barbara Roscorla's Child.

Dr. Trevithick's comments about the revenge of the mind on the body spell out what is implied in Maeterlinck's plays. As Etienne De Greeff has persuasively argued, in Maeterlinck's legendary drama death is never a purely physical function but the reflection of the extinction of man's emotional ties with his environment.[3] The same consideration applies to Barbara Roscorla. Even though her actual death is induced by the draining of the phial given to her by Vecchan, it ultimately goes back to the discovery of the truth about her husband. The intervening time is taken up by the translation of the unconscious decision to die into a deliberate act. As in the case of Mélisande, her struggle is basically one with the deep-rooted fear of an unnatural death. The echo of Mélisande's distraught exclamation "Oh! oh! Je n'ai pas de

courage.... Je n'ai pas de courage!..." (Act IV, sc. 4) in Barbara's murmur "If I had only the courage!... It would be the right thing, wouldn't it?", is not fortuitous - it testifies to a profound kinship between the two women and highlights the similarity of their predicaments. Very much like Mélisande, Barbara Roscorla is "lying there between life and death, as if she had to choose between them". Both options are equally terrifying: she hesitates before the violence of suicide but is also horrified at the thought of perpetuating the Roscorla curse. The swelling sea and the rising wind are unnerving omens of the violence which the birth of a Roscorla heir is liable to unleash. She eventually resolves the dilemma in favour of death, as it was clear from the outset she would do. In this respect too Barbara Roscorla's Child tallies with Maeterlinck's plays. With them, it shares the characteristic that death is written in all its stage-properties: in the disturbed forces of nature, the old and oppressive building, the deepening and encroaching gloom. Since the outcome has from the earliest stages of the play been felt to be a fait accompli, the general effect is best described as that associated with a rite, an end-game, a "drame d'attente". If such a play is to capture the attention of the reader/spectator, the visible action must incessantly reverberate towards the infinite; behind the dialogue and the events one must sense the irresistible pull of fate. But this is precisely what Barbara Roscorla's Child fails to do. One should of course not be too harsh on an unfinished draft of a play but it is nevertheless quite clear that Symons found it hard to achieve the effect he wanted. An example of Symons's difficulties in realizing his intentions is the confrontation between Vecchan and her employer towards

the end of the first half of the play. Fearlessly facing Peter, Vecchan speaks "meaningfully":

> There's a wind at sea, Master Peter, there's a wind coming up from the sea; the wind's bringing trouble, it's bringing trouble to the Roscorlas; mark my words, it's an evil night, Master Peter, it's an evil night to be born on.

It seems clear that with this speech Symons wished to conjure up an image of the inescapability of the ruthless forces of destiny. But Vecchan's claim, coming as it does after a steady flow of omens, loaded statements and warnings, is the stroke that makes the balance tip from the atmospheric to the ridiculous. In fact, it is generally true that much of what is stylistically unsatisfactory in Barbara Roscorla's Child stems from Symons's inability to use restraint. Anxious to get his point across, he is given to excessive explicitness. Where reverie and indirection are called for, he uses bluntness and matter-of-factness. The speech by Vecchan which has just been quoted is one example of this practice. Another instance is found in Sister Agatha's report about Barbara. To Vecchan's question "Has she said nothing?", Sister Agatha replies:

> She was listening, and she asked me if that was the wind, and I said yes, and she said "The wind from the sea, the wind of birth." and then she said "I don't want to die, but it would be better if I were dead. I am bringing life."

Barbara's final words are not merely superfluous - they actually clash with the intended meaning. Whereas without them the lines above would instil into the reader an awareness of the tragic inversion of the associations carried by birth and death, the incongruity of the

concluding sentence deflates the entire statement.

Unlike Maeterlinck's best work, it does not succeed in evoking an individual's confrontation with the mystery of life and destiny. It is clear that in Barbara Roscorla's Child he sought to emulate Maeterlinck's realization of this preoccupation in the dramatic genre. However, the power and effectiveness of Maeterlinck's drama springs from the seemingly effortless and smooth manner in which a mysterious atmosphere and mounting tension are maintained. Symons, on the other hand, tries too hard. His self-conscious gestures towards the creation of mystery ironically deprive the play of the enigmatic quality it might otherwise have had. Where Maeterlinck's plays have atmospheric delicacy and symbolical reverberations, Barbara Roscorla's Child is heavy and ponderous, and, what is most damning of all, at times produces an unintentionally comical effect.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

[1] Symons, An Introduction to the Study of Browning, p. 7.

[2] Symons, "The Decadent Movement in Literature", p. 859.

[3] Etienne De Greeff, p. 355.

CHAPTER FOUR: HARLEY GRANVILLE BARKER

I

Harley Granville Barker's encounter with Maeterlinck's work strikes one as inevitable: given the nature of the theatrical conditions in and with which Barker had to work, the subjects that never ceased to exercise his mind and the struggle to find adequate technical means of conveying the themes haunting him both through the medium of words and on the stage, it was entirely predictable that he would sooner or later have come within the orbit of Maeterlinck. For convenient classification, Barker's work is usually split up into some four separate categories: acting, producing, playwriting, literary criticism. Yet even a superficial acquaintance with his achievements indicates that such a division is artificial and misleading. Better understanding is afforded by an approach focusing not so much on these various forms of artistic endeavour as on the general principle informing them all and summarily described by the title of one of his plays, The Secret Life. The formula underlying all his work, whether creative, critical or performing, centres on the belief that the main task of the artist is to evoke a sense of the primacy of the inner self in all areas of human enterprise, including politics, the professional and the social realms. Barker's plays embody the idea, expounded in his critical and theoretical writings, that for man to fulfil his highest potential, it is necessary that he listen to the inner voice and act according to its directions. The prominence of the theme of the inner life of man in Barker's work has often been remarked upon.[1] In recent years, it has

been the subject of an Oxford thesis,[2] which traces its manifestations throughout Barker's oeuvre. Barker himself never ceased to emphasize his preference for inner drama and deeper significance over external action - instances of this partiality are scattered all over his work and his enthusiastic support for Maeterlinck's decision to deal "always with the inwardness of things," [3] is only one typical example among many. It is not known exactly when Barker's involvement with Maeterlinck's art began - an involvement which was multi-faceted since equally as dramatist, producer and critic Barker was concerned with Maeterlinck's theory and practice. In view of his strong bias in favour of a mode of playwriting concentrating on the inner man, he may have become acquainted with the texts of Maeterlinck's "drama of the interior" even before his practical work in the theatre gave him first-hand experience of its value as material for scenic representation. Both what was effectively his theatrical training and his personal thematic and stylistic partialities predisposed him to viewing Maeterlinck's experiments sympathetically. Barker acquired some of his most valuable experience while working as a kind of apprentice for the sort of people and theatrical societies which had been responsible for the introduction and propagation of Maeterlinck's drama in England, and which collectively represented the increasingly influential and respected non-commercial theatre lobby. His early acting experience included a spell as an understudy during Florence Farr's season at the Avenue Theatre in 1894,[4] in the course of which Shaw's Arms and the Man and Yeats's The Land of Heart's Desire were performed; the title role in Poel's production of Richard II in November 1899 and the part of Eric Bratsberg in Ibsen's The League of Youth, produced by the Stage Society on 25 February 1900.

Whatever their method, the leading figures behind the societies Barker trained with were all determined to confound the attitudes prevailing in the commercial theatre. The stances exemplified by these societies cohered in their unrelenting opposition to the privileges of the actor-manager, the "star" system, the long run and the sacrifice of the play to spectacle and effects. Their alternatives almost invariably revolved round the rehabilitation of the text and, as regards production, greater austerity and unity of tone and effect. While William Poel's productions of Shakespeare were undoubtedly of everlasting importance to Barker's attitude to staging Shakespeare[5] and interpreting him, in the theatre as well as in the printed word, his involvement with the Stage Society played a decisive role in his appreciation of Maeterlinck's dramatic qualities. The Stage Society, founded in 1899 with the view to enabling English and foreign plays of outstanding literary and experimental value to be brought before the public, was equally bent on combating the pernicious conventions of the commercial theatre. Its predecessor, the Independent Theatre, had been established by a Dutch businessman, J.T. Grein, in response to the growing clamour for an alternative to the romantic comedy dominating the nineteenth- century stage as well as to the pseudo-intellectual drama of Jones and Pinero. At its foundation, Grein had defined his aim as the performing of plays "of a higher artistic value and social interest than those which appeal to the great mass of playgoers".[6]

While the Independent Theatre's success in arranging for a visit of Lugné-Poe's Théâtre de l'Oeuvre to London had produced an exhilarating example of the French style of staging Maeterlinck,[7] it was

the Stage Society, the spiritual heir of the Independent Theatre, which, by giving Barker his first opportunity to work as a director, brought renewed attention to Maeterlinck's symbolist drama in England. On 29 April 1900 Barker presented to the public a programme consisting of two plays by Maeterlinck, Intérieur and La Mort de Tintagiles, together with Fiona MacLeod's The House of Usna.[8] It was the beginning of a sustained involvement in the scenic realization of Maeterlinck's work, whose plays are found at the very outset of Barker's career as a director, at its very end and somewhere in the middle, in the first few months of the Barker-Vedrenne venture at the Royal Court Theatre.

Evidently committed to the idea of a non-commercial theatre and excited by the possibility of bringing examples of contemporary developments in European drama and of new "serious" British work before the public, Barker resolved to follow in the steps of the Stage Society while expanding its scope and broadening its appeal. To this end, he thought it indispensable to provide good drama at a repertory theatre. In an often quoted letter to his friend and close literary associate William Archer he wrote:

> I think the Independent Theatre - the New Century - The Stage Society - have prepared the ground, and the time is ripe for starting a theatre upon these lines, upon a regular - however unpretending- basis ...[9]

The result was the Vedrenne-Barker venture at the Royal Court Theatre between 1904 and 1907. Its history is well known and has been fully documented by Margery Morgan, C.B. Purdom, Anthony Jackson[10] and others. It is therefore not necessary to reiterate the general facts; the only

point that needs to be raised is that the third play to be produced during the Court's "stock season of the uncommercial Drama" [11] was Maeterlinck's Aglavaine et Sélysette, in a translation by Alfred Sutro with Thyrza Norman as Sélysette, Florence Farr as Méligraine, Walter Hampden as Méléander and Edyth Olive as Aglavaine.[12] When after a long absence from the theatre, Barker returned to the London stage on 8 January 1921, he did so with a glittering production of Maeterlinck's The Betrothal,[13] the last play he directed singlehandedly.[14] Barker's productions of La Mort de Tintagiles, Intérieur, Aglavaine et Sélysette, and The Betrothal, occurring at considerable intervals and spanning his entire career as a producer, testify to his enduring interest in Maeterlinck's work and his continuing belief in its stageworthiness. There is nothing in the critical notices of Barker's productions to suggest that he brought a new, exciting or innovative interpretation to Maeterlinck's plays. On the contrary, it is clear that his performances were conducted along much more conservative lines than those of, for instance, Lugné-Poe's company, trained in symbolist techniques. The reason for this traditional approach will become clear when we look at the relation between Maeterlinck's drama and Barker's creative writing and critical statements.

II

The relation between Barker's theory of drama and Maeterlinck's critical insights requires fuller documentation than it has received so far. Barker's two explicit appraisals of Maeterlinck's contribution to the course of modern drama - the introduction to the English translation

of Intérieur, La Mort de Tintagiles and Alladine et Palomides, and the lavish praise bestowed on him in On Poetry and Drama - have elicited a certain amount of comment. But of equal interest are the echoes and half-echoes from "Le Tragique quotidien", scattered over Barker's critical essays, which appear to have gone almost completely unnoticed. All the same, the preface to Maeterlinck's plays - apparently taken on somewhat reluctantly[15] - provides the obvious starting-point for our discussion: not only is it Barker's earliest printed statement on Maeterlinck's art, it is also one of his first pieces of criticism devoted to a specific author[16] and therefore of great interest as a document of his emerging aesthetic. Though Barker's essay fails signally to communicate a sense of excitement about the plays, it does make one or two interesting points - interesting for the light they shed on Barker's dramatic principles rather than as incisive remarks about Maeterlinck's achievement. As the preface establishes, by 1910 Barker had grasped the crucial fact that Maeterlinck's plays must be judged by criteria other than those pertinent to conventional drama. Again and over again, the notion of their "difference" is invoked, though it fails to be followed up. The main point seized on by Barker concerns the new austerity brought into the theatre by Maeterlinck's artistic endeavour. Maeterlinck operated on the principle that an effect of overwhelming intensity, symbolical density and intricate allusiveness can be created by "apparently meagre means" (Introd., V) in " a drama of the simplest stage-craft, plays unfussed in the building" (Introd., VII). Throughout the introduction, the stillness, delicacy and hushed quality of Maeterlinck's work are elaborated in unstated but strongly felt contrast to the scenic splendour and indulgence in spectacle that had been in

favour with the public from the middle of the nineteenth century until about 1910.[17] The pictorialism of Maeterlinck's symbolist plays, which had clearly made a strong impression on Barker, stood at several removes from what was understood by pictorialism in the Victorian theatre, where it denoted the elaborate realisation or emulation of action paintings on the stage, allied in spirit to the tableau vivant and symptomatic of the displacement of the literary and performing aspects of the production by dramatic spectacle and scenic effects. In the context of Maeterlinck's work, by contrast, references to his pictorialism tended to be forthcoming in response to the purity of outline, the restrained and sober execution required for their representation, giving the staged play almost the air of a still life. Like many reviewers before him, Barker remarked on the fact that the reading of these plays conjures up images of Pre-Raphaelite paintings and in the case of Alladine et Palomides, of Giotto;

> ... I have always had before me a scene, harmonious, reposeful, decorative simply, something Burne-Jones might have painted; not of rococo realism, gaudy and glaringly lit, strong drink to the jaded optic nerves of a crowd over-wearied with pleasure or work. I see figures, stilly moving, of a calm spiritual beauty, half in shadow; not ebullient, painted, popular personalites. (Introd., VIII)

As we shall see, it is this close mental association of Maeterlinckian and Pre-Raphaelite features that lies at the basis of A Miracle, a short unpublished play which has been linked, perhaps too firmly, to Maeterlinck's example.

Just as the scenic qualities of Maeterlinck's symbolist drama were

totally unlike those of the Victorian spectacular theatre, so his language represented a new departure. It was part of the general symbolist endeavour to recover the original purity of language and develop its suggestive potential. Barker's comments on Maeterlinck's dialogue indicate that he was fully conscious of its superiority to the strident and hollow rhetoric then current in the commercial theatre:

> Above all I hear the cool strong music of human voices at their purest. Maeterlinck, we are told, has no ear for music. That means - for a man who has written nothing else - that any chord is rough against his ear. He asks for the simple single melody of speech. Beauty of speech is still far enough to seek in our Theatre of to-day. (Introd., VI)

In his preface, Barker shows understanding of the suitability of Maeterlinck's mode of playwriting to the contemplation and communication of the essential truths of the human condition; he remarks on the sureness with which Maeterlinck "fixed upon a perfect method of expression" (Introd., VII) in order to "speak of the great facts of life, birth, love, and death" (Introd., VII) - a method hinging on symbolism, the only way of "saying much in little" (Introd., VII). Being first and foremost a practical man of the theatre, Barker had a sharp eye for the theatrical qualities of the plays he had been commissioned to discuss from a primarily literary point of view. It is interesting to note that by the time he came to write the Maeterlinck introduction, he had already produced three of Maeterlinck's plays, two of which - La Mort de Tintagiles and Intérieur - were included in the particular translation he was prefacing, as well as a slightly later work, Aglavaine et Sélysette. Nonetheless, Barker passed severe strictures on the treatment meted out to Maeterlinck's art in the English theatre,

from which he did not exempt his own productions. As Barker was at pains to point out, Maeterlinck's symbolist plays did not deserve the stigma "unfit to be staged", levelled at them from their publication onwards; what they lacked was a different kind of theatre from the one Maeterlinck "could then step into for a franc or two, far other than any he has found since, in this country at least, one is sorry to say" (Introd., VI). However, Barker was not in any way fatalistic; he was convinced that "Given a medium that would grace and not mar them, Maeterlinck's plays are real plays, it is the Theatre which is at fault, not they" (Introd., VI).

Barker's remarks establish two things. In the first place, they make it clear that in spite of his advocacy of the benefits to be derived from reading plays, the play carrying his approval invariably had to pass the test of the theatre, though perhaps only of the utopian theatre of the future. In addition, Barker's comments testify to his continued adherence to naturalism as the framework of his thinking. As is suggested by his wistful call for "a change of system", "a change of heart in our actors", and "a change in public taste" (Introd., X), his stress on the English theatre's inability to stage Maeterlinck's work in a fit manner was not based on the appreciation of its ineluctable other-ness but rooted in his perennial and general dissatisfaction with the conditions and results of the commercial theatre. Barker's introduction includes a few interesting insights but contains nothing to suggest that he had grasped that Maeterlinck's symbolist drama sprang from a sensibility that was different in <u>kind</u>, not just in degree, from that of the realistic theatre, with its assumption of the referential

character of the material presented. One forms the impression that the writing of the preface was slightly hurried, as a result of which it is flawed by a certain amount of imperfectly digested matter. At too many points the discussion breaks off at the moment when the really important issues are beginning to take shape.

The contrast with Barker's observations about Maeterlinck's impact in On Poetry and Drama could not be greater. This lecture, written almost thirty years later, when Barker had a much firmer grasp of the mechanics of his own development, the nature of his literary debts and the principles governing his artistic likes and dislikes, identifies Maeterlinck's symbolist plays as the fountain-head of the revival of English poetic drama towards the beginning of the twentieth century. It is at once a historical sketch of the vicissitudes of what Barker chose to term "poetry in drama", and a statement of his unflagging commitment to one particular mode of playwriting. Barker's essay demonstrates his ability to discern patterns of change and make the right connections between recent literary phenomena and their historical causes. Standing at its centre is a resounding tribute to Maeterlinck's seminal role in the English theatre at the close of the nineteenth century. The new dawn of English literary drama, which saw the theatre achieve fresh vigour and regain a poetic dimension, is traced back to Maeterlinck's realization that "poetic drama" need not mean drama in verse. Maeterlinck's theoretical writings urged the view, illustrated in certain of his plays, that it is possible to write about ordinary life using the kind of unmemorable speech heard in everyday conversations without relinquishing the poetry and the mystery that are the hallmark

of the best Elizabethan verse drama. As Barker strongly emphasized, the remarkable thing about the English poetic revival was not only that it came in prose but also that it should have derived its original impulse from a Belgian symbolist playwright writing in French:

> The poets ... wrote blank verse as if it were a sort of magic formula, and were surprised when the formula did not work. It was no paradox, but a matter of direct significance, that when the revival of poetic drama did come, it came, seemingly, in prose.
>
> Nor do we owe its beginning, as I believe, to any English poet, but to the Belgian, Maurice Maeterlinck.[18]

In On Poetry and Drama, Barker could hardly have been more explicit than be was in his praise of Maeterlinck as one of the seminal thinkers and practitioners in the modern theatre. At a time when Maeterlinck was almost forgotten, Barker recalled his crucial role in revitalizing, revolutionizing and reaffirming the validity of poetic drama. However, the impact of Maeterlinck's work on Barker is also very much in evidence in books and articles acknowledging him only by implication, if at all. The passages that will be discussed in the following pages all illustrate the ways in which Barker's critical discriminations were either nurtured, reinforced or focused by Maeterlinck's example. It is in his adoption of the three critical cornerstones of "Le Tragique quotidien" - the concepts of the tragical in daily life, of static drama and of second-degree dialogue - that Barker's debt to Maeterlinck is most clearly seen.

The famous essay, "Le Tragique quotidien", amounts to a virulent attack on the drama of external action, whose monopoly in the theatre

Maeterlinck bitterly resented. His formula for an alternative theatre sprang from his partiality for a mode of writing expressing the inner self or (in Maeterlinck's words) "notre être véritable" (Trésor, 161). Maeterlinck urged the view that rather than allow himself to be engrossed in the emptiness of surface action, the dramatist ought to evoke a picture of the eternal human condition, "la situation de l'homme dans l'univers" (Trésor, 171). If modern drama was to remain a worthwhile artistic pursuit, it had to steer clear of the superficiality of materialism and concern itself instead with the ultimate realities, which were a source of great anguish as well as of uplifting wonder. Both the plays written by Maeterlinck and those he admired repudiated violence and sought to capture the sense of man's difficult and at times painful quest for "sa vérité, ... sa beauté ou ... son Dieu" (Trésor, 162). From the point of view of the audience, the kind of play in which one was likely to find a poetic image of a psychological or universal condition was characterized by a striking quiescence: the concentration on inner states and the basic problems of existence entailed a drastic reduction in conflict and physical activity and consequently inspired the label "static drama". Maeterlinck's term "le théâtre statique" provoked a good deal of sceptical or even hostile criticism. Yet Maeterlinck had foreseen the objection that "une vie immobile ne serait guère visible, ... il faut bien l'animer de quelques mouvements" (Trésor, 169). He countered this reaction with the words, "Je ne sais s'il est vrai qu'un théâtre statique soit impossible. Il me semble même qu'il existe" (Trésor, 169). In "Le Tragique quotidien" Maeterlinck tried to convey to his readers exactly what he meant by "static drama". His theory allowed for greater flexibility than it was generally

credited with: contrary to widespread belief, physical immobility was neither a prescription nor a target, and his conception of static drama subsumed not just plays marked by a striking stasis but also Greek and Shakespearean tragedies, with their significant share of physical violence. Rather than imply the mandatory absence of visible action, "static drama" referred to its reduction or, alternatively, its subservience to the evocation of inner states and their relation to the mysterious sources of existence. Exactly the same emphasis is found in Barker's essays. He too saw the kind of quiescence achieved through the concentration on states of being as the ideal to be aimed at by the modern dramatist. The principal statement of Barker's partiality for a mode of drama in which linear anecdote and physical movement are drastically subdued is the following:

> One is tempted to imagine a play - to be written in desperate defiance of Aristotle - from which doing would be eliminated altogether, in which nothing but being would be left. The task set the actors of it would be to interest their audience in what the characters <u>were</u>, quite apart from anything they might <u>do</u>; to set up, that is to say, the relation by which all important human intimacies exist. If the art of the theatre could achieve this it would stand alone in a great achievement.[19]

When Barker adds, as a kind of afterthought, "Plays of an approximate intention do indeed exist" though it must be stressed that they are "mostly not English products",[20] it is difficult not to be reminded of Maeterlinck's comment "Je ne sais s'il est vrai qu'un théâtre statique soit impossible. Il me semble même qu'il existe" (<u>Trésor</u>, 169). It is equally hard to resist the conclusion that the kind of foreign drama referred to by Barker was that represented by Maeterlinck, to be followed in later years by Chekhov's. Readers familiar with Barker's

introduction to Intérieur, La Mort de Tintagiles and Alladine et Palomides would immediately have connected Maeterlinck's name with Barker's remark about the existence of foreign plays in which action has been pared down to the bare minimum.

In On Poetry and Drama, written some ten years after "The Heritage of the Actor" (the article about the viability of non-Aristotelian drama), Maeterlinck was again discussed in a similar vein. Maeterlinck, Barker argued, had proved himself to be a poet by dealing "always with the inwardness of things, treating appearances as the mere clothing for that".[21] He went on to point out that

> "It is in the soul" [Maeterlinck] says in that little masterpiece Intérieur, "that things happen". And here, at once, is the secret of dramatic poetry, and of all great drama.[22]

The extent of Barker's admiration for Maeterlinck is attested by the similarity between this tribute and the following definition of "great drama", epitomized by Shakespeare's art:

> No great drama depends upon pageantry. All great drama tends to concentrate upon character; and, even so, not upon picturing men as they show themselves to the world like figures on a stage - though that is how it must ostensibly show them - but on the hidden man.[23]

Barker, it hardly needs to be pointed out, did not share the easy identification of Maeterlinck and Shakespeare posited by Octave Mirbeau - a comparison that does not bear examination and courted the derision which it was liberally accorded. But what the overlap between the extracts quoted above does indicate is how fundamental the stress on

inner movement was to Barker's conception of drama. There is a further notable concurrence between Maeterlinck's perception of the relation between "doing" and "being" in Shakespeare's tragedies and Barker's views on this subject. Maeterlinck held the view that Shakespeare, without ever scrapping material action altogether, subsumed violence and external movement to the exploration of man's soul. According to him, what one hears below the action of the mature plays, such as King Lear, Macbeth, and Hamlet, is "le chant mystérieux de l'infini, le silence menaçant des âmes ou des Dieux, l'éternité qui gronde à l'horizon, la destinée ou la fatalité qu'on aperçoit intérieurement sans que l'on puisse dire à quels signes on la reconnaît" (Trésor, 162). Maeterlinck emphasized that the less action there is, the greater is the likelihood of the protagonist living an inner life of deep intensity - a view encapsulated in his admission, "J'admire Othello, mais il ne me paraît pas vivre de l'auguste vie quotidienne d'un Hamlet, qui a le temps de vivre parce qu'il n'agit pas" (Trésor, 168).

Barker's understanding of what Shakespeare attempted to do was in full accord with Maeterlinck's views. He too continually emphasized that Shakespeare's main interest never lies in exterior action but resides in the inner self. In On Poetry and Drama, the lecture in which Maeterlinck's achievement provides the starting-point for the main argument as well as a focus, Barker remarked on the high concentration of violence in Macbeth but went on to observe, as Maeterlinck had previously done, that Shakespeare was nonetheless primarily "intent upon showing us and upon emphasizing, not what [his characters] do, but what they are".[24] A similar point was raised in the preface to

Love's Labour's Lost, where Barker wrote: "What men are, in fact, comes to concern him far more than what they do".[25] Informing these scattered notes about Shakespeare's art and Barker's and Maeterlinck's discussions of modern authors is the general opposition between the drama of doing and that of being. The principle was enunciated by Barker in On Poetry and Drama, where he argued that while action is fundamental to drama and is therefore ignored by the playwright at his own peril, it seems nevertheless beyond doubt that

> ... as the aim of his art grows finer and its practice more mature, we are likely to find him relegating action to the background and economizing in every sort of doing so that his characters may be able less disturbedly to be what they are ...[26]

The mode of drama outlined in the theoretical writings of both Maeterlinck and Barker, and realized in their creative work - a mode aiming at the reduction of physical conflict and accident and relying on the expressive properties of the various arts of the theatre to suggest its meaning - was geared to the revelation of the inner man and the apprehension of the mysterious laws of the universe. Their common search for a new style and new conventions was inspired by the belief that, in Maeterlinck's terms, "le vacarme inutile d'un acte violent étouffe la voix plus profonde, mais hésitante et discrète, des êtres et des choses" (Trésor, 165). In On Dramatic Method, Barker voiced a similar, though less forcefully stated, insight. According to him, "Action alone can reveal character in outline only and may even obscure for the moment what is within...",[27] Barker's involvement with Shakespeare's art was, needless to say, more profound, sustained and multi-faceted than Maeterlinck's intermittent probing of the principles behind and the

effect of Shakespeare's dramaturgy. Nonetheless, it seems significant that the particular emphasis on the negligibleness of external action in Shakespeare's tragedies which is central to Maeterlinck's various comments on his work, should have re-emerged in Barker's observations. That Barker was familiar with Maeterlinck's writings on Shakespeare is not a matter of conjecture but a demonstrable fact. In On Poetry and Drama Barker gave Maeterlinck credit for having written "some fine pages of Shakespearean criticism" [28] and in the British Academy Annual Shakespeare Lecture for 1925 he availed himself of an excerpt from a little-known introduction by Maeterlinck written for the French translation of Macbeth to characterize Shakespeare's mode of dialogue. Barker made it clear that he fully endorsed Maeterlinck's "masterly analysis of the effect created" [29] by the verbal style in which Shakespeare's personages express themselves - a style intended to be simultaneously a vehicle for intimate revelation, for the advancement of the action and the creation of mystery. According to the definition framed by Maeterlinck, which Barker quoted in his lecture and professed to admire fervently, what "floats" at the "surface" of Macbeth is

> ... le dialogue nécessaire à l'action. Il semble le seul qu'entendent les oreilles; mais en réalité c'est l'autre parole qu'écoute notre instinct, notre sensibilité inconsciente, notre âme si l'on veut; et si les mots extérieurs nous atteignent plus profondément qu'en nul autre poète, c'est qu'une plus grande foule de puissances cachées les supporte.[30]

What Maeterlinck is saying in this extract is that Shakespeare's art depends to a large extent on a particular use of speech which in "Le Tragique quotidien" he termed "dialogue du second degré". Second-degree dialogue was very much the weight-bearing axis of Maeterlinck's theory

of the means of which the poet disposes for exteriorizing inner movements and representing the invisible on the stage. In Maeterlinck's view, conventional drama relied on action and first-degree dialogue or "les mots qui accompagnent et expliquent les actes" (Trésor, 173) for its development. The drama of the most interior being, by contrast, minimized the role of action and substituted, as far as possible, second-degree dialogue for ordinary verbal exchanges. Although "le dialogue du second degré" might strike the uninitiated reader as largely consisting of the words that are spoken "à côté de la vérite stricte et apparente" (Trésor, 174) and are therefore superfluous, Maeterlinck firmly believed that

> ... il faut qu'il y ait autre chose que le dialogue extérieurement necessaire. Il n'y a guère que les paroles qui semblent d'abord inutiles qui comptent dans une oeuvre. C'est en elles que se cache son âme. (Trésor, 173)

In Maeterlinck' view,

> On peut même affirmer que le poeme se rapproche de la beauté et d'une vérité supérieure dans la mesure où il élimine les paroles qui expliquent les actes pour les remplacer par des paroles qui expliquent ... je ne sais quels efforts insaisissables et incessants des âmes vers leur beauté et vers leur vérité. (Trésor, 174)

By quoting and extolling the definition of second-degree dialogue incorporated in the introduction to Maeterlinck's translation of Macbeth, Barker indicated his agreement. Moreover, like Maeterlinck, he emphasized that Shakespeare had "nothing but the spoken word" [31] to reveal the "innermost selves" of his characters. Again like Maeterlinck, he agreed that this apparent meagreness of means was no impediment since

Shakespeare was the supreme practitioner of a mode of dialogue calculated to dig beneath the surface of things and convey a sense of submerged meanings and undercurrents of emotion. The essay prefacing Macbeth contains one further reflection on the nature of Shakespeare's language which reappears in Barker's writing. While open to a variety of dramatic modes, Maeterlinck's highest praise went consistently to those playwrights in whose work one achieves an awareness of the magical power of language - not of verbal pyrotechnics, but of a form of speech transmuting the words of everyday usage into vehicles of symbolical and evocative meaning. Thus he commended Shakespeare for his outstanding skill in keeping his readers and audiences virtually entranced by means of

> ... la résurrection incessante et subtile de tous les mots qui, magiquement au passage du poète, deviennent de frémissantes métaphores et surgissent des tombeaux du dictionnaire.[32]

In the article "The Heritage of the Actor", Barker repeated the gist of this formulation. Barker too stressed that Shakespeare "did but take the common speech of one class and another as material for his magic", and went on to say:

> And magic is needed; the power of the spoken word is a magic power. But the art of the theatre is not a reasonable art. A play's dialogue is an incantation, and the actors must bewitch us with it.[33]

The fact that the statement by Maeterlinck which this observation closely resembles occurs in the introduction to Macbeth, from which quotations are found in Barker's From Henry V to Hamlet, lends force to the suggestion of a causal link between the passages in question.

Elsewhere Barker develops similar views, which demonstrate to what extent his conception of poetic language in drama had broken away from the practice of the realists. For example, in his programme for a new drama, expounded in the lecture On Poetry and Drama, he wrote:

> It is plain that a merely rational vocabulary and syntax will not suffice. But the poet knows how to work on his hearers by subtler ways; openly by the melody and rhythm of words, more powerfully by suggestion, association, by stimulating our imagination. He appeals, past reason, past consciousness often, to our entire sentient being.[34]

The idea of language as magic, a kind of "sorcellerie", undoubtedly stands behind the notion, common to both Maeterlinck and Barker, that dialogue must aim at the intimation of the shy, irrational and often subconscious movements of the secret self. In From Henry V to Hamlet Barker made the point that the kind of dialogue exemplified in Macbeth and defined by Maeterlinck reveals both what was hidden in the characters' minds and "things in themselves of which they were not themselves wholly conscious".[35] In On Poetry and Drama, Barker went back over what were very much the same ideas but this time without linking them explicitly to Maeterlinck's perceptions. Once again, he pointed out that Shakespeare's principal strategy for exteriorizing the movements in his personages' souls centred on a particular kind of speech, which he urged his fellow-playwrights to emulate:

> We need a language ... capable of expressing thought and emotion combined, and, at times, emotion almost divorced from thought.[36]

There seems to be a broad correspondence between Maeterlinck's two "degrés" of dialogue and Barker's complementary types of linguistic

expression. In both cases, the ordinary factual use of language is supplemented by a manifestation of the emotive resources of the medium in an effort to penetrate the surface action and fathom the deepest recesses of the human personality. In Le Trésor des humbles the theory of second-degree dialogue is further developed and brought to bear on Ibsen's plays. Exactly the same procedure is found in Barker's criticism. In "Le Tragique quotidien" Maeterlinck cited The Master Builder as one of the first examples he had come across of the powerful combination of the two basic modes. In Maeterlinck's view, the words spoken by Hilde and Solness

> ... ne ressemblent à rien de ce que nous avons entendu jusqu'ici, parce que le poète a tenté de mêler dans une même expression le dialogue intérieur et extérieur. (Trésor, 180)

Barker's comments on Ibsen also keep returning to the "linguistic" basis of his art. Central to Barker's inquiry was the problem of how Ibsen contrived to "give to an apparently commonplace form of speech all the dramatic force and, when need be, all the emotional suggestion that poetry could give".[37] Barker thought the answer was to be found in Ibsen's masterly use of "the revealing phrase",[38] by which he meant the unobtrusive and apparently casual remark, barely noticeable to a careless listener, yet containing the essence of a character or a situation. In The Use of the Drama Barker argued that the dialogue of Ibsen's plays is distinguished from that found in the work of Maeterlinck, Chekhov or Yeats — three writers he categorized as practitioners of the implicit mode—by its fusion of the implicit and explicit styles. There appears to be a broad correspondence between Barker's label "the revealing phrase" and Maeterlinck's "dialogue du

second degré": both denote statements by the characters which, while often ostensibly unrelated to strict plot requirements, contain the deeper meaning of the play. In addition, there is a striking parallelism between Maeterlinck's perception of Ibsen's work as revolving round a compelling blend of first and second-degree dialogue and Barker's claim that in Ibsen's later plays an amalgamation is effected between the implicit and the explicit.

The concurrence between Barker's and Maeterlinck's perceptions of Ibsen's method extends beyond the resemblance charted so far. In addition to analyzing Ibsen's style in terms recalling Maeterlinck's description of the effect achieved, Barker also adopted Maeterlinck's concept of "Le Tragique quotidien" and its pertinence to Ibsen's particular brand of drawing-room drama. According to Maeterlinck, it was Ibsen's specific achievement to have created a new aperçu on life in the modern world. Ibsen's work was a triumphant vindication of the view that tragedy is neither deceased nor moribund but has assumed a new guise. In "Le Tragique quotidien", Ibsen's The Master Builder leads Maeterlinck to ponder on what it is that "le poète a ajouté à la vie pour qu'elle nous apparaisse si étrange, si profonde et si inquiétante sous sa puérilité extérieure" (Trésor, 177). The notion that Ibsen's plays aim at the re-awakening of the audience's sense of wonder also found its way into Barker's criticism. He too came to believe that the spectator must learn to discern the moving and profound truths embedded in the workaday world. As he put it in On Dramatic Method,

> In the sort of room we all know, peopled by the men and women we may meet any day in the street, the business of a play can be tackled at once. Save for

> climactic moments, what happens there - if we are to picture life as it is and people as they are - will not apparently be very exciting. Yet poignant drama may be pulsing beneath the commonplace event, its burden only heard in the thing hinted or half said, its springs of action hidden in the actors' secret minds.[39]

It is worth recalling that in his introduction to Maeterlinck's plays for marionettes, written two decades before this statement, Barker had noted that Intérieur, probably his favourite Maeterlinck play, "brings us nearer to the work-a-day world" [40] and demonstrates, through the skilful use of "dumb show", what "an appeal" there is to us, "and to something primitive about us, in the inarticulate".[41] Barker's comments about the "moving account" [42] to which Maeterlinck's stage devices are turned in this one-act play enhances the likelihood that Le Trésor des humbles was the ultimate source of reference of the anti-Aristotelian theory propounded in "The Heritage of the Actor". Maeterlinck's theory of drama - a body of prescriptions, recommendations and speculations revolving round the notions of the subordinate role of incident, of dialogue hinting at submerged and ineffable meanings and the evocative properties of simple, supremely quiescent evocations of everyday existence - left an indelible mark on twentieth-century drama. It affected the thinking of dramatists within as well as outside the French-speaking world and was known, be it perhaps only by name or reputation, even to writers, actors and producers who had never read Maeterlinck's theoretical statements or seen his plays in the theatre. It goes without saying that artists by nature drawn to the exploration of psychological and subjective states, and unmoved by vigorous action, were most likely to be excited and stimulated by the ideas accreting round the concepts of "le théâtre statique", "le théâtre du silence",

"la vie profonde", all of which can be traced back to Le Trésor des humbles. Given Barker's obsessive concentration on the claims of the inner life, a general interest on his part in the theatrical speculation generated by Maeterlinck's essays and plays seems inevitable. However, on the evidence of the close verbal correspondence between Barker's formulations and Maeterlinck's cogitations on the same subjects, it seems difficult to escape the conclusion that Barker had paid close attention to what Maeterlinck had to say on the topics close to his heart and had thoroughly absorbed (though not slavishly imitated) what was relevant to him. The instances of concurrence are too many and too striking to be attributed to coincidence. They do, indeed, seem to exceed in importance the similarities between the plays of these two authors, which have attracted more extensive critical comment.

III

The nature of the relation between Barker's literary work and Maeterlinck's art is not a straighforward matter. With remarkable singlemindedness, Barker had set out to create a very individual kind of drama and to campaign for the theatrical conditions which were required for its production. Barker's dramatic writing, while being very Edwardian in its concern with topical subjects of social, political and moral interest, has a distinctly personal flavour, which makes it imperative to be cautious when making comparisons with other writers, whether they be friends and contemporaries such as Bernard Shaw or foreign authors such as Maeterlinck or Ibsen. Until recently, Barker tended to be placed on a level below Shaw[43] and to be denied the

recognition of indisputable originality which he deserves. Barker was no doubt highly impressed by Shaw's dramatic endeavour, and worked in close association with him for some ten years. But this does not mean that he lived and laboured for ever after in the shadow of Shaw, as has too often been assumed. If to-day most Edwardian playwrights tend to be perceived as pale reflections of Shaw, Shaw himself had a keen appreciation of the difference in kind between his own talent and Barker's, as is reflected in his frequent claim that his own work related to Barker's just as Verdi's did to Debussy's.[44] Barker's art was of an altogether stiller nature than Shaw's: in Barker's plays, Shavian wit, paradox, humour, verbal and physical exuberance give way to atmospheric delicacy, allusion, and verbal musicality. Shaw was a myriad-minded artist who resists conventional classification, but it seems safe to posit that poeticality never figured high up on his list of priorities. Barker, by contrast, was possessed by the ambition to create a new mode of poetic drama in which a concern with the social and political problems of the day would be wedded to an overriding interest in the movements of the soul.

It is true, a few critics have recognized the gulf separating Barker's creative endeavour from Shaw's.[45] However, in one or two cases this reaction against the undervaluation of Barker's merit where his relation to Shaw is concerned appears to have produced a curious side-effect, taking the form of an unrealistic assessment of his debt to Maeterlinck. A plausible explanation for this imbalance suggests itself when we recall Shaw's multiple variations on the formulation, "We were as different as Verdi from Debussy".[46] The emphasis on Barker's greater

inwardness, in conjunction with the implied comparison of the tonality of his oeuvre to that of Debussy, whose name is at least as firmly and universally associated with Pelléas et Melisande as is Maeterlinck's, readily leads to speculation about the importance of Maeterlinck as a precursor of the style characterizing plays such as The Marrying of Ann Leete and The Secret Life. Morgan is a prime example of the kind of critic who, while issuing a salutary warning against setting too much store by the shaping influence of Shaw, exaggerates Maeterlinck's importance to Barker's dramatic writing. The same tendency is found, but more emphatically so, in Eric Salmon's study of Barker. However, this is not to say that these writers raise no worthwhile issues. Like several of their fellow-critics, they draw attention to the similarity between the style of dialogue found in Barker's and Maeterlinck's plays, and argue in favour of a causal relation. The simplest way of explaining what is at stake consists in confronting representative passages from Barker's and Maeterlinck's work with each other. Compare, for instance, the following extract from Les Aveugles:

> Deuxième Aveugle-Né: Ne nous inquiétons pas inutilement; il reviendra bientôt; attendons encore, mais à l'avenir, nous ne sortirons plus avec lui.
>
> Premier Aveugle Né: Nous ne sortirons plus, j'aime mieux ne pas sortir.
>
> Le plus vieil Aveugle: Nous ne pouvons pas sortir seuls.
>
> ...
>
> Premier Aveugle-Né: Nous n'avions pas envie de sortir, personne ne l'avait demandé.
>
> La plus vieille Aveugle: C'etait jour de fête dans l'Ile; nous sortons toujours aux grandes fêtes.

with this piece of dialogue lifted out of The Marrying of Ann Leete, and

notice how similar the technique is:

> Carnaby: Yes. It's raining.
>
> Sarah: Raining.
>
> Carnaby: Don't you stop it raining
>
> /.../
>
> Sarah: Ann, what is to become of you?
>
> Carnaby: Big drops ... big drops.
> /.../
>
> Carnaby: Take me indoors. I heard you ask the gardener to marry you.
>
> Ann: I asked him.
>
> Carnaby: I heard you say that you asked him. Take me in ... but not out of the rain.[47]

As even these short examples illustrate, there is an unmistakable resemblance between Maeterlinck's and Barker's language. Barker and Maeterlinck were both masters of a particular kind of dialogue, consisting of the fusion of expressive silence and simple, often broken but highly suggestive speech. At its most concentrated, the words strike one as the tips of icebergs; one is less conscious of their denotations than of the hidden world of thought and feeling lying behind them. The basic materials of which Maeterlinck and Barker availed themselves were the same: ordinary language, the evocative properties of the unexpressed, constant repetitions giving striking prominence and emotional as well as symbolical resonance to what would otherwise be unremarkable words. If it is true, as Morgan and later commentators have claimed (and as appears to be corroborated, negatively, by the absence of any evidence to the contrary), that Barker did not become acquainted with Chekhov's plays until 1914, then it seems hard to escape the

conclusion that the particular style of dialogue exhibited in the extract from The Marrying of Ann Leete and found in Barker's work from the late 1890s onwards derived its original impetus from Maeterlinck's example. The radical simplicity of Maeterlinck's style stood in blatant contrast to the mode of writing then current in the English theatre - a mode shared, with minor differences, both by the much-decried melodrama and farce, which were very popular at the time, and by the more pretentious and intellectually aspiring "new" drama, epitomized by Pinero's The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,[48] a play which managed to delude even an experienced critic such as William Archer[49] into thinking that a new era of serious British drama had started. In the midst of the general predilection for hollow rhetoric, florid and declamatory sentences, Maeterlinck achieved the feat of creating stronger effects by means of a language pared beyond what had ever been seen before. Not only was there no other playwright from whom Barker could have learnt this style of dialogue; his essays also testify to his keen appreciation of the merit and potential of Maeterlinck's particular kind of linguistic manipulation. However, one of the main dangers inherent in pointing out that Maeterlinck's brand of speech is likely to have served as the blueprint for the dialogue of a play such as The Marrying of Ann Leete, is that it seems to imply a greater kinship between this work and Maeterlinck's symbolist drama than exists in reality. On first approaching The Marrying of Ann Leete one is struck by its divergence from Maeterlinck's style. On the surface, The Marrying of Ann Leete is a comedy of manners, a society drama akin to Wilde's plays, a story of corruption and of political intrigue, set in the polite world where "honour" means "bargaining power" and where

love is a commodity in the service of social or political advancement. The opening scene suggests that the subject of the play is Ann's initiation into the world of her elders, with its "esprit de corps", its subtleties and its particular code of conduct. When the curtain rises, all one sees is a garden plunged in darkness. Suddenly the profound stillness is broken by "a shrill, frightened, but not tragical scream" (I, 29), followed by the sound of several people running. It appears that Ann has committed the first of a series of "faux pas". Upon being kissed by Lord John Carp, she screams and then publicly apologizes for her behaviour, thereby twice embarrassing him. It is clear that Ann's introduction to the ways of her father's world must result either in her conforming to it or in repudiating it. In the first act the former still seems the more likely outcome: this is suggested by the introduction of the notion of playfulness at the beginning of the play, which is sustained throughout the first three acts. Ann, it emerges, agreed to a bet, thereby acting in conformity with the prevailing code of behaviour in the aristocratic circles evoked by Barker, where "playfulness" and "artfulness" inform every area of life. That Ann subscribes to her family's moral standards seems to be borne out by the state of affairs in Act II, where she perfunctorily agrees to marry Lord John, an alliance with whom would be politically beneficial to her family.

All this is, needless to say, far removed from the universe of Maeterlinck's plays, which is concerned not with manners but with states of being, not with the accidental and the contingent but with the universal, not with external events but with inwardness. However, as the story of The Marrying of Ann Leete unfolds it acquires an extra

dimension. It gradually becomes clear that this is not an account of an initiation but one of a rebellion resulting in a quest for the self. Having seen through the glittering facade of her relatives' lives, Ann first considers following in her sister's steps by cynically and lucidly agreeing to play the game by its time-honoured rules. Perhaps, so her argument runs, it is incumbent on her to pay her share of her father's debts by allowing him to make use of her. But presently she firmly rejects this option. Such behaviour would go against the grain and would be a crime against her deeper self. Like all Barker's sympathetic characters, and like Ibsen's major characters, most strikingly that of Brand, Ann Leete repudiates the polite world and firmly resolves not to bargain with her deepest self. She decides to leave society and to "come outside for air". To the utmost consternation of all, she suddenly turns to the gardener John Abud and proposes marriage to him. She wants to live the life of "an ordinary woman ... not clever ... not fortunate" (III, 70). To high society she is not only lost but virtually dead. But Ann is conscious of the fact that her dramatic decision to lead the existence of a peasant as the gardener's wife is prompted by the urge for survival. Marrying Abud is the gateway to possible redemption. The life he can offer her guarantees hardship but it is real and holds the promise of fertility, whereas the lot her family reserved for her is tantamount to barrenness and even spiritual death.

Because the unspoken looms so large in this play, Barker, like Maeterlinck, had to assign an important role to symbolism as a means of conveying the full meaning of the play. At the beginning of the first act the garden is parched after a long drought; nothing is growing or

blooming, the earth is cracked. The correspondence between the barrenness of the people living in the house in the garden and the garden of Markswayde itself receives strong emphasis. Ghost imagery is introduced in the first act and taken up again and elaborated later on in the play. The characters look like phantoms because after a sleepless night the wan half-light of the early morning gives them a ghostlike pallor. But, on a deeper level, they are shadows of people because they are not in touch with the vital springs of life; over-civilised as they are they have denied their instinctive, natural selves. In the polite world it is difficult not to disown one's innermost self or not to compromise the soul. This even Ann's sister has come to understand:

> Sarah: [her voice rising]. I'm tired of that world ... which goes on and on, and there's no dying ... one grows into a ghost ... visible ... then invisible. I'm glad paint has gone out of fashion ... the painted ghosts were very ill to see. (III, 69)

When at the end of Act III Ann suddenly repudiates her father's sophistry and the values of her brother and sister, it immediately begins to rain with an abundance of big, fertilizing drops.

Someone starting from the pre-conceived notion that Maeterlinck exercised a formative influence on Barker is likely to be encouraged by the presence of symbolical elements and the stress on the invisible movements of the inner self to look for stylistic confirmation. And indeed, The Marrying of Ann Leete contains a number of features which accord with Maeterlinck's practice. In spite of the crispness and colloquialisms of its dialogue, the play does at no time get anywhere

near to being a mere conversation piece: even a cursory examination reveals how much remains unsaid, how much is only hinted at or intimated. It seems likely that it was from Maeterlinck's theory and practice that Barker learnt something which some ten years later Yeats too was to comment on: modern people, especially those who are well educated and who accept that good manners are important, do not readily translate emotions into speech. This insight led the early Maeterlinck to write plays in which the central motif, the central structure of feeling, makes itself overwhelmingly felt, yet is never explicitly put into words. In Barker's work, even though the characters are admittedly more talkative, the ultimate subject is also expressed by indirect rather than by direct statement. In any play by Maeterlinck we watch inarticulate beings move about the stage. They are not given to discussing what happens in their lives, yet it is their creator's aim to give us an awareness of what is going on in their hearts and minds. Barker's protagonists are far more articulate, but in the last resort they too are actuated by secret impulses and hidden motives which spring from the inner life and elude full statement and definition. Everything in a Maeterlinck or a Barker play points to the fact that the protagonists are profoundly engaged by musings or feelings that strike at the core of their being. Our attention is focused on the powerful struggle that goes on in their minds. We gain insight into the nature of this struggle by the methods of implication, suggestion, symbolization, and the use of revealing words and snatches of speech that well up spontaneously at significant moments of the action. Maeterlinck and Barker both aimed at "intimate revelation", and both attempted to achieve it by using a form of language in which words, in addition to

conveying their accepted denotations, hint at hidden meanings, at meanings which would normally remain unexpressed. In The Marrying of Ann Leete, the characters utter what may seem witticisms, but what are in reality the words of a troubled soul groping for truth. For instance, when Sarah quips about "the house, coals, butter and eggs" (III, 69) which her husband is willing to give her as the price for getting rid of her and makes jokes about what she has to sell, her words gloss over the bitter realities of her life and are suffused with spasms of pain. Similarly, Ann makes very clever remarks about what she is in the process of learning about the world, but among the words she utters we sense her desperate search for alternative answers and for evidence of a more benign order of being.

This catalogue of concurrences in technique and objectives between Maeterlinck's and Barker's art raises the crucial question of the degree of similarity between their creative writing. And when one goes beyond the basic formal procedures to look into the structure of feeling embodied in the plays and the sensibility informing it, then the answer must be that the divergences are much more numerous, and the resemblances much slighter than either the above list of parallels or the published critical discussions of the literary encounter between Barker and Maeterlinck suggest. It is true, the dialogue round which the plays of both authors revolve exhibits an unmistakable affinity. It is intimated that what is most real to man is often not articulated and that outward composure can be a cover-up for inner turmoil. All the same, even the most striking examples of Barker's interior drama, and, by the same token, of a play reflecting a firm grasp of the ways of

society such as The Marrying of Ann Leete, belongs indubitably to a different category from works such as Pelléas et Mélisande, Alladine et Palomides, Les Aveugles or even Intérieur. One of the essential differences between Maeterlinck and Barker concerns the opposing roles played by the conscious, analytical mind in their writings. Barker's plays convey the sense of the mind at work. Even in a highly elliptical piece of writing such as Our Visitor to "Work-a-day", it is possible, though admittedly difficult, to follow the characters' trains of thought by engaging in some intellectual detective work. The task one is confronted with is that of tracking down the information that has been withheld. But the pattern exhibited by even the most internal of Barker's plays is a rational one, centering on an argument which is their master-fulcrum, the centre to which everything can ultimately be reduced. The central structure of feeling in Barker's work is essentially positive: man exerts a high degree of control over his own destiny; so long as he is true to the "secret self" he will lead a meaningful and worthwhile existence. The fitful, hushed, truncated speech of Maeterlinck's characters, by contrast, belongs to a totally different world of experience. It is not that Maeterlinck's men and women express the various strands of their thought in a cryptic manner, as do Barker's protagonists - Maeterlinck's principal personages seem hardly capable of thinking at all and instead feed on their emotions. Maeterlinck's early plays represent a closed world, with its own philosophy of life, its particular rules, attitudes and values, its very individual spectrum of moods. The action, which culminates in a fatal catastrophe, springs from the operation of what is presented to us as a universal law, expressed in the play by implication only, but which we

are meant to be constantly aware of since it is integral to Maeterlinck's incessant exhibition of irremediable disaster, affliction and excruciating pain. The source of these multifarious sufferings is a sinister entity which appears to be both potent and evil, implacable and undefeatable. More specifically, in Maeterlinck's early plays:

> On ... a foi à d'énormes puissances, invisibles et fatales, dont nul ne sait les intentions, mais que l'esprit du drame suppose malveillantes, attentives à toutes nos actions, hostiles au sourire, à la vie, à la paix, au bonheur.[50]

The plays revolve round two distinct but related structures of feeling. One encompasses a harrowing experience of pain and sorrow and an agonizing but mute and half-unconscious sense of evil. The other one hinges on an unarticulated but distinct and conscious apprehension of an element of design, an intimation of the existence of an external force which lies at the basis of all these mishaps, a power that gives shape and direction to man's life. The forces of Destiny are annihilating in their effect and ultimately destroy the will to live and freeze all energy. In the illuminating introduction which Maeterlinck wrote for the collected edition of his early drama, he accepted the validity of a precarious kind of hope. But in his dramatic works he all but denies the possibility of redemption and the meaningfulness of a struggle to the last. The plays show us a number of wretched nonentities thrown up in a chaotic universe, serving only as playthings to Fate. Even the wisest of Maeterlinck's characters fail to see a meaning to what happens in their lives. Everything seems to be haphazard, formless and senseless. In their desperate search for pattern they find nothing but darkness upon darkness, chaos upon chaos. The counterpart of this vision of existence,

transpires only in a few "gestes de grâce et de tendresse, quelques paroles de douceur, d'espérance fragile, de pitié et d'amour".[51] But the crushing forces of Destiny leave Maeterlinck's men and women no illusion as to the futility of active rebellion. A victory over Fate is not on the cards. The characters intuit their inability to influence the course of events. This applies in equal measure to those who have submitted to a burning passion and to those who "stand and wait", watching the others with a growing sense of horror. Astolaine in Alladine et Palomides expresses herself most explicitly on this issue. She blames no one for her unhappiness for she realizes that man is a passive vehicle of change, not an active instigator or executor. Mélisande has one moment of triumph, which takes the form of a brief acceptance of fate issuing in the yearning to die in exultation. Her acceptance of destiny is a form of victory over circumstances, but as soon as it emerges it is nipped in the bud.

Barker greatly admired Maeterlinck and learnt from his theory and practice but differed from him in his philosophy of life. Whereas Maeterlinck's interpretation of the existing world order, as embodied in the early symbolist plays, was too fatalistic to allow for growth, Barker's work centred on the issue of personal development and fulfilment. In Barker's plays pain gives rise to wisdom, suffering to increased awareness; experience, even of a negative kind, to self-knowledge and thence to self-development. Thus what initially appears to be unrelieved disaster can become a means of transfiguration and salvation. The outward, observable action, which involves a personal tragedy and represents a negative structure of feeling, is balanced by

the inner action, which derives from antithetical values and pursues an independent line of development. In Waste, for instance, the external events, which revolve round an aborted pregnancy and an aborted act of parliament, are offset by the process of change taking place in the mind of the male protagonist, Hugh Trebell, and create a gradual awareness of what is integral to moral righteousness and personal authenticity. Whereas in Maeterlinck's plays we are given images of stunted emotional development and of experiences that are so overwhelming and frightening that they become crippling to the spirit and preclude meaningful dialogue with the world, Barker's dramatic world aims at a life-enhancing vision and at a much more complete reading of life. He probes the human heart and sets out to draw psychologically convincing personages. Maeterlinck's drama takes as its subject what is only an infinitesimal part of the world of common experience but for the duration of the play presents it as the totality.

The most radical departure between the artistic aims of Barker and Maeterlinck concerns their contrasting attitudes to social reality. Whereas Maeterlinck's dramatic universe was consciously and defiantly out of time and space, Barker was deeply exercised by the relation between the private and public selves, as well as by the shaping properties of political consciousness and experience on the growth of the inner man. Barker's work appears to embody Lukacs's axiomatic belief in the "organic, indissoluable connection between man as a private individual and man as social being, as a member of a community".[52] Maeterlinck, on the other hand, dealt with the inner life of man - the

only life he regarded as essential and worthy of serious consideration - in isolation from social and historical factors. Maeterlinck's timeless and vaguely legendary settings and pictures of characters without any social reference are symptomatic of his singleminded concern with the eternal yearnings and apprehensions of the emotional self. Maeterlinck rejected the world because it is only incidentally, if at all, concerned with the basic human condition, the ultimate realities of birth, death and love and the eternal problems of man's simultaneous yearning for human fellowship and isolation. Maeterlinck's perennial interests could only find their ideal vehicle in symbolism, which is totally independent of the demands of realistic verisimilitude. By contrast, Barker's fascination with the complex symbiotic relationship between the public and with the private selves precluded the repudiation of the realistic convention. The form by which Barker was deeply excited represented a new development in English drama. It drew on symbolist drama but nevertheless remained loyal to the basic assumptions of realism. After an initial phase of literary apprenticeship during which he wrote a handful of uninspired plays, mostly in partnership with Berte Thomas,[53] he set out to create a drama of great poetic power in which a predominantly naturalistic framework was made to encompass evocations of the invisible springs of existence and explorations of the intuitive or non-ratiocinative self. It is symptomatic of Barker's continuing interest in external reality and the effects that can be produced in the realistic theatre that he was unable to fully appreciate Maeterlinck's intentions in giving Alladine et Palomides, La Mort de Tintagiles and Intérieur the sub-title "trois petits drames pour marionettes". His own persistent concern with finding ways of upholding high professional

standards in the theatre led him to surmise that Maeterlinck was intent on criticizing the skill of the actors he had had to work with. As he put it in the introduction to the English translation of the plays in question, in calling these examples of his work "little dramas for marionettes"

> [Maeterlinck] was guilty ... of irony. If he had said with literary superiority, "These are too good for the Theatre", the lordly actors and managers would have had their answer ready, "Not a practical dramatist! He confesses to failure." He said rather, "I won't trouble your high and mightinesses. These trifles are beneath you. Give me some little wooden figures and the author's voice shall be heard".[54]

The gist of this argument was reprinted some twenty years later, in On Poetry and Drama, proving that Barker had made no headway in his understanding of that fundamental symbolist technique which was to be labelled Verfremdung in later years and in a different context. Maeterlinck saw actors of flesh and blood as threats to the symbolical character of his work. He suggested the use of puppets or actors moving like wooden dolls in order to undermine the spectators' inveterate habit of applying the criteria of naturalistic verisimilitude to the staged play, exercised as he was by the wish to shock them out of their ingrained complacency and force them to discern things they had been oblivious of before. Barker, however, entrenched as he was in a divergent way of seeing and writing, felt compelled to translate this aspect of Maeterlinck's work into terms which he could more readily encompass. It seems therefore extremely unlikely that he should have deliberately set out to emulate the style and objective of Maeterlinck's

plays for marionettes in his own unpublished play A Miracle,[55] as some critics have claimed. Margery Morgan, for instance, maintains that "Among [Barker's] first plays written outside the collaboration with Berte Thomas, the tiny verse drama, A Miracle, belongs indubitably to the type of Maeterlinck's little plays for marionettes and the fairy-tale medievalism of Yeats's earliest dramatic efforts".[56] Similarly, Eric Salmon points out that "The plot of ... A Miracle ... is very like a Maeterlinck plot ... and the setting of the play in a room in a tower - one of Maeterlinck's favourite symbols - in a mythical medieval land is also reminiscent of the Belgian dramatist".[57]

A Miracle is the story of the lady and the hunchback, of the body and the soul, of life-in-death and death-in-life. The deformed Baptista lives, very much like Mallarmé's Hérodiade, in a small turret room with as her only companion her old nurse. One night, she receives an unannounced visit from the exceptionally beautiful Margaret of Troyes in Burgundy. Feeling the hand of Death on her, Margaret decides to seek out the company of this lonely creature, who spends her days and nights in her tower cut off from the world of the living. But when she penetrates into Baptista's modest retreat, she finds herself in the presence of a woman who, though physically unprepossessing, is blessed with a soul of incomparable beauty. Margaret and Baptista are antithetical figures. Margaret, like Joan Westbury in the later play The Secret Life, is much loved but incapable of real affection herself. Baptista, by contrast, loves everything, as she explains to her visitor:

> ... People I do not know, shall never see

> And all the names in history - my history
> The little birds I feed upon the roof,
> And the laughing little demons in the firelight,
> And the sounds and faces in these grey stones
> My love gives dead things life.

The words with which she winds up this speech contain the meaning of the play: Baptista is a life force, very much like her near-namesake, St. John the Baptist. She who has "such love to bestow/Such faith in Man and his high destiny" and a heart "a mine of wealth/Diamonds hidden in flinty rock/While people see ugliness", can give life to her who has come "to stand naked ... ashes waiting for a touch to crumble". As her degenerate soul seems to be leaving her body, Margaret grows more and more lifeless, and finally sinks down on the floor. Baptista, overcome with pity for this wretched creature, this "dead thing" of such formal perfection, beseeches God to permit a transmigration of souls:

> And now, oh God, perform this miracle
> Let me die now, if that may live again.
> Beautiful emptiness
> Surely it is not good that it should perish
> Earnestly I pray
> Grant that my soul may leave the cruel heritage
> Grant unto it this noble mansion to dwell in
>
> Let me die now. Let me die now.
> If in dying I may live hereafter.

Her wish is granted. She kisses Margaret and collapses beside her. Presently Margaret revives. The very first words she utters reveal a complete change of personality: she has become all gentleness, kindness and sympathy. Margaret now has a soul that matches her flawless beauty.

This short summary will have made it clear that, apart from its emphasis on the powers of the soul, A Miracle has thematically very

little in common with Maeterlinck's "plays for marionettes". There are a handful of points of contact between Maeterlinck's dramatic universe and this playlet, but they do not pertain to its subject. The reflective mood is in accord with but not confined to Maeterlinck's example. The description of Baptista's abode as the "turret black against the sky/(one felt it there whether one looked or no)" is reminiscent of the dark castle in which the evil Queen of La Mort de Tintagiles lives and which dominates the valley with its oppressive presence. Baptista is as fatalistic as Maeterlinck's heroines: "Nobody is to blame for this my loneliness", she says. She is resigned to her lot, the very possibility of rebellion does not occur to her. She has been completely abandoned by her relatives: her mother died at her birth ("She was ashamed of me - my father says"), her father never visits her or speaks of her and neither does her sister. As in Maeterlinck's early plays, the sense of imminent death is all pervasive. Death is always in Baptista's mind; Margaret feels that she herself is about to die and tells Baptista of the still-born baby she bore. Margaret's words "Oh what a waste of sorrow and affliction" sums up her entire life, just as they epitomize Maeterlinck's plays, especially Pelléas et Mélisande. Again the note of fatalism is sounded: "What love was there to give my baby life?". Like Mélisande's baby - a tiny, abnormally quiet creature, a "poupée de cire" rather than a healthy, life-thirsty infant - Margaret's still-born child symbolizes the emotional aridity and lack of vitality of its mother. Where there is an insufficiency of love, life cannot overflow and produce new life: this thought and its converse, we find again and again in Barker's work, in Waste, The Secret Life, The Marrying of Ann Leete, but most explicitly in A Miracle.

However, none of these points conclusively proves the existence of a direct line of development from Maeterlinck's oeuvre to A Miracle. Both the internal and the contextual evidence point to the mixed provenance of the imagery. Whereas the description of Baptista's father as a knight in armour and on horse-back and the inclusion of the name "Galahad" call to the mind a Pre-Raphaelite universe, the images and associations accreting round the presentation of Baptista as a damsel cut off from the world in her lonely turret chamber could with equal justice be termed Maeterlinckian. Moreover, Barker's comments in the introduction to the English translation of Maeterlinck's three plays for marionettes establish how closely, indeed at times inextricably, the imaginative worlds of Maeterlinck and the Pre-Raphaelites were linked in Barker's mind. Contrary to what Eric Salmon claims, the subject of A Miracle is much more reminiscent of Yeats's work, though not so much of the early Yeats (as Morgan thinks) as of a late play, The Cat and the Moon,[58] and not as regards the style. Like A Miracle, The Cat and the Moon is a realization of the notion of the interdependence of soul and body. But unlike Barker, Yeats infuses his one-act play with a very personal kind of humour and steers clear of verbalization, being keenly conscious that for his work to have immediacy and vitality "no abstract idea must be present".[59] A Miracle fails because it is too literally what one could describe by means of the title of one of Yeats's poems as "A Dialogue of Self and Soul". The discursive element is altogether too dominant; the play is not so much an enactment of the operations of the "inner life" as a laborious, stodgy and ponderous discussion of issues which Barker normally allows

to remain implicit. There is too much verbalization in this work and what is worse, the dialogue lacks the ethereality and the subtlety which the author was aiming at. Although a number of Pre-Raphaelite and Maeterlinckian elements have been thrown into it, A Miracle does not convey the atmospheric delicacy and the mystical or semi-magical qualities which it is meant to suggest. We find references to Sir Galahad and Sir Lancelot, to dark towers, confessors and knights in armour, but the essential flavour of the Pre-Raphaelite poem or the Maeterlinckian play is not there. In A Miracle, Barker had made two fundamental errors: very much against his better judgement, he had insisted on using verse, and this brought into being a language that was lifeless, heavy and devoid of anything beyond the "casual meaning" [60] of the words. There is too much thought in this play, and too little emotion, too little grace and too little of the "naif magic" [61] which Max Beerbohm saw as a requisite for this kind of work.

A Miracle represents a foredoomed attempt at distilling emotional and symbolical resonance from a situation and materials which are incapable of providing or sustaining it. The archaic turns of phrase and the quaint atmosphere are too studied to be effective. The play fades off into a meditation on the transmigration of souls but never succeeds in conveying a sense of the suffering, tormented self. The failure of A Miracle - a failure Barker himself was presumably conscious of since he never had the play published - confirms in negative terms what the relative success of his prose drama indicates positively: that Barker's real merit lay in the extension of the realistic convention. Barker primarily aspired to widening the possibilities of realistic prose in

order to make it a more expressive medium for the exploration of psychological states, but he was never genuinely interested in breaking with the naturalistic convention. In the last resort his characters are recognizable people of flesh and blood, and the world retains its reality for him, though it has in his hands become a world with a more strongly developed introspective element than would have been deemed possible in the late nineteenth century.

In the preceding pages two plays by Barker, The Marrying of Ann Leete and A Miracle, stand in the focus of attention. However, similar observations could be made about other plays, such as The Secret Life, linked by certain critics to Maeterlinck's example. Superficial similarities there may be, in addition to the indisputable kinship of the style of dialogue, but when all is said and done, the fact remains that Barker's and Maeterlinck's plays represent different modes of writing. That Barker learnt from Maeterlinck's theory and practice seems certain, but the consequent extension of his awareness of what drama can do did not make him a symbolist. On the contrary, again and over again we find evidence of Barker's imperfect understanding of the symbolist nature of Maeterlinck's art. The first critic to grasp this essential fact about Barker's perception of Maeterlinck's objectives and achievements was Desmond MacCarthy,[62] who wrote in a still unsurpassed review of the production of La Mort de Tintagiles that Barker had presented the play too circumstantially, with too little appreciation of its difference in kind from conventional drama. Like Maeterlinck; Barker was interested in introspective literature, but his characters remained recognizable

people of flesh and blood, "full" individuals with a well-defined personality, not mere embodiments of the eternal emotions as Maeterlinck's personages tend to be. It is well to bear in mind this essential difference between Maeterlinck's and Barker's work, lest one's claims for similarity fail to tally with one's experience of the actual plays.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

[1] For instance, in Margery M. Morgan, A Drama of Political Man: A Study of the plays of Harley Granville Barker (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1961), where, the emphasis on the political dimension of Barker's thought notwithstanding, his perennial fascination with the claims of the inner life is recognized throughout; Eric Salmon, Granville Barker: A Secret Life (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983).

[2] D.D. Paschall, A Study of the Plays and Criticism of Harley Granville Barker, D. Phil. Diss. Oxford 1978.

[3] Barker, On Poetry in Drama (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1937), pp. 11-12.

[4] Morgan, Political Man, p. 15.

[5] Barker never ceased to acknowledge his debt to William Poel: see Robert Speaight, William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival (Melbourne, London, Toronto: William Heinemann, 1954), pp 148-149; C.B. Purdom, Harley Granville Barker: Man of the Theatre, Dramatist and Scholar (London: Rockliff Publishing Corporation, 1955), p. 8; D.D. Paschall, p.6. Poel founded the Elizabethan Stage Society in 1894. His methods of production stood in striking contrast to the prevailing approach to Shakespeare's work, epitomized in the lavish style evolved by Henry Irving at the Lyceum, which was concerned with spectacle rather than

art, with surface splendour and extravagance rather than with Shakespeare's meaning or intention. Poel convinced Barker of the validity of performance as a means of uncovering the total significance and the hidden meaning of the text.

[6] Dorothy Leighton, Short Summary of the Position and Prospects of the Independent Theatre; as quoted in N. Schoonderwoerd, J.T. Grein: Ambassador of the Theatre 1862-1935 (Assen: Van Gorcum & Co., 1963), p. 111.

[7] Discussed in Chapter 1, pp. 65-76.

[8] Purdom, p. 9; Morgan, p. 23.

[9] Barker, "Letter to William Archer", April 21, [1903 ?]; as quoted in C. Archer, William Archer (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), p. 273.

[10] Anthony Jackson, "Harley Granville Barker as a Director at the Royal Court Theatre 1904-1907", Theatre Research, XII (1972), 126-138.

[11] Barker, "Letter to William Archer", p. 272.

[12] Desmond MacCarthy, The Court Theatre 1904-1907: A Commentary and Criticism (London, 1907), p. 128.

[13] Purdom, pp. 197-198.

[14] Purdom, p. 206.

[15] According to Paschall, p. 329, who says that unpublished letters, held at the Humanities Research Center, Texas, indicate that Masefield convinced Barker that he could ask an unusually high fee for this piece.

[16] Paschall, p. 328; Barker, Introd., Three Plays by Maurice Maeterlinck (London and Glasgow: Gowans and Gray, 1911). Further references will be given in the text as (Introd., X).

[17] On this subject, consult Michael Booth, Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850-1910 (Boston, London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

[18] Barker, On Poetry in Drama (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1937), p. 10.

[19] Barker, "The Heritage of the Actor", Quarterly Review, CCXL (July 1923), 70.

[20] Barker, "The Heritage of the Actor", p. 70.

[21] Barker, On Poetry in Drama, pp 11-12.

[22] Barker, On Poetry in Drama, p. 12.

[23] Barker, Introd., Prefaces to Shakespeare (London: Batsford, 1972), p. 7.

[24] Barker, On Poetry in Drama, p. 33.

[25] Barker, Preface to Love's Labour's Lost; as quoted in Paschall, p. 266.

[26] Barker, On Poetry in Drama, p. 31.

[27] Barker, On Dramatic Method (New York, Hill and Wang, 1956), p. 178.

[28] Barker, On Poetry in Drama, p. 11.

[29] Barker, From Henry V to Hamlet: The British Academy Annual Lecture for 1925 (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 18.

[30] Maeterlinck, Introd., La Tragédie de Macbeth, trans. Maeterlinck (Paris: Charpentier et Fasquelle, 1910), p. XII; as quoted in Barker, From Henry V to Hamlet, p. 18.

[31] Barker, From Henry V to Hamlet, p. 17.

[32] Maeterlinck, Introd., La Tragédie de Macbeth, p. XV.

[33] Barker, "The Heritage of the Actor", p. 73.

[34] Barker, On Poetry in Drama, p. 34.

[35] Barker, From Henry V to Hamlet, p. 17.

[36] Barker, On Poetry in Drama, p.34.

[37] Barker, On Dramatic Method, p. 171.

[38] Barker, On Poetry in Drama, p. 37.

[39] Barker, On Dramatic Method, p. 172.

[40] Barker, Introd., Three Plays by Maeterlinck, p. VIII.

[41] Barker, Introd., Three Plays by Maeterlinck, p. VIII.

[42] Barker, Introd., p. VIII.

[43] Even recent studies occasionally continue to reflect this prejudice: for instance, John Russell Taylor, 1880 to the Present Day, Vol. VII of The Revels History of Drama in English (London and New York: Methuen, Barnes and Noble Books, 1978), 195.

[44] Morgan, p. 3. See also G.B. Shaw, An Autobiography 1898-1950: The Playwright Years, selected from his writings by Stanley Weintraub (London: Max Reinhardt, 1970), p. 35; Alan Downer, "Harley Granville Barker", Sewanee Review, LV (1947), 630.

[45] For instance, Gerald Weales, "The Edwardian Theatre and the Shadow of Shaw", Edwardians and Late Victorians (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 171: "Barker as a playwright was obviously affected by

Shaw, but he did not write Shavian plays. In structure, in characterization, in dialogue, he was his own man".

[46] Alan Downer, p. 630.

[47] Barker, The Marrying of Ann Leete, The Collected Plays of Harley Granville Barker, Vol I (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1967), 71. Further quotations from The Marrying of Ann Leete are from this edition. References will be given parenthetically.

[48] Representative of the laudatory notices given to this play is the comment that no-one present on the "memorable occasion" of its first night (27 May 1893 at the St. James's Theatre) is likely to "forget the profound impression made by the noble tragedy" and the description of Pinero's work as "the play of the century"; as quoted in "Mr. Pinero and the Literary Drama", The Theatre (July, 1893), p. 3.

[49] On Archer's inflated idea of Pinero's excellence, see John Stokes, Resistible Theatres (London: Paul Elek Books, 1972), pp. 21-22.

[50] Maeterlinck, Préface, Théâtre I, IX.

[51] Maeterlinck, Preface, Théâtre I, XII.

[52] Georg Lukács, Studies in European Realism (London: Merlin Press, 1972), p. 8.

[53] On Barker's early plays, see Margery M. Morgan and Frederick May, "The Early Plays of Harley Granville Barker", The Modern Language Review, LI (1956), 324-338.

[54] Barker, Introd., Three Plays by Maurice Maeterlinck, p. VI.

[55] Barker, A Miracle, typescript, British Library. Performed at a matinée on 23 March 1907 by the Literary Theatre Society, which commissioned settings and costumes by Charles Ricketts. I have used the copy of this text made by Dr. Morgan.

[56] Morgan, p. 23.

[57] Salmon, p. 57.

[58] Yeats, The Cat and the Moon. First printings The Criterion, July 1924 and The Dial, July 1924; rpt. Variorum Plays, pp.792-804.

[59] Yeats, Variorum Plays, p. 807.

[60] Barker, Introd., Three Plays by Maurice Maeterlinck, p. V.

[61] Max Beerbohm, "A Miracle"; rpt. in Last Theatres (London: Rupert Hart-Davies, 1970), p. 291.

[62] Desmond MacCarthy, "The Death of Tintagiles" (27 December 1913); rpt. in Drama (London and New York:Putnam, 1940), p. 59.

CHAPTER FIVE:HENRY JAMES

I

On the face of it, an important literary encounter between Henry James and Maurice Maeterlinck seems an unlikely event. It cannot be denied that the reputations attached to their names are diametrically opposed. While James is generally thought of as the widely acclaimed and cosmopolitan author of an impressive collection of voluminous novels in which the art of psychological unravelling is carried to unprecedented heights, Maeterlinck tends to be perceived as the mystical writer of a handful of vapoury and crepuscular playlets which, with one or two exceptions, never reached beyond the narrow circle of the fin-de-siècle avant-garde. Yet there are indications that Maeterlinck fulfilled a special role for James. For a start, Maeterlinck appears to have been James's only important link with the symbolist movement in France. There are no references to Verlaine, Mallarmé or any of the other "Symboliste" poets of the late 1880s or 1890s in either his creative or critical writings. His early essay on Baudelaire in French Poets and Novelists is limited in scope and understanding. Nothing in his work suggests that he ever made a close study of the theory and practice of the exponents of either the first or second generation of French "Symbolistes", as is hardly surprising considering the very limited and subdued nature of his interest in poetry.

As against this apparent lack of enthusiasm for the achievements of symbolism can be set the fact that James read Maeterlinck's plays and

was eager to see them in performance. His datebooks (the pocket diaries in which he kept his appointments and often made notes to himself[1]) and letters record a meeting with Maeterlinck and his companion Georgette Leblanc in the house of Alfred Sutro, their common friend and Maeterlinck's translator, in 1909. Sutro had thrown a party to celebrate the English première of The Blue Bird, Maeterlinck's most widely known work. The tone of James's recollections shows how much he enjoyed the occasion: "I vulgarly liked Georgette and found the accommodating Maurice shy and sympathetic ... though I didn't probe either of them to disgraceful depths".[2] Moreover, the internal evidence pertaining to Maeterlinck's presence in one of James's major works, The Wings of The Dove, is unequivocal: the name "Maeterlinck" occurs three times in this novel, and one particular scene derives its inspiration, as James states clearly in the text, from Maeterlinck's early symbolist plays. The date ante quem of James's acquaintance with Maeterlinck's work is therefore 1901, but in view of the wide publicity given to the appearance of "le représentant quasi officiel de l'apport des Symbolistes au théâtre"[3] in France and England and James's perennial interest in French literary movements it is likely that by the mid-1890s James would have become familiar with the reputation and dramatic theories accreting round Maeterlinck's plays, if not with the plays themselves.

James's interest in Maeterlinck's achievement, though coming after many years of wholehearted support for the poetics of literary realism, did not represent a sudden and unheralded volte face but had its roots far back in the past, in his exposure to Hawthorne's work from his

childhood days onwards,[4] and his subsequent troubled and fluctuating relationship with Hawthorne's art. The suggestion that the impact of Maeterlinck on James's artistic development may have been complementary to that of Hawthorne is bound to cause a measure of surprise since the most articulate and vigorous assertions of James's indebtedness to Hawthorne have been those simultaneously denying or playing down the relevance of the study of Continental literary movements and individual authors to his thinking. Thus Marius Bewley urges the view that

> To focus James's art against a background of continental writers is not to focus it at all, and to eliminate Hawthorne from the history of his artistic development is simply to eliminate the best part of James - the part towards which his most serious moral interests gravitated.[5]

Only an uninformed assessment of James's artistic growth could fail to recognize the centrality of Hawthorne to his imaginative life. But acknowledging Hawthorne's role cannot be a justification for failing to face up to the real and significant divergences between their aims and techniques. Moreover, it is precisely by giving due consideration to James's reservations about Hawthorne's interests and achievements that the nature of Maeterlinck's relevance to James's development begins to take shape.

Between 1872 and 1914 James made five extended assessments of Hawthorne's work[6], of which the biographical study published in 1879 has the greatest importance in the present context. The fervency characterizing James's strictures in Hawthorne[7] is of a kind which is most readily prompted by an intense recoil from certain aspects of the work of an author to whom one feels otherwise uncomfortably close. What emerges forcefully from James's observations is the extent to which it

was part of the "complex fate"[8] of any culture-conscious writer living in nineteenth-century America to endeavour to come to terms with that most formidable and forbidding period in the nation's history: the Puritan settling of New England, and the frame of mind thereby introduced into the "New World".

Rather than an attack on Hawthorne's artistic power, James's biography is the expression of his anxiety about the effect of the Puritan legacy on the American creative mind. The study contains several passages in which the flaws of Hawthorne's work are explicitly linked to that New England past from which Hawthorne had never succeeded in wresting himself free - most notably in the chapter on The Scarlet Letter, where James singles out the palpable presence of Puritanism as his prime source of dissatisfaction with this novel:

> Puritanism ... is there, not only objectively, as Hawthorne tried to place it there, but subjectively as well. Not, I mean, in his judgement of his characters, in any harshness of prejudice, or in the obtrusion of a moral lesson; but in the very quality of his own vision, in the tone of the picture, in a certain coldness and exclusiveness of treatment. (Hawthorne, 113-114)

In this excerpt the aspects of Hawthorne's imagination which are unpalatable to James are explicitly linked to the Puritan vision. But it is clear that even where the name "Puritan" or one of its derivations does not figure, Hawthorne's roots in the New England cultural tradition are taken as the perspective from which his art and the principles behind it are viewed and assessed. Whenever James's strictures strike at a pervasive and fundamental aspect of Hawthorne's imagination the terms of his remarks recall his perception of the characteristics of the

Puritan fictional world. The "want of reality" (Hawthorne, 114) that is found in Hawthorne's prose writing, its "element of cold and ingenious fantasy" (Hawthorne, 115), its "shadowy style of portraiture" (Hawthorne, 4) and the incessant search for "images which shall place themselves in picturesque correspondence with the spiritual facts with which [Hawthorne] is concerned" (Hawthorne, 119) - all these constituted to James's mind evidence of the pernicious effect of the Puritan hold on the American imagination.

It cannot be denied that the Puritanism of James's native New England represented, to a greater extent than most other Western forms of religious experience, a way of life and a mode of perception. The most important point to be noted is the centrality of the allegorizing process to Puritan thinking: the incessant interpretation of the most trivial occurrences in daily life in terms of metaphors drawn from the Bible, and the consequent "spiritualization" of the material world.

As the range of metaphors which the Puritans were versed in was severely limited by the inflexibility of their habits of mind - Feidelson speaks of the "mental economy"[9] of the Puritans - the effect of their sensibility on the creative imagination was not liberating but constricting. The mode of writing engendered by Puritanism tended to maintain a fundamental dichotomy between theory and illustration, idea and picture. It evoked a universe of sheer abstraction, in which imagery was illustrative; meaning 'given' rather than discovered; action and character development determined by their 'place in a pre-existent conceptual framework. As Hawthorne makes clear, the burden of James's

complaint was that allegory does not constitute an adequate method for exploring the universe or searching for truth since its analytical core inevitably engenders an impoverished version of experience. Hawthorne's allegorical way of looking at life focused alternately on ideas and things, but the fusion between both did not on the whole take place. Instead, the abstract formulae which constituted the substructure of Hawthorne's fictional world were continually pressing in upon character and plot, thus depriving his imaginative universe of autonomy, of credibility, immediacy and substantiality.

By contrast, the features of Hawthorne's imaginative universe which James found congenial were his predilection for "dusky subjects" [10], his interest in the deeper psychology and the invisible movements of the secret self. James's dislike of the allegorical thrust of Hawthorne's work and his partiality for Hawthorne's ceaseless probing into what lies below the surface of life, point forward to his later assimilation of the achievements of the symbolist movement to his own abiding interest in character development. But this stage of his development was preceded by many years during which he worked within the framework of literary realism.

It is hardly surprising that a writer deeply concerned about the adverse effects of the allegorical habit of thinking on literature should have felt attracted to the poetics of literary realism, the counterpart of the mode of writing associated with the Puritans and Hawthorne. There is no shortage of evidence of James's real and long-lasting commitment to realism. A few examples are his statement to

Julian Hawthorne, the novelist's son, that "Imagination [was] out of place; only the strictest realism [could] be right" [11] and the view, voiced in The Art of Fiction, that "the air of reality (solidity of specification)" was "the supreme virtue of a novel" [12]. All the same, it must be stressed that James's realism was always of a psychological variety, and that even at the time of his greatest commitment to the poetics of literary realism he was convinced that

> Life seems to mean moral and intellectual and spiritual life, and not the everlasting vulgar chapters of accidents, the dead rattle and rumble, which rise from the mere surface of things. [13]

Certain of his observations in The Art of Fiction show conclusively that his conception of realism was never narrow or dogmatic. As he put it in this work,

> It goes without saying that you will not write a good novel unless you possess the sense of reality; but it will be difficult to give you a recipe for calling that sense into being. Humanity is immense, and reality has a myriad forms ... [14]

During the late 1880s, his imminent adoption of some of the creeds of literary symbolism was heralded by the increasing frequency of the strictures passed on those writers whose allegiance to the aesthetics of realism entailed the obliviousness of everything except humdrum reality. Symptomatic of this growing partiality for subjects falling outside the range of realism was the comment, included in a review of a novel by Howells, that whereas the standpoint of realists in Europe as well as in America was "an excellent one for seeing a large part of the truth" it did not allow for the fact that "life is a mixture of many things; she by no means eschews the strange, and often risks combinations and

effects that make one rub one's eyes" [15]. As these quotations suggest, James's latent fascination for the inner drama and the expansive powers of the mind made it almost inevitable that he should have felt the need to go beyond realism. It led him to pay close attention to the extension of the possibilities of literature brought about by two European authors, both of them deeply interested in the claims of the inner life. That these writers should have been playwrights rather than novelists may at the time have been a distinct advantage. James's discovery for himself of Ibsen's work, followed by that of Maeterlinck, occurred during his "dramatic years" [16], stretching from 1890 to 1895. During these years he was deeply involved in a struggle to conquer the stage, and would naturally have been at his most receptive to new developments in the theatre. His original guide to a non-naturalistic style of writing was Ibsen. However, the relationship with Ibsen's art was never a straightforward or easy one. The history of James's encounter with Ibsen's drama shows that his response, far from exhibiting a steady development from incomprehension to growing appreciation, was marked by sudden shifts and reversals, swinging backwards and forwards between hostility and admiration. The only constant in his vacillating reactions was his appreciation of Ibsen's merit in having stormed the bastion of the commercial theatre. As James fully realized, Ibsen had opened up new thematic regions in drama and paved the way for a radically different sensibility. His work was important in its own right and as a seminal force in the contemporary theatre. Yet to James, as to other important writers at the time, Ibsen proved hard to come to terms with. Among writers initially excited by Ibsen's extension of dramatic form but soon unsympathetic to his social commitment and harshness of presentation,

there appears to have been a tendency to move on from him to Maeterlinck. In the particular case of James, it is easy to see why Maeterlinck came to replace Ibsen as his chief exemplar of the symbolist method. James's continuing concern for the fullness and richness of experience caused him to hanker after a method allowing for the reconciliation of opposites - an approach to life capable of dealing both with the inner and the material planes of existence. His involvement with the work of Hawthorne, the French realists and Ibsen had engendered in him an understanding of the ways in which their art was relevant to him and of the points on which he diverged crucially and significantly from them. James shared Hawthorne's fascination for the secret self but repudiated his tendency to subordinate his fictional world to a rational formula; he admired Ibsen's moments of epiphanic intensity and his excursions into the symbolical realm but deplored his decision to turn the theatre into a forum for the discussion of socio-politial issues; he applauded the success of realism in taking the art of representation to the heights of perfection but recoiled from its exteriority and unsuitability to subjects involving an awareness of what lies below the mere surface of things.

In Maeterlinck, he found a supreme example of an author who shared Hawthorne's and Ibsen's interest in the crepuscular zones of the psyche but who was free both from the allegorical thrust of Hawthorne's work and from the didacticism, the "hard light" [17] of the presentation and the "pervasive air of small interests and standards" (Scenic Art, 249) marring Ibsen's plays. Maeterlinck's practice demonstrated that symbolism, unlike allegory, did not seek to subordinate

character-drawing and the evocation of experience to abstract notions but, on the contrary, aimed at the abolition of the subject-object dichotomy which had haunted Western thinking since the seventeenth century [18]. Lastly, Maeterlinck's fascination for the unexpressed and often unconscious anxieties ruling man's behaviour proved that there was no indissoluble bond between Hawthorne's thematic preferences and his method. James, whom William Dean Howells had described in 1882 as the "chief exemplar of an American school of realism" [19], was feeling his way towards a revised literary strategy, which included such formerly unfavoured effects as "tint[ing] and distanc[ing]" (Scenic Art, 248). He was increasingly championing the validity in art of

> ... experience liberated, so to speak; experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it... [20]

as a counterpart to the description of experience conforming to standards of verisimilitude.

The theoretical speculation revolving round an extension of the possibilities of literature of which we find signs in James's criticism, letters and notebooks at this time, points forward to the fundamental shift in attitude and approach reflected in his creative work from the early 1890s onwards. It seems likely that the achievement of the Symbolists and especially of Maeterlinck, the one symbolist writer whom it is certain he knew, encouraged him to develop his very individual kind of symbolist prose, but this is a suggestion which it is impossible

to prove in any straighforward way. At any rate, about 1892 James began to concentrate on "things ... we never can directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire" (Art of Novel, 32). James's development towards the novels of his greatest achievement exhibits a trend away from "doing" to "being". In addition, he reverted to an overwhelming concern for the furthest reaches of the mind and the movements of the soul - interests which, judging by his experiments in the ghostly tale in the 1860s and early 1870s [21], went back to his youth and early absorption in Hawthorne, but which had been pushed into the background during the years of his greatest involvement with the poetics of literary realism, and were not revived until after the work of the "Symbolistes" had achieved recognition. Most significant of all, his later work exhibits what Feidelson sees as the hallmark of symbolist writing, the attempt to "view the subjective and objective worlds as functions of each other by regarding both as functions of the forms of speech in which they are rendered" [22]. Examples of this practice are found in those scenes of The Wings of the Dove where we see the symbolical imagination at work, such as the Matcham episode (Book five) and the Regent Park scene (chapter thirteen). The Matcham chapter, with its compelling use of synesthaesia, and the evocation of Milly's sympathetic suffering in Regent Park, conjure up worlds in which the borders between the physical, the imaginative and the psychic are forever shifting and often blurred. In both cases Milly's imaginative response takes her to a level of understanding which does not yield to logical dissection or sequential narration. Scenes like these constitute the implied answer to the dissatisfaction with the allegorist's approach

to experience voiced in James's biography of Hawthorne.

II

A great deal of the adverse criticism urged against The Wings of the Dove concerns the heroine, Milly Theale. One keeps coming across variations on the complaint that at its centre there is a near-vacuum, "an emptiness" that is a function of the nullity of the chief character. Thus John Goode, a commentator who is fundamentally favourably disposed towards The Wings of the Dove, makes the point that it "is not about Milly", or at any rate, "isn't about her in the way The Portrait of a Lady is about Isabel"[23]; at the other end of the scale of appreciation, Leavis, singling Milly out for a particularly savage attack, emphasizes that what we are rewarded with for our painstaking and laborious plodding through James's web of indirections and convolutions, ambiguities and syntactical complexities, is virtual nothingness:

> A vivid, particularly realized Milly might for [James] stand in the midst of his indirections, but what for his reader these skirt round is too much like emptiness; she isn't there and the fuss the other characters make about her as the "Dove" has the effect of an irritating sentimentality.[24]

Whereas Leavis appears to have taken particular offence at the metaphor of the dove, it is the "fairy-tale princess" image that appears to have aroused most of the hostile criticism. The following piece of censure, though admittedly couched in exceptionally harsh terms, provides a vivid example of the kind of comment which Milly Theale has repeatedly provoked:

> The American princess is false, or at least a romantic, improbable and rather thin embodiment of James's own pubescent concept of a heroine; without apparently any social, economic, or domestic reference at all.[25]

An indictment like this one highlights the importance of settling whether it is indeed correct to say that the presentation of Milly is lacking in immediacy, sensuous appeal, "reality" and life. Is Milly a mere phantom, absent from the better part of the novel and hard to visualize, let alone fathom, even when momentarily in the focus of attention?

As I hope to show in this chapter, while most readers' mental picture of Milly is indeed likely to call forth descriptive adjectives such as "blurred", "indistinct", "vapoury" and "ethereal", the notion of vagueness which appears to be part of our conception of her is not the result of a presentation lacking poise and clarity, nor does it indicate a failure of realization on the author's part. Rather, it is a direct consequence of the Maeterlinckian provenance of the principal metaphor characterizing her - the metaphor with which she has become identified in the minds of many critics and readers.

An account of the novel's organisation and action such as that by John Goode, which gives striking prominence to the role played by Densher's growing consciousness, could be misleading. He claims that "On the one hand, the novel is not about Milly. Two-thirds of it are concerned with the development of Densher's consciousness, and she is absent from both the beginning and the end".[26] It is true, Milly does not figure in the first two books of the novel.[27] However, as we shall

see, there are convincing reasons of a thematic and structural nature for her absence at this stage. In the middle sections, by contrast, Milly is both an active presence and our lucid and highly intelligent guide to the ways of London society. She disappears again from the visible scene from book eight onwards. It is important to bear in mind that although Lord Mark's second visit to Venice does indeed bring Densher's daily interaction with Milly to an abrupt end, it is paradoxically from this moment onwards that she becomes most intensely real to him, dispelling even the lingering memories of Kate's brief stay in his rooms. Milly's virtual invasion of Densher's mental space during the final nine-odd chapters points forward to the novel's elegiac conclusion: "We shall never be again as we were"(WD, 576), which is not only the "recognition of a lost future"[28] but also the acknowledgement by Kate of the unpalatable truth that any shared existence will perforce include Milly's living memory as a third party. Moreover, it cannot be overstressed that as Densher's Bildungsroman, The Wings of the Dove traces the changes taking place in his awareness through his encounter with Milly: there is no clear line dividing his sharpening perception of Milly from his conception of what the important issues in life are. It is, then, not possible to convey an impression of Milly's importance simply by stating in what percentage of the total number of pages she figures as an active force. Nor can she be dismissed as a mere catalyst in Densher's transfiguration - a menial role against which the middle sections' fully elaborated and particularized evocation of her sharp and questioning mind and her many refinements of thought and feeling argues.

However, there is no denying that we finish reading

The Wings of the Dove feeling that we do not know Milly in the way we know her chief antagonist Kate. There seem to be two possible explanations for this difficulty in envisioning the heroine. In the first place, it is likely that the variety of iconographic pressures[29] which are constantly being exerted on her has a confusing effect on the emerging picture: besieged as we are by alternative ways of seeing Milly, we end up finding it all but impossible to call a single, unified image of her to the mind's eye. More decisive still is the impact of Maeterlinckian imagery accreting round the figure of the young American heiress and bringing about a systematic and sustained substitution of metaphorical for personal attributes.

From her first appearance in The Wings of the Dove, Milly is presented to the reader as a princess. For the explicit confirmation that the proper context of the princess metaphor is Maeterlinck's dramatic work we have to wait until the "Maeterlinck picture" in chapter 24. However, long before we get to this scene we are given numerous indications as to the metaphor's antecedents. Book three both introduces the princess image and mentions Maeterlinck's name, but without establishing a formal connection between the two. We are told that to Susan Stringham the encounter with Milly was "poetry - it was also history - ... to a finer tune even than Maeterlinck and Pater, than Marbot and Gregorovius" (WD, 94). The subsequent chapters continue to embroider the princess motif. Though these chapters do not overtly refer to Maeterlinck, one gets the strong impression that his heroines are on James's mind whenever princess imagery is part of the discourse. At no time is the princess image cluster abandoned, not even after the highly

romanticized context in which it makes its first appearance gives way to less fanciful occasions; rather, its resonance is cumulative and builds up to the "Maeterlinck scene", which elaborates on the motif and enhances our sense of the image's importance in the playing out of the novel's principal issues. Both Milly's physique and her situation in the world invite Maeterlinckian comparisons. Susan Stringham, the writer of romantic fiction for women's magazines and a self-confessed admirer of Maeterlinck, presents us with the following account of Milly's looks - a description which is likely to stick in the mind and form the basis of our own mental image of the American heiress since it is the first one of her we encounter in the novel. Susan Stringham's initial impression of Milly as:

> .. the slim, constantly pale, delicately haggard, anomalously, agreeably angular young person, of not more than two-and-twenty in spite of her marks ... (WD, 89)

is strongly reminiscent of the fragile, ethereal and anaemic heroines with whom Maeterlinck's dramatic work is most widely associated. Furthermore, the aspects of her situation appealing most strongly to Mrs. Stringham's imagination are similar to those characteristic of the young princesses moving through Maeterlinck's fictional world:

> She was alone, she was stricken, she was rich, and, in particular, she was strange ... (WD, 89)

The adjective "strange", placed in a stress-bearing position, recalls Maeterlinck's slightly weird young women as well as his observation in "Les Avertis" that those forewarned of an early death invariably strike us as odd. From the outset, Milly, like Maeterlinck's heroines, is

surrounded by an aura of mystery and portrayed as utterly alone in the world: as Susan puts it, Milly's case leaves no doubt as to the fact that to be a princess is "a perfectly definite doom for the wearer" (WD, 101), and quite possibly, "with its involved loneliness and other mysteries, the weight under which she fancied her companion's admirable head occasionally, and ever so submissively, bowed" (WD, 101). Mrs. Stringham's subsequent amplifications of her initial picture of Milly repeatedly invoke attributes which, though not necessarily confined to Maeterlinck, harmonize with the "Maeterlinckian princess" metaphor. Thus Milly is presented to us as adept in the art of "being inexplicably sad and yet making it as clear as noon; of being unmistakably gay and yet making it as soft as dusk" (WD, 96-97); her "unpacified state" (WD, 97) and her "constant white face" (WD, 108) are remarked upon; she has the romantic appeal of someone leading an "Isolated, unmothered, unguarded" (WD, 114) existence; she is seen as "the girl with the crown of old gold" (WD, 92) and, most suggestively of all, she is described as a "wandering princess" (WD, 142). At the beginning of the twentieth century, when Maeterlinck's work was still fairly widely known, describing one's heroine as a pale princess, kinless, loveless and wandering aimlessly through the world, in combination with an explicit reference to Maeterlinck's achievement, amounted to an unmistakable acknowledgement of Maeterlinck's legendary plays as one's frame of reference.

Until the elaboration of the dove metaphor in book V, the "fairytale princess" image provides the mould for our response to Milly. In addition, it is instrumental in creating the fairytale atmosphere

dominating book three and subsuming even the biblical echoes found towards the end of chapter five. The link with Maeterlinck's ethereal princesses, once noticed, strengthens the reader's perception of Milly as waiflike, doomed, romantic, vulnerable, enigmatic: in sum, not quite of this world. The Maeterlinckian context automatically brings into play two important motifs, worked out in the rest of the novel: that of an early death and that of victimization. The explicit and implicit references to Maeterlinck's dramatic work are effective in lending force and authority to the hints found from book three onwards, that Milly is marked out for an unusual fate. Dark omens of premature dying suffuse the text and link up with the notion of inordinate wealth to produce slightly portentous overtones. Like the other images applied to Milly, the princess metaphor, though initially innocent and straightforward enough, soon takes on the ambiguity characterizing all image-making in The Wings of the Dove: from a contributing factor in a romantic universe from which the vision of evil appears to be absent, it turns into a focus for human rapacity and corruption.

Provided one has been aware of Maeterlinck as the supplier of one of the novel's important contexts, the characterization of the relationship of Kate and Milly in an episode which, as James puts it, has "the likeness of some dim scene in a Maeterlinck play" (WD, 364), will be perceived as the natural culmination of the many allusions in the preceding chapters to the characters of Maeterlinck's quasi-legendary work. The Maeterlinck scene makes explicit what had been latent and ambiguous before, and widens the discussion to include a consideration of several issues that are central to

The Wings of the Dove and to Maeterlinck's work:

> ... we have positively the image, in the delicate dusk, of the figures so associated and yet so opposed, so mutually watchful: that of the angular, pale princess, ostrich-plumed, black-robed, hung about with amulets, reminders, relics, mainly seated, mainly still, and that of the upright, restless, slow-circling lady of her court, who exchanges with her, across the black water streaked with evening gleams, fitful questions and answers. (WD, 364)

The Maeterlinck conceit, which is worked into the fabric of the Venetian episodes, crystallises the earlier Maeterlinckian associations and reinforces the impression of delicacy, the crepuscular palette and the doom-laden atmosphere brought into play in the third book. Though strikingly different in tone, atmosphere and subject matter from the surrounding chapters, the "Maeterlinck picture" does not stand in complete isolation. On the contrary, it relies for its full significance to emerge on its two companion scenes, to be found in chapters 13 and 15. There appears to be a logical progression between these chapters, based on the steady intensification of Milly's awareness of the rift between herself and Kate, and on the ways in which Milly's growing understanding affects the pattern of her interaction with her English friends. The first two scenes are organised round the following causally connected nodal points: Milly's sense of danger, springing from her perception of the merciless strength found at the core of Kate's personality. Chapter 13 concentrates on Milly's general feeling of unease, her dimly apprehended but keenly felt conviction that something is amiss.

This feeling reappears in chapter 15, but now becomes sharper and more precise through being examined analytically and attached to a set of particularizing images. Chapter 24 stands out by virtue of its stylization: purged of the intensely personal and undigested feelings informing the imagery in chapters 13 and 15, the Maeterlinck conceit appears to achieve a high degree of autonomy, which sets it apart from the neighbouring chapters and creates the sense of an intermezzo, a pause between the acts. Milly's successive pictures of Kate have as their common denominator the notion of power: energy contained in chapter 13, in operation in chapter 15, but in each case conveying the sense of a destructive potential. In both chapters, the effect aimed at is heavily dependent on the contrast between Milly's fragility and Kate's stupendous health and vitality. Chapters 13 and 15 trace Milly's developing understanding of the implications for herself of this imbalance. When as a result of her perceptions and meditations the fear of extinction threatens to submerge her, she takes prompt and decisive action. Since in an all-out confrontation the odds are too heavily weighted against her, her defence tactics hinge on the shirking of meaningful communication. In addition, she sets out to elaborate a set of images with which to explore and make sense of the situation she is involved in, and cope with its pressures. The first instance of this strategy occurs in chapter 13; asked about her health after her visits to the eminent doctor Sir Luke Strett, Milly suddenly senses danger and, though "She couldn't have said what it was exactly that, on the instant, determined her" (WD, 213), disclaims any suggestion of serious illness. Her denial immediately gives her the feeling of having "done something for her safety" (WD, 214). At this point, the imagery and the terms of

reference are, appropriately, still extremely vague: acting on a sudden misgiving, Milly has not had the time for reflection or analysis.

However, as is shown by Milly's musings during the few moments intervening between Kate's arrival at the hotel where the American party is staying and her entrance into her friend's rooms, a decisive factor of Milly's conduct was her perception of Kate's descent from a hansom, ready to pay her a social call. What she saw was not simply the familiar figure of her English friend but an image of power incarnate: concentrated energy, irresistibly reminding one of its ruthless and destructive power even when held in suspension. The solid reality of Kate's presence, the "quantity" (WD, 213) it seems to represent, stands in blatant contrast to the equivocation of the "maze of possibilities" (WD, 214) by which Milly believes herself to be defined. Kate's superb health and strength strike Milly as almost "a grossness" (WD, 168); merely by being, Kate appears to be aggressive, her robustness ostensibly demanding Milly's "surrender" (WD, 214) and asking for "all that was most mortal" (WD, 214) in her.

In chapter 13 Milly gratefully takes up Kate's cue that she has been "absurd" (WD, 214), a term whose inherent ambiguity simultaneously expresses and conceals her thought. The notion resurfaces in chapter 15, thus acting as a thematic connection between both blocks of text. Once again, it is linked to the experience of fear, which surges in the course of Kate's "tutorial" on the mercenary tendencies of English society. Milly's initial reaction is to dismiss her sense of apprehension by calling it "absurd". Pondering on the scene in

retrospect, however, helps her to put her feelings in perspective. It becomes clear to her that the power perceived in Kate on the earlier occasion was not so much human as bestial; the ruthless energy emanating from Kate gives Milly the impression of being "alone with a creature who paced like a panther" (WD 232). Aware of the hyperbole of her characterization, Milly pre-empts criticism by specifying "That was a violent image, but it made her a little less ashamed of having been scared" (WD 232). On the other hand, Kate applies a metaphor with antithetical values, namely that of a dove, to Milly, by whom it is instantly accepted "as the right one" (WD 233). For it came to Milly "like an inspiration" that "though a dove who could perch on a finger, one were also a princess with whom forms were to be observed" (WD 233). It is important to note that the pairing of "dove" with "princess" is entirely Milly's doing: though to Milly it seemed that this elaboration "sealed the sense of what Kate had just said" (WD 233), nothing in the text corroborates her interpretation. At the same time, Milly's conjunction of dove and princess exposes the basic flaw in her thinking: the mistaken belief that it is possible to be a subject of exploitation and yet ultimately in control of one's fate. The strategy deployed in the Venice episode - the creation of a symbolical setting in her rented palazzo, where her retinue of spongers will be forced to treat her with the deference due to a princess - has its source in this section of book V. However, it is only in retrospect that one becomes aware of this connection. What strikes one instantly is the fact that the dove image operating in chapter 15 brings into play the bird's gentleness, innocence and domesticity, and stands in sharp contrast to the kinetic imagery characterising Kate: it is not the dove's flight that is

envisioned but its willingness to perch obediently on the finger of its master.

Finally, the Maeterlinck scene combines the evasion motif introduced in chapter 13, with the notion of protection, through concealment of the secret self: what Maeterlinck termed "le secrèt de ce silence-là, qui est le silence essentiel et le refuge inviolable de nos âmes" (Trésor, 17). In this scene the narrative consciousness is no longer Milly's. The dominant image is that of the American heiress, transformed into a Maeterlinckian princess who, fearful of the wide hostile world, has retired to the safety of a fortified tower. Round this tower she has dug a moat, cutting her off both from human sympathy and from inroads on her safety and privacy. The imagery is carefully chosen to conjure up the surface characteristics associated by the general reader with Maeterlinck's work:

> Certain aspects of the connection of these young women show for us, such is the twilight that gathers about them, in the likeness of some dim scene in a Maeterlinck play; we have positively the image, in the delicate dusk, of the figures so associated and yet so opposed, so mutually watchful: that of the angular, pale princess, ostrich-plumed, black-robed, hung about with amulets, reminders, relics, mainly seated, mainly still, and that of the upright, restless, slow-circling lady of her court, who exchanges with her, across the black water streaked with evening gleams, fitful questions and answers. (WD, 364)

"Delicate dusk", "angular, pale princess", "black water", "evening gleams", and the earlier "tower" and "moat": all these consciously and purposefully hark back to the imaginative universe of Maeterlinck's legendary plays. Also in agreement with the spirit of Maeterlinck's work

is Milly's striking stillness, which strongly contrasts with Kate's restlessness. The opposition between the American girl's virtual immobility and her English rival's inability to keep quiet, catches the fundamental difference in their personalities and attitudes to life. Moreover, Kate's continual circling round Milly's tower is the physical equivalent of her sustained attempt at ensnaring and exploiting her wealthy young friend.

On its own, the Maeterlinck scene is rather an oddity. When related to chapters 13 and 15, however, it acquires a poetic and metaphorical appropriateness. The elaborate artificiality of the Maeterlinck conceit pertains to the essence of the scene, its artifice of form and presentation miming the studied nature of Kate's and Milly's mode of interaction. A relationship based on distrust, fear and manipulation can only survive by resorting to highly formalized behaviour, from which the personal element is removed. The lack of trust characterizing Milly's and Kate's dealings with each other creates problems of communication, as was intimated in the previous scenes and is now brought into sharper focus. The pages leading up to the Maeterlinckian picture set a tone and mood reminiscent of Maeterlinck's work and introduce the Maeterlinckian themes of silent communion with the universe and of speech as concealment. In an evocation aimed at producing strong atmospheric vibrations, Milly is imaged as "the priestess of the worship" (WD,361), moving solemnly and gracefully through her rented Venetian palace and enjoying "the sweet taste of solitude" (WD,362). Her delectation in the deep quiet enveloping her and her perception of silence as a medium and necessary condition for

communion with the inner self and the invisible dimension of existence, accord with Maeterlinck's views. The remarkable correspondence between certain of the thoughts expressed in chapter 24 and several of the observations about the use of silence in Le Trésor des humbles, suggests that Maeterlinck's work provides the context, not just for the "Maeterlinck picture" but also for the preceding pages. Seeking out solitude is described as a characteristic pastime of Milly's, a "need of her nature ... when things spoke to her with penetration. It was mostly in stillness that they spoke to her best; amid voices she lost the sense" (WD, 361). These remarks approximate the view put forward in Le Trésor des humbles that if man wants to hear "la voix ... profonde, mais hésitante et discrète, des êtres et des choses" (Trésor, 165) he must flee the din of modern life as it is only in silence that "le sens de la vie se développe" (Trésor, 163). Maeterlinck was convinced that there are many principles that are more powerful and have further-reaching consequences than the laws governing the passions; however, as he insisted, "ces lois lentes, discrètes et silencieuses .. ne s'aperçoivent et ne s'entendent que dans le demi-jour et le receuillement des heures tranquilles de la vie" (Trésor, 171). Again and over again Maeterlinck warned against the widespread tendency to cultivate companionship compulsively and indulge in talk for its own sake, thereby drowning the inner voice, concealing one's thoughts and eventually eliminating them. Similarly aware of the importance of fostering an atmosphere of intense stillness and reverential receptiveness in which the dialogue between man and destiny can make itself heard, Milly enlists the help of her steward to arrange for the occasional moment of solitude. Tired of the incessant chatter of her

companions, she begs Eugenio to "get [her] an hour alone" (WD, 366). As she puts it to her employee, she needs a break from the others "so that I may just a little, all by myself, see where I am" (WD, 366). In addition, she yearns for peace and quiet in order to be receptive to what the "Voices [that] had surrounded her for weeks ... might well prevent her from hearing" (WD, 361). If the virtually impersonal chatter of Milly's companions is perceived as a threat to the secret self, the mode of dialogue evolved by Kate and Milly for their tête-à-têtes constitutes a quite different form of corruption of the communicative purpose of speech. The Maeterlinck scene is puzzling until one grasps that it is essentially a vignette expressing Milly's way of dealing with her fear of Kate and her growing wariness of candour - twin worries already established in a less stylized fashion in chapters 13 and 15. The young women's mask-removing charade is a fundamentally futile exercise since its artificiality is not less than that taken for granted in their dealings with the world.

> These puttings-off of the mask had finally quite become the form taken by their moments together, moments indeed not increasingly frequent and not prolonged, thanks to the consciousness of fatigue on Milly's side whenever, as she herself expressed it, she got out of harness. They flourished their masks, the independent pair, as they might have flourished Spanish fans; they smiled and sighed on removing them; but the gesture, the smiles, the sighs, strangely enough, might have been suspected the greatest reality in the business. (WD, 363)

Everything done and said by Milly and Kate bears witness to the fact that they both have something to hide. They cultivate form in order to gloss over the glaring lack of communication between them, and practice a mode of speech intended to disguise their thought as well as obfuscate

each other's understanding. The ensuing dialogue stands in sharp contrast to what one expects to find in a free and frank debate but manifestly emulates the verbal style which earned Maeterlinck's symbolist plays notoriety, being broken, suggestive, hesitant, deliberate, punctuated by and trailing off in suggestive silence. Whereas Milly meets Lord Marks's question "Do you mean ... that you're really not well?" (WD, 372) with a deep long silence which, as she presently realizes, is "itself too straight an answer" (WD, 372), in the company of Kate she is careful to keep up a semblance of communication. Milly's reluctance to observe total silence in Kate's presence provides yet another parallel with Maeterlinck's arguments in "Le Silence". According to Maeterlinck,

> L'instinct des vérités surhumaines que nous possédons tous nous avertit qu'il est dangereux de se taire avec quelqu'un que l'on ne désire pas connaître ou que l'on n'aime point; car les paroles passent entre les hommes, mais le silence, s'il a eu un moment l'occasion d'être actif, ne s'efface jamais, et la vie véritable, la seule qui laisse quelque trace, n'est faite que de silence. (Trésor, 12)

Maeterlinck was also convinced that, conversely, any disinclination to be quiet in the company of a friend should alert one to the risks involved in continuing this relationship:

> Dès que les lèvres dorment, les âmes se réveillent et se mettent à l'oeuvre; car le silence est l'élément plein de surprises, de dangers et de bonheur, dans lequel les âmes se possèdent librement. Si vous voulez vraiment vous livrer à quelqu'un, taisez-vous: et si vous avez peur de vous taire avec lui ... fuyez-le, car votre âme déjà sait à quoi s'en tenir. (Trésor, 18)

The exploration of the value and function of speech and silence in book

seven of The Wings of the Dove repeatedly invokes Maeterlinck's ideas. Nevertheless, one should refrain from jumping at the conclusion that the scene in question seeks to emulate slavishly the verbal style of Maeterlinck's legendary plays. It does indeed revolve round a number of issues that play a central part in Maeterlinck's imaginative universe. But the kind of dialogue to which the crucial passage in The Wings of the Dove refers is used in Maeterlinck's plays to an effect which is dramatically opposed to that achieved by Milly and Kate. Whereas in Maeterlinck's symbolist drama the emotional power and the suggestiveness of the unexpressed are conveyed through the characters' short, often incomplete, and invariably dreamy utterances, in The Wings of the Dove a mode of speech that appears to have been modelled on the Maeterlinckian variety is presented to the reader not as an instrument of communication but as one of obfuscation:

> The upright lady, with thick, dark braids down her back, drawing over the grass a more embroidered train, makes the whole circuit, and makes it again, and the broken talk, brief and sparingly allusive, seems more to cover than to free their sense. (WD, 364)

Whereas Maeterlinck's characteristic style of dialogue hints at those deeper meanings which elude articulation and at feelings of which the personages are barely, if at all, conscious, The Wings of the Dove uses Maeterlinckian features - truncated, fitful speech, steeped in long, pregnant silences - as an indication that communication has broken down and the resources of language function as a protective armour.

III

The combination of allusions to Milly's ill-health and the specific invocations of Maeterlinck's anaemic and typically doomed heroines lend urgency to the reader's sense of the American girl's mortality. In Maeterlinck's terms, she is clearly one of the "avertis", those forewarned of an early death. The ultimate source of Milly's untimely threatened existence is likely to have been Minny Temple, James's beloved cousin who died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-four. But the striking concurrence between the trials, tribulations and joys of Milly and the paradigmatic fate of Maeterlinck's women characters as set forth in "Les Avertis", suggests that James intended a parallel between his stricken heroine and Maeterlinck's pubescent girls. The following pages do not contain an exhaustive list of the verbal and thematic correspondences between The Wings of the Dove and "Les Avertis". They concentrate on the unmistakable resemblance between the course taken by the events in Milly's life and the arguments developed in Maeterlinck's essay. "Les Avertis" is about those children and youngsters who come into the world knowing that death is waiting round the corner for them. Their ranks include a handful of hapless creatures who "s'en vont sans rien dire et ceux-là nous demeurent à jamais inconnu" (Trésor, 48). But Milly Theale, like Mélisande, is manifestly one of those who

> ... s'attardent un peu, nous regardent en souriant attentivement, semblent sur le point d'avouer qu'ils ont tout compris, et puis, vers la vingtième année, s'éloignent à la hâte, en étouffant leur pas ... (Trésor, 48)

The excessive importance Susan Stringham attaches to Milly's restlessness and to her eagerness in the pursuit of experience, calls to mind Maeterlinck's observation that mothers (or substitute mothers like Susan) are often alerted to their children's destiny by their inordinate commitment, at an unusually early age, to the notion that one must live all one can. As Maeterlinck put it,

> A la hâte, sagement et minutieusement, ils se préparent à vivre, et cette hâte est le signe que les mères, à leur insu discrètes confidentes de tout ce qui ne se dit pas, osent à peine regarder. (Trésor, 48)

It is, significantly, immediately after Milly's unwillingness to fall in with the sedate pace set by Susan has been remarked on and puzzled over at considerable length that the death motif is introduced. It is given a triple perspective, directing the reader's attention to the indefinite past, of which the references to Milly's series of bereavements and her dramatic mourning attest; to the present, with Susan's agonizing about the likelihood that Milly is contemplating a "sharp or simple release from the human predicament" (WD, 105), and onwards, to the future, prefigured in the speculations as to whether "talk of early dying was in order" (WD, 112). In its instantaneous and unprompted linking of Milly with the notion of mortality, the first section of book three sets the pattern for the other characters' persistent tendency to consider her under the aspect of death. By the same token, the introduction of Milly, suffused as it is with reminders of her death-bound progress, points forward to the Bronzino episode, which epitomizes Milly's relations with the world. The Bronzino chapter is a recognition scene both for the reader and for Milly. We realize that what the American girl sees in the

portrait corresponds exactly to what everyone except those who, like Lord Mark, are "conscious, really of nothing" (WD, 135), instantly notice on meeting her: a quality most fully and imaginatively formulated by Densher in a later chapter as "the great smudge of mortality across the picture, the shadow of pain and horror, finding in no quarter a surface of spirit or of speech that consented to reflect it" (WD, 492). In the Bronzino episode, Milly, face to face with a distilled image of her own plight, recognizes the Lady of the portrait "in words that had nothing to do with her" (WD, 183), before being overwhelmed by the inescapable fact of her own mortality, and the contiguous one of physical and mental agony.

As Milly's raptured account of her experience progresses, the notion of her impending death acquires sharper outlines, culminating in the triple poignant repetition "dead, dead, dead"(WD, 183). Lord Mark is the only person who fails to understand that the similarity between the Lady of the Bronzino portrait and Milly is not primarily a question of features, nor even of the curious green complexion which she shares with Maeterlinck's princess Maleine; the crucial connection resides in the fact that both women bear the visible marks of death. Nevertheless, even after the events at Matcham, Milly continues to channel a great deal of energy into denying that there is anything "the matter" with her - an attempt which fools nobody and only succeeds in creating embarrassment. According to Maeterlinck, this kind of behaviour is typical of the forewarned: the more obvious it is to everyone that they are about to depart to the other world, the more determinèd they become to cover up the desperate nature of their condition, and nothing distresses them

more than the realization that they have become identified with their predestined premature death:

> En rencontrant ceux qui ne vivront pas, ce n'est pas eux que nous voyons, mais ce qui va leur arriver. Ils voudraient nous tromper pour se tromper. Ils font tout pour nous dérouter et cependant, à travers leur sourire et leur ardeur à vivre, l'événement transparaît déjà comme s'il était le soutien et la raison même de leur existence. Une fois de plus, la mort les a trahis, et ils voient avec tristesse que nous avons tout vu et qu'il y a des voix qui ne peuvent se taire. (Trésor, 51)

While for Milly too the imminence of death creates opportunities as well as limitations - it is the threat of early extinction that has provided the spur to surrender herself to experience and to taste of everything life has to offer - her at times paralyzing fear of the end is constantly emphasized and gradually brings into being a wariness of people. For it is people, rather than her physical condition, who prevent her from leading a normal existence. Again we are reminded of a passage in "Les Avertis":

> Ils ont peur de nous, parce que nous les avertissons sans cesse et malgré nous; et à peine les avons-nous abordés qu'ils sentent que nous réagissons contre leur avenir. (Trésor, 50)

As Kate fully appreciates, Milly's "systematic bravado" (WD, 365) requires the "common duplicity" (WD, 365) of her friends for its continued operation and is under constant threat from "the vain sympathy, the mere helpless, gaping inference of others" (WD, 365).

The Maeterlinck picture, which is placed just before the account

of Lord Mark's first visit to Milly's palazzo, prepares the reader for the Maeterlinckian style in which nature is to respond to the exposure of Densher's and Kate's guilt by the English nobleman at his second, and final, appearance. The sudden dramatic change in the weather accompanying Densher's realization that the game is up, though in theory in agreement with Shakespeare's practice, can also be termed Maeterlinckian. If the evocation of a "Venice all of evil"(WD, 460) is placed in a Maeterlinckian rather than a Shakespearean context, then it is possible to discern an almost uninterrupted line of development from the scene which James himself labelled "our Maeterlinck picture" (WD, 364) to Milly's Maeterlinckian renunciation of love and life following Lord Mark's second visit. Strictly speaking, it is her disease that kills Milly. Yet within the novel, the explanation of her sudden deterioration put forward by Densher, though perhaps unsatisfactory from a narrowly medical point of view, has an air of unarguability and imaginative propriety about it. The nub of Densher's argument is that it was Lord Mark's visit and his exposure of the real nature of his relationship with Kate which killed Milly:

> The way it affected her was that it made her give up. She has given up beyond all power to care again, and that's why she's dying. (WD, 509)

The quiet finality and precision of his statement convey the certainty in his mind and impress themselves forcefully on Kate. It is clear, to her as to the reader, that Densher is not speculating. Though by temperament disinclined to dogmatic or deductive thinking, he will not allow for the possibility that Milly's death is to be imputed to something other than her friends' odious conduct.

An interesting aspect of the turn given to Milly's sudden collapse is its congruence with "Les Avertis" and the fate of several of Maeterlinck's heroines. In "Les Avertis" we are told that when deeply hurt by the callousness of their fellow-people, the forewarned completely withdraw from the world:

> Eux-mêmes ne disent presque rien et s'entourent d'un nuage au moment où ils se sentent blessés et où l'homme est sur le point de les atteindre (Trésor, 48)

Similarly, Milly responds to the devastating blow administered by Lord Mark by quietly and unostentatiously withdrawing from the world. Moreover, the words which both Susan and Densher use to describe the American girl's plight - "She turned her face to the wall" - are strongly reminiscent of the way in which Mélisande reacts to the death of the only human being she loves. It is true, Mélisande is struck by Golaud's sword, but the injury thus sustained is a mere scratch. As one of the maidservants points out, it is "une petite blessure qui ne ferait pas mourir un pigeon" (V, i). The doctor who is called to Mélisande's bedside is equally positive that "Ce n'est pas de cette blessure qu'elle se meurt; un oiseau n'en serait pas mort ..." (V, ii). Both Mélisande and Milly die what the psychiatrist Etienne De Greeff has described as a "symbolical death", the result of the extinction of their "rattachement aux êtres et aux choses; et cela se traduit, dans l'âme consciente, par le consentement instantané à la mort".[30] Just as Pelléas et Mélisande presents us with a psychological rather than a medical explanation for the heroine's flagging will to live, so Milly's death is accounted for in emotional terms rather than as primarily a physiological event.

The novel's conclusion, "We shall never again be as we were" indicates that The Wings of the Dove is the story of a transformation. The role played by Milly in this process is in full accord with the argument of "Les Avertis". In his essay, Maeterlinck put the pivotal question,

> Les attirons-nous, ou nous attirent-ils? Les transformons-nous ou nous transforment-ils? Ne se trompent-ils jamais? Pourquoi viennent-ils à nous comme l'abeille à la ruche et la colombe au colombier ...? (Trésor, 52)

"Les Avertis" offers no fully elaborated reply, but hints repeatedly at the fact that the forewarned are consciousness-raising agents:

> Ils sont peut-être indispensables comme toutes les douleurs, et ceux qui ne les ont pas approchés sont moins doux, moins tristes et moins bons. (Trésor, 47)

As "Les Avertis" suggests, without those young men and women visibly marked out for an unusual fate, modern man is liable to lead an existence that is complacent, mechanical, unconscious of ultimate reality. The forewarned help him to recover the lost religious sense, the awareness of that part of life, which, as Maeterlinck puts it, is "la meilleure, la plus pure et la plus grande, - qui ne se mêle pas à la vie ordinaire" (Trésor, 57). "Silence" and "love" are the key-words in Maeterlinck's evocation of the experience man can attain by opening himself up to the benevolent influence of the forewarned. The terms employed in The Wings of the Dove are different but their message is essentially the same. Following his expulsion from Milly's palazzo, Densher too gradually achieves an understanding of the absolutes

governing man's life which his passion for Kate had led him to trivialize. Maeterlinck argued that when it has suddenly become clear that the moment has come for the forewarned to take their leave from the world, those left behind feel

> ...que c'est l'heure enfin d'affirmer une chose plus grave, plus humaine, plus réelle et plus profonde que l'amitié, la pitié ou l'amour; une chose qui bat mortellement de l'aile tout au fond de la gorge, et qu'on ignore, et qu'on n'a jamais dite, et qu'il n'est plus possible de dire, car tant de vies se passent à se taire ... (Trésor, 49)

Similarly, the introspective and reflective mood engendered by his awareness of Milly's undeception triggers off in him a process of change at the end of which he will have become a different man. He learns the meaning of what Maeterlinck describes as "aimer ce qu'il y a d'éternel dans les autres" (Trésor, 244). He becomes aware of the all-important ineffable and religious dimension of existence. Well before the novel's last line, with its poised finality, is reached, it has become clear that Densher's experience cannot be undone. The terms in which he recalls his final meeting with Milly - "The essence was that something had happened to him too beautiful and too sacred to describe. He had been, to his recovered sense, forgiven, dedicated, blessed ..." (WD, 527) - indicate that to him the events in Venice have taken on a quasi-religious significance. Kate has lost her gamble through a failure of imagination. Yet it is she who is to have the last word, both literally and in the sense that she finds the perfect image to describe simultaneously her own error and the transfiguring power of Milly's moral superiority:

> I used to call her, in my stupidity - for want of

> anything better - a dove. Well, she stretched out her wings, and it was to that they reached. They cover us. (WD, 575)

This is an image which contains a multitude of possible echoes, biblical as well as literary ones. One likely reference that appears to have gone unnoticed occurs in Maeterlinck's essay "La Vie profonde ", where the effect of "spiritual" goodness is discussed in terms recalling Kate's metaphor of the covering shadow cast by Milly's unfolding wings:

> Regardez les hommes et les choses selon la forme et le désir de votre oeil intérieur; mais n'oubliez jamais que l'ombre qu'ils projettent en passant sur la colline ou sur le mur n'est que l'image passagère d'une ombre plus puissante qui s'étend comme l'aile d'un cygne impérissable sur toute âme qui s'approche de leur âme. (Trésor, 237-238)

IV

As we have seen, James mentions Maeterlinck's work in chapter five and draws Milly Theale in the likeness of a Maeterlinckian princess in chapter twenty-four. This procedure raises a number of questions which are central to the interpretation of The Wings of the Dove. For a start, it is important to determine the extent to which James supported the perception of Milly as a Maeterlinckian heroine - did he hold that there was a complete identity between her heuristic and her ontological aspects, her "meaning" and her "being"? Equally significant is the problem of the exact nature of the role played by Maeterlinckian materials in The Wings of the Dove. What purpose do the many explicit and implicit references to Maeterlinck's work and ideas serve; how do they fit into the overall design of the novel? The answers to these two

sets of questions appear to be both interrelated and intimately connected with the novel's formal strategy, which revolves round the playing off against each other of a large variety of styles, modes, allusions, references. The bewildering multiplicity of literary and artistic contexts within which The Wings of the Dove operates have a decisive effect on the reading process: in addition to promoting close and sustained attention to what is being said, it draws attention to the formal level of the text, to the extent to which what is being said is a function of the language of rendering.[31] The glaring contrasts in style between the novel's constituent "blocks" cannot be summarily passed over; they force an analytical approach onto the reader, who needs to inquire into the rationale and the implication of these oppositions. The references found in each segment to a certain style, tradition or usuage have their place in a world bristling with aesthetic and philosophical questions. The reader is challenged to scrutinize the relation of each unit to the others as well as to the anterior discourse that is being invoked, thereby creating for himself a kind of dialogue with literary and philosophical history. The pattern of contrasting modes and styles is itself a statement - an assertion of the author's sense of experience as multi-faceted and inviting an indefinite number of distinct approaches.[32] The Wings of the Dove does not contain any stylistic experiments indulged in for their own sakes;[33] rather, stylistic variations are the outward manifestation of differences in attitude and Weltanschauung, which are the author's prime concern and the novel's principal theme. The Wings of the Dove is not so much about the vicissitudes of Milly's, Densher's and Kate's intertwining relationships as about different ways of seeing and the relation between "seeing" and

"being". The stylistic mode we are concerned with is mainly that evoked in book three and in all subsequent ones operating within a Maeterlinckian frame of reference. As James indicated in the preface to the New York edition of The Wings of the Dove, the preceding books, in which Milly Theale does not appear and which call to the mind a different literary model, make their contribution to the characterization of the heroine through opposition and contrast. Books one and two evoke the approach to reality which we associate with the world of the Victorian novel, whose style of meeting experience will be progressively exposed as inadequate and harmful. Its echoes of the realistic novel create expectations as to subject matter - they create what the structuralists call a "horizon of expectation" - which are amply satisfied. The opening books constitute an appropriate gateway into a society whose thinking is completely dominated by quantification and the obsession with material values, and which has evolved a morality of inverted ideals, in which contracting a brilliant but loveless marriage is regarded as "doing one's duty" and "honour" implies the willingness to condone deceit. There is a marked contrast in literary reference, tone, texture and atmosphere between the first two books and the third one, which leaves Kate Gray's and Mrs. Lowder's society for that of Milly Theale. Nonetheless, the characteristic activities of books one and two - conveyed through verbs such as "see", "mark", "weigh" - are shown not to be restricted to the materialistic universe associated with the Victorian realistic novel; they are also the centre of gravity in the fairytale world which is created for and around Milly. The naturalistic viewpoint, represented in the opening chapters brought together in book three, are on the face of it antithetical in nature.

Nonetheless, James demonstrates that the sections harking back to the Victorians and those referring to Maeterlinck's dramatic universe have closely related limitations as they derive from "the same imperfect inspiration". [34] At the root of both lies the compulsive tendency to categorize life and reduce to fixed signification areas of experience which elude classification, quantification and even definition. Kate's obsession with fixed values and realities prevents her from seizing on the inner meaning of experience. On the other hand, Susan's very different conception of reality as romance also interferes with her overall understanding of life. Both attitudes are fundamentally "construction[s] of the will" and hence ignore "the whole of experience for some special interest".[35] The premises and assumptions about life informing the attitudes adopted by the naturalist and the sentimentalist place severe constraints on their respective ways of handling problems; they also limit what can be seen and determine the depth of understanding that can be achieved. The profusion of verbs of perception in the first three books, and the use to which they are put, establish from the start that the naturalist's and the romantic's way of meeting experience merely yield "rudimentary readings" (WD, 23). In books one and two the realistic approach to life is castigated through the persistent highlighting of the rapacity, the excessive materialism and the calculation informing this particular sensibility. In book three it is the way in which verbs of perception are brought to bear upon the "Maeterlinckian princess" image which points up the inadequacy of the sentimentalist's stance.

The interpretation of this metaphor calls for extreme wariness as

its presentation relies heavily on shifting points of view and modulations of tone. It is introduced in the "Alpine scene", shortly after Milly has made her first appearance. In this scene, the chief registering consciousness is Susie Stringham's, but a significant part is played by the frequent authorial interventions which punctuate her observations, and by the lavish application of irony, which undercuts them. James's irony - sharp yet affectionate - suffuses the account of Mrs. Stringham's perceptions and interpretations and points forward to the similarly ironic but even fonder treatment she will be meted out by Milly. The picture of Susan Stringham Shepherd drawn at the beginning of book three is hardly of a nature to inspire confidence in this lady's perceptions. A dedicated pursuer of "the romantic life itself" (WD, 91) she is characterized as an earnest devotee of self-education, "flitt[ing] in and out of the Public Library with the air of conscientiously returning or bravely carrying off in her pocket the key of knowledge itself" (WD, 91); professing to be interested in the fashionable authors of the day but in actual fact fascinated by "the thin trickle of a fictive 'love-interest' through that somewhat serpentine channel, in the magazines ..." (WD, 91). This ironical presentation of Susan notwithstanding, her observations were for a long time granted an authority which James clearly denied them and the princess image a literalness which was not intended.[36] More recently, the important qualification arising from the ironical authorial comments and from the absurd picture of Susan drawn in book three, have been accorded considerable critical attention, at times causing the value of the Maeterlinckian evocation of Milly to be dismissed as merely a fanciful conceit produced by Susie's seething but unreliable

imagination. The truth probably lies somewhere in between these extremes. The irony lavished on Susan and the distancing achieved through tone do not seek to invalidate her perceptions but to shift the reader's attention from Milly to the characters observing her. Susie draws a distorted picture of Milly's conduct, and her interpretations are a travesty of what goes on in Milly's mind, but they represent an accurate image of the way in which the girl is viewed by other people. The profusion of nouns and verbal forms containing the sememes "to see" or "to read" (in the sense of "interpret") is anything but fortuitous; it indicates that the author's interest lies with the way in which his protagonist is perceived, rather than what she is genuinely like,[37] and by the same token, with the states of mind and attitudes of people observing her and responding to her. As regards the mechanics of Susan's successive views of Milly, the following comment, winding up her interpretation of the simple fact of Milly sitting peacefully on a promontory looking down on the spectacular view, as an analogue of Christ's temptation has paradigmatic value:

> ... this was the very vision in which [Milly] had, with no little awe, been discovered. The image that thus remained with the elder lady kept the character of revelation. (WD, 105)

The conjunction of "vision", "image" and "revelation" indicates the overall line of development taken by Susie's perceptions, both in this particular instance and in general.

Throughout The Wings of the Dove there is a constant play on two distinct meanings of the verb "see": superficial, and hence fundamentally erratic, perception leading to simplifications - those

simplifications which, as James shows, are a source of excitement to Susan - as opposed to "seeing" in the Maeterlinckian sense of apprehending the invisible principle governing a man's personality and giving him a sense of separate identity. The transition from the former to the latter is commensurate with a process of inner growth in the novel's two most likeable characters, Merton Densher and Susan Stringham. When towards the end of the novel Kate asks Densher how much Susie knows about their machinations, the answer is a blunt "Everything":

> She looked at him longer. "Everything?"
> "Everything".
> "Because you've told her?"
> "Because she has seen for herself. I've told her nothing. She's a person who does see." (WD, 517)

When affection is complemented by compassion, Susie is able to rise to unexpected heights and have her judgment unclouded by the trappings of the romantic imagination. Susan, the first and main progenitor of distorting images of Milly, nonetheless transcends the inherent limitations of her understanding through her kindness of heart and finally becomes "someone who sees", but now not in the ironical sense in which the verb "see" was used in the Alpine scene.

However, it is not until the late stages of The Wings of the Dove that the connotations of the verbs of perception become more positive. Up to that time, they invariably generate images which are convenient labels with which Milly is "placed" and variously exploited. Susan sees Milly as a Maeterlinckian princess because of her unsatisfied yearning

for romance. To Mrs. Lowder, by contrast, the princess simile denotes principally a set of possibilities, owing to her stupendous wealth. Finally, to Kate the image is only Maeterlinckian insofar as it suggests an early death and as such the opportunity to lay hands on her riches. Thus the image becomes a prismatic reflector of the multiplicity of attitudes to life represented by the characters. In each instance, the interpretation of the term is more revealing about the person by whom it is developed than about the woman to whom it is applied, and in each case it is clearly a distortion and a simplification. By such means James demonstrates the bankruptcy of the realist's and the arch-romantic's life views, both of which engender limited understanding. In the context of The Wings of the Dove the Maeterlinckian point of view is, like the naturalistic one, a form of manipulation and a way of impoverishing reality.

It is not only through its particular use of verbs of perception that the notion of Milly as a Maeterlinckian character is disproved. The details of the plot too are at variance with Maeterlinck's conception of life as ruled by "d'énormes puissances, invisibles et fatales ... hostiles au sourire, à la vie, à la paix, au bonheur".[38] Yet James himself brought the concept of Fate into play in the preface to the New York edition, and gave it a definition that could be variously described as Greek or Maeterlinckian. He wrote that Milly would "herself be the opposition - to the catastrophe announced by the associated Fates, powers conspiring to a sinister end and, with their command of means, finally achieving it" (Art of Novel, 290), and that the first two books seek to "create the predicament promptly and build it up solidly, so

that it should have for us as much as possible its ominous air of awaiting her" (Art of Novel, 294). However, in contrast to what happens in Maeterlinck's dramatic universe, in The Wings of the Dove Fate is shown to be ineluctable on the external and physical level only. In terms of Maeterlinck's philosophy of life Milly stands no chance. Nonetheless, as the novel's final sections demonstrate, she is able to escape its "narrowing circumvallations" (Art of Novel, 294) through her greater awareness.[39] It is this faculty which was singled out in one of Maeterlinck's volumes of essays, La Sagesse et la destinée[40] as the only escape from the fatalistic world view underlying his early symbolist plays which he was prepared to accept. As Maeterlinck puts it in this work, intense awareness is the only form of defence man has against the whims of destiny:

> On n'est chez soi, on n'est à l'abri des caprices du hasard, on n'est heureux et fort que dans l'enceinte de sa conscience. (Sagesse, 22)

As Maeterlinck saw it, the highly conscious person, the person who has developed a positive belief system for himself, holds the key to a form of happiness that is beyond the reach of contingencies. The ability to retreat within the security of the inner space gives man control over his destiny. For, according to Maeterlinck, any event in life

> ... devient beau ou triste, doux ou amer, mortel ou vivifiant, selon la qualité de l'âme qui le recueille. (Sagesse, 22)

Milly's refusal of Lord Mark's proposal is clearly strongly influenced by her appreciation of his inadequately developed imaginative faculty - as she puts it to him shortly after making his acquaintance, he is

"blasé, but ... not enlightened, ... familiar with everything, but conscious, really of nothing" (WD, 135). The store she places by awareness also goes a long way towards explaining how she eventually triumphs, against all the odds, over her European acquaintances. Though lacking experience and having a limited knowledge of the ways of the world, she is emotionally a much more mature and authentic person than any of her European friends pitying her for "not having lived". As Susanne Langer has argued,

> The limits of thought are not so much set from outside, by the fulness or poverty of experiences that meet the mind, as from within, by the power of conception, the wealth of formulative notions with which the mind meets experiences.[41]

In The Art of Fiction, published in 1884, James had already made essentially the same point:

> Experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative ... it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations.[42]

Thus stylistic manipulation and narrative are both saying the same thing in The Wings of the Dove: they are both asserting the superiority of the highly aware individual who deals with experience from a symbolist viewpoint.

The novel's relation to Maeterlinck's oeuvre is a complex one. On

the one hand there appears to be a distinct and elaborate parallelism between the destinies of Milly Theale and Maeterlinck's heroines. Moreover, the tenor of the essay "Les Avertis" has striking pertinence to The Wings of the Dove. On the other hand, far from there being a "careful evocation of the mood of Pelleas and Melisande" (as Edel claims) [43] in this novel, Maeterlinckian ingredients are put to a very Jamesian use. James shows that while it is no doubt in the interest of some of the characters to treat Milly Theale as a Maeterlinckian creation, her behaviour belies their assumptions. If there is a concurrence between the novel's "message" and Maeterlinck's work, it is to be found in its accord with the philosophy of life expounded in La Sagesse et la destinée, which represented a new departure in Maeterlinck's career, coming as it did after the fundamentally nihilistic plays and pointing forward to the optimism of L'Oiseau bleu and much of his later non-symbo-list drama.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

[1] Letter received from Leon Edel, 4 March 1980.

[2] Henry James, Letter to Edith Wharton, 13 December 1909, Letters, ed. Leon Edel, IV (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 538. Compare his datebook for 9 December 1909: "came away early to go to Haymarket to first performance Blue Bird in Mme Maeterlinck's box. Went with her and and Mrs Sutro afterwards to supper at Sutro's - Maeterlinck there with S."; as quoted in a letter received from Leon Edel, 30 July 1979.

[3] Rene Lalou, Le Théâtre en France depuis 1900 (Paris, 1951), p. 40; as quoted in Haskell M. Block, Mallarmé and the Symbolist Drama, (Detroit: Wayne State U.P., 1963), p. 107.

[4] Henry James, Notes of a Son and Brother (London: Macmillan, 1914), p. 381.

[5] Marius Bewley, The Complex Fate: Hawthorne, Henry James and Some Other American Writers (London: Chatto and Windus, 1952), p. 6.

[6] Thaddeo K. Babiiha, The James-Hawthorne Relation: Bibliographical Essays (Boston, Mass.: G.K. Hall, 1980), lists 41 separate items in which James wrote about, or directly referred to, Hawthorne and/or his works.

[7] Henry James, Hawthorne, English Men of Letters series (London: Macmillan, 1879). Further references will be given in the text as Hawthorne, x).

[8] Henry James, Letter to Charles Eliot Norton; as quoted in Leon Edel, Henry James, I, The Untried Years 1843-1870 (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953), p. 271.

[9] Charles Feidelson, Symbolism and American Literature (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 78.

[10] Henry James, rev. of Frühlingsfluthen, by Turgenev, North American Review, CVIII (April 1874); as quoted in Babiiha, p. 5.

[11] The Memoirs of Julian Hawthorne, ed. Edith G. Hawthorne (New York: Macmillan, 1938), p. 127; as quoted in Babiiha, p. 10.

[12] Henry James, "The Art of Fiction", Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Morris Shapira (London: Heinemann 1963; 1884), p. 57.

[13] Henry James, Letter to a friend, 1885; as quoted in Martha Banta, Henry James and the Occult (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 53.

[14] James, "The Art of Fiction", p. 56.

[15] Henry James, "William Dean Howells", Harper's Weekly, June 19, 1886;

as quoted in F.O. Matthiessen, The James Family (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), p. 504.

[16] Leon Edel, Henry James, III, The Middle Years 1884-1894 (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), book V.

[17] Henry James, The Scenic Art (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949), p. 248. Further references will be given in the text as (Scenic Art, x).

[18] Feidelson, pp.50-51.

[19] Howells, "Henry James Jr", Century Magazine,XXV (1882), 26-28; as quoted in René Wellek, Concepts of Criticism (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 230.

[20] Henry James, Preface, The American, ("New York edition"); rpt The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces, ed. R. P. Blackmur (New York and London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 33. Further references will be given in the text as (Art of Novel, x).

[21] Banta, p. 82; Leon Edel, introd., Henry James, Stories of the Supernatural (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1971), p. IX.

[22] Feidelson, p. 56.

[23] John Goode, "The Pervasive Mystery of Style: The wings of the Dove", The Air of Reality: New Essays on Henry James (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 246.

[24] F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), p. 158.

[25] Maxwell Geismar, Henry James and His Cult (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), p. 230.

[26] Goode, p. 246.

[27] I have used the first edition of The Wings of the Dove, published in London by Archibald Constable in 1902. References will be given in the text as (WD, x).

[28] Nicola Bradbury, Henry James: The Later Novels (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 73.

[29] Compare John Carlos Rowe, "The Symbolism of Milly Theale: Henry James's The Wings of the Dove", Journal of English Literary History, XL (1973), 133-134: "There is a constant pressure in the novel to give Milly an immediate iconographic meaning as the "fairy princess" (Susie), the "dove" (Kate), "the little American girl (Densher), or the Bronzino portrait (Lord Mark)".

[30] Etienne De Greeff, "L'Intelligence de Maeterlinck", p. 355.

[31] Compare Nicola Bradbury's comment that in the later novels, through character presentation and plot, as well as through "the surprising variety of style", James "gradually diverts our curiosity from a search

for answers towards an interest in the process by which questions arise" (Bradbury, pp. 1-2).

[32] See Bradbury, pp.72-122, for an excellent discussion of the variety of narrative techniques used in The Wings of the Dove.

[33] Compare Ian Watt, "The First Paragraph of The Ambassadors: An Explication", Essays in Criticism, vol X (1960), 262: "all or at least nearly all of the idiosyncracies of diction or syntax are fully justified by the particular emphases they create". A similar point is made by Kenneth Graham, Henry James: The Drama of Fulfilment (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 160-161.

[34] Allen Tate, "Three Types of Poetry", Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas (New York and London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p.94.

[35] Tate, p.93.

[36] Maxwell Geismar, Henry James and His Cult, p. 228, is oblivious of the fact that the viewpoint in the Alpine scene is Susan Stringham's.

[37] Compare Stephen Koch, "Transcendence in The Wings of the Dove", Modern Fiction Studies, XII (Spring, 1968), 97: Milly "lives not for herself, but for the spectacle she provides others. In esthetic terms she cannot be, but only appears".

[38] Maeterlinck, Préface, Theatre, I, IX.

[39] Sally Sears, The Negative Imagination. Form and Perspective in the Novels of Henry James (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 82: "In the very nature of the situations [James] constructs the whole conception of human freedom of action, choice, and hence responsibility, amounts to a bitter farce ...". Sears's thesis is belied both by Milly's eventual triumph and by the presentation of Kate as someone endowed with a measure of sympathetic imagination and hence ultimately responsible for her own actions. Neither woman can be labelled a mere plaything of Fate.

[40] Maurice Maeterlinck., La Sagesse et la destinée (Paris: Fasquelle, 1898). References will be given in the text as (Sagesse, x).

[41] Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940; 1963), p. 8.

[42] James, "The Art of Fiction", p. 56.

[43] Edel, The Life of Henry James, paperback edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), II, 435.

CONCLUSION

The award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Maeterlinck in 1911 gave public consecration to the endeavour of a writer whose efforts during the first seven-odd years of his career had succeeded in changing the way people thought about drama and the theatre. Not all his innovations were of lasting value - for instance, his exploitation of the pervasive eighteen-nineties' appetite for mistiness soon became a liability rather than an asset. But even the legendary plays, in which all the passion associated with operatic incidents is allied to a nostalgia for mediaeval trappings, brought a new element into literature through their concentration on unseen and enigmatic qualities. In addition, he made a permanent contribution to the theatre by discovering the dramatic expressiveness of a radical simplicity which was found to be much more effective than the elaborate modes developed by his literary forebears. Maeterlinck's overriding interest in negatives - silence, stasis, the invisible, the subconscious - engendered an iconoclastic dramaturgy, which continues to influence, directly or indirectly, the playwrights and directors of our time. The resemblance between Maeterlinck's early plays and more recent dramatic writing does not necessarily suggest that his influence has come down to us in an unbroken line of development. Rather, it indicates that the theatrical innovations made necessary by his concern for new subject-matter anticipated similar developments by later writers, equally eager to break the mould of traditional drama. Maeterlinck properly belongs not to the writers who are passé but to the select group of innovators who have expanded the horizons of their art, not just for a short while but for posterity as well.

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2. Manuscripts

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Appendix I

BARBARA ROSCORLA'S CHILD

This Appendix consists of a Xerox copy of the carbon copy of the original typescript; the closest to a facsimile that can be achieved.

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BARBARA ROSCORLA'S CHILD

A Play in one Act

by

Arthur Symons

From Arthur Symons,
136 Lauderdale Mansion
Maida Vale
W.

The Characters

Peter Roscorla, aged 40.

Dr. Trevithick.

Sister Agatha, a nurse.

Vecchan, an old woman, who has been Peter Roscorla's nurse.

The action takes place in the dining-hall of Roscorla Manor, near the sea-coast of Cornwall. The hall is lofty, panelled with oak, furnished sparely with old oak furniture. There is an open hearth, with oak benches, on the right; beyond the fireplace is a door, leading into the house. In the centre of the hall is a long table, the end of which faces the audience. An oak arm-chair stands at the head, plain oak chairs at the sides. At the back, to the left of the table, is a door leading into a bedroom. On the left is a panelled screen which reaches two-thirds of the way to the ceiling, and forms the whole of the wall. A door in the centre of it leads to the entrance-hall.

It is the twilight in autumn. During the whole of the action Barbara Roscorla is lying in bed, in the inner room. With her, during the first part of the play, is Sister Katherine, a nurse.

Vecchan and Sister Agatha are seated by the fire, the old woman drowses.. The wind is heard as the curtain rises.

Sister Agatha (with a start). Vecchan, Vecchan, is that only the wind?

Vecchan (rousing herself) Eh?

Sister A. Is that the wind?

Vecchan. It is the wind from the sea. It blew all night. You can hear the sea out beyond; sometimes you can hear it louder than the wind. There's always been wind at sea when the Roscorlas were born; they bring trouble.

Sister A. The wind frightens me. I have never been quite myself since I came here.

Vecchan. Yes, yes, the Roscorlas come with the wind; they bring trouble.

Sister A. (nodding her head towards the closed door) Do you think she is going to die?

Vecchan. It isn't death I'm fearing; it's being born.

Sister A. Is that what she is afraid of?

Vecchan. It's a poor gift, being born; if they that come could think twice, not many of them would take it.

Sister A. Is that what she is afraid of? I have never seen any woman who seemed to dread so what was going to happen. She lies there all the time as if she were seeing a ghost.

Vecchan. The wives of all the Roscorlas feared what they were going to bring into the world; Peter Roscorla's wife is only like all the others.

Sister A. I have never seen any woman who was so afraid of being a mother.

Vacchan. Any woman is wise to fear it; there's little joy and much care for any mother; but it's a bitter motherhood, here in this house. She does right to fear it.

Sister A. She is such a little thing, and so young, and sometimes she trembles all over, so that the bed quivers.

Vecchan. She is thinking on that that's to be. Did she say nothing when you were with her?

Sister A. She said nothing; she lay there with her long black hair all over the pillow; her eyes were wide open, staring straight in front of her; I think she was listening to the wind.

Vecchan. The last that was born in this house was Gregory Roscorla, Peter Roscorla's brother; there was an evil wind when he was born, and the sea came up the village street as far as the market-cross.

Sister A. I have never seen Gregory Roscorla; does he not come to this house?

Vecchan. Not for these fifteen years. He was the best of them, Gregory; but he was his father's child, his father loved him the best. 'Tis his place here, by right of love; but it's Peter's by right of law. Peter's the elder, and his father hated him for that, and now he hates his brother that's younger, and they haven't spoken a word for these fifteen years, and Gregory hasn't set foot inside the house.

Sister A. Do they hate one another so much?

Vecchan (leaning forward, speaking low). Shall I tell you a thing? Why do you think Peter Roscorla is so hungry for the child to come that's coming, and why has

he been wild for joy ever since he had the hope of him, and why does he fear every minute of the day that his wife isn't cared for as she should be? Is it love of his wife, do you think? Is it just and only because he wants a son of his own? O, he loves his wife, and he's hungering for a son of his own; but it's to spite his brother as well, it's for fear his brother should come to take his place here after he's dead; it's because his brother sha'n't inherit Roscorla.

Sister A. Has his brother ever done him any harm?

Vecchan. Gregory never did anyman harm;but the Roscorla blood's in Peter. Do you know what they say in these parts? "To hate like a Roscorla". Peter will have an evil child.

Sister A. And she, why is it she is so afraid of being a mother

Vecchan. (as before leaning forward, and speaking low) Do you know how Peter Roscorla, that was, died? No one knows how he died, his sons don't know how he died; I tended him, weeks and weeks, and he cried on God and the saints when he saw hell-fire coming near him; there was the smoke of it in his eyes,and he fell a-whimpering at the last, and he cursed the father that had begotten him. The child that's going to be born will curse his father.

Sister A. Do you mean that they are al -- ?

Vecchan. An evil race, bad sons, and bad fathers; evil in the blood. They come and they go with the wind, and it's the birth that's the greater evil.

Sister A. And she, does she know?

Vecchan. (keenly) Ay, she knows, she knows now.

Sister A. Didn't she know when she married him?

Vecchan. What does a young girl know? A little and sweet thing, like a young child that I could take in my arms. But she knows now (meaningly).

Sister A. She should never have known.

Vecchan. (fiercely) It was right for her to know; what I told her I told her for her good.

Sister A. (rising in agitation) You? Do you mean that you told her?

(The door of the side opens, and Peter Roscorla enters. He is in riding-gaiters, spotted with mud he carries a whip which he lays down gently on a table near the door. He moves with clumsy care, glancing at the bedroom door, as if afraid of disturbing his wife..)

Roscorla (going over to Sister Agatha, and speaking rapidly and harshly) Why are you not with her? Has the doctor called?

Sister Agatha (standing stiffly) Sister Katherine is taking her turn to watch beside her, she was asleep when I left her. The doctor has not called.

Roscorla (taking out his watch and putting it back without

looking at it) I went for him, but he wasn't there. When do you think he will come? (takes out his watch again, and looks at it) You say she's asleep? Has she been quite quiet? Said nothing? Nor wanted anything?

Sister A. She cried a little, but very quietly. She has said nothing.

(He makes a few steps, turns. Then anxiously:

Roscorla. When do you think he will come?

Sister A. The doctor promised to be here today after five.

Roscorla (looking at his watch and speaking slowly). Five minutes to five.

(He controls himself with an effort. Then appealingly:

I suppose I mayn't go in?

(Sister Agatha shakes her head firmly. She sits down in her former seat, and turns to the fire. Roscorla moves away, seats himself heavily on an oak arm-chair at one end of the long table. Vecchan has not taken her eyes off his face. He looks at her abruptly.

What are you staring at me for, like an old raven?

Vecchan. Mayn't old Vecchan look at you, Master Peter? It's three generations of the Roscorlas that she's seen born. There was Peter Roscorla your father, there was you, Master Peter, there was Master Grego-ry —

Roscorla. (his face convulsed with rage) Gregory!

(He is about to bring down his fist on the table, when he stops, glancing aside at the closed door. Vecchan gets up and comes over to him slowly.

Vecchan. (standing close to him, and speaking meaningly)

There's a wind at sea, Master Peter, there's a wind coming in from the sea; the wind's bringing trouble, it's bringing trouble to the Roscorlas; mark my words it's an evil night, Master Peter, it's an evil night to be born on.

Roscorla. (angrily, looking up at her with an ugly sneer)

You're the witch on the heath, Vecchan; you always bode ill-luck. But you're wrong; it's an ill wind, Vecchan, but it's bringing good luck to me.

Vecchan. (shaking her head) No birth here comes to good, Master Peter. Do you know what you're going to give to the child that's to be born?

(He stares at her with a puzzled look)

The legacy of the Roscorlas!

(As she speaks, the door at the side opens, and Dr. Trevithick enters. He comes up to the table. Roscorla rises eagerly.

Roscorla. I am so glad you have come. And you will stay?

Dr. Trevithick. I have to see an old man in the village. But I can attend to that later. There is no change, Sister Agatha?

Sister A. (rising and coming forward) There is no change,

doctor. She was asleep a little while ago. Shall I see if she is awake?

Dr. T. If you please.

(Sister Agatha opens the bedroom door quietly, and goes in. Part of the bed is seen as she opens the door. The doctor turns to Roscorla, looking at him keenly.

Have you done exactly as I told you?

Roscorla (meekly). Yes, doctor.

Dr. T. You have left her quite alone? Not disturbed her in any way? Not let her know that you have any anxiety?

Roscorla. I have left her quite alone.

(Sister Agatha re-opens the bedroom door, and beckons to the doctor, who goes in. The stage has gradually darkened; Vecchan gets up and lights several candles, which give a dim light. Roscorla walks up and down uneasily; suddenly he stops in front of Vecchan who is in the act of lighting a candle.

What did you mean by what you said just now?

Vecchan (hypocritically) What was it I was saying just now, Master Peter?

(She goes back to the fireside. He follows her.

Roscorla. The legacy of the Roscorlas. What did you mean?

Vecchan. It was only a word that I said, Master, and there was no great meaning in it. Birth and death to be seen the coming and going of them for three genera-

tions. (Looking up at him, and putting her hand on his sleeve) Are you not fearing that birth that's going to be?

Roscorla (excitedly) Vecchan, when I come in here holding my son in my arms —

Vecchan. Your son, Master Peter?

Roscorla. It must be a son. Hasn't the first-born here always been a son, Vecchan?

Vecchan. Very true, Master; the first-born of the Roscorlas has always been a son; yes, it'll be a son, Master Peter, and the blood of the Roscorlas will be in him.

Roscorla. (triumphantly) Didn't I tell you? The legacy of the Roscorlas! Is that what you meant? It's the blood, good , good Cornish blood, the blood of gentlemen.

Vecchan. Ay, ay, old and gentle; do you know what goes to the seasoning of the blood among gentle-folk?

(The bedroom door opens, and the doctor comes out with a very anxious look on his face. He looks scrutinisingly at Roscorla before speaking to him. Vecchan looks suspiciously at the doctor, and mutters, shaking her head.

Vecchan. It's not the doctor that's wanted, but the power of God!

(Vecchan goes out by the door on the right.

Roscorla. Well, doctor? (a pause)

Dr. T. (sitting down at the side of the table, and leaning his arms upon it) I must not hide from you that th case is grave.

Roscorla. She is worse! She is not dying?

Dr. T. She is not dying. But she is not out of danger.

Roscorla. Only - you are going to save her!

Dr. T. I hope so, I think so. But, something may have to be done, as I feared. There are times when it is doubtful if we or nature are the best physician. Nature generally knows better than we do, but she is not always to be trusted to do what we want.

Roscorla. Something will have to be done!

Dr. T. May have to be done. Do you mind if I ask you a fe questions?

Roscorla. I will answer anything you ask me.

Dr. T. Do you know, I sometimes wish we physicians had the power that our rivals, the priest, has; the power of getting at the truth, the real, inner truth of our patients. The body is so often little more than the slave of the mind. And yet all we can say is: "Do you feel a pain here, a pain there?" the mere ache of the body. We dare not pry into the soul.

Roscorla. What do you mean?

Dr. T. If I were a priest, I would ask your wife to come to me for confession.

Roscorla (proudly). My wife has nothing to confess.

Dr. T. Do not misunderstand me. Something has been preying on her mind; the mind has helped to take its own revenge upon the body; some shock, some brooding trouble: do you know of any?

Roscorla (shaking his head blankly). No.

Dr. T. Something to account for what is certainly the fact: that she has a morbid horror of giving birth to a child.

Roscorla. Nothing possible in the world!

Dr. T. How long is it since she became melancholy silent, brooding? Since she has expected her child?

Roscorla. She was filled with joy! O, it is not that. Something changed her, but not that, about five months ago. I don't know what it was. There was no reason. There could have been no reason.

Dr. T. And since then?

Roscorla (bitterly). She has been different, she has seemed as if she were afraid of something; afraid of me! But it's nerves, surely it's nothing but nerves? It's wild here in the winter, the house is gloomy, it's too near the sea. She is rather afraid of the sea and the wind. But I'll take her to London, I'll do anything she likes. I'm very fond of Barbara! All I want is one thing: my son. It will be a son. It

must be. It's all I want in the world!

Dr. T. You want a son more than anything in the world? (a pause). Do you know I don't always agree with people when they express that wish. There are some children who should never be born. (He looks at Roscorla keenly.)

Roscorla (excitedly) My son must be born. If I don't have a son, Gregory gets the land when I die.

Dr. T. Is that why you want a son so much, Roscorla?

Roscorla (rising to his feet, in intense excitement, and leaning towards the doctor) Isn't that reason enough Gregory shall never be master here, not if I'm alive, not if I'm dead. I keep him out now, and my son keeps him out when I'm gone.

Dr. T.. What wrong has your brother done you?

Roscorla. (sitting down fiercely) Wrong? None. He exists

Dr. T. Is that enough reason, in your family, for hating one another?

Roscorla. (jumping up again, in rage) Yes. (sitting down again) Don't you know the saying: to hate like a Roscorla? It's a true saying.

Dr. T. I know it's a true saying. I was by your father's bedside when he died.

Roscorla. They sent me away when he was dying. I was young then. I never heard much about it..

Dr. T. When I said to you just now that there were some

children who should never be born —

Roscorla. Yes?

Dr. T. Do you know much about your family history, Roscorla?

Roscorla. I've got the pedigree; it's in the drawer yonder. I never went beyond it.

Dr. T. I don't quite mean that. Your father, your grandfather, his father: do you know much about them, about how they lived and died?

Roscorla. (with a laugh which he tries to render careless) Now you're talking to me like Vecchan. What are these riddles, doctor?

Dr. T. Vecchan! What was she saying to you? She has been here since your grandfather's time, hasn't she?

Roscorla. Vecchan is always saying she has seen three generations born, and the birth of a Roscorla brings trouble, and talk of that kind. But you, doctor, you are not going to tell me old wives' tales? (excitedly) I want to know exactly what you mean!

Dr. T. What I mean is this, that, as you must be aware, there is a certain strain in your family, call it a strain of eccentricity, which is not exactly healthy; perhaps, from an abstract point of view, not exactly desirable to perpetuate. Have you ever thought of the responsibility of bringing a child into the world? (meaningly) Has your wife ever thought of it?

Roscorla. (looking round him in a dazed, awakening way).
I begin to see what you mean. You mean (slowly) that we are all — (breaking off with a gasp of terror)

Dr. T. You see my point. You see the reason why I speak to you about it at this moment.

Roscorla (haggard and dazed, shaking his head helplessly).
No .... (His face slowly changes, and with a dull terror in his eyes, he whispers) Is it in me?

Dr. T. No, no, I don't mean that at all. One generation may escape, often does. It is the next that suffers.

Roscorla. The next!

Dr. T. Now I tell you frankly: I am not sure that I can save both your wife and your child. If the child lives, the mother may die. Will you risk her life on a possibility, on such a possibility? Will you, after what I have told you?

Roscorla (sullenly) I don't believe what you have told me. The family's a good family. You and Vecchan are only trying to frighten me. I must have my son. And

Barbara. (excitedly) Both!

Dr. T. I am not sure that I can save them both.

Roscorla. Barbara has been a good wife to me. There was no woman for me till I married Barbara. I shouldn't care much for life if she wasn't there. But my son —

he's to live after me. If my son isn't born Gregory'll have the place. (starting to his feet, as if struck by a sudden thought) Do you think she knows anything about it? Is that why she's frightened of me?

Dr. T. I think it is possible she has guessed something.

Roscorla (in wild excitement). She wants to rob me of my child! She wants my child not to be born! They all want my child not to be born. They are all in league against me. But I'll have my way. It's the way of nature. I have that on my side they can't fight with. They're fighting against God. (dropping into his chair as if exhausted) I must have my child.

(While he is speaking the door on the right opens and Vecchan steals in quietly and makes her way unobserved to her seat by the fire. She listens to every word.

Dr. T. At whatever cost?

Roscorla. At whatever cost.

Dr. T. (rising and taking out his watch) I will return in half an hour. Mind, till then, quiet; above all, quiet.

(He goes out. Roscorla buries his face in his hands, and then sits staring before him with his elbows on his knees. After a pause.

Roscorla. What have you been saying to my wife, Vecchan?

Vecchan (as if she did not hear) Eh, Master?

Roscorla. Is it you that set her thinking on things there

was no need to think on?

Vecchan. A young wife thinks her own thoughts: what should an old woman give her to think on? Maybe, it's the wind she's thinking on now, and the life that's coming as the wind comes.

Roscorla. How did my father die, Vecchan?

Vecchan. He died hard; he cursed his own father.

Roscorla. And my grandfather, Vecchan?

Vecchan. They took him away; he didn't die at Roscorla. The Roscorla blood was in him.

Roscorla. Does Barbara know all this, Vecchan?

Vecchan. How should I know, Master? It's whispered, it's not spoken.

Roscorla (getting up and walking to and fro, speaking half to himself and half to Vecchan). If it's true — but it's not true — it makes no difference. Do you understand, Vecchan, it's not true! Have you been telling these lies to my wife? (Vecchan makes no reply, but gazes at him fixedly). The Roscorla blood is the best blood in Cornwall. What have you beentelling her? (she remains silent). She always believed everything you said to her. And she has been believing it, she hates to bear me a child because he'll have the Roscorla blood in him! He shall, he shall have the Roscorla blood. I am going to speak to her, she

must see; it must be proved to her. She doesn't want my child to be born. Vecchan! But he must be born.

(In suppressed excitement he goes up to the bedroom door, opens it, and goes in.

Vecchan. What were they talking about? "Must have my child", he said; "at any cost", he said. Whose cost? Mistress Barbara's. It's the mother for the child they mean. Is it? (she laughs) She shall know, she shall know. She's a brave woman: she will do justice on the Roscorlas.

(Sister Agatha opens the bedroom door, and comes out accompanied by Sister Katherine, who goes out by the door on the right. She goes over to Vecchan.

Sister A. He sent us away. Will he be quite quiet? He was quiet, but he looked strange. He said he had to speak to her alone.

Vecchan. It's lies that he has to tell her. But I am going to tell her the truth.

Sister A. Vecchan, what is the truth? Is it something terrible? Why do you look at me like that?

Vecchan. Has she said nothing?

Sister A. She was listening, and she asked me if that was the wind, and I said yes, and she said "The wind from the sea! the wind of birth!" and then she said "I don't want to die, but it would be better if I were dead. I am bringing life". And she turned her head

over on the pillow, and lay quite still.

Vecchan. And that was all?

Sister A. No, I heard her say "If I had only the courage!' I don't know what she meant. And she said, as if she were speaking to herself "It would be the right thing, wouldn't it?"

Vecchan. She knows the right thing, and when she knows all, she will do the right thing.

Sister A. Listen! He is speaking loud. O, he should not cry out to her like that! I must go back. She was so frightened, and she is lying there between life and death, as if she had to choose between them.

Vecchan (rising). Child, let me go in to her. I can soothe her better than you can soothe her.

Sister A. Ifshe could only sleep!

Vecchan. I will try to put her to sleep. But only if she chooses sleep.

(The bedroom door opens and Roscorla rushes out violently. Vecchan slips into the room, and closes the door behind her.

Roscorla (beside himself, to Sister Agatha). I told her it was all right. I told her the child must be born. I was perfectly quiet, I said "Look at me!" I was as quiet as possible, but she wouldn't hear, she shrank away from me, she said "You, you, I see it all, now I see it!" and that put me in a fury, and I don't

quite know what I said to her.

(A low wail is heard from the bedroom. They listen.

What was that?

Sister A. Vecchan is trying to put her to sleep.

Roscorla. Why isn't the doctor here?

Sister A. I think I hear him coming. Listen.

Roscorla. He is coming.

(He goes towards the door; the doctor comes in, greets him, and, with a questioning lift of the eyebrows to Sister Agatha, goes into the bedroom, followed by her. Roscorla waits expectantly. After a short pause the door opens, and the doctor comes out holding a phial in his hand. He says quietly:

Dr. T. I have come too late. She is dead.

Roscorla (with a cry, falling on his knees by the table). My God!

Vecchan (appearing at the bedroom door). Hush! I have put her to sleep. She chose sleep. There will be no more trouble to the Roscorlas for a time now.

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

Arthur Symons
Bacton: Jan: 21-3:1902

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APPENDIX II

A MIRACLE

by

H. Granville Barker

Transcription by

Margery M. Morgan

from unpublished text in

the Lord Chamberlain's Office.

Date of licence: 21.3.07

A MIRACLE

* * * *

Baptista Blessed angels guard me
With your benediction
From all evil ward me.

Mary from thy throne above
Look on my affliction
With thy pitying love.

(She kneels, a voice startles her)

What's that?
Who's here - I'm not afraid

(ENTER MARGARET)

Is it a ghost?

Margaret Touch my hand

Baptista Yes - but how cold

Margaret May I sit by your fire?

Baptista Who are you?

Margaret I am Margaret of Troyes in Burgundy
And a guest of your father in the castle here.
Your name's Baptista?

Baptista Yes.

Margaret Are you not curious to know why I've climbed
In the dead of night to see you?

Baptista I have been asleep - over my book, I think.
Indeed I'm not sure if I am awake now.

Margaret Looking at the turret black against the sky
(One felt it there whether one looked or no)
My eye had caught a little figure and brown hair
Blown straight by the wind.

Baptista I walk every day in my garden above.

Margaret And my women chattered of - an ugly name
You are not ugly; I don't believe it.

Baptista You must understand
Nobody is to blame for this my loneliness;
I might be in a cloister among good nuns
But - Jesu forgive - I love the world better than God
This - my world - this room and the garden above.

Margaret When did your mother die?

Baptista When I was born.
She was ashamed of me - my father says.

Margaret Your sister climbs the stairs to be with you?

Baptista In kindness - never
For fear I should be jealous of her beauty.

Margaret I have not thought her beautiful.

Baptista No mirror is in the room
Lest I should grow to hate myself and die.
Is it not, Lady Margaret, a curious thing
How life clings hard to some - unfortunates
Not that I long to die, I am content

Margaret Why does your father never speak of you?

Baptista Does he never speak of me?
Sometimes from the tower-top I see him riding
His armour and his horse's armour glittering,
And I imagine that his face is very proud
Stern - a bearded face. But I do not know my father.

Margaret He is a great man.

Baptista So my nurse says
I have an old nurse tends me; never another visitor.
But once a week comes Father Antonio, my confessor,
And I confess my sins.

Margaret Is it not strange, Lady Baptista
That sin should cling so desperately
Can heaven be free of it?

Baptista My basest sin is of ingratitude.
I am not always thankful for my life
I am rebellious and ambitious
I grow impatient at my uselessness
My hunch back is heavy and I am angry with God.

Margaret How old are you?

Baptista I forget.
This summer is like the last and the next summer
Will be like this. I am not very young
But I seem to grow no older.

Margaret And though you are content and do not long to die
Yet you do not fear death?

Baptista It seems to me
Death to me will be just a stepping higher.
Just one step higher than this high turret.
Into the company of all my heroes.

Margaret Who are they?

Baptista Beside you is my one book
Beautifully illuminated.
The history of King Arthur and his knights
Those are my friends.

Margaret Galahad and Launcelot?

Baptista Sir Galahad and Sir Perceval are in heaven
And the great King rests after his long day's work.
But for the others I believe that they,
Gawain, the mighty, and Mordred the sly
And Launcelot, noblest sinner of them all
(Sinners I understand - see through their sin somehow)
Are battling out their quarrels as of old
Striking for our salvation too - if we only knew
And I shall join them. After the lonely life
One expects company. I'm not good enough for Heaven
Nor bad enough, I think, for Hell.
May not one choose one's Purgatory? ....
How my tongue runs! I seldom speak aloud
And I can't talk thus to Father Antonio
And nurse will never listen. I am glad you came
All up the steep stairs in the dead of the night
To see me.

(Pause)

Margaret I am to die tonight.

Baptista What hidden meaning is there in that?
It is impossible it can be plainly true.
God would not let the world lose so much beauty.
I shall have a sin to confess to Father Antonio
I shall have envied you.

Margaret When it had come upon me that I must die
I rose - I had not slept - and in the dark
Arrayed myself in all my best apparel.
I cannot see but I can feel my beauty.
You know that I am beautiful.

Baptista Oh yes, indeed.

Margaret Yours is the last homage that will be done to me.
For the last time I am satisfied. I thank you.

Baptista The splendour of it hurts me.

Margaret What has drawn me to you.
Why have I climbed - groping my way - bruising myself?
See, I am weakening already.

Baptista Your face is paler.

Margaret It is very certain I am here to die
Speak comfort to me - you, who have never lived.

Baptista Why must you die?

Margaret Because all virtue has gone out of me.

Baptista I notice that your eyes are very dim.

Margaret Because I cannot love - speak now

Baptista I love everything,
People I do not know, shall never see
And all the names in history - my history
The little birds I feed upon the roof,
And the laughing little demons in the firelight,
And the sounds and faces in these grey stones
My love gives dead things life.

Margaret You must love me.

Baptista If you wish.

Margaret It is why we meet - evidently
Will you kiss me?

Baptista No - at least, not yet
What are you?

Margaret Almost any woman.
When I was twelve I was married; I never saw my husband
He fell - God rest his soul - in the Holy land.
There is his tomb in our chapel at home - legs crossed
And I was taught to pray there.
Then I married again at seventeen to a Count of Burgundy
Wine-cask; good natured enough when sober - seldom sober
I bore one little baby in great anguish,
Which never breathed; it would have been a girl too.
Oh what a waste of sorrow and affliction!

What love was there to give my baby life? ....
He had his mistresses!, I was a child.

Then the Count died and I wept for him.
Now I was doubly rich, courted by many.
Twice a widow - not yet aged twenty
As I travelled - life spreading out before me
City eclipsing city in their rich splendours,
Monarch vying with monarch in magnificence
Knight (sic), Politicians, love-lorn squires, Troubadours,
Worshipping me - partly for fashion's sake ....
Princes would condescend to kiss my hand.
Women and some men might save themselves by hating me
So I learned the power of beauty over all the world
Reigning a queen .....
Beauty - this of my face - is as a lonely idol -
Incensed in its shrine by mute adorers.
Then they run to chatter with their fellows

Baptista You have been very proud, I am afraid.

Margaret Very lonely - always very lonely

Baptista I also am very lonely; but not for pride's sake.

Margaret Gradually - as from a dead man's features
Dies the power and passion which made them human
The while they form into a flower like calmness -
Gradually has faded the virtue from my beauty.
Slender arm, towering neck, clear mouth
Raven hair - softening round my temples
These are the alloy from which the gold has vanished.
And I must die.

Baptista Who is it that you cannot love?

Margaret One who loves me.

Baptista A man?

Margaret The man of men.

Baptista Can he not give you life?

Margaret Men are so selfish. It is right they should be
For the strength of the world must be increased
He has known evil and he chooses good.
Chooses me - good; and I must die - not disappoint him.

Baptista I have such love to bestow
Such faith in Man and his high destiny
Oh to be inarticulate - inarticulate
One's heart a mine of wealth
Diamonds hidden in flinty rock
While people see ugliness.

Margaret I have no love to give.
There is a mockery of a heart in me,
But I schemed for his as women may
Courteous, cold, ever drawing, then withdrawing
While the shadow of a happiness was with me
While I understand and mocked God's goodness
Felt the giving and receiving and completion
As a memory and the mockery of a memory.
All the while he stood before me
And in the strength of his love he claimed me
And I could not look upon his face.
Oh - for the greatest and the meanest woman
One day stands - beyond all passion or affection
Something - love!

This love a furnace into which one enters
Coming thence to stand naked
Gold refined
Or ashes waiting for a touch to crumble.

Baptista But I will pray
That I may die for you
that I may sacrifice my useless life
To make yours rich.
For I am very weary of this body
And if my soul could be incorporate

With your tired soul and look out of those eyes
Hover upon those lips
Unconsciously I should be very happy.
While you, who covet this great power of love,
Yearning so inexpressibly within me
Could face the world anew with a new beauty
Face him - your husband.
And peradventure might a child spring from you
Born with all his strength and with your loveliness
And with my spirit - my spirit in that child
Then I should grow nearer to God and nearer
Paying my debt to the glorious world around me
All - all untrammelled by this Nature's blunder ....
Here is a miracle worth the praying for
And I will pray.

Margaret No. You are very far apart form me
There is no love that's possible on earth
Strong enough for the saving of a soul.
Body you may love - mind you may love - heart you may love
But there's a barrier none can overleap
Fencing round - What?
I have lived my life and I must die
Because the virtue has gone out of me
We are forbidden to rise above ourselves
Body and soul inextricably commingled
So when the little inch of wax is burnt
Must not the light go too?
I have no faith in Heaven or care for faith
It seems to me I am already dead
Presently when I fall asleep
Will begin my dissolution.
As a dead leaf flutters from a tree
So shall I part from the world.
As a shell lies upon the sea shore
So will my body lie
Death is my extermination.
Indeed ... Indeed ... I am already dead.

(For a little while BAPTISTA gazes at the body)

Baptista And now, oh God, perform this miracle
Let me die now, if that may live again.
Beautiful emptiness
Surely it is not good that it should perish
Earnestly I pray
Grant that my soul may leave this cruel heritage
Grant unto it this noble mansion to dwell in
Let me die now. Let me die now.
If in dying I may live hereafter.
I see Paradise before me.
Perfectness of earthly beauty
Soul well satisfied with body.
Earnestly I pray
Yes I will kiss the lips

(SHE kisses the body and sinks down beside it)

(After a pause MARGARET revives)

Margaret Sleepy little girl!

Well, I'll sit here till the morning.
Are you ill, child - dead?
Why call for help when I know she's dead.
How perfectly the little body lies!

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