Some Theories of Creative Process of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: A Context for T. E. Hulme

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Patricia Marion Rae

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to reconstruct the theory of creative process present in the writings of T. E. Hulme, and to juxtapose it with some other theories which either influenced it or with which it has been associated. It argues that there is no inconsistency in Hulme's simultaneous advocacy of a new "classicism" and his incorporation into his aesthetic of tenets analogous to ones typical of the English Romantic and French Symbolist traditions. His rejection of "romanticism" is seen to have been a disapproval of a certain attitude which coloured the way in which art had been discussed. His self-described aim is seen to have been the redescription, with the aid of the new psychology, of phenomena which in the idealist traditions had been attributed to supernatural causes.

Each of the accounts of creative activity considered is divided, broadly, into what it has to say about the artist's "apprehension," "articulation" and "product." Chapter I contrasts the two French movements with which Imagism has been linked: the positivist aesthetic of Parnassianism and the idealist one of Symbolism. The theories of Walter Pater and the young W. B. Yeats are considered in Chapter II, and claims about their status as English Symbolists are assessed in the light of the previous discussion. Chapters III and IV describe the scientific reinterpretations of Symbolist principles found in the work of Théodule Ribot, Remy de Gourmont and Henri Bergson. The appeal for Hulme of the demystification achieved by these writers is illustrated in Chapter V, where the detailed reconstruction of his theory reveals much evidence of their influence. Chapter VI considers the changes in Hulme's view of art corresponding to his shift of interest to the visual arts. Chapter VII compares Hulme's account of poetic activity and the theory developed by Ezra Pound on behalf of Vorticism.

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For George Whalley

1915 - 1983

People anxious to be literary men think there is no work, just as haymaking - but just as monotonous grinding it out. Concerned in the field with ecstasy, but the pains of birth and parturition are sheets and sheets of paper.

- T. E. Hulme

INTRODUCTION

> All writers, all artists of any kind, in so far as they have had any philosophical or critical power, perhaps just in so far as they have been deliberate artists at all, have had some philosophy, some criticism of their art; and it has often been this philosophy, or this criticism, that has evoked their most startling inspiration, calling into outer life some portion of the divine life, or of the buried reality, which could alone extinguish in the emotions what their philosophy or their criticism would extinguish in the intellect. They have sought for no new thing, it may be, but only to understand and to copy the pure inspiration of early times, but because the divine life wars upon our outer life, and must needs change its weapons and its movements as we change ours, inspiration has come to them in beautiful startling shapes.
>
> - W. B. Yeats, "The Symbolism of Poetry"[1]

> But it seems to me that there is another way of dealing with an art from a general point of view which follows the contours of the thing itself a little more closely. It may be justified in that it attempts to deal, not so much with the art itself, as with the language in which the artist or critic attempts to explain that art.
>
> - T. E. Hulme, "Modern Art and its Philosophy"[2]

The writing in which artists discuss their art invites investigation as a body of literature in itself. The descriptions which artists give us of the creative process, and of the products resulting from that activity, are justifiably

[1] Essays and Introductions (London: Macmillan, 1961), pp.154-5.

[2] Speculations, ed. Herbert Read (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1924), p.76.

regarded as we may regard all works of art: not for the literal truth or falsity of their statements, but for the basic attitudes towards reality, and man's place within it, which they reveal. W. B. Yeats showed his respect for such writings, and his awareness of their intimate connection with the metaphysical convictions of their authors, in the preface to his essay on Symbolist art. For T. E. Hulme, the question of the kind of language with which artists described their art was a central preoccupation, and when he himself came to discuss art, he chose his own words carefully, acutely conscious of the fundamental Weltanschauung which they would imply. Artists' accounts of the artistic process are of interest, furthermore, not only for what I. A. Richards would have called the "emotive" dimension of their language,[3] but also for the way in which they illuminate the products of the artists' own creative endeavours. However adequate or inadequate any account of creativity may be as a description of what actually happens in some creative experience undergone by its author, that account inevitably, as Yeats comprehended, bore some intimate relation to the type of art which he produced. In considering the forty or fifty years straddling the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, moreover, a period which saw some monumental innovations in all of the arts, the artists' own commentary on their work is an invaluable legacy. It is impossible to overestimate the value of the accounts of creative

[3] See I. A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1926), p.211, and the discussion in the Conclusion to this thesis.

process given by a Whistler or a Kandinsky in teaching us not to look for a mirror of reality when we contemplate abstract painting. It is difficult to exaggerate the benefit of the accounts left by a Yeats or a Hulme in teaching us to suspend any irritable reaching after fact and reason when we come to read the suggestive, non-discursive poetry of Symbolism or Imagism.

A serious study of the theory of creative process left by T. E. Hulme is long overdue. Only two major studies of his work have been published: Michael Roberts' T. E. Hulme[4] and Alun R. Jones' The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme.[5] Roberts' book, conversational and highly digressive, leaves its reader with as strong an impression of Roberts' opinions as of Hulme's. His study of Hulme's poetic theory is particularly unsatisfying, many of the details of Hulme's account being lost or misrepresented in his enthusiasm to convey his own views about poetry. Jones' study, which offers useful summaries of Hulme's views on politics, war and aesthetics, as well as on poetic theory, is a valuable source of information about Hulme's biography and his sources. His exposition of Hulme's poetic theory is more accurate and more objective than Roberts', but is disappointing in taking into account a very limited number of Hulme's writings on the subject, specifically only the lecture "Romanticism and

[4] Originally published by Faber in 1938; reprinted with an Introduction by Anthony Quinton by Carcanet New Press, Manchester, 1982.

[5] (London: Victor Gollancz, 1960)

Classicism," and the essay "Bergson's Theory of Art."

Apart from these two volumes, most critical commentary on Hulme's work comes in the form of passages, at best chapters, within studies of broader movements or themes in literary history, or of authors more highly regarded than Hulme. J. B. Harmer discusses Hulme's role as the first of the three unofficial Imagist leaders, his successors being Ezra Pound and Amy Lowell. Stanley Coffmann also looks at Hulme's theory in the context of the Imagist movement, as does Graham Hough in his investigation into the "literary revolution" of the early twentieth century. Frank Kermode and Herbert Read are primarily concerned with the place of Hulme's work in the tradition of "organic" theories of art; Donald Davie considers it in his inquiry into the syntax of modern poetry; Murray Krieger discusses it at the beginning of his study of the accounts of creative activity formulated by the proponents of the New Criticism. J. R. Daniells, Ronald Schuchard, and Allen Austin are among the many Eliot scholars who have discussed Hulme's influence on Eliot's neo-classicism. Herbert Schneidau and Ian Bell, in their studies of Pound, prove infected by the lack of regard which Pound had for Hulme; Schneidau, in particular, makes a number of mocking remarks about Hulme's work which elucidate nothing but the carelessness with which he has read it.[6]

[6] The short titles of these works are, respectively, Victory in Limbo (1975), Imagism (1951), Image and Experience (1960), Romantic Image (1957), The True Voice of Feeling (1968), Articulate Energy (1955), The New Apologists for Poetry (1956), "T. S. Eliot and his Relation to T. E. Hulme" (1933), "Eliot and Hulme in 1916" (1973), "Eliot and Hulme" (1974), Ezra Pound (1969), and Critic

The creative process is a central theme in the numerous essays and unpublished notes which Hulme left behind him when he met his untimely death on a Belgian battlefield in 1917. It was his expressed hope that the insights he recorded in his note-books would suggest "great unities,"[7] or a comprehensive picture of the poet's activity which, at that still early stage in his career, he felt incapable of drawing in its entirety. When we organise and systematize his scattered remarks we find that a very comprehensive account of the creative process can in fact be constructed from them, and it is by far the most complete aesthetic formulated by any member of the Imagist coterie. The range and completeness of the theory, we shall see, constitutes a challenge to those commentators who have regarded Hulme merely as a "brilliant middle-man of ideas,"[8] who have dealt with his work as a catalyst without coherent substance of its own, a conductor of ideas between bodies of work of much greater significance than itself. It challenges, too, the prevailing view of Hulme as a sloppy and unconvincing writer,[9] a muddled thinker guilty of

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as Scientist (1981). Full details of their publication will be noted as they are cited, or in the bibliography, where further articles dealing with Hulme are also listed.

[7] T. E. Hulme, Notes on Language and Style, in Further Speculations, ed. Sam Hynes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), p.87.

[8] J. B. Harmer, Victory in Limbo (London: Secker and Warburg, 1975), p.115.

[9] The view that Hulme was a sloppy writer is a commonplace amongst his critics. Wyndham Lewis described his literary remains as "incredibly badly written"; Blasting and Bombardiering (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1937), p.107. Anthony Quinton makes a reference to Hulme's apparent carelessness, as does Murray Krieger, who detects in his work "the damning inconsistency of a muddled mind...." See Quinton's Introduction to Roberts'

surreptitiously appealing to theories he formally rejected, to support contrary theories which he claimed to espouse. By far the most frequent criticism levelled against Hulme has been that, in writings remarkably lacking in logical rigour, he supports what he claims to be a new, "classical" poetic with tenets drawn directly from the work of the English Romantics.[10] A careful study of the "great canvas"[11] of Hulme's writing, however, reveals that he was a much more deliberate and self-conscious polemicist than his critics have recognized, that his overtly unsystematic, highly metaphorical style was adopted for a very specific reason, and, most importantly, that he defined the terms "romantic" and "classical" in a way which entailed no inconsistency. Hulme used the "romantic" and "classical" labels, we shall see, to identify two fundamental, antithetical attitudes which he saw could colour the language in which the artistic activity was described: the one a highly

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T. E. Hulme, and Krieger's The New Apologists for Poetry (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1956), p.35. Graham Hough is perhaps the writer most dismissive of Hulme's literary skill. Of the essay "Romanticism and Classicism," he remarks that "words fail me to record the number of fallacies and contradictions in these twenty pages...." See Image and Experience (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1960), p.33.

[10] According to Jones Hulme "insists on classicism according to romantic canons"; Life and Opinions, p.57. To Krieger Hulme reveals "an uncompromising prejudice against romanticism coupled with an invocation of romantic and Coleridgean concepts"; The New Apologists, p.35. To Hough Hulme "makes propaganda for a 'hard,' 'dry,' classical art, with weapons taken largely from romantic critics"; Image and Experience, p.30.

[11] Hulme, "Poems and Fragments," in Further Speculations, p.215. Cf. Hulme's use of the image of a canvas to describe philosophical writing, in "Searchers after Reality. III. De Gaultier," in Further Speculations, p.20. Hulme's implication that his remarks should be read in the context of the broad sweep of his writing is corroborated by his contemporary Richard Curle, who referred to the experience of listening to Hulme's conversation as one of studying "an elaborate pattern whose inner lines and

optimistic assessment of man's potential, the other a much more modest estimation of his capacities. Seen in the light of these definitions, Hulme's own account of art does indeed substantiate his claim to be a "classical" thinker. His work is of considerable significance, in sum, because it both acknowledges and exemplifies an important change in attitudes towards the creative activity taking place during the early decades of this century: the shift in attitude which dictated that claims about the mystical or supernatural dimension of the artist's experience be re-cast into the language of the new psychology.

When Hulme's remarks on the creative process are collected and reduced to order, the result is a firm base from which to approach not only the romanticism/classicism controversy, but also some other prevailing questions about the relationship of his theory to certain other aesthetic theories, both French and English. Commentators frequently have drawn comparisons between the Imagist movement and both the Parnassian and the Symbolist movements in France. They have hinted at an affinity between the endeavours of the Imagist poet and the work of contemporary visual artists. They have debated, too, the question of the likeness between Hulme's theory of poetry and the one formulated by the other major spokesman for Imagism, Ezra Pound. In an effort to come to terms with these and other issues, I have chosen to present

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texture emerge gradually as you gaze." See Caravansary and Conversation (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), p.27.

the study of Hulme in the context of comparable studies of the views on the creative activity expounded by certain other theorists. To ensure the discovery of some significant points of comparison, I have found it useful to draw up a "paradigm" of topics which it seemed likely that any comprehensive account of the creative experience would consider, and to conduct my research with an eye for what the various writers had to say on these issues. The major elements in this list are worth considering briefly at this juncture, to elucidate some of the terminology which is to recur throughout the thesis.

The first major issue to be considered about any theory of creative process is what it has to say about the experience in which the artist grasps, or "apprehends" something which compels him to create. Although the term "apprehension" is frequently used, by neo-Coleridgean theorists like Herbert Read and George Whalley, for example, specifically to describe an intuitive experience, in which the powers of the analytical intellect are laid aside,[12] I have chosen to use it in the broadest possible sense: as a general term for that part of the experience which precedes the process of expression, within which many variables, such as the kinds of mental faculties involved, may be admitted. The question of the primacy of intuition or intellect, of an immediate or a reflective type of experience, is without a doubt the central matter to be decided in accounts of this part of the creative

[12] See for example Herbert Read, The True Voice of Feeling (London: Faber and Faber, 1953), p.21, and George Whalley, Poetic Process (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1953), pp.40-1.

activity. Is the experience represented as one in which the artist, withdrawn from the world of action, restrains any tendency to analyze his perceptions, one in which he feels a sense of identification with the things he contemplates? Or is it one in which he regards everything he encounters with an eye for its potential use to him, or with an urge to formulate the general truths it suggests; one in which he senses his separation from the world, gazing at it through a framework of concepts derived from experience? To what extent, too, are his emotions involved or repressed in the event?

Over and above the question of the faculties involved in the experience, moreover, there remains the issue of the nature of the world, the kind of "realm," we might say, which the apprehending artist is said to know. Is it a realm which will yield up all of its secrets to a process of analysis and induction? Or is it one which will forever elude the attempts of "vulgar logic" to comprehend it? The question of how a theorist defines the "realm" which is the end-point of the artist's gaze proves, we shall see, to be one of the most significant issues upon which our comparative study turns. A number of the accounts of creative process we consider, although alike in their specifications concerning the faculties involved in the artistic apprehension, turn out to differ sharply, and significantly, on that question. These accounts resemble each other in suggesting that the artist, in an intense contemplative moment, his practical interests laid aside, pierces through some kind of interface or "veil," to grasp some higher reality than the one of which he is normally

aware. But the descriptions of that veil and the reality it shrouds vary. The veil may denote the familiar tapestry of the transient, earthly world, and the realm behind it some eternal, transcendental principle. It may, on the other hand, be a metaphor simply for the conceptual framework through which we regard earthly things, and the world contacted merely the vista of unique things regarded without this simplifying screen. The realm contacted may be a world of spirit or of matter; its constituents may be universal Ideas, free of any qualities fixing them in space or time, or they may be unique, particular things, possessed of all those accidental properties which the Ideas lack. Since the artist is more often than not understood to be the man who sees as clearly and as far as is humanly possible, what a theorist has to say about the realm he apprehends is often a clue to his basic position concerning man's capacities. The specifications which Hulme lays down concerning the artist's realm of apprehension are a key element, we shall see, in his vindication from accusations about the "romantic" element in his thought, for they reveal a conservatism about the extent of artistic knowledge which is in keeping with his definition of the "classical" Weltanschauung.

The second major area for consideration in any theory of creative process is its account of the act of "articulation": the process by which the artist transforms what is to be expressed into the enduring materials of his art. One of the major questions to be decided here, and the issue over which some of our theorists will be seen to divide, concerns the

form which the cognitive "content" of the work of art takes in the creating artist's mind. Does the artist first formulate the theme of his work in general, abstract terms in his mind, only then proceeding to translate this theme into some concrete mental "form"? Or does the intellectual significance of his work become evident to him only through that particular concrete mental manifestation? Are the acts of intellection and concretization, in other words, temporally distinct or the same? Or to put it another way, is the relationship between "content" and "form" one which is arbitrary or necessary? Similar questions may be put with regard to the actual struggle with the materials of art: is this activity one in which the artist merely translates thoughts and feelings which are already clear to him, or is it one through which he first discovers these thoughts and feelings, through which they are brought into sharp focus in his consciousness for the first time? A comparable matter must be settled, too, concerning the way in which the overall design of the work of art comes to the artist's mind. Is it something which he formulates clearly and definitively before translating it into its concrete form, or is it something which is modified and developed through the very act of its execution? One very important variant of the matter of design for the poetic theorist in this period concerns the evolution of the poem's pattern of rhythm and rhyme. Does he propose that the artist work to a fixed blue-print of a scheme, or is the rhythm, too, something which he discovers as he labours to bring his work into being? Just as a theorist's opinion about the artist's realm of apprehension

may reflect his basic views about the nature of reality and man's ability to know it, so his views about the process of execution, we shall see, may reflect a conviction about the degree of freedom implicit in human experience.

In combing the writings of Hulme and other theorists for references to the experiences of apprehension and articulation, I have not thought it necessary to distinguish remarks which overtly concern the theorist's own experience from those which take the form of comments about the creative experiences of artists in general. I have chosen to regard both kinds of remark as lines in a hypothetical picture by which mental processes are interpreted, a picture whose relationship to some experience actually undergone is in any case likely to be unverifiable. I have not, moreover, distinguished as a body those remarks which take the form of statements of fact, from those which are more obviously prescriptive, remarks which take the form of statements about the way the artistic experience is, from those offered as recommendations about the way the artist ought to proceed. This is because both kinds of remark, it seems to me, arise out of a theorist's basic attitudes concerning the nature of reality and the artist's potential function within it, and so may with reason be viewed collectively, as constituting the theorist's vision of what the "ideal" artistic process should be. In considering the subject of the act of articulation, accordingly, I supplement where possible the accounts of the process by which the artist discovers, or merely translates, his work's theme and its design, with any recommendations

the theorists offer about the kinds of discipline to which the artist ought to submit his hand. In the case of the poetic theorists, for example, I consider the specifications made about the kind of language the poet may employ, and about the ways in which that language ought to be arranged.

The final matter to be settled is how the theorist represents the product of his ideal artistic process. How, in his opinion, is the work of art structured? What are its powers? What sort of approach does it demand of its audience? One of the most interesting points to emerge when we record the answers to these questions is that a theorist's description of the ideal product almost invariably resembles his description of the realm which the artist apprehends. As the realm, for example, is portrayed as accountable to the analytical intellect, so too, invariably, is the work of art. As the realm is held to be of mystical, or supernatural status, so the product of its apprehension is likely to be similarly invested. I conclude my studies of some of the theorists with an inquiry into some of the products of their own creative endeavours. My concern there is to look for the ways in which these reflect the hypothetical processes by which they are said to have been created.

The first writings to which I bring this list of questions, in an effort to set up an illuminating context for the reconstructed theory of Hulme, are chosen because they are representative of the two French movements with which commentators have linked the name of Imagism: Parnassianism and Symbolism (Chapter I). The fact that Imagism has been

connected with both these movements, we shall see, invites a break-down of their aesthetics into specific points for comparison, for the two theories of art stem from basic philosophical stances so incompatible that it is clear that the English movement cannot be in total alignment with both. Setting it against the background of the positivist theory of art expounded by Hippolyte Taine, whose basic principles it shares, I outline first of all the description of the poetic process given by Parnassian theorists like Leconte de Lisle and Sully Prudhomme, and consider briefly how their poetry may be seen to reflect it. This account serves as a foil to the theory of art expounded by the idealists Schopenhauer and Carlyle, theories which I consider because they were of common knowledge among Symbolist poets and prefigured the Symbolist aesthetic in many of its essentials. In order somehow to pin down the slippery notion of the Symbolist aesthetic, I have chosen to examine briefly the accounts of creative process laid down by three of its major spokesmen: Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé. Of the three, it is Mallarmé whom the paradigm of questions exposes to the greatest advantage, for it is in his work that we find the connection established most clearly between an experience of apprehension and a style calculated to reflect the realm apprehended.

When the representative theories of Parnassianism and Symbolism are viewed side by side, certain obvious points of difference emerge. Whereas the gaze of the poet of positivism and the Parnasse is restricted to the world of

phenomena, the idealist and Symbolist poet is invariably depicted as apprehending some transcendental realm. Whereas the experience of the former reflects a faith in the power of the analytical intellect to comprehend reality, that of the latter poet reflects a greater belief in moments when the intellect is suspended. The Parnassian and Symbolist accounts differ, too, in their descriptions of the stage at which the poet formulates clearly both the meaning and the form of his work, the first seeing these as matters determined prior to the act of making, the other seeing them as matters discovered through it. The two theories are seen to diverge, finally, in describing products designed in one case to appeal to, and in the other to frustrate, the analytical powers of their readers.

The comparative account of the Parnassian and Symbolist theories serves as a useful guide in approaching the question of the degree of compatibility of Hulme's aesthetic with each. It proves especially helpful, we shall see, in pin-pointing precisely what is wrong with one of the most enthusiastic claims for Hulme's affinity with Symbolism: Frank Kermode's Romantic Image. Kermode's study is on the one hand provocative and exciting, exposing a number of the lines of analogy existing between the theories of Mallarmé and Hulme. It is on the other dangerously reductive, suffering both from a lack of rigour in establishing the points of the comparison, and from a failure to give sufficient weight to the important question of the attitudes underlying the writings which it compares. Kermode's thesis is that Hulme's poetic

theory is in all essentials identical to the theory expounded by Mallarmé in France, and by a long line of anti-positivist writers in England extending from Coleridge to Pater, Wilde, Symons and Yeats. He is concerned in particular with exposing the efforts of all these writers to assert, for the beginning of the creative process, an intuitive, non-analytical apprehension, and for its end an autonomous, non-discursive product. He calls the resulting "aesthetic monad" the "Image," and describes it this way:

> The work of art itself is symbol, 'aesthetic monad'; utterly original and not in the old sense 'imitated'; 'concrete,' yet fluid and suggestive; a means to truth, a truth unrelated to, and more exalted than, that of positivist science, or any observation depending upon the discursive reason; out of the flux of life, and therefore, under one aspect, dead; yet uniquely alive because of its participation in a higher order of existence, and because it is analogous not to a machine but to an organism; coextensive in matter and form; resistant to explication; largely independent of intention, and of any form of ethical utility; and itself emblematised in certain recurring images, of which...the Dancer is the most perfect.[13]

In sharing such views with the likes of Mallarmé, Kermode maintains, Hulme is offering "a modernised, but essentially traditional, aesthetic of Symbolism" (p.121). What is more, Kermode says, he is thus exposing his true allegiance to the "Romantic" tradition which he claims to reject (p.130).

Two of Kermode's statements about Hulme's connection with the Romantic and Symbolist tradition are especially worth recording, for couched in their particular way of stating

[13] Romantic Image (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p.44. My italics. Further references to this volume will be incorporated into the text.

the affinity is the key to their misrepresentation of it. "Hulme's artist," Kermode says, "is really the Romantic voyant expressed in terms more agreeable to a man who disliked some kinds of philosophical language."[14] The "Hulmian Image," he asserts, "precise, orderly, anti-discursive, the product of intuition - is the Symbol of the French poets given a new philosophical suit" (p.130). Kermode's point, in other words, is that Hulme is describing the same mental event and the same product as Coleridge and Mallarmé, but simply using different terms to do so. The difference, he notes in passing, is that Hulme cannot tolerate in his descriptions any reference to "the magical properties of the Image, or any exact parallel between poetic and mystical cognition..." (p.119).[15] The implication of Kermode's discussion is that the language which a theorist uses to express his beliefs about the ideal poetic process is somehow irrelevant to those beliefs; he assumes the impressive ability to equate viewpoints which their own advocates choose to identify quite differently. But the language which theorists like Coleridge, Mallarmé, and Hulme use to outline their beliefs about art surely does matter. Hulme, we shall see, certainly thought so: he recognized that an aesthetic philosopher's words could reflect his most basic attitudes about man's cognitive capacities.

To deny the language with which art is described

[14] The italics from "expressed...language" are mine.

[15] Cf. a similar comment concerning I. A. Richards, p.133. Kermode states that "the unfortunate 'pseudo-statement' is after all merely the Image looked at from a disapproving positivist point of view."

its importance is to be in danger of collapsing into each other things which possess an important dimension of difference. It is to preclude, certainly, an investigation which will perceive the subtlety of Hulme's arguments on behalf of a new "classicism." The references to the mystical dimension of the poetic apprehension and product which Kermode quite rightly notes that Hulme cannot tolerate, are in fact, we shall see, not to be dismissed lightly, for they are representative of an attitude which Hulme thought it his chief vocation to combat. Hulme identified a dangerous "romantic" attitude in claims which he said "brought the infinite" into descriptions of the artistic process. By the "infinite" he meant a realm of apprehension described by the Symbolists: a transcendent realm constituted of God, or of the infinite and eternal Spirit, or of universal archetypes, Ideas. He was to define a quite different realm of apprehension for his own ideal artist, and this claim was one significant mark of the "classical" attitude he claimed for himself. In its implicit respect for the language used in descriptions of artistic process, my approach to Symbolism in the first chapter lays bare certain elements of the aesthetic with which Hulme's will be seen to accord, and others with which they, because of these differences in attitude, will appear in sharp contrast.

To highlight Hulme's place in relation to the English literary tradition, it has seemed appropriate to make a brief study of two other English writers blithely included by Kermode under the Romantic/Symbolist banner: Pater and

Yeats (Chapter II). In the light of the conclusions reached in Chapter I, I conduct a systematic investigation to assess the compatibility of their poetic theories with the major tenets of Symbolism. The result, in the main, corroborates Kermode's view of the two as English Symbolists: they share an anti-intellectualism which informs their opinions about the ideal poetic apprehension, and which manifests itself too in their assertions that the significance and form of the work of art are matters for discovery rather than for mere mechanical execution. The study does reveal one significant point, however, on which Kermode's assessment of Pater, in particular, falters. In blithely equating "what Pater called 'vision' and the French called Symbol" (p.29), Kermode implies an identity between the realms of apprehension defined by Pater and the Symbolists. On close examination, however, Pater's statements about the artist's experience of a transcendental "vision" constitute only one of two contrary positions to be detected in his work. The other, and perhaps the stronger, sets him quite apart from Schopenhauer and Mallarmé, with their view that the objects of apprehension and communication should be the timeless and abstract Platonic Ideas. It is a dedication to the Heraclitean flux: a realm of transient and concrete impressions possessed of all the "accidental" properties which the Ideas lack. Pater's description of a non-intellectual apprehension with a temporal rather than timeless world as its object is interesting because it foreshadows the accounts given both by Hulme and the philosopher he most admired, Henri Bergson.

If an interesting perspective upon Hulme's artistic theory is gained by looking at the purportedly comparable aesthetics of Pater and Yeats, an even more valuable one is achieved by examining those recorded by the theorists who substantially influenced him. Three French writers in particular are worth investigation for the light they shed upon Hulme's fragmentary notes on language and style: the father of experimental psychology in France, Théodule Ribot, the Symbolist poet turned scientific critic, Remy de Gourmont, and the anti-determinist philosopher, Bergson.

Although a number of critics have acknowledged Hulme's reading of Ribot, none have explored his debt to the French psychologist in any detail. A study of Ribot's L'Evolution des idées générales, for its discussion of the way in which general ideas evolve out of sense impressions in the mind, illuminates Hulme's somewhat cryptic notes on poetic language, and reveals the debt which Imagism's notion of a concrete language owes to the empiricist and associationist tradition (Chapter III). Ribot's treatise also contains a highly interesting account, backed up by experiment, of the different rational processes corresponding to ideas at different stages of evolution in the mind. In the unlikely setting of a study of the thought processes of animals, we encounter a description of a rational activity involving images which corresponds precisely to the one which is at the heart of Hulme's poet's experience. This activity is intriguing, in being comparable to one defined by Schopenhauer and Carlyle and held as a model by the Symbolists, in entailing a

recognition which cannot be translated into the discursive terms of a conceptual language. It does so, moreover, without making any of the references to a transcendental or supernatural presence which the idealist and Symbolist writers invoked to account for the phenomenon, a fact which would not have been lost on Hulme.

Ribot's discussion in Idées générales is the ground-work for a later work dedicated specifically to the subject of creative activity, the Essai sur l'imagination créatrice. This study proves to be a fascinating keystone in the transition we trace between the Symbolist aesthetic and the so called "classical" aesthetic of Hulme. In it, Ribot recasts a number of the features of the creative activity which the Symbolists attributed to supernatural causes into an account involving psychological factors alone, and Hulme was to incorporate a number of these suitably demystified tenets into his own account of poetry. Ribot's discussion in Imagination créatrice proves useful, too, in providing descriptions of two specific types of creative imagination which correspond with Symbolist and Hulmian ideals. These are to serve as useful aids in enabling us to pin-point some essential differences between the poetry of Mallarmé and Hulme.

Another account of creative process to have a significant influence upon Hulme's, as well as Pound's and Eliot's theory, was that presented by Remy de Gourmont in Le Problème du style. Like Ribot's in its reliance upon the empiricist view of language, Gourmont's theory parallels it, too, in involving a deliberate demystification of certain

Symbolist tenets. The discussion in Le Problème du style rests upon a view of the realm of apprehension which marked a significant departure for Gourmont: he had transformed his faith, as a young Symbolist, in the realm defined by subjective idealism, into a conviction about the existence of an objective and material reality accessible to the senses, a realm variously perceived because of variations in the physical make-up of the perceiver. Out of this conviction, and appealing always to physical causes in making his distinctions, he proceeded to define two kinds of writer who were to re-emerge in the writings both of Hulme and of Pound. The first of these, he held, was highly suspect in being effectively blind to the world, and to the sensible content of his terms of expression; his act of expression was facile, automatic. The second he praised for being possessed of all the sensitivity the first lacked, a man whose total involvement in his work entailed both a capacity for intense sense-experience and an acute sensitivity to the images at the heart of words. Gourmont's ideal writer, we shall see, became the model for the Imagist poet, shaping his concrete language into striking new metaphors.

The thinker who had the single greatest influence upon Hulme's view of the poetic process was without a doubt Henri Bergson. Although much has been said about the attraction Hulme felt for Bergson's argument against determinism, critics have failed to acknowledge another significant part of his allure: Bergson's account of the mind, Hulme said, provided the terms with which the creative experience could be described

with a new precision, in a way which involved none of the "hocus-pocus" typical of "romantic" accounts of it. From remarks scattered throughout Bergson's writings, we may reconstruct a coherent account of the creative activity, an account which is, as many of Bergson's commentators have remarked, reminiscent of the Symbolist one (Chapter IV). As Hulme perceived, however, Bergson redefined some parts of the activity in a way which stripped them of much of the mystery commonly invested in them by Symbolist theorists.

One of the most important features of Bergson's account in this regard is his description of the intuitive experience which is a model for the artist's apprehension. Showing first of all how the intellect, in the interests of action and with the aid of a language of concepts, habitually fixes and simplifies the objects of the mind's attention, Bergson proceeds to define the intuitive experience as one in which this habitual mode of knowing is reversed, in which a man pierces through the compromising "veil" and apprehends his object for the unique thing it is. Like Pater, and notably unlike his Symbolist kin, Bergson defines the end-point of the artist's gaze defiantly as the fleeting, Heraclitean flux, be it the external world perceived by the painter, or the inner life which is the special province of the poet. The realm apprehended, he stresses, is describable as "absolute" or "infinite" only in the sense that it would require an eternity for the intellect to analyse it into its constituent properties; there is nothing otherwise mysterious about it.

If Bergson's carefully worded account of the

intuitive apprehension was his first major contribution to Hulme's account of art, his second was an equally measured representation of the act of expression as a process of discovery. His references to this part of the creative process are rooted in a detailed argument on behalf of the unpredictability of the self which controls it: an argument which Hulme embraced thankfully as offering relief to the mechanistic accounts of human behaviour which he found intolerable. The work in which most of Bergson's references to the act of expression are found, and the source for a major motif in Hulme's notes, is the treatise on L'Évolution créatrice, where Bergson repeatedly cites the impulse controlling artistic expression as an analogy for the "élan vital" responsible for creation in nature. In his discussion here, and elsewhere, we see a re-statement of the Symbolist view that both the plan of the work of art and its cognitive content become clear to the artist only through his struggle with the materials of expression.

The final notable aspect of Bergson's account of art is his description of the kind of poem which he believes capable of conveying otherwise inexpressible intuitions. This construction, an arrangement of images designed to frustrate the understanding, is strikingly similar in character to the poem envisioned by Schopenhauer and realized by Mallarmé. In describing it, however, and how its incompatible images force the reader to reverse the normal direction of his thought processes, Bergson is able to describe its effect without making any kind of claim for its connection with some

transcendental principle. He re-expresses, that is, the Mallarméan desire for a poetry which will make its reader feel directly what he cannot understand, but he does so in the terms of an extensively developed psychology, without need of recourse to claims about the conveyance of mysterious universal relations or timeless Ideas.

One of the first things to strike us when we come to consider the account of creative process developed by Hulme (Chapter V) is the great degree of self-consciousness with which he undertook his task. Both from the essays collected in Speculations (1924) and Further Speculations (1962) and in some uncollected, and largely neglected articles in The Commentator and The New Age, we see that Hulme had as much to say about his own role as an aesthetic philosopher as he did about art itself. Hulme was a man preoccupied with the sense that he lived at the cusp of two significant eras in human thought, that his age was witnessing the dying of one prevailing Weltanschauung and the emergence of another. He believed, moreover, that whenever such a condition exists there is a special need, not for technical, systematic philosophers, but for philosophers who will express the new attitude in a more personal, unsystematic way: writers who will appeal not to their readers' intellects, but to the basic intuitive selves where all philosophies begin. Like Carlyle and Bergson before him, Hulme championed the kind of philosopher whose intuitions shaped themselves first into images. Like those philosophers, too, Hulme was himself just such a writer, seeking to persuade

his readers through compelling, insightful metaphors.[16]

Hulme's expression of appreciation for the type of writing in which basic attitudes are expressed through metaphor serves as a suitable preface to both the matter and the manner of his attack on romanticism. He defined "romanticism" as a basic attitude, a highly optimistic feeling about man's powers and capacities. One of the forms in which he saw this attitude manifested was in the metaphor depicting man as flying up into, or otherwise achieving contact with some transcendental realm, a realm from which he himself believed man had been irrevocably separated by Adam's Fall. Hulme's hostility to all remarks crediting man with contact with any kind of "infinity," we shall see, was one driving principle behind his formulation of his own account of art. A second was his hostility to what he saw as another form of hubris: a misguided faith in the power of the intellect to account absolutely for events in the realms of biology, history and psychology. Hulme's effort to counteract such intellectualism, which had led to the "nightmare of mechanism," took the form of a metaphorical depiction of the world as a realm of mud or "cinders." This gritty world, the legacy of an image developed by Bergson in L'Évolution créatrice, he represented repeatedly as being far more complex than any of the rigid patterns the intellect might trace upon its surface.

[16] One critic who has especially appreciated the metaphorical style of Hulme's work is J. F. Hendry. In "Hulme as Horatio," in Life and Letters Today, 35 (December, 1942), p.138, he says this of the Notes on Language and Style:

> These are full of what I call thinking in clots, in lumps. The thoughts are thrown up like gold nuggets and turned over for testing. This is organic thinking, real intuition because quite free of pre-existing concepts or attitudes.

He also transferred this fundamental vision to the issue of the poetic activity, representing writing as a "cindery" thing: a process which neither begins with abstract thought, nor may itself be analysed into mechanical stages.

The will to transform or deflate a typically Symbolist account of art is the life-blood of Hulme's discussion of creative activity. We sense this especially when we read his remarks about the realm of the poet's apprehension and see how firmly he restricts his gaze to the details of particular things in an objective, material world. His ambitions for his poet lie in the same phenomenal realm cherished by Pater and Bergson, a realm of ever-changing impressions, not of fixed universals. Kermode, among others who speak of Hulme's surreptitious romanticism, mistakenly contends that Hulme expressed his unqualified allegiance to the aesthetic experience described by Schopenhauer.[17] A careful reading of Hulme, however, reveals that Hulme's attitude towards Schopenhauer was one of nominalist to realist: while supporting Schopenhauer's view that the moment of apprehension is an intuitive experience, he contemptuously dismissed the notion that the object of contemplation is a pre-existent, universal Idea. Kermode ignores the crucial fact that Hulme refers to Schopenhauer's description of the art of Ideas with the same impatience for romantic excess which he shows towards a number of other accounts of art, including those of Ruskin and Yeats,

[17] See Romantic Image, p.130. Further claims about the transcendental dimension of Hulme's poetic theory will be discussed in Chapter V.

which make reference to a transcendental realm. In the manner of Ribot, Hulme repeatedly seeks to deflate such illusions by pointing to their physical causes, or by attributing any strong belief in mystical contact to a mere intensity of emotion. His allegiance to a general conservatism about man's capacities, a conservatism which he defined as the essence of a "classical" attitude, holds undiminished throughout his work. That some features of the creative process he describes, like the non-analytical nature of the apprehension, are analogous to features of the creative processes described by a Coleridge or a Schopenhauer is a fact which does not threaten the consistency of his position in the romantic/classical conflict, as he defined it.

Hulme's desire to deflate romantic notions of art is reflected in many general remarks emphasizing the difficulty of the act of expression. His discussion of the details of this second part of the poetic process, although available to us only in the form of scattered notes, coheres nicely when we set these against the background of the studies of Ribot, Gourmont and Bergson. Bergson's account of the inevitable compromise involved in the descriptive use of a language of concepts, and his description of the sort of mental tension required to convey a unique feeling with any precision, lie behind a number of Hulme's comments on the process. His work is the likely source for a metaphor which recurs in his account of poetry, and which is significantly altered in his later analysis of visual art: the image of a process by which fixed, approximating curves are bent, with great effort, to fit the

precise contours of the thing to be expressed. The influence of Ribot's account of the imagination is felt in Hulme's references to the formation in the poet's mind, prior to the putting of pen to paper, of a construct of associated images awaiting transformation in words. Embryonically a mere brace of images, linked because of an analogy between them, this construct is represented by both Ribot and Hulme as modifying itself, or growing in complexity, as the writer attempts to objectify it in a poem. New images come to join the cluster, they maintain, as the poet writes. It is noteworthy that the description of these images is devoid of Rimbaudian or Yeatsian claims about their participation in some universal Spirit; it was the aspiration of psychology, as a new science, not to speculate about the first causes of the phenomena it observed. As Hulme's psychological account of the continual discovery of images represented a demystified version of a common Symbolist tenet, moreover, so did his comments about the necessary relationship between a particular image-cluster and its particular meaning. After Ribot's account of the untranslatable recognitions characteristic of the "logique des images," Hulme made an assertion about the inseparability of the ideas bound up in a cluster of images from that very exact combination of images. He managed thus to re-express the fundamental Symbolist tenet about the intrinsic significance of a "symbol," about the special unity of its concrete form and its intellectual content, without any claims about the supernatural endowment of meaning, or about "transparent lamps" enclosing "spiritual flames." Hulme's conviction that the ideal poetic process

involved the discovery of meaning <u>through</u> images, rather than the translation of meaning <u>into</u> images, was accompanied by an approval of the discovery of form involved in <u>vers libre</u>. He frequently expresses his fundamental intuition about the thoroughly organic nature of the poetic process, again through metaphor: through images of dancers or birds or impulses organising a "cindery" language into life.

Hulme's specifications about the kind of language a poet uses, and his experience of using it, bear the unmistakeable mark of his readings of Ribot and Gourmont. He sets his ideal poetic language in contrast to two kinds of language which it is not: the highly abstract language which Ribot had discovered, through experiment, to be very rarely accompanied by images in its user's mind, and the language of clichés which Gourmont had depicted being wielded blindly by his ideo-emotive writer. Unlike either such "counter" language, he insists, the words the poet uses command the rapt attention of his mind's eye. Coming from the concrete end of the scale of abstraction defined by Ribot in <u>Idées générales</u>, and shaped into striking new metaphors, the language of poetry demands the same degree of involvement of its reader, rendering impossible any merely superficial acknowledgment of its meaning. The ideal poem, as Hulme conceives it, is one which exhausts the reader by confronting him with a succession of analogical images, images charged with special significance. Although in some of its features it resembles the poem idealized by Mallarmé, moreover, Hulme's can be seen to differ from the Symbolist one in the impression of stability which its image-

clusters give, as they bring into focus quite objective points of likeness. In the fact of these analogies we shall see resting all of Hulme's hope for art: the best possible means man has, in his view, for making sense of a world elusive to explication in abstract terms.

In the eighteen months prior to the outbreak of World War I, Hulme's interest in poetry and poetic theory was almost entirely displaced by an enthusiasm for the innovations taking place in the visual arts. When approached with an eye for what they say about the creative activity (Chapter VI), his lectures and articles on the new abstract art reveal a significant shift of opinion on the matter of what it is the artist apprehends and embodies in his work: a shift which, although Hulme never openly admitted it, amounted to a rejection of one of the major elements of his avid Bergsonism. The force behind this unguarded change of heart was the work of the German art critic, Wilhelm Worringer. Worringer's approach to art was similar to Hulme's own, in its tendency to trace major features of style back to underlying Weltanschauungen, and his analysis of two attitudes corresponding roughly to Hulme's "romanticism" and "classicism," we see, was the crucible in which Hulme's own views took on a new twist. Within the framework of Worringer's theory, the sort of intense appreciation of the Heraclitean or Bergsonian flux which had marked the experience of Hulme's poet became the sign of a sense of ease within nature which was suspiciously "romantic," or humanistic; the mark of a man who has failed to acknowledge the alienation effected by Adam's Sin. Hulme's claims for his Impressionist

poet's apprehension of the particular gave way, accordingly, to an implicit approval for a painter's apprehension of the universal: Worringer had portrayed the recognition and expression of geometrical forms as the mark of an underlying "religious" attitude, the mark of alienated man seeking refuge from the flux. Through Worringer, Hulme came to champion a painting which utilized fixed, universal forms, devoid of accidental variations, came to speak with approval of the use of precisely those "generalizing curves" which his poet had taken great pains, metaphorically, to bend. Hulme's anti-romantic sentiments also shape, we see, an argument in which he expresses his conviction that the greatest asset of the new art is not what it in any way reveals about nature, but rather what it says about how the artist makes expressive use of what he finds there. He praises the painting whose structure, being of the artist's own, rather than nature's design, gives the impression of being a kind of autonomous world, a painting which in its dependance upon internal reflections resembles the Symbolist and Imagist poem. As we note, however, in a coda to our study of this part of Hulme's work, there are a number of threads in his thought which restrain him from accepting an art which is entirely autonomous, containing no allusion at all to the natural world. Among these we can trace the stubborn remnants of his empiricist view of imagination, and a circuitous argument based, once again, on a hostility to claims about a kind of quasi-mystical, uniquely aesthetic emotion.

The theory of creative process sketched out by Ezra

Pound on behalf of Vorticism is an appropriate subject with which to conclude our study (Chapter VII). The theory of Vorticism is especially interesting, first of all, because Pound designed it to apply to artists in all media, and it thus makes much more clear the affinities between the new painting and the new poetry at which Hulme's writings on art merely hinted. Seen within a general framework inspired by Whistler and Kandinsky, Pound's account of the specifically poetic process provides an interesting comparison with the one we have reconstructed out of Hulme's notes. It makes similar use, for one thing, of the new psychology, providing once again a demystified version of the claim about the unique relation between a poet's mental images and the thoughts and feelings they embody. It makes reference, too, under the influence of Gourmont, to the same kind of intense mental engagement with language experienced by Hulme's poet, even if, as we see, it gives a new interpretation to the notion of a "concrete" poetic language. Perhaps the most interesting thing to be observed about Pound's account of art, however, is the apparent knife-edge it treads between outright claims about the transcendental or spiritual significance of art, and accounts of it which recast such claims into what might be considered the more respectable language of science. We hear Pound voicing approval of claims representing the poet as mystic, but then listen to him redescribing the spiritual realm apprehended as the realm of forces into which the nineteenth century physicists had transmuted matter. Similarly, we hear him expressing tolerance for Yeatsian claims about the magical

powers of poetry, but listen to him elsewhere offering an alternative interpretation of its function using the language of mathematics. Pound's early account of poetry, in sum, proves an eclectic and somewhat tense combination of the kind of mystical claims for art typical of Symbolism, and claims which in their allusions to psychology and the other sciences reflect Hulme's new "classicism."

My hope, above all, in this study, is to do something towards redeeming Hulme from the detraction of his critics. The patient study of his image-studded notes has been highly rewarding. As Carlyle once predicted, speaking three-quarters of a century earlier than Hulme but unquestionably about the type of writing to which his work was to belong, "By degrees, the eye grows accustomed to its new Whereabout,"[18] and his curious metaphorical world yields up its secrets. Although the selection of material for the circumjacent studies has been dictated by my intention to illuminate Hulme's work, I hope nonetheless that these will prove useful accounts in themselves, bringing together as they do many scattered remarks which have not previously been set side by side. It seems to me, finally, that in approaching the accounts of creative activity systematically, and as a literature in itself, we are able to mark some exact points of comparison and distinction which if they have been previously intuited, have not before now been pin-pointed. Registered in these distinctions is a significant change in attitude which is one of the most

[18] Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus (London: Chapman and Hall, 1885), p.182.

intriguing facts about discussions of art in the early twentieth century. Its culmination in the work of I. A. Richards is a subject I consider briefly in my Conclusion.

CHAPTER I

CURRENTS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY FRANCE

i) Imagism and France.

A survey of critical writings on the Imagist aesthetic, and on the aesthetic writings of Hulme in particular, reveals the widespread belief that Imagism bore a strong resemblance to certain literary movements in nineteenth century France. More specifically, connections are asserted between Imagism and the schools of poetry known as Parnassian and Symbolist.

The name of the Parnassian movement achieved recognition with the publication of the anthology Le Parnasse contemporain in 1866.[1] The literary ideals exemplified in the publication, however, had their origins in the reaction to Romanticism which set in in France after 1830. Théophile Gautier, from his publication of Mademoiselle de Maupin in 1836, was the earliest exponent of Parnassian principles. Subsequent masters included Louis Bouilhet, Théodore de Banville, and Leconte de Lisle, and the younger generation of René-François-Armand Sully Prudhomme, Catulle Mendès, Émile Verhaeren, and José-Maria de Heredia. Flaubert laid down comparable principles in his discussions of the Naturalist novel.

Symbolism was first identified as a school by

[1] Subsequent anthologies appeared in 1869 and 1876.

Jean Moréas, in essays both in 1885 and 1886.[2] Its members at that time included Moréas, Paul Verlaine, René Ghil, Henri de Régnier, André Gide, Stuart Merrill, Jules Laforgue and Gustave Kahn. As a literary spirit, however, Symbolism had been born in the writings of Baudelaire in the 1850s. It had shaped the brief literary career of Rimbaud in the early 1870s, and had achieved perhaps its fullest development in the writings of Mallarmé, already well known to, and revered by, the writers who first carried the Symbolist banner.

Among the critics who relate Imagism to the earlier of the two French movements is L. S. Dembo. In his Conceptions of Reality in Modern American Poetry he maintains that Imagism constituted a return to the ideals of the Parnasse; the poets of both movements, he says, maintained a purposeful detachment from self-sentiment, and consequently employed an objective, concrete style.[3] Like Stanley Coffman,[4] Dembo sees the fulfilment of Imagist specifications in the poetry of Gautier, highly disciplined and replete with concrete images. Another writer who holds by the affinity between Imagism and Parnassianism is Glenn

[2] See "Réponse à Paul Bourde," in Le XIXe siècle (11 Aug., 1885), and "Le Symbolisme," in Le Figaro littéraire (18 Sept., 1886). The two articles are included, in abbreviated and complete forms respectively, in Guy Michaud's Message poétique du Symbolisme (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1947), pp.798-9, and pp.724-6.

[3] See L. S. Dembo, Conceptions of Reality in Modern American Poetry (Berkeley: University of Calfornia Press, 1966), p.11.

[4] See Stanley K. Coffman, Imagism: A Chapter for the History of Modern Poetry (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), p.86.

Burne, who asserts that this likeness is much stronger than any between Imagism and Symbolism.[5]

Claims for Imagism's debt to Symbolism are widespread. Graham Hough, in the intelligent study Image and Experience, locates the roots of the Imagist aesthetic in the experimentations of Rimbaud and Mallarmé.[6] In addition to acknowledging the affinity between the Imagists and Gautier, Coffman recognizes an interest in Symbolism among the Imagists so prevalent "that their doctrine might have been in some measure shaped by it."[7] Harmer, too, adds to his suggestion about Imagism's likeness to the Parnasse the observation that the Imagists turned for ideas to the work of Baudelaire and the Symbolists; he attributes their attraction to France to a desire to break from the sadly degenerate literary tradition in England.[8] The most sweeping, the most provocative, and the most problematic claim for the Imagist/Symbolist connection is found, as we have noted, in Frank Kermode's Romantic Image. Kermode places Hulme's writings in the tradition of Romantic anti-positivism, and states categorically that Hulme presents to the English tradition "a modernised, but essentially traditional,

[5] See Glenn Burne, Remy de Gourmont: His Ideas and Influence in England and America (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963), p.152.

[6] See Graham Hough, Image and Experience: Studies in a Literary Revolution (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1960), p.51.

[7] See Coffman, p.76.

[8] See J. B. Harmer, Victory in Limbo: Imagism 1908-1917 (London: Secker and Warburg, 1975), p.155.

aesthetic of Symbolism."[9]

The claim for Imagism's connection with both the Parnasse and Symbolism would be happily digested were it not for the fact that critical opinion also holds the philosophical principles fundamental to the two aesthetics to be incompatible. Enid Starkie alerts the English reader to this fact when she locates behind Symbolist poetry the assumption that "the external world is not important," and calls this attitude "a reaction against the excessive materialism of the Parnassian movement."[10] T. E. Hulme, whose interest in philosophy was as great as his interest in art, was himself well aware of the allegiances held by the two literary movements to the opposing philosophies of positivism and idealism. In a review of Tancrède de Visan's L'Attitude du lyrisme contemporain (1911), Hulme paraphrases de Visan's thesis that the poetry of the Parnasse, the Naturalist novels of Flaubert, and the painting of Courbet correspond to the positivism of Comte, Littré and Taine.[11] The same thesis is upheld by another French critic read by Hulme, André Beaunier. Beaunier is worth quoting for his succinct expression not only of the beliefs shared by the Parnassian and the positivist, but also of those upheld by the Symbolist and "le métaphysicien," or idealist:

[9] Kermode, Romantic Image, p.121.

[10] Enid Starkie, From Gautier to Eliot: The Influence of France on English Literature 1851-1939 (London: Hutchinson, 1960), p.95.

[11] See Hulme, Review of L'Attitude du lyrisme contemporain by Tancrède de Visan, in The New Age, IX, 17 (24 August 1911), pp.400-1. Subsequent references to this journal will be to New Age.

> Le monde phénoménal est, pour le Parnassien et pour le Positiviste, la suprême réalité; il n'est, pour le métaphysicien, que l'apparence extérieure de l'essentielle réalité, ou, si l'on veut, il constitue dans son ensemble une sorte de vaste allégorie dont la signification est mystérieuse. Peindre la réalité telle qu'elle se présente immédiatement aux regardes de l'observateur, tel est l'art du Parnassien; représenter dans la réalité tout le définitif mystère qu'elle recouvre, tel est l'art du Symboliste. Toutes les divergences qui séparent ces deux écoles viennent de là.[12]

The creative processes typical of the two literary movements, Beaunier claims, were fundamentally shaped by the different views held by each concerning the reality of the phenomenal world. The Parnassian process was coloured by the view that this world is the supreme reality, the Symbolist by the belief that it is only a cover for the mysterious and essential reality above or beyond it. If Starkie and Beaunier, along with Arthur Symons and Edmund Wilson,[13] are correct in identifying the philosophical allegiances of the two French movements, it is difficult to see how Hulme's Imagism, grounded as it is in philosophical speculation, can be at once entirely in accord with each of the two schools.

Hulme himself gives few clues towards the resolution of this puzzle, admitting no allegiance to either Parnassianism or Symbolism. In the "Lecture on Modern Poetry"(1909) he dismisses Parnassianism as a movement which produced little

[12] André Beaunier, La Poésie nouvelle (Paris: Société du Mercure de France, 1902), pp.20-21.

[13] Symons represents the Parnassian and Symbolist movements as positivist and idealist in The Symbolist Movement in Literature, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958), as does Edmund Wilson in Axel's Castle: A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930 (New York: Scribner's, 1939).

poetry of significance, which declined rapidly from its beginnings as a protest against Romanticism into a "state of sterile feebleness."[14] Although he goes on to express enthusiasm for Symbolist innovations, and particularly for the formal innovations of the vers libristes, he then denies an absolute identification between vers libre and the new poetry on behalf of which he is speaking. Elsewhere he strongly criticizes F. S. Flint, the Imagist who took the strongest scholarly interest in French verse, for what he regards as the "belated romanticism" behind Flint's excessive admiration for Symbolism.[15]

The critics give us a confused picture, and Hulme provides no way out of the confusion. The need for a systematic study, therefore, is clear. In this chapter, I shall attempt first of all to clarify the basic tenets of positivism and idealism, and to establish precisely how the accounts of creative process characteristic of Parnassianism and Symbolism reflect these opposing philosophies. This project will aid my attempt in subsequent chapters to assess the degree of compatibility between each of the two movements and Hulme's Imagism.

[14] T. E. Hulme, "A Lecture on Modern Poetry," in Further Speculations, ed. Sam Hynes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), p.70.

[15] See T. E. Hulme, "Belated Romanticism," New Age IV (Feb. 18, 1909), p.350. Hulme is responding in this article to an article by Flint in New Age, IV (Feb. 11, 1909), where Flint compares the London Poets' Club unfavourably with the poets of Symbolism.

ii. Positivism.

The major spokesmen for positivism in nineteenth century France included Auguste Comte, Emile Littré, Ernest Renan, and Hippolyte Taine.[16] Although these philosophers differed in their areas of specialization, as positivists they held in common certain general views concerning the nature of reality and the nature of knowledge. Fundamental to their work was the empiricist view that the mind was a passive recipient of sense-impressions. Also essential was the belief that these sense-impressions were totally sufficient guides to reality, the reliable foundations of a process of observation, analysis, and induction which resulted in the formation of general laws. The positivists did not countenance the notion of an unseen world, a world beyond or outside of the one which could be observed. They rejected, too, a priori reasoning, and all forms of intuitive knowledge. The positivist spirit was, in sum, one of faith in the reality of appearances, and in the power of the analytical and generalizing intellect to account for all of the world's mysteries.[17]

[16] See especially Comte's Cours de philosophie positive (1830-1842), Littré's De la Philosophie positive (1840), Renan's L'Avenir de la science (written in 1848, published in 1890), and Taine's De l'Intelligence (1870).

[17] I owe this, very general account of positivism to discussions in A. G. Lehmann's The Symbolist Aesthetic in France 1885-1895 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), pp.21-37, R. G. Collingwood's The Idea of History (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946), pp.126-8, and Nina Smith's L'Accord de la science et de la poésie (Vienna: Ligugé, 1928), pp.25-30.

Among the French positivists it is Taine whose work will shed the greatest light upon the art of the Parnasse, for in the Introduction to his Histoire de la littérature anglaise(1863-4), and in his Philosophie de l'art(1865), his positivist principles are brought to bear specifically upon the issue of the artistic activity. The dominant theme in Taine's account of art is the view that there is nothing mysterious or unpredictable about the act of creation, or about the work of art which ensues from it. He portrays the artist not as an essentially free being, possessed of an unpredictable imaginative power, but as a man whose disposition and whose art are totally determined by his race, his environment, and his epoch.[18] Taine is confident that the nature of any work of art may be explained as a product of these external forces, stressing that art is never "un simple jeu d'imagination, le caprice isolé d'une tête chaude...."[19]

Taine's positivist spirit not only informs his view of the work of art as a determined product, but also shapes his account of what, ideally, the artistic process entails. From remarks scattered throughout the Philosophie de l'art, we may construct a picture of the artistic activity which allies it closely with the general positivist method. Taine groups together the activities of painting, sculpting,

[18] See Taine, Introduction à l'histoire de la littérature anglaise, ed. H. B. Charlton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1936), p.39. Also note his remark in Philosophie de l'art (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1904), pp.9-10.

[19] Taine, Introduction, p.25.

and composing poetry, identifying as their common purpose the imitation of objects in the external world.[20] The process of imitation begins, he says, with a vivid sensory experience, an experience of acute perception, for which the artist is especially gifted.[21] This initial, essentially passive experience of observation is followed by an active experience of rational interpretation, an activity in which the artist seeks to determine what Taine calls the "caractère essentiel"[22] of the object, the fundamental feature from which all of its other features may be seen to derive. This is followed by further intellectual activity still, as the artist calculates how, in the work of art, the relations within the object may be altered, so that its essential character may be effectively conveyed. It is only with these calculations completed that the artist sets his brush to canvas, or his chisel to stone, or his pen to paper.

The most important point to be noted about Taine's discussion, for its reflection in Parnassian art, and the contrast with Symbolist activity which it entails, is its apparent assumption that the artist somehow clarifies in his own mind what he is to say before he translates it into the materials of his art. In the section of the Philosophie de l'art in which he discusses the value of art in human

[20] See Taine, Philosophie de l'art, pp 14-15.

[21] See Taine, Philosophie de l'art, p.40.

[22] Taine, Philosophie de l'art, p.33. Taine gives as an example of an "essential character" the lion's character as a flesh-eater, a feature which shapes all aspects of its physical structure.

life, Taine celebrates man's capacity for reflecting upon the things he observes, and for constructing out of these reflections general laws; he sees this power as crucial to man's ability to protect himself, both from nature and from other men. He places the artist, here, alongside the scientist, as an individual especially blessed with the ability to formulate valuable generalizations, and to communicate them to others. Taine represents the basic procedures followed by the artist and the scientist, and the ends achieved by them, as for all intents and purposes the same. The only significant difference he acknowledges lies in the forms in which they communicate their generalizations. Whereas the scientist, he says, expresses the knowledge he has acquired in precise, abstract formulae, appealing to the intelligence of a favoured few, the artist translates the truths he wishes to communicate into sensual terms, appealing "non seulement à la raison, mais encore aux sens et au coeur de l'homme le plus ordinaire."[23]

iii. Parnassianism.

In the Preface to his Poèmes antiques (1852), Leconte de Lisle was emphatic about the great affinity he felt, as an artist, with the scientist. "L'art et la science," he proclaimed, "longtemps séparés par suite des efforts divergences de l'intelligence, doivent...tendre à s'unir

[23] Taine, Philosophie de l'art, p.48.

étroitement."[24] He went on to express an attitude which alerts us to why the methods of science proved so attractive to French writers at this stage in literary history, remarking of contemporary literature that "Le thème personnel et ses variations trop répétées ont épuisée l'attention."[25] In lamenting the subjectivity marking current literary endeavours, he is referring to the work of Romantic writers like Hugo, Lamartine, Musset and Sainte-Beuve. The aesthetic of the French Romantics had, like the political movement which accompanied it, celebrated the freedom of the individual spirit. This celebration of the individual had manifested itself both in a revolt against what was felt to be the oppressive discipline of classical verse forms, and an increasing emphasis on the expression, without constraint or regulation, of personal emotions.[26] Leconte de Lisle made it clear in the Preface that his attraction to science, and scientific method, was the symptom of a weariness with the untrammeled subjectivism of Romanticism. He expressed his impatience with the highly personal themes of the Romantics again in the 1862 sonnet "Les Monteurs," where he vowed never to use poetry as a vehicle for baring his

[24] Leconte de Lisle, Preface to Poèmes antiques, in Derniers poèmes (Paris: Librairie Alphonse Lemerre, 1899), p.222.

[25] Leconte de Lisle, Preface to Poèmes antiques, p.221.

[26] Cf. Hugo, Les Contemplations (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1969), p.173:

> Il faut de strophe en strophe, il faut de vers en vers,
> S'en aller devant soi, pensif, ivre de l'ombre;
> Il faut, rêveur nocturne en proie à l'esprit sombre,
> Gravir le dur sentir de l'inspiration;
> Poursuivre la lointaine et blanche vision....

soul:

> Dans mon orgueil muet, dans ma tombe sans gloire,
> Dussé-je m'engloutir pour l'éternité noire,
> Je ne te rendrai pas mon ivresse ou mon mal.
>
> Je ne livrerai pas ma vie à tes huées,
> Je ne danserai pas sur ton tréteau banal
> Avec tes histrions et tes prostituées.[27]

Leconte de Lisle's remarks point to what were perhaps the two major forces shaping the poetic process distinctive of the poets of the Parnasse: the one a weariness with undisciplined, Romantic subjectivism, the other an enthusiasm for the methods of scientific positivism. Among the other Parnassian writers who gave expression to these attitudes, one of the most articulate, and most helpful in enabling us to clarify the affinity between the Parnassian philosophy of art and that of Taine, was René-François-Armand Sully Prudhomme. In the Introduction to his "Testament poétique," he flatly rejected a method of composition in which the experiences of suffering and expression are one,

[27] Leconte de Lisle, "Les Montreurs," in Oeuvres de Leconte de Lisle, vol.II, ed. Edgard Pich (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1976), p.190. This attitude was expressed by many of the Parnassians. Cf. Heredia, in a speech to the Academie francais, cited by Charles Bruneau, in La Langue et le style de l'école parnassienne (Paris: Tournier et Constans, 1946), p.24:

> Ces confessions publiques, menteuses ou sincères, révoltent en nous une pudeur profonde. Seul le génie a le droit de tout dire. Et pourtant, ce n'est qu'en les généralisant par une idéalisation naturelle ou volontaire, que les poètes ont pu, sans paraître impertinents, expliquer leurs sentiments intimes. La vraie poésie est dans la nature et dans l'humanité eternelle et non dans le coeur de l'homme d'un jour, quelque grand qu'il soit. Elle est essentiellement simple, antique, primitive, et, pour cela, vénérable.... Le poète est d'autant plus vraiment et largement humain qu'il est plus impersonnel.

and proposed in its stead a process in which reason intervenes to divide them:

> Aujourd'hui l'improvisation est impossible, à moins de faire des bouts-rimés, c'est-à-dire d'adapter une pensée quelconque à des mots donnés, au lieu d'ajuster ces mots a l'expression exacte d'une pensée prédéterminée. Il faut nécessairement que le poète fasse avec réflexion un choix délicat, et une singulière force de volonté lui est indispensable pour ne se relâcher en rein de sa probité d'écrivain. Il doit acquérir l'habitude de fixer ses impressions les plus fugitives assez énergiquement et assez longtemps dans son âme pour pouvoir les arrêter et les placer en quelque sorte hors de lui et devant lui; c'est en les maintenant ainsi comme des modèles sous l'oeil de la conscience qu'il peut chercher à loisir sur la palette du langage les tons juste qui les expriment.[28]

The single most important fact about Sully Prudhomme's ideal poet, the fact which epitomises Parnassianism's reaction to Romanticism and which brings its aesthetic in line with that of Taine, is that he stops to reflect upon his feelings, turns them into clear, abstract ideas, before he turns to the palette of language to seek the mots justes for their expression. His activity of constructing the poem, however exacting, is represented as one merely of translating thoughts which have already been clearly conceived. Sully Prudhomme's conviction about this point is clear from many remarks throughout the Introduction and elsewhere. He implies at one point that the poet's expression of his thoughts is identical in essence to the process of translating ideas already articulated by someone else, saying that the choice of words in both cases demands an absolute fidelity to ideas which

[28] Sully Prudhomme, Introduction to "Testament poetique," in Oeuvres de Sully Prudhomme: Prose (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1944), p.26.

pre-exist in the poet's conscious mind.[29] In the Preface to his major poem "Le Bonheur," similarly, he describes the poet's task as one of finding a beauty of form "appropriée à sa conception,"[30] and speaks of conception and form as matters separately sought, and separately to be judged. The "conceptions" to which Sully Prudhomme is referring in the latter case are not the general ideas which arise out of some emotional experience, but rather the general formulae which have recently been induced and put forward by scientists. Like Leconte de Lisle, Bouilhet, and Verhaeren, in particular, Sully Prudhomme was excited by these newly formulated laws, and thought it a noble aspiration for the poet to seek to convey them:

> Outre la peinture des affections obscures et tenues de l'âme, qui a surtout occupé les premières années de ma carrière, je dois à mon éducation scientifique et à ma passion pour la philosophie un ardent désir de faire entrer dans le domaine de la poésie les merveilleuses conquêtes de la science et les hautes synthèses de la spéculation moderne.... Certes Homère est admirable: mais, je l'avoue, aucun passage de ses poèmes n'a fait courir dans tout mon être le frisson d'enthousiasme que j'ai ressenti quand, pour la première fois, mon imagination a suivi l'élan de ma pensée dans l'espace infini pour m'y représenter le peuple innombrable des astres soumis à la loi si simple de Nature.[31]

[29] See Introduction, p.24.

[30] Sully Prudhomme, Preface to Le Bonheur (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1938), p.v.

[31] Sully Prudhomme, Introduction, p.28. Cf. Louis Bouilhet, in a notebook entitled "Impressions philosophiques," in which he lays out "une définition de la poésie future qui fait pressentir le Parnasse." He says here that poetry "à son inspiration primitive...doit joindre le philosophie de l'époque. Loin de repousser la science, comme incompatible avec elle, elle s'associera à toutes ses découvertes." See Louis Bouilhet, Lettres à Louise Colet, ed. Marie-Claire Bancquart (Rouen: Université de Rouen, 1968), p.49.

One characteristic fact about the Parnassian poet was his dedication to conveying clearly formulated ideas, ideas linked, more often than not, in rigorous logical progressions.[32] In doing so he sometimes performed just the function prescribed by Taine: he picked up where the scientist left off, and worked to translate his general laws into forms more accessible to the common man.[33]

[32] See for example the characterization of the Parnassian movement which appeared in the Parnassian journal L'Art, cited in Bruneau, p.71:

> La nouvelle génération poétique, bien convainçue que la rêverie et les negligences de forme sont les signes caracteristiques de l'enfance dans l'art, se distingue surtout par un culte sévère de cette forme tant dédaignée et par la précision mathématique de ses idées.

[33] Henri Morice agrees with this assessment of the Parnassian aesthetic, and regards Prudhomme in particular as a Tainian artist. See La Poésie de Sully Prudhomme (Paris: Pierre Segui, 1920), p.355.

For Leconte de Lisle's support of such a process, see his remark that "le mérite ou l'insuffisance de la langue et du style dépend expressément de la conception première...." See Preface to Poèmes antiques, in Derniers poèmes, p.222. Like Prudhomme he stressed the absolute precision and control with which the conception must be translated:

> Si le poète est avant tout une nature riche de dons extraordinaires, il est aussi une volonté intelligente qui doit exercer une domination absolue et constante sur l'expression des idées et des sentiments, ne rien laisser au hasard....

See "Les Poètes contemporains," in Derniers poèmes, p.276.

Flaubert, whose connection with the Parnassian movement was established through his friendship with Louis Bouilhet, also described his process as one of conceiving and translating precisely. Contemplating the writing of Salammbo, he attributed his inability to begin to the fact that "je ne vois pas nettement mon objectif." Quoted by Albert Cassagne, in La Théorie de l'Art pour l'Art en France (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1906), p.421. He expressed, too, his commitment to a style "précis comme le langage des sciences...." Letter to Louise Colet, 24 April 1852, in Correspondence, vol.II (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), p.79. Cf.

What, then, were the features of the form into which the Parnassian poet translated his conceptions? One answer is given by Xavier de Ricard, in the Parnassian journal L'Art:

> Le poète idéal n'est point ce vates épileptique...émettant indéfiniment et d'un seul jet, sous l'inspiration de je ne sais quelle muse bavarde, des vers faciles et incohérents, mais un penseur sérieux, qui conçoit fortement et qui entoure ses conceptions d'images hardies et longuements ciselées.[34]

One typical practice of the Parnassian poet, and again a practice approved by Taine, was his reliance upon sensual, usually visual images as part of an effort to illustrate his ideas. Gautier was one particularly strong spokesman on this point. He had high praise for the "auteur objectif," who "procède par images, par descriptions," and who "amène les choses sous les yeux du lecteur."[35] He expressed a typical Parnassian attitude, too, in speaking of an affinity with visual artists. In the poem "La Diva" he lamented "Ah, combien je regrette et comme je déplore / De ne plus être peintre."[36] Elsewhere, like Ricard, he likened the poet to a sculptor, struggling with concrete matter resistant

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the letter to Colet of 22 July 1853: "Quand la littérature arrive à la précision de résultat d'une science exacte, c'est roide."(Correspondance, vol.II, pp.387-8.)

[34] From a manifesto signed by Xavier de Ricard, in L'Art in 1865; cited by Bruneau, p.72. Last italics mine.

[35] Théophile Gautier, Spirite: nouvelle fantastique, ed. Marc Eigeldinger (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1970), p.118.

[36] Gautier, "La Diva," in Poésies complètes de Théophile Gautier, ed. René Jasinski, vol.II, (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1970), p.97.

to his toil:

> Oui, l'oeuvre sort plus belle
> D'une forme au travail
> Rebelle,
> Vers, marbre, onyx, émail....
>
> Sculpte, lime, ciselle:
> Que ton rêve flottant
> Se scelle
> Dans le bloc résistant![37]

The Parnassian poets were, like true positivists, dedicated to a close examination of the visible world. Many of them, most notably Leconte de Lisle, conducted extensive researches to ensure the accuracy of the images which they incorporated into their verses. Leconte de Lisle criticized the highly imagistic poetry of Victor Hugo for the fact that its images were not based on first-hand observation: Hugo hid, he said, "sous des énormités d'images une parfaite ignorance de la simple réalité des choses et des faits."[38] The results of Leconte de Lisle's own researches are best apparent in his animal poems, like "Les Hurleurs" and "La Panthère noire," where the animals' physical features and the details of their habitats are recorded with painstaking accuracy.

Although a good deal of Parnassian writing is purely descriptive, presenting pictures of nature for nature's sake, in much of it the visual images are incorporated into structures which clearly manifest the poet's dedication to illustrating some abstract theory. In much Parnassian

[37] Gautier, "L'Art," in Émaux et camées (Lille: Librairie Giard, 1947), pp.130-2.

[38] Leconte de Lisle is quoted by Bruneau, p.16.

poetry, that is to say, we see images hung upon structures of abstract ideas like bright ornaments on skeletal theoretical trees. One of the most extensive and most celebrated poems of this kind is Louis Bouilhet's "Les Fossiles"(1854), a work designed to illustrate the theories of geological evolution formulated by Cuvier in his Discours sur les révélations de la surface du globe(1822). With scrupulous attention to detail, Bouilhet translates each of the evolutionary stages identified by Cuvier into concentrated, detailed pictures: plants sprout, shell-fish stir, hideous monsters rise and clash in battle. In the penultimate section of the poem, prior to an equally vivid description of the history of man, Bouilhet describes in abstract terms the various phases which he has just represented to his readers' senses.[39] Some fine shorter examples of structures incorporating images and abstract commentary are found in Sully Prudhomme's volume Le Prisme. In the poem "Métaphysique," for example, he outlines the process by which man has come to formulate a number of his abstract, metaphysical notions. Witnessing the course of a day, in which a colourful dawn stains the world, clearing mists expose an endless blue horizon, and the planets are seen suspended in harmonious relation in the darkening sky, we are told of the birth of the terms "la Beauté," "l'Infini," and "l'Absolu."[40] The poem "Les Chercheurs" provides some

[39] See Louis Bouilhet, "Les Fossiles," in Oeuvres (Geneva: Slatkine, 1974), pp.119-148.

[40] See Oeuvres de Sully Prudhomme: Poésies, vol.VI (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1907), pp.64-66.

excellent examples of the typical Parnassian technique of personifying abstract notions: we see, among other cases, "le Vrai" as a giant python hidden under brush, his scales glinting in the sun.[41] A number of Leconte de Lisle's shorter poems are representative examples of how images in Parnassian verse may serve to illustrate general themes devised by the poet himself. In "Midi," for example, Leconte de Lisle presents images of placid oxen, a quiet wheatfield, and a distant forest, to convey the message that indifferent nature offers to the man who contemplates it an escape from any disturbing emotions which may possess him.[42] In "Dans le ciel clair," similarly, he juxtaposes the picture of a forest glistening in the morning light with one of two strolling lovers, and then comments upon these saying that unlike the morning, which will forever recur, the lovers and their love must die.[43] Another structure of images and commentary of this kind is found in "Le Soir d'une bataille," where images of a gruesome battlefield impress upon the reader the horror of war: a horror which Leconte de Lisle then pronounces justified if undertaken in the defence of liberty.[44]

[41] See Sully Prudhomme, Oeuvres: Poésies, vol.VI, p.79.

[42] See Leconte de Lisle, "Midi," in Oeuvres de Leconte de Lisle, vol.I (Paris: Societe d'Edition "Les Belles Lettres," 1976), pp.290-91. Subsequent references to this work will be to Oeuvres.

[43] See Leconte de Lisle, "Dans le ciel clair," in Oeuvres, vol.III, pp.17-18.

[44] See Leconte de Lisle, "Le Soir d'une bataille," in Oeuvres, vol.II, pp.197-8.

The impression given by much Parnassian verse is, then, as Hulme was to observe, one of a "poetry of 'clear' ideas," sprinkled with images as if with "'atoms of the beautiful'...."[45] The appearance of logically structured mosaics is strengthened, as Pierre Martino has noted, by the pervasive presence of clear grammatical conjunctions:

> Le poète ne craint pas, pour assurer la liaison des différentes parties, de faire les "joints" si solides qu'ils sont visibles; il use des lourdes conjunctions dont les poètes, généralement, ont peur; il allonge ses phrases; cette construction solide donne l'impression, souvent, de l'immobilité et de la raideur.[46]

We may say, in sum, that it was the Parnassian intention to create a poetry which would reflect the character of the positivist world: a poetry whose significance would be, insofar as that of any construction in words can be, wholly accessible to an inquiry by the senses and the understanding. It was a poetry intended to possess those virtues which the positivist confidently saw implicit in natural phenomena: "l'ordre, la clarté et l'harmonie...."[47]

The belief that the poetic process should begin with an act of reflection was not the only major implication of the Parnassian reaction against the Romantic aesthetic. Disturbed by what they saw as the sloppiness of form ensuing from the untrammeled inspiration of the Romantic poets, the

[45] T. E. Hulme, Review of Visan's L'Attitude du lyrisme contemporain, p.400.

[46] Pierre Martino, Parnasse et Symbolisme (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1970), pp.53-4.

[47] Leconte de Lisle, Preface to Poèmes et poésies, in Derniers poèmes, p.227.

Parnassians were repeatedly stressing the importance of craftsmanship, and a dedication to certain stylistic requirements. A work of art "n'est jamais le produit d'une inspiration irréfléchie," said Leconte de Lisle, but rather "tout vrai poète est double d'un ouvrier irréprochable."[48] One of the tasks which the Parnassian poet set himself was that of a rigid adherence to classical verse-forms. Theodore de Banville's Petit traité de poésie française(1872) was one popular stylistic handbook, setting out specifications for the metrical patterns traditionally found in French verse, and complicating these with a great variety of rules about matters such as the proper alignment of vowels, and the visual appropriateness of certain rhymes. Sully Prudhomme's "Réflexions sur l'art des vers"(1892) outlined similar detailed rules for versification. One remark in the latter treatise, in which Sully Prudhomme speaks of the essential difference between poetry and prose, neatly encapsulates the significant fact to be remembered about the Parnassian attitude towards form:

> Tandis que, en prose, la pensée moule elle-même sa forme, elle /la poésie/ la reçoit du vers mesurée d'avance; c'est à elle à s'y ajuster. Quand elle n'y réussit pas, elle est gênée et, par suite, aliène son caractère propre, ne semble plus ni originale ni distinguée.[49]

[48] Leconte de Lisle, "Les Poètes contemporains: Auguste Barbier," in Derniers poèmes, p.77.

[49] Sully Prudhomme, "Réflexions sur l'art des vers," Revue de Famille, I (January-March 1892), p.117. My italics.

The Parnassian poet, we are told, chooses his verse-form before he begins to express his thoughts. His task is one of translating, adjusting, and if necessary compromising his ideas until they assume the form of a perfect sonnet, or a series of perfect alexandrines. Gautier, in the poem "L'Art," envisioned his Muse donning a straight, tight, rhythmical buskin.[50] Beaunier, the critic largely responsible for shaping Hulme's view of Parnassian art, neatly twisted this metaphor to state the weakness which he felt the obsession with formal requirements inevitably entailed:

> Cette forme 'antérieure à la pensée' on pourrait la comparer à ces costumes 'tout faits' qui ne vaut jamais aussi bien que les vêtements 'sur mesure.'[51]

The Parnassians' obsession with craftsmanship was intertwined with one strain in their thought which ran counter to Taine's prescriptions for poetry as a servant of science. This was their habit of making a kind of religion out of the pursuit of Beauty: a religion often depicted, interestingly enough, as a substitute for the religion which positivism, in its aversion to mystery, had discredited. In his poem "Hypatië," Leconte de Lisle praised Beauty as the sole inhabitant of eternity, now that the gods had turned to dust;[52] Flaubert spoke for many when he wrote to Louise Colet, "Aimons-nous donc en l'Art, comme les mystiques

[50] See "L'Art," p.130.

[51] Beaunier, p.32.

[52] See "Hypatie," in Oeuvres, I, p.66.

s'aiment en Dieu."[53] The religion of Art introduced an element of tension into the aesthetic of the Parnassians: their writings are full of references to the careful balance to be maintained between a dedication to accurate description, or to Truth, and a commitment to the perfection of form, or to the selection of particularly pleasing images, which will result in a thing of Beauty.[54]

Perhaps the most noteworthy consequence of the religion of Beauty, however, was the fact that it gave rise to some very curious remarks about the relationship between form and content, remarks which were in fact totally out of keeping with the kind of practice the Parnassians recommended. The dedication to formal beauty led to hyperbolic claims about the inextricable relation between the beauty of art's form and the beauty of its content, claims which led in turn to the assertion that form and content are inseparable. Flaubert made this claim in an 1846 letter to Louise Colet:

> Poète de la forme! c'est là le grand mot à outrages que les utilitaires jettent aux vrais artistes. Pour moi, tant qu'on ne m'aura pas, d'une phrase donnée, séparé la forme du fond, je soutiendrai que ce sont la deux mots vides de sens. Il n'y a pas de belles pensées sans belles formes, et réciproquement.[55]

[53] Letter of 15 August 1853, in Correspondance, vol.II (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p.393.

[54] See for example Leconte de Lisle, Preface to Poètes contemporains, in Derniers poèmes, p.240, Flaubert quoted by Cassagne, p.280, and Sully Prudhomme, "Testament poétique," p.30.

[55] Flaubert, letter to Louise Colet, 18 September 1846, Correspondance, vol.I, p.350.

Theophile Gautier asserted it in the December 1856 issue of L'Artiste:

> ...l'art pour nous n'est pas le moyen, mais le but; - tout artiste qui se propose autre chose que le beau n'est pas un artiste à nos yeux; nous n'avons jamais pu comprendre la séparation de l'idee et de la forme, pas plus que nous ne comprenons le corps sans l'âme, ou l'âme sans le corps, du moins dans notre sphère de manifestations; - une belle forme est une belle idée....[56]

Both Flaubert and Gautier were making their claims for the identity of form and content as part of a defence of their carefully polished work against the criticism that its formal perfection was achieved only at the expense of its content. Their allegations that form and content are inseparable, that the beauty of one depends utterly upon the beauty of the other, were designed simply to illustrate that no amount of attention paid to form could be excessive. We must not make the mistake, as Albert Cassagne has done,[57] of reading these claims as comments about the identity, in the Parnassian process, of the acts of establishing what the form and the content of the poem were to be. For this, as we have seen, was manifestly not the case, in either of the ways in which it might have been so. The experience of the poet who "conçoit fortement," and who merely translates his conceptions into imagistic poetic language, was decidedly not an experience in which the poem's intellectual content was discovered in the process of executing its

[56] Gautier is quoted by Martino, p.16.

[57] See Cassagne, p.446.

form.[58] Similarly distinct, of course, in the experience of the "ouvrier irréprochable," were the act of determining the metrical form of a poem and the one of giving expression to its content: in no sense did the poet discover the metre of the poem only in the actual process of laying down his thoughts. Claims about the identity of form and content were totally inappropriate as descriptions of the process of the wilfully rational, and stylistically classical, Parnassian poet. They acquired a viable significance only, as we shall now see, with the rise of the idealist aesthetic of Symbolism.

iv. Idealism.

The versions of philosophical idealism which developed out of eighteenth century Germany, and which germinated both the Romantic aesthetic in England and the Symbolist one in France, were many, and highly variable. We may, however, without great misrepresentation, distil from these certain basic tenets by virtue of which they, and their ensuing aesthetics, diverged from positivism.[59]

[58] See Hegel's description of the kind of poem in which form and content are manifestly separate, in the discussion of Pater in Chapter II, p.153 of this thesis, for an apt description of the Parnassian poem.

[59] I have chosen, for a variety of reasons, to focus on what might be called "absolute," as opposed to "subjective" idealism, and the aesthetics which developed in accordance with it. Subjective idealism, the view that appearances are nothing but the projections of men's minds, and the theory informing the strain of Symbolist writing including Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and the young Remy de Gourmont, was not in

If the tendency of the positivists, and the Parnassians after them, was to assume that the phenomenal world was the highest one men could know, it was the conviction of idealist philosophers that men in fact had access to a higher world, a world "beyond" it. To the extent that the positivists can be said to have been materialists, the opposition may be stated as one of a disagreement as to the ultimate reality of the material, or the spiritual worlds. This disagreement about the ultimate reality, and about the realm thus accessible to the artist, was complemented by a disagreement about the human faculty best capable of comprehending it. The positivist faith in the analytical intellect had its contrast in the idealist faith in a higher faculty operative when the intellect is denied, a contemplative faculty which enables men to apprehend that supra-sensible reality. The effect of these philosophies was to resurrect the realm of "mystery" which positivism had dispelled, through its absolute faith in the visible and the intellectual.

Unlike England, whose literature was being shaped by German ideas by the end of the eighteenth century, France did not feel their impact until the latter half of the nineteenth. Two writers whose work was largely responsible

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strict opposition to the positivist view, insofar as both shared the stance that the world immediately accessible to the eye was the only world man could know. The more obvious contrast, and the more significant one for literature, was that between positivism and the "absolute" form of idealism, which posited the existence and the accessibility of a higher reality not immediately apparent to the senses. Brief references to subjective idealism are made in my discussions of Pater and Gourmont, in Chapters II and III.

for popularizing these ideas were Arthur Schopenhauer and Thomas Carlyle. Schopenhauer's work gained wide recognition in 1874, with the publication of Théodule Ribot's study Schopenhauer, and was frequently cited as an authority by the Symbolists of the 1890s. Carlyle's philosophy, greatly inspired by Fichte, came also to enjoy a wide celebrity in France, being the subject of numerous articles in literary journals in the 1840s and 1850s,[60] and of a full-length work in 1864: ironically, Taine's L'Idéalisme anglaise. The accounts of art provided by these men, dwelling as they do upon worlds "beyond" the visible one, and on the contemplative faculty through which they are reached, will serve as our models for the idealist aesthetic.

a) Schopenhauer.

Schopenhauer's philosophy stands in contrast to the philosophy of positivism on a number of counts. In his major treatise, Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung (The World as Will and Idea)(1819), first of all, he takes objection to the notion that the human mind is a merely passive recipient of sense-data, which are in turn reliable representations of reality. In truth, he asserts, taking his lead from Kant, there is a subjective element in all ordinary forms of perception: the human intellect imposes upon reality certain artificial forms of order, allocating to each thing it sees a place in time and in space. Hence

[60] See Michaud, pp.202-3.

his most often quoted dictum: "The world is my idea...."[61] Hence also his citation of the view expressed by many Indian philosophers, that each man lives as if in a dream, unable to be sure of the truth of his perceptions:

> It is Maya, the veil of deception, which blinds the eyes of mortals, and makes them behold a world of which they cannot say either that it is or that it is not: for it is like a dream; it is like the sunshine on the sand which the traveller takes from afar for water, or the strong piece of rope he mistakes for a snake. (p.9)

Schopenhauer's claim that the world is man's idea must not, however, be taken as tantamount to the Berkleyan claim that there is no reality beyond the world perceived. For he goes on to acknowledge the existence of an objective reality beyond the veil of deception. This reality, which he calls the "will," is a blind, non-rational force, whose aspirations are without purpose or design. It is universal, lying beyond all perceptions, driving through each and every individual self. Its random, purposeless, irrational progress baffles all attempts at analysis; it cannot be accounted for by the kind of mechanistic models cherished by the positivists (p.354).

Schopenhauer goes further, moreover, than merely to posit the Will's existence, maintaining also that it "objectifies itself," or makes itself known to man (pp.123-

[61] Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Idea, vol.I, tr. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London: Trubner, 1883), p.4. Subsequent references to this volume will be included in parenthesis in the text.

215; p.219). It manifests itself, he asserts, in the objects of knowledge which, after Plato, he calls "Ideas": "the original unchanging forms and qualities of all natural bodies..." (p.219). The Ideas are not those images which appear on the veil of Maya, but are entities free of the conditions which the human intellect imposes. They are free, first of all, of time. When we are conscious of them, says Schopenhauer, "time, the formal and subjective condition of our knowledge, /is/ drawn away, like the glass lens from a kaleidoscope."[62] They are also free of spatial conditions. Schopenhauer notes that the Idea is not "this special form which floats before me," but rather the inner significance of this form, "which may be quite the same even though the spatial relations of its form be very different" (p.271). The Ideas are as archetypes, of which the particular things which occupy the temporal and spatial world are mere copies (p.219). They are "essential," where the details of their particular manifestations are "accidental":

> When the clouds move, the figures which they form are not essential, but indifferent to them; but that as elastic vapour they are pressed together, drifted along, spread out, or torn asunder by the force of the wind: this is their nature, the essence of the forces which objectify themselves in them, the Idea; their actual forms are only for the individual observer. To the brook that flows over stones, the eddies, the waves, the foam-flakes which it forms are

[62] Schopenhauer, "On Aesthetics," in Essays and Aphorisms, selected and translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p.158. Subsequent references to this volume will be indicated by EA.

> indifferent and unessential; but that it follows the attraction of gravity, and behaves as inelastic, perfectly mobile, formless, transparent fluid: this is its nature; this, if known through perception, is its Idea; these accidental forms are only for us so long as we know as individuals. (p.235)

Schopenhauer is careful to distinguish the Idea from the concept. Whereas the latter, he stresses, is a unity constructed out of a multiplicity of perceptions by an act of intellect, the former is a unity which dissolves into multiplicity in the world of perceptions (p.303).

Every man, in Schopenhauer's view, may experience moments of the will's best objectification, may penetrate through the veil of deception to achieve contact with the eternal Ideas. Such an experience, however, is dependent upon one major condition. A man's common way of looking at things, Schopenhauer says, his compulsive attempt to establish the when, and the where, and the why of things,[63] is a method dictated entirely by the intellect. The intellect is a slave of the individual's will, seeing every knowledge as in relation to it, seeking the knowledge which will satisfy its needs and desires.[64] A man may know the Idea of a thing, therefore, only when he detaches himself from his will and thus from his intellect. He must, in essence, relinquish his individuality, and only continue to exist as "the pure subject, the clear mirror of the object...." In the presence

[63] See World as Will, I, p.229, where Schopenauer discusses causation as part of another framework imposed by the intellect.

[64] Schopenhauer, "On Aesthetics," in EA, p.157.

of the Idea the individual is not conscious of himself as a perceiver distinct from his perception; "both have become one," we are told, "because the whole consciousness is filled and occupied with one single sensuous picture..." (p.231).[65]

The notion of the Idea is central not only to Schopenhauer's theory of knowledge, but also to his aesthetic. If all men are capable to some degree of the kind of contemplative experience in which the Idea reveals itself, he holds, it is the special gift of the artist to be able to sustain that awareness and to communicate to others the Idea which he apprehends. "The comprehended Idea," we are told categorically, "is the true and only source of every work of art" (p.304). It is the artist's purpose, furthermore, to create a form for the Idea as free as possible of those "disturbing accidents" (p.252) which draw attention to the particularity of a thing rather than to its eternal essence. The work which he creates will thus render the Idea easily perceptible to the beholder, more easily perceptible than it is in any of its natural representatives in the world. By virtue of this fact the work of art will be more "beautiful" than that natural representative; to Schopenhauer the measure of beauty is the degree of ease with which an object is regarded in a purely objective way, the ease with which it releases its Idea (p.272).

In describing the ideal creative activity as one

[65] Schopenhauer says that this may be true of the contemplation of memory images as well as of objects immediately present to the eye.

in which the artist apprehends and communicates an Idea, Schopenhauer is defining a process directly contrary to the one which we have seen espoused by Taine and the Parnassians. He sets the art of Idea in direct contrast to one which begins with a "concept," or "conception," one involving the translation, into a predetermined formal structure, of predetermined, clearly formulated ideas. To appreciate the differences entailed by these radically different starting-points, we do well to refer to the passage in which Schopenhauer clarifies the precise difference between concept and Idea:

> The concept is abstract, discursive...attainable and comprehensible by him who has only reason, communicable by words without any other assistance, entirely exhausted by its definition. The Idea on the contrary...is always object of perception, and although representing an infinite number of particular things, is yet thoroughly determined...the concept is like a dead receptacle, in which, whatever has been put, actually lies side by side, but out of which no more can be taken (by analytical judgment) than was put in (by synthetical reflection); the (Platonic) Idea, on the other hand, develops, in him who has comprehended it, ideas which are new as regards the concept of the same name; it resembles a living organism, developing itself and possessed of the power of reproduction, which brings forth what was not put into it. (pp.302-3)

Schopenhauer cannot consent, he says, to "the intentional and avowed employment of a work of art for the expression of a concept..." (p.306). As examples of the expression of such fixed, finite, constructed ideas he speaks both of the deliberate imitation of any previously devised formal mannerisms (p.304), and the simple translation of any clearly

conceived theme. His specific target in speaking of the latter is any form of allegorical art, the same target which we shall see repeatedly blasted by his Symbolist followers; it is therefore somewhat ironic that he chooses to define "Symbolism" as just a particularly "degenerate" form of allegory (p.308), in which the relationship between concept and corresponding image is entirely arbitrary.[66] In contrast, however, to the determined, mechanical process of translating such fixed conceptions, the process undergone by the artist in whom "an Idea floats before /the/ mind," is a process of continual discovery. Because "the Idea is and remains object of perception," the artist "is not conscious in the abstract of the aim and intention of his work"; he "can give no justification of what he does," but works "from pure feeling ...unconsciously, indeed instinctively" (p.304). His experience is one of the continual uncovering of new ideas, the offspring of the fertile organism in whose presence he works.

The contrasting experiences which Schopenhauer defines for the artist of concept, and the artist of Idea, would seem to be applicable also to the men who come into the presence of their respective works. Schopenhauer's description of the art of concept seems an appropriate account of the kind of clear, atomistic art which was to be

[66] Not surprisingly, there are numerous examples of allegory in the work of the Parnassians. See for example Leconte de Lisle's "Niobe," an allegorical account of the struggle between Dorian and Phrygian traditions, and "Quain," an account of the battle between science and religion.

typical of the Parnasse. Like the conception it conveys, he implies, such a work is a "dead receptacle": it is easily accounted for by analysis, its "different constituent parts" always ascertainable "if they are sought out and separated from the mixture..." (p.304). In contemplating allegorical art, Schopenhauer notes, the spectator's attention quickly shifts away from the perceived work to some abstract conception, and when this has happened the work has achieved its end (p.306). The art of Idea, by contrast, like the "living organism" it embodies, will be endlessly generative, never exhausted, never comprehensible through analysis. It will not permit, we are told, without unaccountable loss, a shift of attention from itself to any purely conceptual translation. Its spectator's gaze is necessarily intransferable: "the transition from the Idea to the Conception," Schopenhauer says, "is always a fall" (p.307). When he comes specifically to discuss the type of poetry which will present an Idea, Schopenhauer is acutely conscious of the peculiar problem inherent in the fact that it must necessarily be built out of words. It cannot be easy, he acknowledges, for the poet to render perceivable a living Idea through an arrangement of what are the representatives of dead, abstract concepts. The only way in which he might achieve this, he argues, is through an effort directly contrary to the type which we have seen was to preoccupy poets like Sully Prudhomme: an effort not to clarify, but to obscure, or confuse, the abstract significance of the

poem's individual, constituent parts. By arranging the words "in such a way that none of them can remain in its abstract universality," the poet will be able to cause the Idea to appear as if through a chemical process:

> As the chemist obtains solid precipitates by combining perfectly clear and transparent fluids; the poet understands how to precipitate, as it were, the concrete, the individual, the perceptible idea [sic], out of the abstract and transparent universality of the concepts by the manner in which he combines them. (pp.313-4)

In Schopenhauer, then, we find the outline of an aesthetic quite contrary to the positivist and Parnassian one. The world of appearances to which the Parnassian is dedicated is for Schopenhauer but a veil, masking a higher reality. The sort of analytical thinking with which the Parnassian begins, moreover, is renounced by Schopenhauer's poet, in an effort to come to know that higher reality. The ideal poem, finally, in Schopenhauer's view, is built not to lead its reader to some clear understanding, but rather, through mystifying him, to make him, too, apprehend directly the will's best representative, the Idea. These broad features of Schopenhauer's account of art were, as we shall see, to re-emerge repeatedly in Symbolist theory. They were also to appear, with some variation, in the writings of Carlyle.

b) <u>Carlyle</u>.

The account of reality, and of art, found in

Carlyle's Sartor Resartus(1833-4),[70] although analogous in the main to that of Schopenhauer, differs from it in certain details. It fails to explain certain things which Schopenhauer's does, and is fuller in its explanation of others. Its greatest asset, undoubtedly, is its colourful, highly metaphorical style, which lends the idealist aesthetic theory great imaginative appeal.

Carlyle describes the world of appearances as a "Phantasmagoria," or "Dream-grotto" (p.37), as the "Canvas ...whereon all our Dreams and Life-visions are painted" (p.38). Deepest of all illusory appearances, he says, are the "two grand fundamental world-enveloping Appearances, SPACE and TIME" (p.176). But if the sensory panorama is in some sense a projection of the mind, it is also for Carlyle, as for Schopenhauer, the manifestation of an objective world beyond itself. This world beyond is in Carlyle's case inhabited, not by random will, but by a deity: the dream-painted "Canvas" is also "the living visible Garment of God..." (p.38).

Carlyle's discussion of the relation between the phenomenal world and God is significant because it contains a definition of "Symbol" which was the same as that to be adopted by the French Symbolists. He calls the phenomenal universe a "vast Symbol" because it is the means by which a spaceless and timeless, an "Infinite" entity, makes itself attainable to man:

[70] Sartor Resartus first appeared in serial form in Fraser's Magazine, from November 1833 to August 1834. It was first published in book form in America in 1836. All references will be to the edition cited in my Introduction, p.34, and will be incorporated in parentheses into the text.

subject and object effectively become one (p.98).

Like Schopenhauer, Carlyle represents the artist as a man particularly suited to the apprehension of the transcendental realm, and sees the work of art as a vehicle for bodying forth what he has discovered there. It is the function of the artist's "Imagination," he says, to "weave Garments, visible Bodies, wherein the else invisible creations and inspirations of our Reason are, like Spirits, revealed, and first become all-powerful..." (p.50). The true work of art, as opposed to the "Daub of Artifice," is always, in his view, an "intrinsic" symbol: in it one can discern "Eternity looking through Time; the Godlike rendered visible" (p.152). Although the fact that Carlyle identifies the work of art as an "intrinsic" symbol suggests that he did not conceive it to be a sensible form arbitrarily constructed for the expression of some previously determined, consciously formulated, conception, he says very little in Sartor Resartus about the actual process of construction. That he shared Schopenhauer's views on the matter, however, and understood the creative process to be one of discovery rather than of mere translation, is made absolutely clear in a slightly earlier essay called "Characteristics"(1831). This essay is dedicated to diminishing those of men's achievements accomplished "with Consciousness and by Forethought,"[76] and to exalting those which ensue from

[76] Carlyle, "Characteristics," in Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, vol.II, p.195. Subsequent references to this essay, in this paragraph, are contained within parentheses in the text.

"paradisiac Unconsciousness" (p.194). Throughout it Carlyle repeatedly depicts the world's conscious thinkers, or logicians, its "System-makers and builders of logical card-castles" (p.197), as men diseased, and its inspired, or unconscious thinkers, like "the Poet or Priest" (p.205), as the only men who are truly healthy. He asserts categorically, moreover, that "Unconsciousness is the sign of creation," while "Consciousness, at best, /is/ that of Manufacture" (p.205): the source of the true work of art is never the kind of conscious thought which occupies the surface of the mind, but a kind of thought which springs from a deeper, and divinely connected self. Carlyle's account of the two kinds of thought, the superficial which is the mark of the logician, and the fundamental which is the well-spring of the poet, is worth quoting in full, for we shall see its precise, if demystified analogue in the work of Bergson:

> Of our Thinking, we might say, it is but the mere surface that we shape into articulate Thoughts; - underneath the region of argument and endless discourse, lies the region of meditation; here, in its quiet mysterious depths, dwells what vital force is in us; here, if aught is to be created, and not merely manufactured and communicated, must the work go on. Manufacture is intelligible, but trivial; Creation is great, and cannot be understood. Thus if the Debator and Demonstrator, whom we may rank as the lowest of true thinkers, knows what he has done, and how he did it, the Artist, whom we rank as the highest, knows not; must speak of Inspiration, and in one or the other dialect, calls his work the gift of a divinity. (p.196)

Carlyle's understanding of the creative activity, then, was like Schopenhauer's in involving the apprehension

of a transcendental spirit, and an unpremeditated process of construction. But what did he have to say about the nature of the "Garments" with which the poet makes "the else invisible creations and inspirations of our Reason" perceptible? When the narrator in Sartor Resartus describes the philosophical writing of the hero Teufelsdröck, thus voicing Carlyle's own ideal, and indeed aptly describing the style of Sartor Resartus itself, he observes that "of true logical method and sequence there is...little" (p.24). In contrast to the work of the "System-makers," which presents "Words well bedded ...in good Logic-mortar" (p.37), the work of the unconscious "Poet or Priest" offers an illuminating series of "Metaphors" (p.50).[77] Thus, in Sartor Resartus, we are given access to Carlyle's insights not through the medium of rational argument, but through the repetition in many contexts of the metaphor of clothes: we read of clothes which express the soul of the person wearing them (p.25), of clothes as phenomena covering eternity (p.38), of clothes as words covering thought (p.50). With Carlyle's book, as with Schopenhauer's ideal poem, and, as we shall see, with the poetry of Symbolism, we are offered an insight into something without any appeal being made to

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our sense of logic. Like the Poet/Priest confronting the garment of God, we are required to suspend our analytical powers: "By degrees, the eye grows accustomed to its new Whereabout" (p.182), and the significance of the metaphors, the symbols, is intuited.

v. Symbolism.

An effort to establish the basic, idealist principles of the Symbolist aesthetic is best rewarded, as Charles Chadwick has suggested,[78] by focusing not on the work of the lesser lights of the Symbolist movement, officially called, but rather on the earlier and greater writers whom Moréas and his associates revered. The major features of the aesthetics laid down by Schopenhauer and Carlyle were mirrored in the work of Baudelaire, whom Moréas extolled as the forefather of the movement.[79] Rimbaud, by defining for the poet a contact with a higher reality through the observation of the contents of his unconscious mind, and by initiating the formal revolution of vers libre, became a model for younger writers like Laforgue and Barrès. Mallarmé

[78] See Charles Chadwick, Symbolism (London: Methuen, 1971), p.5.

[79] See Jean Moréas, "Le Symbolisme," from Le Figaro (18 September 1886), cited by Guy Michaud, in Message poétique du symbolisme, p.725. Michaud, like Robert Gibson in Modern French Poets on Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), presents selections from a number of valuable Symbolist documents. Where these documents are not readily available, I have referred to them in these texts.

was the theorist who did the most to define a poetic technique which would fulfill idealist aspirations, and the writer whom the majority of the young Symbolists sought to emulate. It is to his work, accordingly, that the greatest part of my study will be devoted.

a) Baudelaire.

Charles Baudelaire presented an aesthetic theory which contained all of the basic elements of that proposed by the idealist philosophers. His affinity with them was apparent, first of all, in his expressions of disapproval for philosophical art, art used as a vehicle for the expression of "des pensées ou des idées tirées d'un monde étranger à l'art, des idées scientifiques, des idées politiques, etc...."[80] He saw no point in using verse merely to repeat "les lois connues": "c'est se réduire aux devoirs de la science et empiéter sur ses fonctions, et c'est embarrasser son langage traditionnel de l'ornement superflu...."[81] "Plus l'art voudra être philosophiquement clair," he asserted categorically, "plus il se dégradera."[82] By far the strongest anti-positivist theme in his work, however, even greater than his objection to a poetry of ideas, was his rejection of an art dedicated

[80] Baudelaire, "Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains: Auguste Barbier," in Oeuvres complètes, vol.II, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p.143. All further references to Baudelaire's work will be to this, or the first volume, and indicated by OC.I, or OC.II, accordingly.

[81] "Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains: Victor Hugo," in OC.II, p.139.

[82] "L'Art philosophique," in OC.II, p.599.

to the mere description, or imitation, of the world of appearances. It was his conviction, as it had been Schopenhauer's and Carlyle's, that the artist's vocation was to achieve contact with a higher reality "beyond" the realm acknowledged by the positivists, and to construct a work of art which would function as a kind of lamp, through which the light of Eternity would shine.

Baudelaire's own aspiration to achieve contact with a supernatural realm stemmed directly from a desire to escape from what he felt to be the unbearable conditions of earthly existence, and the evil inherent in mankind. The human state was to him a fallen state; his overriding sense was one of exile from a lost paradise, and his foremost desire one for "un retour vers l'Éden perdu."[83] In Les Fleurs du Mal(1861) his longing for regaining contact with a supernatural realm manifested itself in part in an obsession with death. Extinction seemed to him a welcoming prospect: "le portique ouvert sur les Cieux inconnus."[84] Another gateway, in his view, to the lost paradise, was the state of intoxication achievable through experimentation with drugs and alcohol; and it is in his record of his experiments with these stimulants, Les Paradis artificiels(1860) that we find descriptions of experiences very much like those given by Schopenhauer and Carlyle. Relating his experiences with hasheesh, for example, he described a kind of moment in which

[83] "Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains: Theodore de Banville," in OC.II, p.165.

[84] "La Mort des pauvres," in OC.I, p.127.

the self seems one with the objects it contemplates:

> Il arrive quelquefois que la personnalité disparait et que l'objetivité, qui est le propre des poètes panthéistes, se développe en vous si anormalement, que la contemplation des objets extérieurs vous fait oublier votre propre existence, et que vous vous confondez bientôt avec eux. Votre oeil se fixe sur un arbre harmonieux courbé par le vent; dans quelques secondes, ce qui ne serait dans le cerveau d'un poète qu'une comparaison fort naturelle deviendra dans le vôtre une réalité. Vous prêtez d'abord à l'arbre vos passions, votre désir ou votre mélancolie; ses gémissements et ses oscillations deviennent les vôtres, et bientôt vous êtes l'arbre.[85]

Like Edgar Allen Poe, moreover, whom he revered, Baudelaire recognized in drug experience certain moments when the visible world seemed to deepen, to open up and reveal a supernatural realm:

> Sans avoir recours à l'opium, qui n'a connu ces admirables heures, véritables fêtes du cerveau, ou les sens plus attentifs perçoivent des sensations plus retentissantes, ou le ciel d'un azur plus transparent s'enforce comme un abîme plus infini, ou les sens tintent musicalement, ou les couleurs parlent, ou les parfums racontent des mondes d'idées?[86]

If Baudelaire recalls Schopenhauer in his reference to an access gained to a "monde d'idées," his likeness to Carlyle is confirmed by his description of the phenomenal world, in such moments, as a "symbole":

> Dans certains états de l'âme presque surnaturels, la profondeur de la vie se révèle

[85] Les Paradis artificiels, in OC.I, p.419.

[86] "Exposition universelle(1885)," in OC.II, p.596. My italics.

> tout entière dans le spectacle, si ordinaire qu'il soit, qu'on a sous les yeux. Il en devient le symbole.[87]

Like Carlyle, Baudelaire regarded every material appearance as a potential symbol, its power to reveal eternity dependent entirely on the state of the man who contemplates it: "tout est hiéroglyphique, et nous savons que les symboles ne sont obscurs que d'une manière relative, c'est-à-dire selon la pureté, la bonne volonté ou la clairvoyance native des âmes."[88]

The supernatural realm described by Baudelaire, however, differed from those we have seen so far in being modelled upon the spiritual world defined by the Swedish philosopher Swedenborg (1688-1772). It had been Swedenborg's contention that for every phenomenon of sense there is a specially related entity in the world of spirit, that "There is a Correspondence of Heaven with all things of Earth."[89] Baudelaire summarized the Swedenborgian metaphysic in an article on Victor Hugo:

> D'ailleurs Swedenborg...nous avait déjà enseigne ...que tout, forme, mouvement, nombre, couleur, parfum, dans le spirituel comme dans le naturel, est significatif, réciproque, converse, correspondant.[90]

[87] "Fusées," in OC.I, p.659.

[88] "Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains: Victor Hugo," in OC.II, p.133.

[89] Swedenborg is quoted by P. Mansell Jones, The Background of Modern French Poetry: Essays and Interviews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), p.24. The meaning of the term "correspondence" is given by Swedenborg in a short manuscript written in 1741 and entitled Clavis Hieroglyphica, published in London in 1784 as A Hieroglyphic Key.

[90] OC.II, p.133. See also "Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe," in OC.II, p.334.

He described the experience of glimpsing the spiritual "Correspondances" in a poem by the same name:

> La nature est un table où de vivants piliers
> Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
> L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
> Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.[91]

As well as asserting the mysterious correspondences between the spiritual realm and the sensible world, Swedenborg asserted also "a correspondence of all things in Heaven with all things in Man."[92] Baudelaire endorsed this second set of relations, too, asserting in the Hugo article that "le ciel est un très grand homme."[93] In addition to asserting these vertical correspondences between the spiritual world and the phenomenal and human ones, moreover, both Swedenborg and Baudelaire held that certain sensual phenomena exist in a special, horizontal relationship with each other. They believed, that is, that the entity to which any individual sentiment, or sound, or colour, or perfume corresponds corresponds also to a single phenomenon within each of the other categories of sentiment or sense, and that by virtue of being "'engendrées par un même rayon de lumière'"[94] certain sentiments, and sounds, and colours are "analogous" to each other:

> Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
> Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,

[91] OC.I, p.11.

[92] Quoted by Jones, p.24.

[93] OC.I, p.137.

[94] Baudelaire quotes Hoffmann, in Salon de 1846, in OC.II, p.425.

> Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
> Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.[95]

It became a concern for Baudelaire, and for many of his contemporaries and successors, to make records of what they believed were analogical sensations.[96] The association of sensations of one kind with those of another became known as the process of "synaesthesia."

Baudelaire's belief in the Swedenborgian metaphysic had a direct influence upon his views about the ideal accomplishment of the poet. For he held it to be the special power of the "faculté quasi divine" called "Imagination," to perceive "tout d'abord, en dehors des méthodes philosophiques, les rapports intimes et secrets des choses, les correspondances et les analogies,"[97] and he believed it the poet's duty to create a poetry which would bring its reader into immediate contact with "les splendeurs situées derrière le tombeau...."[98] The poet fulfilled his function, thus, when he built a poetry which juxtaposed, often in the form of similes or metaphors, images of things related by divine ordination. He enlightened his reader about the world of spirit, in effect, by being a scientist of the supernatural, recording with accuracy what he had apprehended in an objective network of relations:

[95] "Correspondances," in OC.I, p.11. Cf. also Les Paradis artificiels, in OC.I, p.392.

[96] See A. G. Lehmann, The Symbolist Aesthetic in France 1885-1895 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), pp.207-8.

[97] "Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe," in OC.II, p.329.

[98] "Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe," p.334.

> Chez les excellents poètes, il n'y a pas de métaphore, de comparaison ou d'épithète qui ne soit d'une adaptation mathématiquement exacte dans la circonstance actuelle parce que ces comparaisons, ces métaphores et ces épithètes sont puisées dans l'inépuisable fond de l'universelle analogie, et qu'elles ne peuvent etre puisées ailleurs.[99]

In his effort to render the mystical relations perceptible, Baudelaire emphasized, the poet must renounce the aim of the "positiviste," the aim to record the world of appearances "'telles qu'elles sont, ou bien qu'elles seraient, en supposant que je n'existe pas.'"[100] He must regard this world, instead, as "'un dictionnaire,'"[101] or "un magasin d'images,"[102] which, by the power of his imagination, he will digest and transform. Like Schopenhauer,[103] and of course like Coleridge,[104] Baudelaire saw the imagination as a power which both perceives and assimilates, both analyses and synthesizes.[105] He shared, moreover, Coleridge's view that the poet, gifted with that "quasi divine" faculty, is possessed of a power analogous to "'that sublime power by which the Creator projects, creates,

[99] "Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains: Victor Hugo," in OC.II, p.133.

[100] Salon de 1859, in OC.II, p.627.

[101] See Salon de 1859, pp.624-5.

[102] Salon de 1859, p.627.

[103] See The World as Will and Idea, I, p.304, where Schopenhauer likens the artist of Idea to "the organised, assimilating, transforming and reproducing body."

[104] See Coleridge's description of the "secondary imagination, which "dissolves, diffuses /and/ dissipates, in order to re-create. Biographia Literaria (London: Dent, 1965), p.167. See also p.177.

[105] See Salon de 1859, p.620.

and upholds his universe.'"[106] He saw his accomplishment as one of the creation of a new world, free of the laws governing the material one, and subject only to the laws of the imagination:

> /L'imagination/ décompose toute la création, et, avec les matériaux amassés et disposés suivant des règles dont on ne peut trouver l'origine que dans le plus profond de l'âme, elle crée un monde nouveau, elle produit la sensation du neuf. Comme elle a créé le monde (on peut bien dire cela, je crois, même dans un sens religieux), il est juste qu'elle le gouverne.[107]

Baudelaire's own poetry, replete with images drawn from every category of sense, suitably reflects his aspirations for the ideal poet. In juxtaposing the various sense-images, and in presenting metaphors which link the physical and spiritual qualities of men with images drawn from nature, it could indeed be conceived as exposing the unity of the

[106] Baudelaire quotes Catherine Crowes's The Night Side of Nature (1848), in Salon de 1859, p.624. Cf. Coleridge in a letter to Richard Sharp, 15 January, 1804, in Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, vol.II, ed. E. L. Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p.1034:

> ...I dare affirm that he /William Wordsworth/ will hereafter be admitted as the first & greatest philosophical Poet - the only man who has effected a compleat and constant synthesis of Thought & Feeling and combined them with Poetic Forms, with the music of pleasurable passion and with Imagination or the modifying power in that highest sense of the word, in which I have ventured to oppose it to Fancy, or the aggregating power - in that sense in which it is a dim Analogue of Creation, not all that we can believe but all that we can conceive of creation.

Coleridge also, of course, implied that the experience of perception is an analogue of the divine process of creation, in the passage concerning the "primary" imagination. See Biographia Literaria, p.167.

[107] Salon de 1859, p.621. My italics. For an historical overview of remarks about the poet as Creator, and of the poem

Swedenborgian universe. A number of poems manifest what Baudelaire celebrates as the "métamorphose mystique / De tous mes sens fondus en un!"[108] In "Parfum exotique," "le parfum des verts tamariniers...Se mêle dans mon âme au chant des mariniers";[109] in "La Vie antérieure" the colours of sunset mingle with the music of pounding waves;[110] in "Harmonie du soir" the same colours blend with the aroma of flowers, and with the sound of a viol.[111] A number of other works serve to illustrate the principle that "le ciel est un très grand homme." In "L'Invitation au voyage," for example, the eyes of a woman shine like suns, and the tears which fill them fall like storms of rain: the woman is a being of steadiness and warmth, veiled by infidelity and caprice.[112] A similar combination of sun and rain is linked with a woman in "Ciel brouillé,"[113] where the changing skies reflect her indifference to her lover; the sense of such indifference is conveyed equally effectively in another poem, where her soul is likened

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as a universe subject to its own laws, see M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp.272-285.

[108] "Tout entière," in OC.I, p.42. See also "Les Bijoux," p.158.

[109] OC.I, p.26.

[110] OC.I, pp.17-18.

[111] OC.I, p.47. See also "Obsession," p.75.

[112] OC.I, pp.53-4.

[113] OC.I, pp.49-50.

to a vast desert.[114] Other poems which fuse the character of woman with natural images include "A celle qui est trop gaie,"[115] "Tristesses de la lune,"[116] and another "Invitation au voyage."[117] In "Obsession,"[118] and "L'Homme et la mer,"[119] Baudelaire uses the affinity between man and the sea to suggest the mystery, the sorrow, and the violence of his experience. It is a notable feature of many of these poems, moreover, that the juxtaposed images serve to suggest facts of experience without the accompaniment of abstract statements re-stating them clearly in abstract terms. It was in this feature that Baudelaire's poetry best anticipated the work of the Symbolists proper, whose guiding principle was to be never to explain, but always to suggest directly.

b) Rimbaud

Although the young Arthur Rimbaud had great admiration for Baudelaire, extolling him as "le premier voyant, roi des poètes, un vrai Dieu,"[120] the particular concerns which dominated his, sadly few, remarks on the creative activity

[114] "Avec ses vêtements ondoyantes et nacres," in OC.I, p.29.

[115] OC.I, p.156.

[116] OC.I, pp.65-6.

[117] OC.I, pp.301-3.

[118] OC.I, p.75.

[119] OC.I, p.19.

[120] Letter to Paul Demeny, 15 May 1871, in Oeuvres complètes, ed. Rolland de Rénéville and Jules Mouquet (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), p.257. Subsequent references to Rimbaud's work will be to this edition, and indicated by the abbreviation OC.

were such as to set him quite apart from the older writer. He distinguished himself, first of all, by emphasizing quite a different route to the "beyond" for the poet from that of the contemplation of external images, recommending instead that he turn inward, to gaze at his own soul. He surpassed Baudelaire, secondly, in expressing quite revolutionary ideas about form. Where Baudelaire had in the main accepted the classical conventions of the Parnasse, Rimbaud was the first French writer to advocate that the metrical form of a poem be a matter not predetermined, but discovered in the poem's making.

Rimbaud's poetic career was short-lived, and his remarks on the craft of poetry are in short supply. For his views on aesthetic matters we rely on a few letters written in 1871, and on some retrospective comments, penned in disillusionment, in Une Saison en enfer(1873). It is in his most renowned letter, written to Paul Demeny on 15 May 1871, that he identifies most clearly the realm to be explored by the poet. This territory, although of a higher order than the world of appearances, is not something which he believes the poet to apprehend through external nature, but instead through his own self: a dynamic, transcendental principle reminiscent of Schopenhauer's will, and anticipating what was to become widely known as the "Unconscious."[121] Rimbaud wrote

[121] Theories of the Unconscious as a metaphysical principle were being discussed in Germany at the time of Rimbaud's formulation of his poetic theory, but there is no evidence of his having read these. Note Edouard von Hartmann's Die Philosophie des Unwussten(1869), which was published in French as La Philosophie de l'Inconscient(1877). Later Symbolists

to Demeny of his sense of possessing two selves: a conscious one, and another, which he observes but does not control:

> ...JE est un autre. Si le cuivre s'éveille clairon, il n'y a rien de sa faute. Cela m'est évident: j'assiste à l'éclosion de ma pensée: la symphonie fait son remuement dans les profondeurs, ou vient d'un bond sur la scène.

It seems to him, he goes on to say, to be the duty of the poet to watch over this independent soul, to test it and to study its sensible contents. It is his duty, too, to cultivate it, to make it into a kind of "monster," by indulging in all manner of sensual depravity:

> ...il s'agit de faire l'âme monstrueuse.... Imaginez un homme s'implantant et se cultivant des verrues sur le visage...
>
> Le Poete se fait voyant par un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens. Toutes les formes d'amour, de souffrance, de folie; il cherche lui-même, il épuise en lui tous les poisons, pour n'en garder que les quintessences. Ineffable torture ou il a besoin de toute la foi, de toute la force surhumaine, ou il devient entre tous le grand malade, le grand criminel, le grand maudit, - et le suprême Savant! - Car il arrive a l'inconnu![122]

Rimbaud himself pursued this programme, indulging in drugs and drink and debauchery. In doing so he did indeed cultivate some bizarre new images, hallucinations which later he was to recognize as reflections of nothing more than his miserable self.[123] But at the time of his letter, as he later noted

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who dedicated their art explicitly to the revelation of the Unconscious included Jules Laforgue and Maurice Barrès.

[122] Letter to Demeny, 15 May 1871, in OC, p.254.

[123] See "Adieu," in Une Saison en enfer, in OC, pp.228-230.

in Saison en enfer, he found "sacre le désordre de /son/ esprit,"[124] regarded his visions as manifestations of a mysterious and objective reality. He did not consider the poetry in which these visions were to be recorded as a merely personal record,[125] but the record of something which the poet, as "mage ou ange,"[126] will have brought back "de là-bas."[127]

Looking back on his definition of a poetic ideal, in Saison en enfer, Rimbaud noted that his next step, after cultivating his soul, was to seek to translate his magical sophistries "avec l'hallucination des mots."[128] His collective remarks on how the poetic language was to function are few, and cryptic, but they are sufficient to make it clear that he had in mind something approaching the view of language which we shall see more fully developed in Mallarmé. He was working out a view, that is, quite contrary to the desire expressed by Flaubert for a language "précis comme le langage des sciences...." All his comments point to a use of words which will exploit what might be called their "intrinsic" properties, rather than one which will communicate merely through the "extrinsic" concepts or thoughts for which they might stand. It is the use of words for the purpose of creating a kind of spell: a state of recognizing some significance which,

[124] "Délires.II. Alchimie du verbe," in OC, p.220.

[125] See the letter to Georges Izambard, 13 May 1871, in OC, p.252.

[126] "Adieu," in OC, p.229.

[127] Letter to Demeny, 15 May 1871, in OC, p.255.

[128] "Delires.II. Alchimie du verbe," in OC, p.220.

as in the state described by Schopenhauer, will be unaccountably diminished when the immediate experience of the words is broken. In the letter to Demeny, first of all, he expresses impatience with the attitude towards language shown by the makers of dictionaries. Words are to be regarded, he implies, not as mere vehicles for stipulated definitions, but as entities possessed of intrinsic power: he dreams of a language which will be universally accessible, which will not be incomprehensible, as languages have been, to readers who possess different sets of words and stipulated meanings. This "langage universel," he goes on to say, will be a language "de l'âme pour l'âme":[129] notably not one of intellect for intellect. One of the best testaments to Rimbaud's view of an intrinsically powerful language is the famous sonnet entitled "Voyelles," where his subject is the inherent power of the very particles of which words are made. In the Swedenborgian manner, he presents each of the vowels in company with accounts of what he holds to be its analogous perfume, sound, colour and tactile quality; each is, by implication, a kind of Baudelairian symbol, a gateway to some spiritual entity which connects it mysteriously with phenomena in every other category of sense. Whatever spiritual authority Rimbaud might have cited for the particular sensations he chose to connect with each vowel, he seems clearly to have been inspired by the visual impact of each vowel as it is written: the "A" is linked with a black belt, the "U" with the wave-like motion

[129] Letter to Demeny, 15 May 1871, in OC, p.255.

of the sea, the "O" with the light of a divine eye.[130] His general interest in the intrinsic power of individual letters was most likely inspired, as Enid Starkie has noted,[131] by his extensive readings in occult philosophy. In the Cabbala, for example, it is said that specific meanings are, by divine ordination, conveyed by each of the twenty letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Rimbaud imagined a poetic language which would be "accessible...à tous les sens."[132] However unpromising his dream of evoking in a reader the analogical sensations of his letters, he made an inescapable appeal to his readers' senses by concentrating in his poetry a great number of images. Most representative of the principle he laid down in the letter to Demeny are poems like "Mémoire" and "Le Bateau ivre," where he presents, as if floating in a current or passing on a shore, as he drifts along in a boat, kaleidoscopic series of visual, olfactory, and audial images. Although, as a number of Rimbaud's commentators have observed,[133] these poems show some mark of a concern for their overall structure, for long stretches the images appear to fall at random one after the other, displacing each other by virtue of their strange variety:

[130] See "Voyelles," in OC, p.103. See also "Délires.II. Alchimie du verbe," p.219. For the concern with the visual appearance of letters and words compare Mallarmé's experiment in "Un Coup de des," Fenollosa's fascination with Chinese calligraphy, and Pound's use of letters in "A Game of Chess," all discussed later in this thesis.

[131] See Enid Starkie, Arthur Rimbaud (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p.101.

[132] "Délires.II. Alchimie du verbe," in OC, p.219.

[133] See for example Charles Chadwick, in Rimbaud (London:

J'ai vu fermenter les marais énormes, nasses
Ou pourrit dans les joncs tout un Léviathan!
Des écroulements d'eaux au milieu des bonaces,
Et les lointains vers les gouffres cataractant!

Glaciers, soleils d'argent, flots nacreux, cieux
de braises!
Échouages hideux au fond des golfes bruns
Où les serpents géants dévores des punaises
Choient, des arbres tordus, avec de noirs parfums![134]

Many of the prose poems in Les Illuminations, such as "Après le déluge," "Enfance " and "Ornières,"[135] also present series of images which bear no apparent relation to each other. Each of their images unseats its precursor, with the effect often of suggesting some bizarre transformation. Rimbaud reinforces the impression of disorder by suppressing the kind of logical markers which were so important to poets like Sully Prudhomme, and in some of the Illuminations, like "Veillées" and "Métropolitain,"[136] seems deliberately to confuse the syntax. Unlike the Parnassians, in sum, Rimbaud clearly does not present his images as the sensory evidence in a logical exposition of any theory, scientific or otherwise. His images are to be taken, in most cases, as nothing more than the images which have mysteriously appeared in the "autre" self of which he wrote to Demeny.

Rimbaud rebelled against the Parnassian aesthetic, then, in his views about the function of poetic language and

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Athlone Press, 1979), pp.28-9, C. A. Hackett, in Rimbaud: A Critical Introduction (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), and A. G. Lehmann, in The Symbolist Aesthetic in France, p.93.

[134] "Bateau ivre," in OC, pp.101-2.

[135] See OC, pp.167-8, 168-70, and 180-1.

[136] See OC, pp.184-5 and 189-90.

the structural role fulfilled by poetic images. He rebelled against it, too, in a way which Baudelaire did not: in his attitude towards formal conventions. In the same breath in which he praised Baudelaire as "le premier voyant," he criticized him for what he saw as his trivial use of form.[137] Lamartine seemed to him similarly praiseworthy and culpable, as "quelquefois voyant, mais étranglé par la forme vieille."[138] Rimbaud told Demeny that the poet who apprehends hitherto unknown truths about the universe should seek to express these in forms which are just as recently discovered: "Les inventions d'inconnu réclament des formes nouvelles."[139] The visions which flow through the poet's mind, he asserted, should not be cut up and squeezed into classical forms, but rather recorded in the rhythms in which they come to him: "si ce qu'il rapporte de là-bas a forme, il donne forme; si c'est informe, il donne informe."[140] In Une Saison en enfer, Rimbaud asserted that the language of poetry ought to be marked by "des rythmes instinctifs";[141] thus indicating clearly that he was reaching towards a theory of vers libre.[142] A number of his poems

[137] Letter to Demeny, 15 May 1871, in OC, p.257.

[138] Letter to Demeny, 15 May 1871, p.256. My italics.

[139] Letter to Demeny, 15 May 1871, p.257.

[140] Letter to Demeny, 15 May 1871, p.255.

[141] "Délires.II. Alchimie du verbe," in OC, p.219.

[142] See most of the poems of 1872, for example "Fêtes de la faim," in OC, p.137, "L'Éternité," pp.132-3, and "Âge d'or," pp.133-4. Also note "Marine" and "Mouvement," from the Illuminations, in OC, pp.188 and 193-4. A succinct summary of the ways in which Rimbaud deliberately violated classical requirements is found in Hackett, pp.45-7.

were to anticipate those of the vers libristes in their irregularity of stanza form and line length, and in their use of assonance in preference to strict rhyme. The revolutionary quality of his innovations is evident when we recall that the year in which he was experimenting (1872) was the year of the publication of Banville's Petit traité de poésie francaise.

c) Mallarmé

The theories of art of each of Schopenhauer, Carlyle, Baudelaire and Rimbaud share a common axis, in implying a direct connection between a transcendental or mystical vision and the work of art. Schopenhauer's artist apprehends an Idea, and his poem embodies and conveys that Idea. Carlyle's artist apprehends God, and through his work the Godlike is rendered visible. In Baudelaire's account the poet glimpses the analogical structure of the universe, and his poem exposes that structure in its association of sensory images, and in its richness of metaphor. Rimbaud sees the poet as a "voyant," witnessing the flowing of mysterious images through his soul; Rimbaud's own poems seem to mirror that succession, in their alogical series of images.

All of these writers were reaching towards an ideal which is more fully developed in the theoretical and imaginative writings of Mallarmé. As A. G. Lehmann has noted,[143] Mallarmé stood above all writers of his generation for the strength of the connection he established between the transcendental experience of the poet and the act of formal creation. He

[143] Lehmann, p.167.

was remarkable, that is, for devising new poetic techniques in direct service to the cause of making the poem a window onto the transcendental realm, a lamp through which the light of Eternity would shine.

Like Baudelaire and Rimbaud, Mallarmé's ultimate vision of the poet was one of "L'homme chargé de voir divinement...."[144] His progress towards this position may be traced from certain poems written in the 1860s, poems pervaded by the same attitude which we have seen to mark Les Fleurs du mal. In these verses, Mallarmé expresses his weariness with the dreary and barren quality of earthly life, and speaks of being haunted by thoughts of a world beyond it. These thoughts come again and again to him, evoked by the relentless "Azur" of the sky.[145] But unlike Baudelaire, whose desire for escape from the material condition was unwavering, Mallarmé is confused, is at once fearful of the beyond and desirous of embracing it. He presents this uncertainty most strikingly in the poem "Les Fenêtres," where he likens himself to a patient in a dreary hospital, "pris du dégoût de l'homme à l'âme dure...." He speaks of standing, appropriately when we recall Carlyle, before a window-pane, on the other side of which is a world of timeless Beauty:

[144] Mallarmé, Variations sur un sujet, in Oeuvres complètes, ed. Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p.378. All further references to Mallarmé's works will be to this edition, and indicated by the abbreviation OC. All further references to this particular work will be indicated by Variations.

[145] See both "L'Azur" and "Renouveau," in OC, pp.37-8 and 34. See also "Hérodiade," p.48.

> Je fuis et je m'accroche à toutes les croisées
> D'où l'on tourne l'épaule à la vie, et, béni,
> Dans leur verre, lave d'éternelles rosées,
> Que dore le matin chaste de l'Infini
>
> Je me mire et me vois ange! et je meurs, et j'aime
> - Que la vitre soit l'art, soit la mysticité -
> A renaître, portant mon rêve en diadème,
> Au ciel antérieur où fleurit la Beauté!

In the penultimate stanza he shrinks back from the window: "le vomissement impur de la Bêtise / Me force à me boucher le nez devant l'azur." But in the end he is drawn to a possibility reminiscent of that which Carlyle proposed in "Signs of the Times," the possibility of smashing the glass and recovering the heavenly country beyond:

> Est-il moyen, ô Moi qui connais l'amertume,
> D'enfoncer le cristal par le monstre insulté
> Et de m'enfuir, avec mes deux ailes sans plume
> - Au risque de tomber pendant l'éternité?[146]

"Les Fenêtres" was composed in May, 1863. In his letters of March 1866 to May 1867, Mallarmé writes of his efforts to deny the world of sense, and to commit himself to the world beyond it: a world whose precise nature he takes some time to define. He says, first of all, that the realm he contemplates is a realm devoid of a deity, that after a long struggle he has come to dismiss God as an invention of man.[147] In renouncing the world of sense, he tells his friend Cazalis, he has come face to face with utter Nothingness, "le Néant."[148] After some months, however, he writes again

[146] OC, p.33.

[147] See letter to Henri Cazalis, March 1866, cited by Michaud, Message poétique, p.172.

[148] Letter to Cazalis, March 1866, cited by Michaud, p.172.

to Cazalis to say that after finding Nothingness he has found "le Beau."[149] After some months again, in a letter to Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, he speaks of having come to understand "la corrélation intime de la Poésie avec l'Univers";[150] and finally, in May 1867, he describes as fully as he is ever to do the nature of the realm in whose presence poetry is born.

Writing to Cazalis, on 14 May, 1867, Mallarmé speaks of being in the presence of a universal Spirit which is ever developing itself and ever seeking to become conscious of itself. He, Mallarmé, having annihilated all that makes him a unique individual, has become identical with the Spirit, and the locus at which its aspirations are being realized:

> C'est t'apprendre que je suis maintenant impersonnel, et non plus Stéphane que tu as connu, - mais une aptitude qu'a l'Univers Spirituel à se voir et à se développer, à travers ce qui fût moi.

Mallarmé's description of the continually developing spirit, and of his own aspiration to become the medium in which "l'Univers retrouve...son identité,"[151] is to some degree reminiscent of Schopenhauer's account of the will. It was undoubtedly inspired, however, by the notion of the universal Geist, or Spirit, developed by another idealist philosopher: Hegel. As Edmond Schérer summarized, in an 1861 article on

[149] Letter to Cazalis, July 1866, cited by Michaud, p.176.

[150] Letter to Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, 24 September 1866, cited by Gibson, p.84.

[151] Letter to Cazalis, 14 May 1867, cited by Gibson, p.85.

Hegel which it is likely Mallarmé read,[152] Hegel's Spirit was a transcendental power in continual progression: "un acte, un changement sans repos, une transformation sans fin, le progrès constant d'une réalité qui consiste dans la transition même et dans le progrès."[153] Everything in the phenomenal world, Schérer noted, was for Hegel a manifestation of the Spirit, which is its "essence."[154] Because it is exclusive of nothing, the highest attainment which the Spirit can achieve is a complete consciousness of itself, and the locus for the process by which it moves towards this consciousness is the human mind. The movement towards self-realization, mirrored in Hegel's own dialectic, is a movement of affirmation through negation: a movement from the recognition of a thesis, to the recognition of an antithesis implied by the thesis, to the recognition of a synthesis which reconciles thesis and antithesis.[155] Mallarmé suggests to Cazalis that his future work will somehow reflect this dialectic, announcing that he sees it to be his task as a poet to create, "à l'heure de la Synthèse," a poetry which will be "l'image de ce développement."[156]

[152] Gibson points out that Mallarmé's limited knowledge of Hegel was probably derived from this article, "Hegel et l'Hégélianisme," in Revue des Deux Mondes, Vol.XXXI (15 February 1861), and from conversations with Lefebure and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. See Modern French Poets on Poetry, p.86.

[153] Scherer, "Hegel et l'Hégélianisme," p.831.

[154] See "Hegel et l'Hégélianisme," p.830.

[155] See "Hegel et l'Hégélianisme," p.834.

[156] Letter to Cazalis of 14 May 1867, cited by Gibson, p.85.

The spiritual realm which Mallarmé sought to convey through his poetry was not, however, modelled exclusively on the Hegelian Geist. It incorporated, too, the kind of network of mysterious relations which marked the spiritual realms defined by Swedenborg and Baudelaire. H. M. Block points out that the doctrine of correspondences was fundamental to medieval alchemy, and notes that Mallarmé developed an interest in alchemical writings in the summer of 1866.[157] In July 1866, Mallarmé wrote to his friend Aubanel of the system of relations which he intended to record in a prospective "Oeuvre." He likened these relations to the threads of a cloth of lace, and himself to a sacred spider, clinging to their point of intersection:

> J'ai voulu te dire simplement que je venais de jeter le plan de mon oeuvre entier, après avoir trouvé la clef de moi-même - clef de voûte, ou centre, si tu veux, pour ne pas nous brouiller de métaphores, - centre de moi-même, ou je me tiens comme une araignée sacrée, sur les principaux fils déjà sortis de mon esprit, et à l'aide desquels je tisserai aux points de rencontre de merveilleuses dentelles, que je devine, et qui existent déjà dans le sein de la Beauté....[158]

Mallarmé's writings on his art are full of references to the apprehension of "des relations entre tout,"[159] and to

[157] See H. M. Block, "Mallarmé the Alchemist," Australian Journal of French Studies, Vol.VI, no.2 (May 1969), p.165 and p.170. See also Jean-Pierre Richard, L'Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1961), p.327.

[158] Letter to Aubanel, 28 July 1866, cited by Michaud, p.179.

[159] Variations, in OC, p.378. See also Variations, p.368, "La Musique et les lettres," p.647, and "Réponses à des enquêtes: sur l'évolution littéraire," p.871.

the act of recording these analogies in poetry. He provides a haunting account of a creative process springing from the recognition of synaesthetic relations in a prose poem called "Le Démon de l'analogie."[160] That he held the function of poetry to be to manifest the mysterious network of relations is suggested, too, by his frequent association of references to creation, and images of spider's webs, or cloths of lace. One striking example of such an association is found in the Variations, where he identifies the black marks which a writer makes upon paper with the threads of lace which curb the Infinite:

> Tu remarquas, on n'écrit pas, lumineusement, sur champ obscur, l'alphabet des astres, seul, ainsi s'indique, ébauché ou interrompu; l'homme poursuit noir sur blanc.
>
> Ce pli de sombre dentelle, qui retient l'infini, tissé par mille, chacun selon le fil ou prolongement ignore son secret, assemble des entrelacs distants où dort un luxe a inventorier, stryge, noeud, feuillages et présenter.[161]

The network of relations emerges again in "Hérodiade,"[162] and in "Frisson d'hiver,"[163] where it appears under the guise of the spider's web. Perhaps its most significant appearance, however, is in the poem "Une dentelle s'abolit," where it is again a cloth of lace, but this time one which floats before a window-pane. When considered in conjunction with the much

[160] OC, pp.272-3.

[161] Variations, in OC, p.370.

[162] OC, p.42.

[163] OC, p.271.

earlier "Don du poème," the images in "Une dentelle s'abolit" suggest clearly that Mallarmé is speaking of the experience of giving birth to a poem. In the earlier poem he speaks of bringing forth a child "Par le verre brûlé d'aromates et d'or, / Par les carreaux glacés";[164] the poem, he implies, is something snatched from an eternal world which lies the other side of a window-pane. In "Une dentelle s'abolit" he again associates a window and a birth:

> Telle que vers quelque fenêtre
> Selon nul ventre que le sien,
> Filial on aurait pu naître.

But here he adds the image of a curtain of lace which "Enfui contre la vitre blême," and "Flotte plus qu'il n'ensevelit":[165] a cloth which both floats, to reveal the world beyond the pane, and falls, to hide this world with its threads. We are reminded of how the Swedenborgian analogies hide the world of spirit, insofar as their components are phenomena, and how they reveal it, by exposing the connections which it ordains. We are reminded, too, of Carlyle's "intrinsic" symbol, in which there is both "concealment and revelation." Subtly, beautifully, bringing together the images of window and lace which invariably signal his sense of a transcendental realm, Mallarmé hints once again at his desire that poetry be a vehicle for its mysterious secrets.

In his dedication to a poetry which would convey the mysteries of a non-phenomenal realm, Mallarmé was consciously rejecting the kind of positivist art typical of

[164] OC, p.40.

[165] OC, p.74.

the Parnasse. He spoke openly of the "Idéalisme" implicit in his work, and explicitly rejected the two principal features of Parnassian art: the dedication to "une pensée exacte," and the aim for direct, accurate depiction of "les matériaux naturels."[166] Like Schopenhauer and Baudelaire, Mallarmé spoke out openly against the kind of art which begins with the clear formulation of some abstract theme. He said emphatically to his friend Degas that "Ce n'est point avec des idées qu'on fait des sonnets...."[167] He envisioned the source of poetry, most importantly, as a spring from below the level of the conscious mind, a spring "antérieure à un concept":

> Le chant jaillit de source innée: antérieure à un concept, si purement que refléter, au dehors, mille rythmes d'images. Quel génie pour être un poète! quelle foudre d'instinct renfermer, simplement la vie, vierge, en sa synthèse et loin illuminant tout.[168]

An offense equal to the act of beginning composition with clear ideas, in Mallarmé's view, was the Parnassian habit of presenting "les objets directement," a practice by virtue of which "ils manquent de mystère...."[169] It was his belief, stemming from a fundamental conviction about the unreality of the world of appearances, that the poet's aim ought not to be to name any object directly, or to describe it clearly,

[166] Variations, in OC, p.365.

[167] Mallarmé is quoted by Henri Mondor, in Vie de Mallarmé (Paris: Gallimard, 1941), p.684.

[168] "Sur Poe," in OC, p.872.

[169] "Réponses à des enquêtes: sur l'évolution littéraire," in OC, p.869.

but rather to evoke "dans une ombre exprès, l'objet tu, par des mots allusifs, jamais directs...."[170] The poet ought not to aim to capture, he asserted, what Schopenhauer called the "accidental" properties of things, but rather their "essential" qualities, their "Ideas": he represented the poet's accomplishment, on a number of occasions, as the evocation of the Idea of a flower.[171] From a number of his remarks, moreover, it is apparent that he equated the invisible essences of objects to be conveyed with the kind of emotional effects the objects have on their beholder. In a letter to Cazalis in January, 1864, he made the recommendation "Peindre non la chose, mais l'effet qu'elle produit,"[172] and in the Variations he spoke about aspiring to convey "l'horreur de la forêt...non le bois / intrinsèque et dense des arbres."[173] His position

[170] Variations, in OC, p.400. My italics.

[171] See Variations, in OC, p.368:

> Je dis: une fleur! et, hors de l'oubli où ma voix relègue aucun contour, en tant que quelque chose d'autre que les calices sus, musicalement se lève, idée même et suave, l'absente de tous bouquets.

See also the gardens of ideal flowers mentioned in "Prose: pour des Esseintes," in OC, pp.55-7, and "Toast funèbre," in OC, p.207. The notion that words must be used to convey the Platonic Ideas is also suggested in a passage in Variations, where they are said to be "projetés, en parois de grotte...." See also Variations, p.400.

[172] Letter to Cazalis, 12 January 1864, cited by Michaud, p.165. My italics.

[173] Variations, in OC, pp.365-6. My italics. A. G. Lehmann, in a typically reductive statement, sees Mallarmé's references to the essences, or Ideas of poetic objects as merely a justification of an affective factor in art. See The Symbolist Aesthetic, p.65.

on the treatment of objects in poetry, and its essential divergence from the typical Parnassian practice, is neatly summarized in a passage where he describes precisely the technique of suggestion by which the poem itself may become a "symbole":

> Nommer un objet, c'est supprimer les trois-quarts de la jouissance du poème qui est faite de deviner peu à peu: le suggérer, voilà le rêve. C'est le parfait usage de ce mystère qui constitue le symbole: évoquer petit à petit un objet pour montrer un état d'âme, ou, inversement, choisir un objet et en dégager un état d'âme, par une série de déchiffrements.[174]

The two issues on which Mallarmé diverged from the Parnassians, the questions of the role of ideas in poetry, and of how natural objects ought to be presented there, are neatly drawn together in his most famous statement on the subject of poetic language. He identifies, in the Variations, two potential functions for language, the one clearly the kind exercised in Parnassian art, the other a contrary one, to which he aspires in his own:

> Un désir indéniable à mon temps est de séparer comme en vue d'attributions différentes le double état de la parole, brut ou immédiat ici, là essentiel.
>
> Narrer, enseigner, même décrire, cela va et encore qu'à chacun suffirait peut-être pour échanger la pensée humaine, de prendre ou de mettre dans la main d'autrui en silence une pièce de monnaie, l'emploi élémentaire du discours dessert l'universel reportage dont, la littérature exceptée, participe tout entre les genres d'écrits contemporains....
>
> Au contraire d'une fonction de numéraire facile et représentatif, comme le traite d'abord

[174] "Réponses à des enquêtes: sur l'evolution littéraire," in OC, p.869.

> la foule, le dire, avant tout, rêve et chant,[×]
> constitutive d'un art consacré aux fictions,
> sa virtualité.[175]
>
> × retrouve chez le Poëte par nécessité

The contrast Mallarmé wishes to establish is one between the use of language merely as an arbitrary currency, the representative of some significance extrinsic to itself, and the use of language for its immediate, essential properties. It is a contrast between what were to be called the "scientific," and the "emotive" uses of language:[176] uses which differ in the experiences they entail both for the writer and for the reader. Unlike the precise, scientific use of language which was the Parnassian ideal, in which the poet first formulates his ideas clearly, and then finds the appropriate images, and the exact terms, in which to express them, Mallarmé is proposing an alternative kind of experience: one in which the recognition of significance, and the act of working with language, are one. The poet's act of expression proceeds from an inner source "antérieure à un concept"; it is a "jet immédiat de l'Esprit";[177] it is also, not incidentally, the locus at which the Hegelian Spirit becomes conscious of itself. Where the reader is concerned, moreover, the difference is clearly the same one at which Schopenhauer hinted in his distinction between the art of concept and the art of Idea, or to which Carlyle was pointing when he asserted that art must not be an "extrinsic," but an "intrinsic" symbol. Saying

[175] Variations, in OC, p.368. My italics.

[176] See I. A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism, p.211, and the discussion in the Conclusion to this thesis.

[177] Mallarmé is quoted by Mondor, p.520.

that his poetry will not be the equivalent of the placing "dans la main d'autrui en silence une pièce de monnaie," rejecting the use of language as a "numéraire facile et représentatif," Mallarmé is rejecting the view that the reader will be able to exchange, or translate, the words he sees before him into abstract concepts, that having done so he will be able to dispose of the poem, remaining in full possession of what it means. It is his desire, by contrast, as it had been Schopenhauer's and Rimbaud's, that the words of a poem should baffle any such attempts to cash them in, that they should function instead as magical talismans, weaving an untranslatable spell. The reader must be made, he insists, not merely to understand things, but to feel profoundly what they are; in the presence not of an arbitrary currency, but of "signes purs,"[178] he is to come to know directly "un fait de nature en sa presque disparition vibratoire...."[179]

Mallarmé's identification of the two uses of language was without question his most important contribution as a theorist. His own desire for an expressive use of words, a use in which the determination of form and content, the acts of intellection and concretization, are one, was something to which he gave alternative expression in numerous passages where he depicted the dancer as the ideal artist. Dance, he noted, is the art ideally capable "Par son écriture sommaire, de traduire le fugace et le soudain jusqu'à

[178] Mallarmé is quoted by Mondor, p.520.

[179] Variations, in OC, p.368.

l'Idée."[180] Both Yeats and Hulme, as Kermode has pointed out,[181] were to share, with like intent, the idealization of the dancer. As far as our study of Hulme is to be concerned, however, the most significant of Mallarmé's points was undoubtedly his distinction between a language which worked by its intrinsic power, and one which functioned as an arbitrary substitute for ideas. What Rimbaud had been rejecting in disdaining the lexicographer's view of language, and Mallarmé in declining the use of language as currency, was a practice similar in principle to what Hulme was to attack when he spoke out against a language of "counters." Although, as we shall see, Hulme's distinction between a direct and a "counter" language was inspired by Théodule Ribot and Remy de Gourmont, it is worth noting here that Visan, one of Hulme's primary sources on the subject of French literature, focused on the distinction as the essential difference between Parnassian and Symbolist art. Whereas "Le parnassien pense par symboles ou signes," he observed, "Le poete 'symboliste' pense directement...."[182] Whereas for the philosophical writer "l'idée est un chiffre, une équation," for the Symbolist "celui-ci c'est une émotion, un sentiment, quelque chose qui vibre et qui s'élance comme une fleur."[183]

Mallarmé's expression of desire for a poetic

[180] Lehmann quotes Mallarmé, and cites numerous other references to the dance, in The Symbolist Aesthetic, p.63.

[181] Romantic Image, pp.49-91, and 131.

[182] Visan, p.459.

[183] Visan, p.40.

language which would bring its reader directly into contact with some reality, instead of with some arbitrary substitute for it, is supplemented by many further remarks in his work which celebrate the intrinsic power of words. He likened words, at one point, to living beings, made of fleshy vowels and skeletal consonants.[184] He saw their likeness, too, to precious stones, powerful not merely as ciphers for communication, but in themselves, exuding and exchanging magical light:

> L'oeuvre pure implique la disparition élocutaire du poète, qui cède l'initiative aux mots, par le heurt de leur inégalité mobilisées; ils s'allument de reflets réciproques comme une virtuelle trainée de feux sur des pierreries, remplaçant la respiration perceptible en l'ancien souffle lyrique ou la direction personnelle enthousiaste de la phrase.[185]

Like Rimbaud, but to a much greater extent, Mallarmé took an interest both in the theory, and the practical exploitation, of the intrinsic properties of words. He took a special interest in three factors in particular: the physical appearance of words, their immediate sounds, and the evidence of their etymology which they contain. He expressed his own personal concern with typography at a number of points in the Variations.[186] One of the best examples of his own exploitation of the visual appearance of words is his long poem "Un Coup de des": the scattered pattern in which they appear on the page reflects the poem's internal imagery,

[184] See Les Mots anglais, in OC, p.901.

[185] Variations, in OC, p.366.

[186] See for example OC, pp.380 and 407.

suggesting at suitable moments the throwing of dice, the tossing of a wake of waves, the shining of stars in the sky.[187] His interest in the sound and the etymology of words is best demonstrated, interestingly enough, in his 1877 study of the English language, Les Mots anglais, where he went to some lengths to compile evidence for what he held to be the correlation between the sound of letters, and the sense of the words in which they appear.[188] That he was concerned in his own poetry with the correlation of sense and sound is admirably illustrated by a table of his vocabulary drawn up by Robert Greer Cohn;[189] Guy Michaud has suggested that it is to this very concern that the limited nature of his poetic vocabulary may be attributed.[190] The fascination which Mallarmé showed for exposing the etymological roots in English words[191] also was something he extended to his own craft. He was an avid reader of the etymological Littré dictionary; that he chose the words in his poetry with a view to their roots is clearly demonstrated in a study by Charles Chassé.[192]

That Mallarmé was fascinated by the intrinsic power

[187] See OC, pp.457-477.

[188] See for example OC, pp.921-1009.

[189] See Robert Greer Cohn, Towards the Poems of Mallarmé (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), pp.265ff.

[190] See Guy Michaud, Mallarmé, tr. Marie Collins and Berthe Humez (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p.145.

[191] See Les Mots anglais, in OC, p.919.

[192] See Charles Chassé, Les Clés de Mallarmé (Paris: Aubier, Éditions Montaigne, 1954).

of words is clear. It remains, however, to show the precise techniques which he defined for the purpose of evoking the essences of objects, for mirroring the development of the Hegelian Geist, and for conveying the mysterious network of universal relations. In brief, we may identify three techniques by which he attempted to build the poetic "symbol": the use of negation, synecdoche, and evocative sequences of allusive images. Like Baudelaire, Mallarmé tried to expose the "relations entre tout" through metaphor; his poetry serves as an especially appropriate mirror of such relations, moreover, in containing within itself, as a body, an entire metaphorical system. Finally, we shall see that Mallarmé made every effort to confound his reader's understanding, taking pains to eliminate logical markers, and to cultivate ambiguity.

The first of Mallarmé's techniques, his use of statements of negation, renders his poetry analogous, in a sense, to his "Néant." Putting negative statements to positive, evocative use, he builds realms of absences as full of potential as the mystical realm he speaks of apprehending. He calls poetic realities into being through processes of assertion and denial which could be seen, in the broadest sense, as reflecting the Hegelian dialectic. A number of his poems depend for their effect upon images which remain in the mind in spite of the fact that the existence of these images is strictly denied. On reading the poem "Sainte,"[193] for example, we are left with an impression of a picture upon a stained

[193] OC, pp.53-4.

glass window: a picture of an angel, his wings brushing a harp, bending over to pluck the string of a viol held by a saint, who holds in her other hand an old book of music. The sandalwood of the saint's viol, and the book which she holds, named in the first and second stanzas, are said in the last stanza no longer to exist. But this eventual negation does not prevent these images from mingling with the others, to form a glimmering picture in our minds. In the sonnet beginning "Ses purs ongles..."[194] the dreams of evening are said to be captured in a receptacle, whose existence is then denied. It is as if the "ptyx" (Mallarmé held this combination of letters to have no recognized meaning)[195] is brought into existence at the point of intersection of negative rays:

> Maint rêve vespéral brûlé par le Phénix
> Que ne recueille pas de cinéraire amphore
>
> Sur les crédences, au salon vide: nul ptyx,
> Aboli bibelot d'inanité sonore....[196]

Perhaps the most pointed use of negative statement is that found in "Prose: pour des Esseintes."[197] In that poem a garden of ideal flowers is gradually evoked by two gentle negations and a negating paradox. The soil in which the flowers grow is said to bear no name, and the flowers are said to grow without anything being said about them. Then

[194] OC, pp.68-9.

[195] See Michaud, Mallarmé, p.70.

[196] "Ses purs ongles," OC, p.68.

[197] OC, pp.55-7.

it is said that a "lacune" exists between these flowers and the "jardins";[198] unless we read the latter as referring to other, perhaps actual and not ideal, gardens, we seem to have a statement about the flowers being separated from themselves and therefore being not themselves. Finally, in stanzas eleven and twelve, a wish is expressed that it not be believed that these gardens do not exist. Read strictly, this double negative would become an affirmation of their existence, but the delay of two stanzas between the negatives creates a tension in favour of a simple negative. Whatever the case, it is the effect of the series of negatives in the whole of the poem to leave us with a sense of the existence of a garden of flowers: precisely those ideal flowers which Mallarmé, in the Variations, claimed himself capable of calling into appearance through poetry.

A more subtle method of indirect evocation than that of naming things, and then negating them, is the use of synecdoche: the technique whereby the name of a part of a thing is substituted for the whole. Mallarmé used this device frequently, selecting the representative component always with an eye to its emotive power. One poem in which he uses it to especially powerful effect is "Le Tombeau de Charles Baudelaire": a poem dedicated to evoking the spirit which the deceased Baudelaire has nonetheless left behind in his art. In the first stanza of this poem, Mallarmé presents the striking image of a buried temple, spewing, through the mouth of a sewer, mud, and rubies, and an effigy of Anubis, the Egyptian

[198] See OC, p.56.

god of death. The putrid sewer gas seeps into stanza two:

> Ou que le gaz récent torde la mèche louche
> Essuyeuse on le sait des opprobres subis
> Il allume hagard un immortel pubis
> Dont le vol selon le réverbère découche....[199]

The most powerful image in this stanza is provided by the word "pubis." As confirmed by a glance at Baudelaire's "Le Crépuscule du matin,"[200] a poem whose images were undoubtedly an inspiration to Mallarmé, the "pubis" is an image chosen to represent a prostitute. This, of all features of the prostitute which might have been chosen to represent her, is perhaps the one which most strongly suggests the sordid reality of the street life. The sense of sordidness is reinforced by the second line, which modifies "la mèche" in the first; the lock of dubious ("louche") pubic hair has been many times the object of insult ("Essuyeuse on le sait des opprobres subis..."). A "mèche" may be, moreover, not only a lock of hair but a lamp-wick, and as such serves briefly as a substitute for the street-light which is not named until the stanza's final line ("le réverbère"). Two examples of synecdoche are used to good effect in the third stanza, where "feuillage" and "le marbre" represent, respectively, a funeral wreath and a tomb-stone against which it lies. In focusing upon the materials from which these two memorials to Baudelaire are made, Mallarmé impresses upon his reader

[199] "Le Tombeau de Charles Baudelaire," in OC, p.70.

[200] See Baudelaire, OC.I, pp.103-4. This poem serves as a foil to Mallarmé's more allusive one, sharing with it the images of a sleeping prostitute, flickering lamplight, and pervasive fog.

the transience of the former, and the relative permanence of the latter. This is a significant progression, for it points to the identification in the last line of the only memorial to Baudelaire which is truly immortal: the prostitute ("Celle"), now Baudelaire's ghost ("son Ombre"), mingling with the sewer gas, and hanging forever about the grave ("un poison tutélaire / Toujours à respirer si nous en périssons."). Selecting representative components of each in a series of objects, Mallarmé achieves an end like that which was to be valued by Yeats, evoking out of a number of subtle, fleeting appeals to emotion a single, larger, and more powerful feeling.[201]

Mallarmé's attempts to evoke objects indirectly are not always so straightforward as simple synecdoche. Frequently, for example, he attempts to suggest the essence of an object not by a single image, instantly, but through a whole series of images, gradually. He speaks in the Variations of how images carefully juxtaposed may release into our awareness a third thing quite different from themselves. "Instituer une relation entre les images exacte," he asserts, "et que s'en détache un tiers aspect fusible et clair présenté à la divination."[202] To come to know a

[201] See Chapter II, p.182 of this thesis. Other examples of synecdoche in Mallarmé include the use of a finger-nail, an "ongle," for a finger or hand, in both the sonnet beginning "Ses purs ongles..." in OC, p.68, and "Hérodiade," ll.25 and 63, OC, pp.42 and 43. It has been suggested that the choice of the nail is evocative of a feminine cruelty; it is also appropriate as an image resembling the moon, whose presence is intimated in both poems. See Cohn, p.140.

[202] OC, p.365.

Mallarméan object is often to be led through a mysterious process whose significance becomes apparent only at its end. In "Une dentelle s'abolit,"[203] for example, we recognize the existence of the lace curtain only on reading of lace, then of the "blanc conflit" which a garland engages in with itself, as it flees up to a window-pane and struggles between concealing and revealing what lies beyond. In "Surgi de la croupe et du bond,"[204] we are gradually made aware of a glass vase with a squat bottom and a long neck. Something, we are told, has been made by a jump up from the rump of a glass-works, and by a sudden interruption of its leaping neck; the vase is evoked through a set of images which convey the motions of its making. A reference to the vase's absence of flowers, and to its consequent bitterness, initiates the effect, developed throughout the poem, that it is sterile and aching to be fertile. Mallarmé puts a series of images to comparable use in the sonnet beginning "Dame."[205] We see a rose which is torn and tired, then a white coat which turns purple, and becomes untied, then, embedded in flesh, a weeping diamond; the effect is one of a woman whose purity has been soiled, whose icy virginity has melted, leaving her sad.[206]

[203] See OC, p.74.

[204] See OC, p.74.

[205] See OC, p.60.

[206] The image of the diamond is used repeatedly in "Hérodiade," in conjunction with images of ice, to evoke the heroine's frigid, virginal state. See below, note 211, p.119 Compare also the sonnet beginning "O si chère de loin...," where a woman emerges whose diamantine qualities (she is "cristal obscurcis") and freshness (she is a "rose avec son bel été") are preserved. See OC, p.61.

In recognizing the association made in the sonnet "Dame" between the glittering diamond, and the state of virginity, we are being alerted to one strand in the intricate lace-work of relations which Mallarmé attempts to mirror in his writing. It was Mallarmé's practice, moreover, to make explicit only one element in any analogical pair, any metaphor. We come to recognize its other significance, its partner, through observing its repeated appearance, in comparable contexts, throughout the body of his work. His lace-work incorporates, thus, not just one-to-one associations, but also clusters of images which repeatedly gravitate to each other.

A brief exercise in following through some of the associations found in Mallarmé's work will reveal something of the complexity of his personal network of relations. As a starting point we may take the image in "Les Fenêtres" of the act of smashing through the window-pane and recovering eternity.[207] Mallarmé presents a similar image in "Éventail," when he speaks about knocking down the sky with the beating of his fan.[208] In another poem the fan becomes a wing:[209] the image which, with the image of a bird, recurs the most frequently in poems which clearly concern the experience of the poet. In the sonnet "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui"[210] we see a swan who is helpless to smash through

[207] See "Les Fenêtres," OC, pp.32-3.

[208] See "Éventail," OC, p.59.

[209] See "Autre éventail: de Mademoiselle Mallarmé," OC, p.58.

[210] See OC, pp.67-8.

the frozen ice of a lake because his wings are clamped to the ground. The day of his helplessness, the day of poetic sterility, is a day of whiteness and cold. It is also a "virginal" day; the notion of virginity, as we have noted, is frequently associated with images of cold, snow and ice.[211] The virginal state is also linked with the image of an empty bed with white sheets,[212] and the sheets of the bed with the sheets of white vellum which await violation by the poet.[213] But the ice is melted, virginity shattered, and poetry created, only by the application of fire.[214] Hence Hérodiade's innocence is lost, and a bird takes flight in "Petit air. I," against the backdrop of a burning sunset.[215] The same sun glows through the window-panes in "Don du poème," and in "Les Fenêtres,"[216] suggesting the fires of an eternal world beyond it. The chain of associations grows ever longer, often doubling back upon itself. To rest in contemplation of any of Mallarmé's images, we can see, is to cling, as he envisioned himself doing, to the point of intersection of many threads

[211] See for example "Hérodiade," l.22, OC, p.41; l.65, p.43; l.76, p.47; and l.87, p.47. Virginity is also associated with diamond or crystal. See "Hérodiade," l.225, p.48, the melting diamond in the sonnet "Dame," (see above, p.206), and the sonnet "O si chère...," p.61.

[212] See "Hérodiade," l.31, OC, p.42, also "Une dentelle s'abolit," p.74, and "Petit air. I," p.66.

[213] See "Hérodiade," l.60, OC, p.42. The white sheet is also the sail on a boat steered by the poet. See "Salut," OC, p.27.

[214] See above. Also note "Éventail," OC, p.59.

[215] See "Hérodiade," ll.84-7, OC, p.43, and "Petit air. I," OC, p.65.

[216] See OC, pp.40 and 32.

which link that image with others.

Mallarmé's comments on the various suggestive techniques exercised in the effort to create the poetic "symbol," including the final technique, the attempt to obscure the poem's sense, point to an overall feature of his ideal creative activity which must not be overlooked. If he rejected the kind of poetic activity which was dedicated to the clarification and translation of clear ideas, he did not, it must be stressed, envision an activity devoid of all care and calculation. Indeed he often spoke, inspired, as Baudelaire had been, by Edgar Allen Poe, of the "puissants calculs et subtils"[217] which must go into arranging the words of a poem, to convey an appropriate effect. In his letters he criticized a writer of his acquaintance for the fact that he scribbled "trop aisément" pages "brillantes et vides,"[128] and spoke of his own "horreur d'une chose dite sans être arrangée."[219] "Le hasard," he asserted firmly, "n'entraîne

[217] "Sur Poe," in OC, p.872. Poe wrote, in "The Philosophy of Composition," about the calculations involved in achieving desired poetic effects. He said of his poem "The Raven" that "no one point in its composition is referrable either to accident or intuition - that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precise and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem." See Selected Writings of Edgar Allen Poe, ed. David Galloway (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p.482. See Mallarmé's expression of his intention to emulate Poe's effort, in a letter to Cazalis, 12 January 1864, in Gibson, p.261. Cf. Baudelaire, "Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe," in OC, II, p.331.

[218] Letter to Cazalis, 3 June 1863, cited by Gibson, p.79.

[219] Letter to Eugene Lefébure, February 1865, cited by Gibson, p.243.

pas un vers...."[220] Mallarmé represented his act of composition, on a number of occasions, as one of first laying down his words, and then with calculation arranging and rearranging them:

> Il y a à Versailles des boiseries a rinceaux, jolis a faire pleurer; des coquilles, des enroulements, des courbes, des reprises de motifs. Telle, m'apparaît d'abord la phrase que je jette sur le papier, en un dessein sommaire, que je revois ensuite, que j'épure, que je réduis, que je synthétise.[221]

"L'armature intellectuelle" of the resultant poem, however, "se dissimule":[222] in sculpting his verse, Mallarmé attempted to eliminate logical markers like articles, conjunctions, and relative pronouns,[223] and in his later poems, punctuation.[224] He attempted to obscure sense, too, through presenting the words "indépendamment de la suite ordinaire":[225] through breaking down conventional word orders, scrambling and

[220] Letter to Francois Coppée, 5 December 1866, cited by Gibson, p.243.

[221] Words attributed to Mallarmé by Maurice Guilleent, in Villégiatures d'artistes(1898), cited by Gibson, p.159.

[222] "Sur Poe," in OC, p.872.

[223] Mallarmé's efforts at elimination are particularly evident when we compare the early and late versions of "Le Pitre châtié." See the early version, OC, p.1416, and the final version, p.31. Note the elimination of "pour," "dont," and "ses," in particular. See also successive versions of "L'Après-midi d'un Faune," OC, pp.1448-66.

[224] See for example "M'introduire dans ton histoire" and "A la nue accablante tu," in OC, pp.75 and 76.

[225] Variations, in OC, p.386.

separating nouns and their verbs and adjectives.[226] The effect of his arrangements, too, is often to render uncertain the noun or verb to which a modifier belongs; adjectival or adverbial light may be, as it were, cast in many directions at once.[227] Mallarmé often fuelled such ambiguity by choosing words with more than one potentially suitable meaning,[228] or by presenting ambiguous situations.[229] In frustrating his reader's attempts to extract a simple sense, Mallarmé invites him to keep turning his attention back to the words themselves: to remain, in a sense, caught in their spell. He fulfils Schopenhauer's prescription for a poetry in which no single word may be simply translated into its "abstract universality," but in which a particular combination

[226] For examples of the inversion and separation of nouns and verbs see "Hérodiade," ll.1 and 4, OC, p.41 ("Abolie...Une Aurore..."), and ll.46 and 48, p.42 ("Suaire...S'élève"), and "Éventail: de Madame Mallarmé," ll.9 and 11, p.57 ("où va redescendre...Un peu invisible cendre"); inversion is evident in "Ses purs ongles...," l.4, p.68 ("Que ne recueille pas de cinéraire amphore"), and ll.13 and 14, p.69 ("Que...se fixe / De scintillations sitôt le septuor"); separation is effective in "Prose: pour des Esseintes," ll.17 and 19, p.56 ("son site... Ne porte pas de nom").

An example of the separation of a noun and its epithet is found in "Éventail: de Madame Mallarmé," l.58, p.57 ("miroir...limpide"), of a verb and its adverb in "Le Tombeau de Charles Baudelaire," ll.10 and 11, p.70 ("elle se rasseoir... vainement").

[227] See for example "Avec clarté," in the sonnet beginning "Victorieusement fui le suicide beau," l.12, OC, p.68.

[228] Examples of ambiguity, or multivalent meaning, are found in the sonnet "Dame" ("rosée," in l.6, p.60, means both "dewy" and "rosy"), in "Tombeau de Charles Baudelaire," ("mèche," in l.5, p.70, means both "lock" and "wick"). Many of the images in Mallarmé's work are of course multivalent, in a sense, too, by virtue of the suggestion of their analogous partners: a swan is never simply a swan, nor a window a window, nor a sunset a sunset.

[229] See for example "Prose: pour des Esseintes," (the

of words precipitates the concrete "Idea."

Like Baudelaire, Mallarmé envisioned the ideal poem not only as a vehicle for the truths of a transcendental realm, but also as a kind of autonomous world in itself. His sense of its autonomy is clear from a number of theoretical remarks, and reinforced by certain aspects of his practice. Like Baudelaire, first of all, he broke the tie which Taine had defined between the poem and the world of appearances, regarding the images in nature not as pictures to be recorded for their own sake, but rather as materials to be grasped, and manipulated for the purpose of creating certain effects. "Tout, au monde" he asserted, "existe pour aboutir à un livre."[230] The images he included in his constructions strained towards autonomy from the natural world too, in a sense, by the new significance which they acquired from their poetic contexts: swans suggesting poets, sheets and sails their virgin paper, sunsets Eternity's violating fire. As a body, Mallarmé's poetry suggests a closed circuit of meaning, its images lending significance to each other with "réflets réciproques."[231] Finally, Mallarmé spoke of the ideal poem as one which would give the impression of being an "architecture spontanée et

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question of the separation of the flowers, from themselves, or from something else, and the question arising out of the separation of "non" and "n'exista pas") as discussed above, p.114.

[230] Variations, in OC, p.378. For this point of view, cf. Whistler, Hulme, Kandinsky and Pound, as discussed in Chapters VI and VII of this thesis.

[231] See above, p.110, and Mallarmé's letter of 5 December 1866 to Francois Coppée, cited by Gibson, p.243.

magique," with all signs of its connection with its author, its "échafaudage"[232] removed. It would neither bear evidence of a lyrical "I," of "la respiration perceptible en l'ancien souffle lyrique ou la direction personnelle enthousiaste de la phrase";[233] nor would it appear in any way to call out to its reader:

> Impersonnifié, le volume, autant qu'on s'en sépare comme auteur, ne réclame approche de lecteur. Tel, sache, entre les accessoires humains, il a lieu tout seul: fait, étant.[234]

The poem, in Mallarmé's view, was to show no signs of being a token in a communicative process, sliding from one hand to another. It was to appear simply to exist, independent and motionless, glittering with mysterious implications.

d) The Symbolist Revolution.

A glance at the views expounded by members of the Symbolist movement proper, the movement which officially announced itself in the 1880s and 1890s, serves to illustrate its kinship with the idealist aesthetics laid down by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and, in particular, Mallarmé. A. G. Lehmann has remarked that by 1895 the connection of "Symbolist" with a writer's name tended to suggest merely a reverence for, and desire to emulate, Mallarmé.[235] For this reason I shall make

[232] "Sur Poe," in OC, p.872.

[233] Variations, in OC, p.366.

[234] Variations, in OC, p.372.

[235] See Lehmann, p.16.

brief reference to the work, extending well into the twentieth century, of Mallarmé's greatest disciple: Paul Valéry.

That the Symbolist revolutionaries rooted their aesthetic in idealism is evident in their repeated representation of art as the embodiment of the Idea. "Ennemis de l'enseignment, la déclamation, la fausse sensibilité, la description objective," announced Moréas in his 1886 manifesto, "la poésie symbolique cherche à vêtir l'Idée d'une forme sensible...."[236] To André Gide the receptacle of the Idea embodied, too, the qualities of the lost Eden mourned by Baudelaire:

> ...l'oeuvre d'art est un cristal - paradis partiel où l'Idée refleurit en sa pureté supérieure; où, comme dans l'Éden disparu, l'ordre normal et nécessaire a disposé toutes les formes dans une réciproque et symétrique dépendance, où l'orgueil du mot ne supplante pas la Pensée, - où les phrases rythmiques et sûres, symboles encore, mais symboles, purs, où les paroles se font transparentes et révélatrices.[237]

As Gide's comments suggest, the quality of manifesting an Idea was the definitive feature of the poem which the Symbolists called a "symbol." Henri de Régnier defined the symbol as "la plus parfaite, et la plus complète figuration de l'Idée."[238] René Ghil made the same point, and attributed the definition to Mallarmé;[239] he was faithful to Mallarmé in defining the

[236] Jean Moréas, "Le Symbolisme," in Figaro littéraire, 18 September 1866; cited by Michaud, p.725.

[237] Andre Gide, Le Traité du Narcisse(1891), cited by Michaud, p.731.

[238] Henri de Régnier, Figures et caractères(1900), cited by Michaud, p.755.

[239] See Rene Ghil, Traité du verbe(1887), cited by Michaud, p.756.

poetic symbol by its quality of suggestiveness. The younger generation of writers expressed, too, the view that the poem should reveal in its metaphors the mysterious network of relations existing between phenomena. Charles Morice referred to the law of "Correspondances"[240] as the foundation of all poetry; Rene Ghil discussed synaesthesia at great length in his Traité du verbe(1885).

Statements of Symbolist doctrine remained true to Schopenhauer in consistently distinguishing the poetic symbol from allegory. Mockel's discussion of the matter, in his Propos de littérature(1894), is especially interesting for making it clear that the essence of the Symbolist activity was emphatically not an automatic process of translating ideas already clearly conceived, but rather a process of discovery:

> L'allégorie, comme le symbole, exprime l'abstrait par le concret. Symbole et allégorie sont également fondés sur l'analogie, et tous deux contiennent une image développée.
>
> Mais je voudrais appeler l'allégorie l'oeuvre de l'esprit humain ou l'analogie est artificielle et extrinsèque, et j'appellerai symbole celle où l'analogie apparaît naturelle et intrinsèque.
>
> L'allégorie serait la représentation explicite ou analytique, par une image, d'une idée abstraite PRÉCONCUE...
>
> Au contraire le symbole suppose la RECHERCHE INTUITIVE des divers elements idéaux épars dans les Formes.[241]

[240] Quoted by Michaud, Mallarmé, p.128.

[241] Albert Mockel, Propos de littérature(1894), in Michaud, Message poétique, p.752. For the distinction from allegory, see also Saint-Antoine, "Qu'est-ce que le Symbolisme?", in L'Ermitage (June 1894), in Michaud, pp.748-75, Maeterlinck, "Réponse à un Enquête," in J. Huret's Enquête(1891), in Michaud, pp.750-2, and Camille Mauclair, in Eléusis (Paris: Perrin, 1894), p.97.

Mauclair was making the same general point, in terms reminiscent of Mallarmé's, when he asserted that "La poésie n'est pas une langue chiffrée."[242]

In addition to advocating the discovery-in-the making, as opposed to the predetermination, of poetic significance, the Symbolists advanced, too, the cause of the discovery-in-the-making of the poem's rhythmical form. Rimbaud's aspirations were put into practice by his friend Verlaine, in the Romances sans paroles of 1894. Verlaine expressed his support for effective irregularities in versification in the poem "Art poétique":

> De la musique avant toute chose,
> Et pour cela préfère l'Impair
> Plus vague et plus soluble dans l'air,
> Sans rien en lui qui pèse ou qui pose.[243]

Among the younger generation the artist's freedom from the stringent Parnassian dictates about form became a fervent cause. The poet, in their view, was free of all binding regulations on matters of rhyme, particularly those rules based on linguistic features other than sound,[244] and free to exploit as he wished all of the sonorous properties of language. He was liberated from the obligation to preserve regularity in the rhythm and the length of lines; the basic

[242] Mauclair, Eléusis, p.170.

[243] Verlaine, "Art poetique," in Oeuvres poétiques completes (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p.206. The "vers impair" was Verlaine's term for the line of irregular length.

[244] See for example A. Rette, "Sur le rythme des vers," in Mercure de France, Vol.XXI, no. 3 (July 1899), p.84: "Nous ne pouvons, par exemple, concevoir qu'il fût interdit de faire rimer un singulier avec un pluriel."

element of verse became in any case not the line but the strophe, whose rhythm and length was to be determined by the shape and extent of the matter which it was to convey.[245] In saying that the poet was free of the obligation to fulfil all of the difficult requirements laid out by a Banville, however, the vers libristes were not ordering him to renounce all of the resources offered by classical techniques. All traditional techniques were left open to him; his responsibility was to use them, if he did, in a manner perfectly appropriate to the poem's substance.[246] The vers libristes were not recommending a carelessness in the act of articulation. They were not maintaining that the metrical clothes chosen for the matter of their poetry were irrelevant; they were simply saying that these clothes ought not to be ready-made, that they should be for each new body exclusively tailored:

> L'importance de cette technique nouvelle (en dehors de la mise en valeur d'harmonies forcement négligées) sera de permettre à tout vrai poète de concevoir en lui son vers, ou plutot sa strophe originale, et d'écrire son rythme propre et individuel au lieu d'endosser un uniforme taillé d'avance et qui le réduit à n'être que l'élève de tel glorieux prédécesseur.[247]

The result was a form which would not interfere with the organic development of the poet's visions; "Le propre

[245] Gustave Kahn, "Reponse á une Enquête," in Jules Huret, Enquête, cited by Michaud, p.797.

[246] See A. Mockel, Propos de littérature (1894), cited by Michaud, p.794.

[247] Gustave Kahn, in Symbolistes et décadentes (1888), cited by Michaud, p.798. See also Mockel, Propos de littérature, cited by Michaud, p.794.

du vers libre, c'est d'assurer à chacun le plein épanouissement de ses rêves."[248] For Jules Laforgue, the exponent of vers libre whose thought most closely resembled Rimbaud's, free verse seemed an invaluable aid in enabling the poet to hold up a mirror to the constant changes within the transcendental "Inconscient."[249]

Perhaps the major legatee of Mallarmé's theory of poetry was Paul Valéry. In essays ranging from the "Introduction à la méthode de Léonard de Vinci"(1894), to "Poésie et pensée abstraite"(1939), to "Mallarmé"(1944), Valéry struggled with and developed the ideas of the man whom he proclaimed to be his master.[250] He was an advocate of the kind of "labeur intelligente"[251] which Mallarmé dedicated to the construction of the poem, and admired Mallarmé for his ability to apply such labour without destroying a poem's evocative charm.[252] Like Mallarmé, too, he was prone to speak of the autonomy of poetry, imagining a "univers poétique" in which all of the poet's materials would be "musicalisés, devenus resonnants l'un par l'autre, et comme harmoniquement correspondants,"[253]

[248] Kahn, Symbolistes et décadentes, cited by Michaud, p.797.

[249] See Lehmann, p.116.

[250] See, for this issue, the illuminating introduction to Paul Valery: An Anthology, ed. James P. Lawler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956).

[251] Valéry, "Poésie et pensée abstraite," in Oeuvres, Vol.I (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), p.1335.

[252] See Valéry, "Mallarmé," in Oeuvres, I, p.706.

[253] "Poésie et pensée abstraite," in Oeuvres, I, p.1321.

and asserting that a poem should retain no obvious signs of its maker.[254] Most importantly, Valéry shared Mallarmé's view that the words in the ideal poem will not function simply as counters in a representative currency,[255] whose form might as well dissolve once their message is conveyed.[256] He imagined them instead as entities of intrinsic power whose sound will be especially suited to their sense;[257] he was full of admiration for the poetry "dont la forme, c'est-à-dire l'action et la sensation de la Voix, est de même puissance que le fond...."[258] That he shared Mallarmé's sense that the significance of a poem should be not clearly preconceived, but discovered in the act of making, is evident in his praise of his master's work for the fact that in it "le 'fond' n'est plus cause de la forme: il en est l'un des effets."[259] He hinted at the inseparability of the recognition of significance, and its expression, by likening poetic composition to dancing.[260] He shared Mallarmé's conviction, finally, that "Devant le

[254] See Valéry, "Introduction à la méthode de Léonard de Vinci," in Oeuvres, I, p.1157.

[255] See "Poésie et pensée abstraite," in Oeuvres, I, p.1318.

[256] See "Poésie et pensée abstraite," in Oeuvres, I, pp.1325-6.

[257] See "Poésie et pensée abstraite," in Oeuvres, I, p.1333.

[258] See "Poésie et pensée abstraite," in Oeuvres, I, p.1336.

[259] See "Mallarmé," in Oeuvres, I, p.710.

[260] See "Poésie et pensée abstraite," in Oeuvres, I, pp.1329-1330.

papier, l'artiste <u>se fait</u>,"[261] that the struggle with language is itself instrumental, indeed necessary, in making the poet himself know clearly the "état d'âme" he bodies forth in his art:

> ...ni l'émotion ni la création poétiques ne se séparent des formes qui les font naître. La beauté est la souveraineté de l'apparence. Celle-ci résulte de quelque manière de faire qui nous appartient et que nous imposons à une matière que nous trouvons autour de nous.[262]

vi) <u>Conclusion</u>.

I have proceeded in this chapter from the assumption that the Parnassian and Symbolist aesthetics had essentially to be incompatible, because of the two opposing metaphysics which underlay them, and the literature I have examined seems to support this view. Their positivist and idealist roots have been seen to define contrasting creative processes: the one a process by which a conception is simply translated into artistic form, the other an activity in which a non-intellectual apprehension develops and clarifies itself in the act of articulation. The contrast between the predetermination and discovery of significance has been seen to be paralleled by a comparable opposition, in Rimbaud and the <u>vers libristes</u>, on the matter of the determination of a poem's rhythmical

[261] Mallarmé, letter to Eugène Lefébure, February 1865, cited by Gibson, p.79.

[262] "Mallarmé," in <u>Oeuvres</u>, I, p.708.

form. The products resulting from these processes were conceived, we have seen, as being analogous to the positivist and idealist worlds, in being respectively susceptible and elusive to analysis. They themselves reflected these worlds in the images of which they are made: the images of Leconte de Lisle's positivist poetry being detailed, accurate, and clear, those of Mallarmé's idealist poetry vague, dissolving, and suggestive.

In closing, however, it must be acknowledged that there are some points on which the two aesthetics were not at odds. A. G. Lehmann has noted that the way for the Symbolist movement was in part paved by the Parnassian one;[263] and it cannot go unnoticed that Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Verlaine were all contributors in good standing to Le Parnasse contemporain. Briefly, it may be said that the Parnassian and the Symbolist were compatible in their opposition to what had been the literary values of Romanticism. They were united in opposing a poetry of undisciplined declamation, and in placing a high value on craftsmanship. Gautier was a self-described "sculptor," struggling with material resistant to his toil; Mallarmé envisioned himself cutting away, like a sculptor, the excess verbal material which gave evidence of logical thought, or which constituted the personal "scaffolding" on his desirably autonomous poetic world. Both Leconte de Lisle and Mallarmé spoke of eliminating "Le hasard" in the choice of their words, valuing exact usages of language, if usages with very different ends.

[263] See The Symbolist Aesthetic, p.113.

CHAPTER II

SYMBOLISM IN ENGLISH: PATER AND YEATS

i) The Symbolist Requirement.

If the critics are at odds over the place of T. E. Hulme in relation to the two literary currents in nineteenth century France, they appear in greater agreement in placing Walter Pater and W. B. Yeats squarely in the Symbolist tradition. The first book on French Symbolism to appear in English, Arthur Symons' The Symbolist Movement in Literature(1899), is dedicated to Yeats; Symons praises his good friend as "the chief representative of that movement in our country."[1] Some thirty years later, looking back over the strain of Symbolism which had taken root and flowered in England, Edmund Wilson locates in the critical writings of both Pater and Yeats "an English equivalent to the Symbolist theory of the French."[2] Wilson's stance has been shared by subsequent writers like Enid Starkie[3] and Frank Kermode. Its formulation in Romantic Image is of particular interest to us, for Kermode bases his judgment about the affinity of the English writers with the French on what he perceives as the strength of their common anti-positivism. He focuses, in particular, on what he claims to be the common belief of all of these writers in the fact of a mystical

[1] Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958), p.xix.

[2] Edmund Wilson, Axël's Castle (New York: Scribner's, 1931), p.32. See also p.40.

[3] See Starkie's remarks about Pater, From Gautier to Eliot, pp.51-4, and about Yeats, p.117.

apprehension at the beginning of the artistic experience. He attributes the extensive attention which he devotes, in his study, to Yeats, to the strength of "his belief in what Pater called 'vision' and the French called Symbol. "[4]

The validity of these claims about the status of Pater and Yeats as Symbolists may be greatly elucidated by investigating their remarks on the subject of the creative activity. My discussion in Chapter I has exposed certain broad tenets which we might posit as constituting the Symbolist "requirement." Typical of the Symbolist position, first of all, is a commitment to a moment of apprehension in which the artist achieves contact with a realm somehow beyond, or higher than the phenomenal or material one cherished by the positivists. The anti-intellectualism which demands that this moment be one in which the will and the analytical powers are suspended also informs Symbolist views about the experience of articulation. It shapes a hostility towards an art of "ideas," of the kind we have seen in Sully Prudhomme, and defines a craft which is a process of discovery: one in which both meaning and form are not merely predetermined, and then executed, but gradually uncovered in the process of making. The Symbolists have been seen, finally, to define the ideal poem as one which will prove elusive to investigation by the analytical powers of its reader, which will hold his attention as if in a spell, which the exercise of such powers would serve only to diminish. They have conceived the function of such a poem, ultimately, to be one of revelation: of exposing for the reader some of those truths which the poet has

[4] Kermode, Romantic Image, p.29.

uncovered beyond the veil of appearances.

ii) Pater.

a) Apprehension.

"It is always a mistake in thinking about Pater," Anthony Ward has astutely pointed out, "to suppose that his attitudes are not equivocal."[5] It was for Pater, indeed, a matter of policy never to acquiesce for very long in any opinion. On perhaps no issue can we be less definitive, moreover, than that of what he held to be the nature of the ideal artistic apprehension: for as Ward has so convincingly illustrated in his excellent study of Pater, and as Pater himself so clearly documented in the quest of his autobiographical artist-hero in Marius the Epicurean (1885), throughout his life he vacillated, without resolution, between two apparently opposing views about where the gaze of the artist should rest. He shuttled, that is, between the view that the artist should aspire to apprehend a transcendental, or "ideal" realm, and the view that he should fix his gaze firmly on the world immediately available to his senses. Marius' journey from the "ideal" home of his childhood was marked, on the one hand, by a rather Baudelairean aspiration to recover "a world altogether fairer than what he saw." This longing was counterbalanced, on the other, by a recurring sense that "the object, the experience...is really from first

[5] Anthony Ward, Walter Pater: The Idea in Nature (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1966), p.31.

to last the chief point for consideration in the conduct of life...."[6] Haunting intimations of "the hiddenness of perfect things"[7] are coupled, in Marius' experience, with strong attractions like the one he feels towards his friend Flavian, who represents for him "the breaking in of the solid world upon one."[8] Even after the closest thing in his experience to a "beatific vision,"[9] moreover, a moment in which he seems to apprehend behind phenomena "an image of unaccountable rest," and to sense his oneness with the "spirit of life in nature,"[10] Marius is still to be seen subsequently gripped by the conviction that "For himself...he must still hold by what his eyes really saw."[11]

How, then, are we to answer the question of whether Pater believed the artist's gaze to rest on a transcendental or a merely phenomenal realm? One answer might be the one proposed by Ward: that inspired by his reading of Hegel, he imagined an experience which combined both the immediate experience of appearances, and the contact, in the consciousness of self in that experience, with the evolving

[6] Pater, Marius the Epicurean, Vol.I (London: Macmillan, 1910), p 45. Subsequent references to this work will be to Marius, with reference to Vol.I or Vol.II accordingly.

[7] Marius, I, p.93.

[8] Marius, I, p.53.

[9] See Marius, II, p.22.

[10] Marius, II, p.66.

[11] Marius, II, p.90. My italics.

Geist.[12] Even such an answer, however, points to a significant fact about the body of Pater's references to the issue, a fact upon which I shall focus because it points out the fallacy in Kermode's blithe identification of the experiences of apprehension defined by Pater and Yeats, Mallarmé and Hulme. This is the fact that, however often Pater may have spoken of the aspiration of the artist to achieve contact with a realm beyond the visible one, he was invariably unwilling to surrender the conviction that the artist must remain acutely sensitive to the particularity of things. Pater never implied that the world should fall away completely from the poet's eyes, that he should exist like Mallarmé in the presence of the "Néant," or pierce, like Schopenhauer's artist, through all of the "accidental" properties of things to apprehend only their formless and colourless Ideas. Even in describing Marius' most intense visionary moment, when he comes close to believing in the existence of a "World of Ideas,"[13] he does not say that the world of particulars completely dissolves to reveal them, but keeps his hero ever conscious of the accidental details of light and shade in the world around him. He shows a similar commitment to the world of sense in his account of Wordsworth's visionary moments, stressing that the Romantic

[12] See Ward's discussion, pp.43-77. Ward maintains that Hegel's thought, in both its empiricist and idealist aspects, offered Pater a reconciliation of his opposing inclinations. It is worth recalling how differently Mallarmé interpreted Hegel, incorporating his notion of the experience of Geist into an experience of a non-phenomenal realm.

[13] Marius, II, p.69.

poet's apprehension of the souls in inanimate things "came of an exceptional susceptibility to the impressions of eye and ear, and was, in its essence, a kind of sensuousness."[14] Perhaps the best, and certainly an indisputable summation of Pater's attitude to any transcendental moments which might be experienced by the artist is his own remark in an essay on Coleridge:

> Who would change the colour, or curve of a roseleaf for that...colourless, formless, intangible, being - Plato put so high? For the true illustration of the speculative temper is not the Hindoo mystic, lost to sense, understanding, individuality; but one such as Goethe, to whom every moment of life brought its contribution of experimental, individual knowledge; by whom no touch of the world of form, colour, and passion was disregarded.[15]

It is with considerable justification, then, that I shall focus on the passages in Pater's writing where he described the nature of the world of appearances, and the artist's experience of it. When we consider these passages apart from his speculations about the potentially "beatific"

[14] "Wordsworth," in Appreciations (London: Macmillan, 1910), p.48.

[15] "Coleridge," in Appreciations, p.68. That Pater envisioned the Ideas as occupying a kind of mystical realm is evident from his discussion in Plato and Platonism (London: Macmillan, 1910), p.153, where he describes them as "substantial things-in-themselves ... little short of living persons... constituting together that common, eternal, intellectual world, a sort of divine family or hierarchy...." Cf. Apuleius' Platonism, in Marius, II, pp.87-8.

For a corroboration of my view of Pater's general attitude towards transcendental apprehension, see Graham Hough's observation that "For Marius-Pater religious conviction could never come in the form of abstract theological doctrine; his scepticism is too radical: nor in the form of some supernatural fantasy: he is too determined to rely on the testimony of sense," in The Last Romantics (London: Duckworth, 1949), p.151.

quality of the experience of this world, or apart from his other, not infrequent lapses into the position of a subjective idealist,[16] his descriptions can be seen to resemble very closely the account of the reality experienced by the artist which we shall encounter in Bergson and Hulme. The inspiration behind Pater's account of the world of phenomena is the ancient philosopher Heraclitus. The recurring theme in his description of this world is its instability, its brevity, its quality of being in perpetual flux. The image of this realm which emerges in the famous Conclusion to The Renaissance (1868), and the book Plato and Platonism (1893), is one of a world which is on all levels in a state of constant change. The granite kernel of the earth, Pater says in Plato, "is ever changing in its very substance, its molecular constitution, by the very passage through it of electric currents."[17] In the Conclusion he presents a broader picture, including within the image of change in the physical world the wasting and repairing of the human body:

> Our physical life is a perpetual motion...the passage of the blood, the waste and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the modification of

[16] See for example Pater's suggestion in the Conclusion to The Renaissance (London: Macmillan, 1910), that the impressions which fill a man's consciousness may be nothing more than a "dream of a world," and his reference to "that which we can only conjecture to be without," p.235. The Conclusion was included in the first edition of 1873, excluded in the second edition of 1877, and included again in the third edition of 1888. Subsequent references will be to Renaissance.

Further statements of the subjective idealist position are found in Marius, I, p.146, and "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," in Appreciations, p.214.

[17] Plato, p.20.

> the tissues of the brain under every ray of light and sound - processes which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces. Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us: it rusts iron and ripens corn. Far out on every side of us those elements are broadcast, driven in many currents; and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few of ten thousand resultant combinations.[18]

What is true of the physical world, moreover, is also in Pater's view true of the inner, mental and emotional life of man. A man's consciousness is bombarded by "impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with /his/ consciousness of them."[19] The "inward world of thought and feeling" strikes Pater as a "whirlpool"; it is like "the race of the mid-stream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought."[20]

Pater's sense of the flux both outside and within the human consciousness is remarkably similar to the account of reality which was to be laid down by Bergson, an account which we shall consider in some detail in Chapter IV. Bergson we shall see, was gradually to evolve the view that even the inanimate, physical world is an indivisible continuity, enduring and developing a new condition with every moment. At the very centre of his writings, too, was to be the view that the mental life of man is a stream of interpenetrating states, indivisible because each new state contains within

[18] Conclusion to Renaissance, pp.233-4.

[19] Conclusion to Renaissance, p.235.

[20] Conclusion to Renaissance, p.234.

it some memory of those which have gone before. Pater appears to have a comparable understanding of the nature of the inner life, remarking in the Conclusion that it consists in "a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream...a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by...." He comes to a conclusion similar to Bergson's, furthermore, in recognizing that such an interpenetrated flux will elude any attempt of the analytical intellect to divide it up into discrete, constituent states:

> It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off, - that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves.[21]

The sense of the impossible challenge which the world of flux poses to the intellect is at the heart of all Pater has to say about the ideal artistic experience. He reveals a consistent hostility to any level of intellectual activity which interferes with the artist's true and complete experience of the impressions. This antipathy begins, for him just as for Bergson, with a suspicion of the role played in perception by conceptual language, the primary tool of the analytical and generalizing intellect. Bergson, as we shall see, was to regard language, the product of a process of abstraction and generalization, as something responsible for separating men from the flux; when a particular object is regarded simultaneously with an awareness of its

[21] Conclusion to Renaissance, p.236.

general name, he was to point out, not only does the fluidity of the object become arbitrarily frozen, but the perceiver is likely to recognize only those features which the object shares with other objects of the same name, and not the features which render it unique. Pater seems to be making the same point in the Conclusion, asserting that the ideal experience of impressions is not the experience of looking at objects "in the solidity with which language invests them,"[22] and dismissing as undesirable "the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike."[23] He expresses his sense of the distorting power of concepts again in Marius, recommending that we rid ourselves of "such abstractions as are but the ghosts of bygone impressions," of "the notions we have made for ourselves, and that so often only misrepresent the experience of which they profess to be the representation...."[24] What is true of individual concepts, moreover, was in Pater's view even more troublesome in the case of those strings of concepts which constitute general theories about the flux. It was his conviction, as it was to be Bergson's, that the events in a world pervaded by change will never be adequately accounted for by any fixed generalization. If the ancients had faith in the possibility of establishing definitive theories about the world, he says in the essay on Coleridge, the findings of science which have

[22] Conclusion to Renaissance, p.235.

[23] Conclusion to Renaissance, p.237.

[24] Marius, I, p.141.

uncovered the weaving and unweaving of the world have made that assumption impossible for modern man. "To the modern spirit," he asserts, in a manner contrary to the optimistic positivist spirit we have discussed in Chapter I, "nothing is, or can be rightly known, except relatively and under conditions."[25]

Pater's profound sense of the flux of appearances, and his conviction that the analysing and generalising intellect can only distort it, is the motivating force behind his specifications about the ideal artistic experience. He speaks vividly in the Conclusion about the consequences of the account of reality which he has given for all men who wish to make the most of life:

> With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy.... The theory or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or of what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.[26]

In Marius he asserts that the artist's experience, a model experience for all men, must have at its beginning a moment of intense receptivity to impressions, and not an act of forming general, abstract thoughts or principles. He speaks,

[25] "Coleridge," in Appreciations, p.66.

[26] Conclusion to Renaissance, pp.237-8.

with characteristic ambiguity when alluding to the ultimate significance of the apprehension, of "the desirableness of refining all the instruments of inward and outward intuition... till one's whole nature became one complex medium of reception, towards the vision - the 'beatific vision,' if we really cared to make it such - of our actual experience in the world." He shows little enthusiasm for any attempt at "the conveyance of an abstract body of truths or principles,"[27] and praises instead an art rooted in the expression of one's own, highly unique experiences.

Pater's account of the experience of apprehension with which art must begin, in its assertion about the necessary suspension of the analytical intellect, is of course analogous to those descriptions which we have seen in Schopenhauer and Carlyle. It includes the assertion, too, uttered by both of these idealists, that to achieve that apprehension the artist must renounce the world of action,[28] and the superficial way of seeing which is the result of habit or custom.[29] In concluding our account of Pater's view

[27] Marius, I, p.143.

[28] See the Conclusion to Renaissance, p.234, where Pater contrasts the intense experience of the impressions with the experience of being called out of oneself "in a thousand forms of action." See also his statement, in "Wordsworth," in Appreciations, p.62, that "The end of life is not action but contemplation - being as distinct from doing...."

[29] See Pater, "Coleridge's Writings," as it appeared in the Westminster Review for January 1866, in Walter Pater: Essays on Literature and Art, ed. Jennifer Uglow (London: Dent, 1973), p.17, for the statement that "What constitutes an artistic gift is first of all a natural susceptibility to moments of strange excitement, in which the colours freshen upon our threadbare world, and the routine of things is broken by a novel and happier synthesis." Pater's words recall Coleridge's comment in the Biographia Literaria about Wordsworth's aspiration to

of the apprehension, however, we cannot stress too strongly that the experience he defines, if like Schopenhauer's in its conditions, is profoundly different from his in its claim about its object. The likeness of Pater's artist's moments of "ecstasy"[30] to those of Carlyle's Teufelsdröck, on the one hand, is as certain, or uncertain, as his vacillating opinion about whether a universal Spirit can be contacted in the contemplation of the visible world. The likeness of these moments to those described by Schopenhauer or Mallarmé, however, stops absolutely where the latter suggest that they involve the dissolution of those "accidental" features, those momentary peculiarities of light and shade, which mark each instant in the Heraclitean flux. Pater makes no claims about an art which bodies forth spaceless, timeless, universal Ideas at the expense of their particular manifestations. He is to be heard stressing that the "first condition of the poetic way of seeing and presenting things is particularisation";[31] and that poetry should be as "veritable, as intimately near, as corporeal, as the new faces of the hour, the flowers of the actual season."[32] He has this to say of painting:

> In its primary aspect, a great picture has no

"give the charm of novelty to the things of every day" by "awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom." See Biographia Literaria, p.169.

[30] Conclusion to Renaissance, p.237.

[31] "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," in Appreciations, p.208.

[32] Pater, Gaston de Latour, ed. Charles L. Shadwell (London: Macmillan, 1910), p.52.

> more definite message for us than an accidental play of sunlight and shadow for a few moments on the wall or floor: is itself, in truth, a space of such fallen light, caught as the colours are in an Eastern carpet,....[33]

Of poetry, he has this complimentary remark to make of the work of Joachim Du Bellay:

> One seems to hear the measured motion of the fans, with a child's pleasure on coming across the incident for the first time, in one of those great barns of Du Bellay's own country, La Beauce, the granary of France. A sudden light transfigures some trivial thing, a weather-vane, a windmill, a winnowing fan, the dust in the barn door. A moment - and the thing has vanished, because it was pure effect: but it leaves a relish behind it, a longing that the accident may happen again.[34]

b) Articulation.

Pater remains faithful throughout his writings to the view that the fleeting impressions of the world are basic to art. There is, however, one respect in which a notion of a transcendental order seems to inform his conception of the desirable creative process. One clue to this subtle reentry of a kind of transcendentalism into his theory of art is found in a passage in Plato and Platonism, where he makes a distinction between the possibility of apprehending the Platonic Idea, and that of recognizing another sort of perfect entity. "If we are not likely," he says, "to enjoy the vision of his "'eternal and immutable ideas,'"

[33] "The School of Giorgione," in Renaissance, p.133.

[34] "Joachim Du Bellay," in Renaissance, p.176.

> Plato may yet promote in us what we call 'ideals' - the aspiration towards a more perfect Justice, a more perfect Beauty, physical and intellectual, a more perfect condition of human affairs, than any one has ever yet seen; that κόσμος, in which things <u>are</u> only as they are <u>thought</u> by a perfect mind, to which experience is constantly approximating us, but which it does not provide.[35]

Throughout his work, Pater repeatedly voices the desire that the artist, although he begins with a vivid experience of the actual world, might somehow impose on these impressions some idealizing order, and thus make of his art "a refuge into a world slightly better...than the real one."[36] He refers to such an idealizing process, in <u>Marius</u>, as the artist's "golden alchemy";[37] and elsewhere illustrates how an impression of a landscape is transformed into art by envisioning it suffused with a golden light, which lends a unifying order to its details.[38] In <u>Plato</u>, again, he summarizes the role of both the artist and the philosopher as being one of enforcing "a reasonable unity and order,"[39] a unity like that which Plato and Pythagorus saw in "the harmonious order of the whole universe,"[40] upon "the chaotic infinitude of the impressions that reach us from every side...."[41]

[35] <u>Plato</u>, p.195.

[36] "Feuillets 'La Morte,'" in <u>Appreciations</u>, p.219. Cf. "Style," p.18, and "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," p.218.

[37] <u>Marius</u>, I, p.101.

[38] See "The School of Giorgione," in <u>Renaissance</u>, pp.135-6.

[39] <u>Plato</u>, p.34.

[40] <u>Plato</u>, p.70. See also p.52.

[41] <u>Plato</u>, p.36.

Pater's two-fold desire for art, that it both preserve the impressions, and also somehow lend greater order to these than the chaos in which they meet the eye, gives rise to a number of references in his work to two, contrary forces present in the highest art. He identifies these two forces variously as "Asiatic" and "European,"[42] "Ionic" and "Dorian,"[43] and, perhaps most interestingly, "romantic" and "classical." The nature of the "romantic" and "classical" forces, contrary to one another but both of essential importance to art, is the subject of Pater's lengthy Postscript to Appreciations. He begins this essay by representing the former tendency as a curiosity, or love of strange things, and the latter as a desire to impose sanity and order upon what is found. He goes on, then, to give an account of the ideal artistic activity, which he attributes to the "born romanticist." In contrast to the "born classicist," he says, who starts with some kind of traditional form, and who "will entertain no matter which will not go easily and flexibly into /it/," the born romanticist allows himself to experience all new matter with enthusiasm, and subsequently, but only subsequently, reduces it to order:

> On the other hand, there are the born romanticists, who start with an original, untried matter, still in fusion; who conceive this vividly, and hold by it as the essence of their work; who, by the very vividness and heat of their conception,

[42] See "The Marbles of Aegina," in Greek Studies (London: Macmillan, 1910), pp.251-2.

[43] See Plato, p.36, "A Study of Dionysus," in Greek Studies, pp.34-5, and "The Marbles of Aegina," pp.251-3.

> purge away, sooner or later, all that is not organically appropriate to it, till the whole effort adjusts itself in clear, orderly, proportionate form; which form, after a very little time, becomes classical in its turn.[44]

Pater's rejection, in the Postscript, of the art which begins with a predetermined form, and his praise for that which involves the creation of a new one, points to the fact that he did indeed share the Symbolist view of the creative process as an act of discovery. The distinction between the activities of "romanticist" and "classicist" is comparable too, of course, to the distinction which Coleridge noted between the "mechanic" and "organic" uses of form; Pater cites the relevant passage from his work in his "Coleridge" essay:

> The form is mechanic when on any given material we impress a pre-determined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material, as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form.[45]

Pater shows his support for an organic process again in the essay on "Style," where he refers to the necessary presence in the writer's mind of an "architectural design...a single, almost visual image vigorously informing /the/ entire...

[44] Postscript to Appreciations, pp.257-8.

[45] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism, Vol.I, ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor (London: Constable, 1930), p.224. See "Coleridge," in Appreciations, p.80.

composition."[46] On the surface of it, such a statement might indicate that Pater understands the artist to formulate precisely the kind of fixed "blue-print" of his work which Coleridge and other exponents of the organic imagination had specifically opposed.[47] But he also specifies that the mental design in whose presence the artist works is never rigid; he sees the richness of the final product as dependent, in fact, upon the "development or growth of design, in the process of execution, with many irregularities, surprises, and afterthoughts...."[48] Pater's only objection to Coleridge's view of the organic process of creation, it is interesting to note, rests with what he understands[49] to be Coleridge's suggestion that it is a process which is entirely "blind," one which admits of no conscious care, or calculation. It is Pater's conviction, just as we have seen it to be Mallarmé's, that the artist's voyage of discovery is nonetheless one in which he "moves slowly over his work, calculating the tenderest tone, and restraining the subtlest curve, never letting hand or fancy move at large." Even the "most intuitive" works, he asserts, should impress their readers with "the power of the understanding in them, their logical process of

[46] "Style," in Appreciations, p.23.

[47] See W. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), p.166.

[48] "Style," in Appreciations, p.23. Compare the "conception idéale" of Ribot, discussed in Chapter III of this thesis.

[49] Mistakenly, as Owen Barfield has pointed out. See What Coleridge Thought (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.60.

construction, the spectacle of a supreme intellectual dexterity which they afford."[50]

Pater supplements his general approval of a process of composition involving discovery with a number of remarks supporting the two specific modes of discovery which we have observed in Symbolist theory. That he probably approved of the principle of vers libre is evident from his comments in an article on the poetry of Arthur Symons, where he praises Symons for his efforts to find the rhythmical form uniquely tailored to the substance of each individual poem, instead of sacrificing substance for the sake of fulfilling predetermined formal specifications:

> Readers of contemporary verse who may regret in much of it, amid an admirable achievement of poetic form, a certain lack of poetic matter, will find substance here - abundant poetic substance, developing, as by its own organic force, the poetic forms proper to it, with natural vigour.[51]

Of greater interest to Pater, however, is the notion that the significance of the work of art is not something which the poet formulates clearly, and then translates into, or illustrates with, images, but rather something which he discovers at the same time as he discovers the concrete forms with which he is to express it. The source for his thoughts on this matter was probably Hegel, the influence of whose

[50] "Coleridge," in Appreciations, p.81. Compare Pound's attitude towards the organic process, discussed in Chapter VII of this thesis.

[51] "A Poet with Something to Say," in Uncollected Essays (Portland: Thomas B. Mosher, 1903), p.80.

Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik(1835) is evident throughout his art criticism.[52] In the Introduction to this treatise, Hegel had devoted some time to distinguishing between the type of art in which content and form may be said to be separable, and the type in which they may be said to be fused. His approach to this issue is of special interest to us because he sees the identity of form and content primarily in terms of what takes place in the process of construction. He describes the type of art in which content and form are separable, for example, as the kind resulting from an activity in which the acts of formulating some abstract theme, and of selecting some images with which to illustrate it, are quite distinct. Unlike the likes of Sully Prudhomme, however, his attitude to such a process is less than positive:

> ...it would be possible in poetical creation to try and proceed by first apprehending the theme to be treated as a prosaic thought, and by then putting it into pictorial ideas, and into rhyme, and so forth; so that the pictorial element would simply be hung upon the abstract reflections as an ornament or decoration. Such a process could only produce bad poetry, for in it there would be operative as two separate activities that which in artistic production has its right place only as undivided unity.[53]

In direct contrast to such a process, he goes on to say, is the much superior activity in which the recognition of content

[52] See for example the evidence in his work of Hegel's theory about the evolution of different art forms, compiled by Ward, pp.55-6.

[53] Hegel, The Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Fine Art, tr. and ed. Bernard Bosanquet (London: Kegan Paul, 1886), pp.74-5. Subsequent references will be to the Introduction.

and of form are simultaneous, an activity in which the "spiritual" element within the artist, and waiting to be expressed, is never known by the artist as an abstract theorem, but only reveals itself to him in the form of some sensuous, concrete image:

> Such a process may be compared with the habit even of a man with great experience of the world...who, although he has complete knowledge of the main stakes of life, of the substantive interests that hold men together, of what moves them, and of what is the power they recognize, yet neither has himself apprehended this content in the form of general rules, nor is able to explain it to others in general reflections, but makes plain to himself and to others what occupies his consciousness always in particular cases.... For in his ideas, everything shapes itself into concrete images, determinate in time and place....[54]

Hegel makes it clear that the poem which results from a process of this kind will be much superior to one in which thought and image have been formulated and chosen quite separately. He places little value on the type of poem which "sets in relief its generalized aspect with the purpose of abstract instruction," in which "the imaginative and sensuous aspect is only an external and superfluous adornment...." Such a work, he says, is what the product of the second, truly genuine artistic activity can never be: "a thing divided against itself, in which <u>form and content no longer appear grown into one</u>."[55]

That Pater had little use for the first type of

[54] <u>Introduction</u>, pp.75-6.

[55] <u>Introduction</u>, p.97. My italics.

poetry identified by Hegel, and epitomized by what we have seen in Parnassian verse, is suggested by his objection in Marius to the general pursuit of conveying "an abstract body of truths or principles."[56] He comes closest to criticizing the strain in French writing which we have discussed in "The School of Giorgione," where he objects to the moral and political poetry of Victor Hugo, a poetry for which, he says, "it is easy enough for the understanding to distinguish between the matter and the form...."[57] More frequent, however, than such criticisms, are his indications of support for a process comparable to the one recommended by Hegel. In "The School of Giorgione" he acknowledges the existence of the "'imaginative reason,'" a "complex faculty for which every thought and feeling is twin-born with its sensible analogue or symbol."[58] In an essay on Leonardo da Vinci, he envisions that artist waiting patiently for "that moment of bien-être, which to imaginative men is a moment of invention,"[59] that moment in which "the alchemy complete: the idea is stricken into colour and imagery...."[60] A clear allusion to Hegel's description of the process is found in his study of Rossetti, where he blames the Medieval Schoolmen for establishing a false opposition between spirit and matter in their discussion

[56] See note 27 above.

[57] "The School of Giorgione," in Renaissance, p.137.

[58] "Leonardo da Vinci," in Renaissance, p.113.

[59] "Leonardo da Vinci," in Renaissance, p.114.

[60] "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," in Appreciations, p.212.

of the human mind. It ought to be true of artistic experience, he asserts, that "the two trains of phenomena which the words matter and spirit do but roughly distinguish, play inextricably into each other."[61] He makes much the same point, too, in the essay on Winckelmann, where he notes that in the finest Greek art the "spiritual motive" in the mind "is not lightly and loosely attached to the sensuous form, as its meaning to an allegory, but saturates and is identical with it."[62] Pater summarizes his conviction about the importance of the inseparability of form and content in art in his well known dictum that "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music."[63] In music he recognizes what Mallarmé cherished in dance, the absolute indivisibility, in both the act of creation and in its product, of what is to be expressed, and its expression:

> In /music's/ consummate moments, the end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression; they inhere in and completely saturate each other....[64]

Clearly, then, Pater's sense of the ideal process of poetic expression was much the same as that formulated by the Symbolists in reaction to the practice of the Parnasse. As his criticism of Coleridge has indicated, furthermore, he shared with both Parnassian and Symbolist the sense of the

[61] "Winckelmann," in Renaissance, p.205.

[62] "Winckelmann," in Renaissance, p.206. My italics.

[63] "The School of Giorgione," in Renaissance, p.135.

[64] "The School of Giorgione," in Renaissance, p.139.

importance of conscious craftsmanship in the act of execution. The best testament to this conviction is his essay on "Style," where he asserts that the finest literature will inspire its reader with "the delightful sense of difficulty overcome."[65] Like Gautier and Mallarmé, he regards a large part of the writer's craft as his "tact of omission,"[66] his skill at chiselling away, like a sculptor, all that is not essential, or "organically appropriate"[67] to the image of the work developing in his mind:

> Surplusage! he will dread that, as the runner on his muscles. For in truth all art does but consist in the removal of surplusage, from the last finish of the gem-engraver blowing away the last particle of invisible dust, back to the earliest divination of the finished work to be, lying somewhere, according to Michelangelo's fancy, in the rough-hewn block of stone.[68]

Pater develops the analogy between the writer and the sculptor further, in "Style," to make yet another point which allies his aesthetic with that of Mallarmé. He points out that the linguistic material in which the writer works "is no more a creation of his own than the sculptor's marble," but rather the product "of a myriad various minds and contending tongues," a creation possessed of "obscure and minute" associations, and containing "its own abundant and

[65] "Style," in Appreciations, p.17.

[66] "Style," in Appreciations, p.18.

[67] See above, p.149, and his comment in "Style," p.18, that "permissable ornament" must be "structural, or necessary."

[68] "Style," in Appreciations, pp.19-20.

often recondite laws...."[69] It is the writer's duty, accordingly, to become a scholar of language, to familiarize himself with its properties so that he will not abuse its laws and limitations, but rather be capable of exploiting them to good advantage. One aspect of language which Pater sees both as commanding respect, but also as offering great possibilities for exploitation, is its basis in metaphor. Unlike most men, he says, in whose rapid, everyday use of words there is no recognition of this metaphorical basis, the writer is a minute and constant observer of the "physiognomy," or latent figurative texture, of language; he will not, as Pater puts it so memorably, "treat coloured glass as if it were clear...."[70] In being so acutely aware of the metaphors hidden in language, the writer will be aware of a restriction upon his use of it: the obligation to avoid mixing metaphors.[71] He will also, however, be able to expand his range of expressions through exploiting the essential metaphors in accurate ways. As Flavian expresses it, outlining his poetic programme, in Marius:

> Others might brutalise or neglect the native speech, that true 'open field' for charm and sway over men. He would make of it a serious study, weighing the precise power of every phrase and word, as though it were precious metal, disentangling the later associations and going back to the original and native sense of each, - restoring to full significance all its wealth of latent figurative expression,

[69] "Style," in Appreciations, p.12.

[70] "Style," in Appreciations, p.20. My italics.

[71] See "Style," in Appreciations, p.20.

> reviving or replacing its outworn or tarnished images.[72]

Pater's recommendations on this matter recall Carlyle's observation about language's metaphorical make-up, and the concern which Mallarmé revealed in his passionate interest in etymology.[73] The view that the writer should keep his inner eye focused on the images at the heart of his expressions is one, too, which we shall see voiced repeatedly by the theorists we have yet to consider.[74]

What, finally, did Pater have to say about the product, in part discovered, and yet carefully crafted, by the poet? His comments on the matter once again reveal his affinity with the Symbolists, for they consistently describe a poem in which all the parts work together to hold the reader in a kind of spell, to create an effect which could never be analysed without incurring an unaccountable loss. The direct inspiration for his account of the matter is quite clearly Coleridge's Biographia Literaria, with its description of the ideal poem as one whose parts are fused by the fire of the imagination into an organic synthesis.[75] In the Preface to The Renaissance, he expresses disappointment that so few artists leave behind them a body of work every part of which "the heat of their imagination has wholly fused and

[72] Marius, I, p.20.

[73] See Chapter I, p.111 of this thesis.

[74] See Yeats, below, p.180, Gourmont, Chapter III, p.241, Hulme, Chapter V, p.354, and Pound, Chapter VII, p.446 of this thesis.

[75] See Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, pp.172-4.

transformed."[76] In the essay on Winckelmann, after a clear allusion to Coleridge's "secondary imagination,"[77] he praises a poem of Browning's for conveying "the impression of one imaginative tone, of a single creative act,"[78] and likens the ideal work of art to a point of focus "where rays, in themselves pale and impotent, unite and begin to burn...."[79] That he understood the poem to be one in which, as Coleridge described it, "the parts...mutually support and explain each other,"[80] is confirmed in the essay on "Style," where he says of the working writer that he "foresees the end in the beginning and never loses sight of it, and in every part is conscious of all the rest...."[81] Pater's account of how the effect of the organically related parts will elude analysis is directly in keeping with Schopenhauer's description of the highest art, for which any attempt to translate its embodied Idea into concepts was "always a fall."[82] Praising lyrical poetry, he locates its special value in the fact that any attempt, upon reading it, "to detach the matter from the form," will result in "a deduction of something from that matter

[76] Preface to Renaissance, pp.x-xi. My italics. Of Wordsworth, he remarks on p.xi that "The heat of his genius, entering into the substance of his work, has crystallized a part, but only a part, of it...."

[77] See "Winckelmann," in Renaissance, pp.213-4.

[78] "Winckelmann," in Renaissance, p.215.

[79] "Winckelmann," in Renaissance, p.214.

[80] Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, p.172.

[81] "Style," in Appreciations, p.21.

[82] See Chapter I, p. 69 , of this thesis.

itself...." The "perfection of such poetry," he asserts, touching a chord which would have had much resonance for that master of the obscure and the ambiguous, Mallarmé, "often appears to depend...on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the meaning reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding...."[83]

iii) Yeats.

a) Apprehension.

In the Introduction to that book which he dedicated to Yeats, Arthur Symons characterized the Symbolist movement in literature as essentially a "revolt against exteriority, against rhetoric, against a materialistic tradition...." He represented Symbolist writings in general as endeavours "to disengage the ultimate essence, the soul, of whatever exists and can be realised by the consciousness...."[84] Symons' views of Symbolism are echoed by Yeats in an essay entitled "The Autumn of the Body," written two years before The Symbolist Movement in Literature was published. Here Yeats admits that his early aspirations as a writer were simply "to describe things as vividly as possible," that at one time he took pleasure in literature which was "picturesque and declamatory." These early pleasures have now, however, lost their attraction

[83] "The School of Giorgione," in Renaissance, p.137.

[84] Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, p.5.

for him; and he regards his change of heart as indicative of precisely that changing spirit identified by Symons. "I did not then understand," he says, "that the change was from beyond my own mind, but I understand now that writers are struggling all over Europe...against that picturesque and declamatory way of writing, against that 'externality' which a time of scientific and political thought has brought into literature." He goes on to assert that the future purpose of his art, and of the arts in general, will be to convey "the essences of things." Artists, in sum, "are about to substitute once more the distillation of alchemy for the analyses of chemistry...."[85]

Yeats' rejection, in "The Autumn of the Body," of an art of "externality" for an art of "essences," would seem a definitive statement of his allegiance to the Symbolist rejection of the material world which found its extreme expression in the theoretical writings of Mallarmé. Indeed he supports his statement of his new aspirations for art by citing Symons' translation of the dictum of Mallarmé, that a writer must aim to capture "'the horror of the forest or the silent thunder in the leaves, not the intense dense wood of

[85] "The Autumn of the Body," in Essays and Introductions (London: Macmillan, 1961), p.189. See also "The Symbolism of Poetry," p.155. Subsequent references to this volume will be to Essays.

Also note Yeats' letter to the editor of the Daily Chronicle, 27 January 1899, in The Letters of W. B. Yeats, ed. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p.310, and the letter to John O'Leary, from the week ending 23 July 1892, p.211. Subsequent references to this volume will be to Letters.

the trees....'"[86] In fact, however, Yeats' comments in his early writings do not manifest any simple, single-minded rejection of material reality, for Yeats' powerful attraction to a transcendental world coincided with an equally powerful attachment to the world of sense. Largely through his reading of Blake, Yeats had acquired the same wariness of abstract theory which we have observed in Pater, and the same dedication to the experience of impressions. Yeats' problem was to reconcile this feeling about the artist's obligation to sense-experience with the conviction that the world beyond the material one had also much to offer him. The critic William O'Donnell points out that by 1906 Yeats had developed a "permanent 'solution'"[87] to this problem. By looking at Yeats' writings from and about the period leading up to that time, we may clarify both the elements of the problem and the terms of the solution.

In a letter to John O'Leary in 1892 Yeats proclaimed that "The mystical life is the centre of all that I do and all that I think and all that I write."[88] The prose

[86] "The Autumn of the Body," in Essays, p.193. Symons translates and paraphrases Mallarmé's words in The Symbolist Movement in Literature, p.73.

[87] See William H. O'Donnell, "Yeats as Adept and Artist: The Speckled Bird, The Secret Rose, and The Wind Among the Reeds," in Yeats and the Occult, ed. George Mills Harper (London: Macmillan, 1976), p.60. Note also Michael J. Sidnell's recognition, in "Mr. Yeats, Michael Robartes and Their Circle," of the same problem, in Harper, p.225: "the conflict in the man and his work between a passionate attachment to nature and an insistent quest for transcendent reality."

[88] Letter to John O'Leary, during the week ending 23 July 1892, in Letters, p.211.

and poetry of the subsequent decade is full of allusions to a world "beyond" the material one, and Yeats' musings upon that world in many ways recall the attitudes which we have noted in Baudelaire and Mallarmé. Baudelaire's image of the mystical world speaking to men through a forest of symbols is called to mind by a passage in "The Celtic Element in Literature"(1902). In that essay Yeats celebrates the way in which ancient peoples perceived the world, marvelling at the fact that for them "trees, and beasts, and dead things" alike seemed to "talk with human voices."[89] The analogy which Carlyle and Mallarmé observed between the spiritual world revealing itself through nature and the light shimmering through a window has its counterpart in "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry"(1900), where Yeats cites the striking lines from "Adonais": "Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass, / Stains the white radiance of Eternity."[90] Just as, moreover, in Mallarmé's early verse, the haunting "Azur" tempts the poet away from earthly life, so throughout Yeats' early poems, from Crossways(1889) to The Wind Among the Reeds(1899), the fairies utter their enticing call:

> Come away, O human child!
> To the waters and the wild
> With a faery, hand in hand,
> For the world's more full of weeping than you
> can understand.[91]

[89] "The Celtic Element in Literature," in Essays, p.175. Cf. Symons' quotation of Gérard de Nerval, in The Symbolist Movement in Literature, p.17.

[90] "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry," in Essays, p.72.

[91] "The Stolen Child," The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (London: Macmillan, 1950), ll.9-12, p.20. See also "The

The spiritual world to which Yeats referred in his early poetry was not a fiction to him: he was certain both of its existence, and of the possibility of gaining access to it. His would-be means of access was, of course, magic; he wrote to Lionel Johnson in 1893 of his conviction that "an idealism or spiritualism which denies magic, and evil spirits even, and sneers at magicians and even mediums...is an academical imposture."[92] As a member successively of three occult societies, Yeats undertook his necromantic experiments in conscious defiance of the scientific materialism which he had encountered in his own father, and which was the avowed enemy of members of the occult revival in general. As he declared in "The Autumn of the Body," the present time was one "when we are beginning to be interested in many things which positive science, the interpreter of exterior law, has always denied: communion of mind with mind in thought and without words, foreknowledge in dreams and in visions, and the coming among us of the dead, and of much else."[93]

Hosting of the Sidhe," ll.4-5, p.61, where the fairy Niamh calls "Away, come away: / Empty your heart of its mortal dream." Subsequent references to this volume will be to Poems. Cf. Yeats' letter to Katharine Tynan, on 14 March 1888, where he says that his poetry is "a flight into fairyland from the real world, and a summons to that flight." See Letters, p.63.

[92] Letter to Lionel Johnson, February or March 1893, in Letters, p.228.

[93] "The Autumn of the Body," in Essays, pp.191-2. See also Yeats' address at the opening session of the Dublin Hermetic Society on 16 June 1885, cited by Richard Ellmann, in Yeats: The Man and the Masks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.42.

By what means, then, did Yeats believe access to the spiritual world could be gained? In "The Symbolism of Poetry" he notes that a trance-like state in which symbols appear to the mind's eye may be induced by the experience of hypnotic auditory or visual rhythms.[94] The experience of the symbolic procession may also be induced, he asserts in a 1901 essay on "Magic," by the presentation to one's own mind or to another's, of certain geometrical or natural "symbols":[95] certain forms which have "acquired a precise meaning...not only to the dark portion of one's own mind, but to the mind of the race."[96] Yeats learned about the specific evocative powers of such talismans from Mathers, who was well-versed in the symbols of the Christian Cabbala, and there are many accounts in the prose writings of his own first-hand experiences of evocation:

> He gave me a cardboard symbol and I closed my eyes. Sight came slowly, there was not that sudden miracle as if the darkness had been cut with a knife...but there rose before me mental images that I could not control: a desert and a black Titan raising himself up by his two hands from the middle of a heap of ancient ruins. Mathers explained that I had seen a being of the order of Salamanders because he had shown me their symbol, but it was not necessary even to show me the symbol, it would have been sufficient that he imagined it.[97]

[94] See "The Symbolism of Poetry," in Essays, p.159.

[95] See "Magic," in Essays, p.28.

[96] The Trembling of the Veil, in Autobiographies (London: Macmillan, 1955), p.372.

[97] The Trembling of the Veil, in Autobiographies, pp.185-6.

Yeats clarifies what he understands to be the precise nature of the realm he has contacted in Mather's spells in the essay on "Magic," where he asserts his belief in the existence, in the universe, of a "single mind," and one "great memory":[98] a spiritual unity in which all individual minds and memories participate. A belief in such a universal mind or spirit, as he notes, had been fundamental to all magical doctrine. Madame Blavatsky, for example, another one of his spiritual teachers, asserted the fundamental identity of all souls with a "Universal Oversoul."[99] The notion of such an Oversoul had a history extending back to Plato, for whom it was the dwelling-place of the Ideas. It appeared in Swedenborg as the "Grand Man" of the universe,[100] and in Wordsworth as the "immortal sea" out of which all men are born into the world.[101] Most recently, too, although Yeats was unaware of this fact in 1901, it had emerged as the "Collective Unconscious" of Jung; and we have seen an implicit reference to something like it in Rimbaud's account of that "autre self," rooted in a life beyond that of his sole person.

[98] "Magic," in Essays, p.28.

[99] See Ellmann, Yeats: The Man and the Masks, pp.58-9.

[100] From Swedenborg it was passed to Blake and Baudelaire, among others.

[101] See William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," in The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, Vol.IV, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947), p.284, l.164. Cf. Yeats in Per Amica Silentia Lunae, in Mythologies (London: Macmillan, 1959), p.346: "Our daily thought was certainly but the line of foam at the shallow edge of a vast luminous sea...."

The spiritual realm described by Yeats resembles Rimbaud's in being the dwelling-place of mysterious images, images which, in fulfilling certain conditions which I shall specify shortly, Yeats calls "symbols." From "a deeper source than conscious or subconscious memory,"[102] he has learned from Mathers, there sometimes well up before the mind's eye "images that are living souls...."[103] Like Rimbaud, he holds that the conscious mind exercises no control over the contents of this "other self"; he refers to the spectacle before his mind's eye as "a capricious and variable world, which the will cannot shape or change...."[104] Like all of the idealists and Symbolists we have considered, moreover, and like Pater, he holds that these most significant moments are possible only when the mind is "liberated from the pressure of the will "[105] and the individual withdrawn from the world of action: "one is furthest from symbols," he observes, "when one is busy doing this or that...."[106] Most commonly, Yeats' descriptions of the state in which the symbols are experienced portray it as a state somewhere between sleeping and waking, a state in which the conscious mind renounces control over what it witnesses, but not the ability to ponder over its

[102] The Trembling of the Veil, in Autobiographies, p.183.

[103] See "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry," in Essays, p.79.

[104] "Symbolism in Painting," in Essays, p.151. See also "Magic," p.29.

[105] "The Symbolism of Poetry," in Essays, p.159.

[106] "The Symbolism of Poetry," in Essays, p.162. See also "Discoveries," pp.277-8.

significance.[107]

Yeats' early prose writings contain numerous accounts of his own experience of the images of the Anima Mundi. He speaks vividly, for example, in The Trembling of the Veil(1922), of an occasion when he saw "between sleeping and waking, as in a kinematograph, a galloping centaur, and a moment later a naked woman of incredible beauty, standing upon a pedestal and shooting an arrow at a star."[108] His enthusiastic pursuit of the spiritual world, through experiments in which "the visible world would completely vanish,"[109] and the world of the Oversoul take its place, suggest that he was seeking wholeheartedly to renounce the material world. He hints at such an aspiration in "The Celtic Element in Literature," saying that "it may be the arts are founded on the life beyond the world, and that they must cry in the ears of our penury until the world has been consumed and become a vision."[110] In a number of the poems

[107] In "The Symbolism of Poetry," in Essays, p.161, Yeats speaks of how the intellect aids the reader to ponder over the procession of symbols evoked by symbols in poetry. For further references to the state of both sleeping and waking see "The Symbolism of Poetry," p.159, "Discoveries," p.285, Per Amica Silentia Lunae, in Mythologies, p.326, and The Trembling of the Veil, in Autobiographies, pp.332 and 372.

[108] The Trembling of the Veil, in Autobiographies,p.372. See also "Symbolism in Painting," in Essays, pp.151-2.
Yeats also writes of the experience of inducing visions in others by calling up symbols before his own mind. See for example Autobiographies, p.258, pp.261-2, p.264, p.268.

[109] The Trembling of the Veil, in Autobiographies, p.186.

[110] "The Celtic Element in Literature," in Essays, p.184.

in The Wind Among the Reeds, too, he expresses a longing for a final, apocalyptic dissolution of the material world;[111] and in the 1906 version of The Shadowy Waters he has Forgael voice a comparable desire:

> All would be well
> Could we but give us wholly to the dreams,
> And get into their world that to the sense
> Is shadow, and not linger wretchedly
> Among substantial things....[112]

But Yeats' quest for the spiritual world was not, in fact, without moments of trepidation. Sometimes the comfort of the world below the stars exerted a powerful appeal over the wonder of the world beyond them. Among the invocations of apocalypse in The Wind Among the Reeds is a poem in which Yeats hesitates trembling at the very prospect, much as the young Mallarmé hesitated at the prospect of smashing the window-pane and falling into eternity. Yeats' reluctance wholeheartedly to embrace the spirit world is best documented in two essays of 1897, "Rosa Alchemica" and "The Tables of the Law." In the first of these, he speaks of standing at his window, gazing at the stars and longing for an ecstatic union with the world on the other side of them. But when he is offered the opportunity of such a union, through initiation into an occult society, he proves the most hesitant novice, and in the end flees from the society in terror. At the close

[111] See for example "The Secret Rose," in Poems, p.78, "He Mourns for the Change that has Come upon him and his Beloved and Longs for the End of the World," p.68, and "He Hears the Cry of the Sedge," p.75.

[112] The Shadowy Waters, in Poems, p.480.

of this essay, as in "The Tables of the Law," Yeats recoils from the overreaching of the occultists, and is drawn towards the Christian view that man is obligated to dwell amongst material things. A man must perhaps seek God, he considers, not by directly pursuing the spiritual world, but by recognizing and repenting the sin which has divided him from it.[113] In these moments, Yeats' aspiration, reminiscent of Baudelaire's desire for the immediate recovery of the "Éden perdu," is restrained by a sober, somewhat Hulmean sense of the restrictions imposed on him by the fact of Original Sin.

Far more than any dedication to Christian belief, however, it was Yeats' sense of the special nature of the artistic vocation which confirmed his attraction to the world of sense.[114] As an artist, he believed, it was his duty to experience the material world in all its variety. In The Trembling of the Veil he wrote of his prayers as a young man for an imagination "as preoccupied with life as had been the imagination of Chaucer."[115] The enemy of art, and the habit

[113] See "Rosa Alchemica," in Mythologies, p.292, and "The Tables of the Law," pp.305-6.

[114] Yeats himself acknowledges a conflict between his occult and artistic interests. At the beginning of "Rosa Alchemica" he speaks of criticisms which have been levelled at him by men entirely committed to the occult, criticisms to the effect that his tentative sympathy for occult activity is "but the sympathy of the artist...." See Mythologies, p.267. In the unfinished autobiographical novel The Speckled Bird, a character modelled on MacGregor Mathers confronts the Yeats character with the same accusation: "'I have come to recognize that you are not a magician, but some kind of artist, and that the summum bonum itself, the potable gold of our masters, were less to you than some charm of colour, or some charm of words.'" William H. O'Donnell quotes the mss. of The Speckled Bird, in "Yeats as Adept and Artist," in Harper, p.59.

[115] The Trembling of the Veil, in Autobiographies, p.188. My italics.

in all events to be avoided, was for him precisely what it had been for Pater: the activity of generalizing about experience which blinds men to the uniqueness of things, "the abstract meditation which lures men from visible beauty...."[116] A 1909 entry from his journal is reminiscent of Pater's attack in the Conclusion to The Renaissance on the holding of any theory, or idea, or system which cuts one off from life. It reveals Yeats' sense, too, of the fact of experience which preoccupied Bergson,[117] that the man who clings to a fixed, abstract theory, or opinion, will cease to be responsive to the changing responses to life taking place in his deeper self, and will instead behave mechanically, as a kind of automaton:

> Opinion (perhaps even philosophy is too definite if more than a protection) is the enemy of the artist because it arms his uninspired moment against his inspiration. What was once inspiration is systematized and is used by the heavier part of the mind to strengthen itself against the finer. A mechanism is created which may attack life itself. The artist has vulgarized himself the moment his systematized thought passes out of his passion as from under a fiery cloud.[118]

An artist's truth, Yeats goes on to say, unlike the truth of logical, dogmatic thinkers like Voltaire or Rousseau, is admirable because it is new with each new experience; "We taste and feel and see the truth," he states categorically

[116] "The Celtic Element in Literature," in Essays, p.175.

[117] See Chapter IV, p.254 of this thesis for Bergson's discussion of the superficial self.

[118] See "Journal," entry of 17 February 1909, in Memoirs, ed. Denis Donoghue (London: Macmillan, 1972), p.170.

in a subsequent entry; "We do not reason ourselves into it."[119] In The Trembling of the Veil Yeats says that it was from studying Blake that he learned to hate all abstraction.[120] He cites Blake, too, in a statement in the "Discoveries" essays about the bond between art and the world of sense:

> Art bids us touch and taste and hear and see the world, and shrinks from what Blake calls mathematic form, from every abstract thing, from all that is of the brain only, from all that is not a fountain jetting from the entire hopes, memories, and sensations of the body.[121]

The tension between Yeats' desire for the supersensual world and his reluctance to renounce the material one was evident as early as 1893, when in "To the Rose upon the Rood of Time" he both summoned the Rose, symbol of spiritual beauty, and begged it not to come too close to him:

> Come near, come near, come near - Ah leave me still
> A little space for the rose-breath to fill!
> Lest I no more hear common things that crave;
> The weak worm hiding down in its small cave,
> The field-mouse running by me in the grass,
> And heavy mortal hopes that toil and pass....[122]

By the "Discoveries" essays of 1906, however, he has gone some way towards defining a state in which the artist might be said to straddle the two worlds to which he is drawn. He pictures the artist, there, as an ascetic who has ascended some way out

[119] Yeats, "Journal," entry of 21 March 1909, in Memoirs, pp.195-6.

[120] See Yeats, The Trembling of the Veil, in Autobiographies, p.181.

[121] Yeats, "Discoveries," in Essays, pp.292-3.

[122] "To the Rose upon the Rood of Time," in Poems, p.35, ll.13-18.

of material interests, but an ascetic whose renunciation of worldly things has not been the kind of absolute renunciation of a saint.[123] The saint, he points out, forgoes all types of worldly experience, all sensual enjoyment and all of the personal emotion which accompanies it; his existence is akin to the state which Mallarmé claimed to have achieved in confronting "le Néant." The artist, however, ought, he believed, to renounce only the kind of interests and issues which fill the newspapers, localized matters which may never again arise; he ought not to deny himself those sensual and emotional experiences which are perpetually recurring among men in the world.[124] Yeats' description of the proper realm for the poet's attention resembles Pater's description of the flux, but the flux turning and revolving back over its path, like a serpent with its tail in its mouth:

> The poet must not seek for what is still and fixed, for that has no life for him...but [he must] be content to find his pleasure in all that is for ever passing away that it may come again, in the beauty of women, in the fragile flowers of spring, in momentary heroic passion, in whatever is most fleeting, most impersonal as it were, for its own perfection, most eager to return in its glory.

"If it be true that God is a circle whose centre is everywhere," he says in conclusion, "the saint goes to the centre, the poet

[123] See "Discoveries," pp.286-7.

[124] Yeats writes to George Russell, on 6 March 1899, that "I think that a poet, or even a mystic, becomes a greater power from understanding all the great primary emotions and these one only gets out of going through the common experiences and duties of life." Letters, p.315.

and artist to the ring where everything comes round again."[125]

b) Articulation.

If a certain reconciliation of Yeats' transcendental and sensual interests is achieved in his assertion that the artist should be an ascetic of what is truly transient, but a participant in the kind of experience which recurs, a more satisfactory reconciliation of his interests lies in his discussion of the means by which the artist is to articulate his experience. Accepting that fleeting impressions are worthy of the artist's contemplation, Yeats is nonetheless anxious that his response to these impressions should be transmuted, in his art, into something impersonal, something timeless: something which will partake of the higher, spiritual world. He proposes in an 1898 article that impressions which would otherwise flicker away might be sustained, if they could only be touched by some divinity.[126] Elsewhere, in a clear allusion to Mallarmé, he expresses a desire that the work of art appear to be something "as separate from everything heterogeneous and casual, from all character and circumstances, as some Hérodiade...dancing seemingly alone in her narrow moving luminous circle."[127] The key to the transmutation of personal impressions into impersonal, eternal, art seems to

[125] Yeats, "Discoveries," in Essays, p.287. For the same image see Per Amica Silentia Lunae, in Mythologies, p.340.

[126] See "A Symbolic Artist and the Coming of Symbolic Art," in Memoirs, p.284.

[127] The Trembling of the Veil, in Autobiographies, p.321.

him to be the use of a language of "symbols." Individual experience, he recognizes, can be immortalized, translated for universal understanding, if in expressing it one draws on the resources of the Anima Mundi:

> Does not all art come when a nature, that never ceases to judge itself, exhausts personal emotion in action or desire so completely that something impersonal, something that has nothing to do with action or desire, suddenly starts into its place, something which is as unforeseen, as completely organized, even as unique, as the images that pass before the mind between sleeping and waking?[128]

In building a work of art out of symbolic images, Yeats asserts, the artist can make it into a kind of window onto a transcendental world. He can be an "enchanter,"[129] presenting an artistic talisman which will expose the Anima Mundi for the reader just as Mather's charms have done for Yeats himself:

> All art that is not mere story-telling, or mere portraiture, is symbolic, and has the purpose of those symbolic talismans which mediaeval magicians made with complex colours and forms, and bade their patients ponder over daily, and guard with holy secrecy; for it entangles, in complex colours and forms, a part of the Divine Essence.[130]

In the presence of symbolic theatre, Yeats asserts at one point, "We feel our minds expand convulsively or spread out slowly like some moon-brightened image-crowded sea."[131] The

[128] The Trembling of the Veil, in Autobiographies, p.332.

[129] "William Blake and his Illustrations to the Divine Comedy," in Essays, p.141.

[130] "Symbolism in Painting," in Essays, p.148.

[131] "The Tragic Theatre," in Essays, p.245.

end of any true work of art, he maintains at another, is nothing else but the feeling of ecstasy "awakened by the presence before an ever-changing mind of what is permanent in the world...."[132] Yeats' sense of the ultimate revelatory power of art is clearly in line with the ideals of a Carlyle, or a Baudelaire, for whom, as we have seen, it was to be a garment rendering the God-like visible, or a gateway to "les splendeurs situées derrière le tombeau...."

As well as sharing their belief that the ideal poem will expose transcendental truths, Yeats describes a creative process which incorporates both of the types of discovery which emerged in the Symbolist aesthetic. He makes it clear, first of all, in an 1888 letter to Katharine Tynan, that the form of the poem should develop organically, and not merely follow some predetermined pattern. Referring to the poetry of W. E. Henley, he declares:

> To me Henley's great fault is his form. It is never accidental but always preconceived. His poems are forced into a mould. I dislike the school to which he belongs. A poem should be a law to itself as plants and beasts are. It may be ever so much finished, but all finish should merely make plain that law.[133]

In the essay on "The Symbolism of Poetry," he expresses again the wish that the rhythmical pattern of a poem be not as will pre-ordains it, but rather as instinct discovers it. Like the vers libristes, he advocates rhythm's release from

[132] "Discoveries," in Essays, p.287.

[133] Letter to Katharine Tynan, after 6 September 1888, in Letters, p.86.

arbitrary laws external to the poet's particular imaginative experience:

> With this change of substance, this return to imagination, this understanding that the laws of art, which are the hidden laws of the world, can alone bind the imagination, would come a change of style, and we would cast out of serious poetry those energetic rhythms, as of a man running, which are the invention of the will with its eyes always on something to be done or undone; and we would seek out those wavering, meditative, organic rhythms, which are the embodiment of the imagination, that neither desires nor hates, because it has done with time, and only wishes to gaze upon some reality, some beauty....[134]

Most importantly, however, Yeats makes it clear that he rejects a creative process which begins with the formulation of clear ideas, and which proceeds with their translation into illustrative images. Like Pater, he advocates one instead in which significance is discovered <u>through</u> concrete images which appear spontaneously, outside of the jurisdiction of the will. He reiterates a view implicit in many of his earlier essays, and recalls that passage in Hegel which probably influenced Pater, in a 1913 essay called "Art and Ideas," where he regrets the interest in "fragmentary sensuous beauty" and "detachable ideas"[135] which characterizes the work of many contemporary poets. That he shares with Schopenhauer and Mallarmé the belief that the source of art

[134] "The Symbolism of Poetry," in <u>Essays</u>, p.163.

[135] "Art and Ideas," in <u>Essays</u>, pp.353-4. The ideal poem seems to him, he says, to be one in which no idea is detachable, but all ideas are fused into "a single image." Cf. Pound's conception of the "image," discussed in Chapter VII of this thesis.

is "antérieure à un concept" is evident in the "Discoveries" essays, both from his assertion that it is instinct and not intellect which provides the subject matter of art,[136] and from his description of an old peasant who has "felt something in the depth of his mind "[137] and is desirous of expressing it. The aspect of Yeats' theory which makes it most clear, however, that he believed the poet's recognition of intellectual or emotional content and of sensual forms to be coinstantaneous, is his repeated reference to that common Symbolist distinction between "symbolism" and "allegory." He is dismissive of allegory for involving an activity in which the artist merely selects an image to represent some "familiar principle,"[138] or "preordained thought":[139] something which has already been "embodied"[140] in language in his mind. The relationship between the allegorist's meaning and the image he chooses to represent it, is not, he points out, a necessary one; his meaning might be expressed "as well, or better, in another way...."[141] By contrast, he observes, the symbol arises in the mind when the intellect and the will are

[136] See "Discoveries," in Essays, p.289.

[137] See "Discoveries," in Essays, p.276.

[138] "William Blake and his Illustrations to the Divine Comedy," in Essays, p.116.

[139] "Edmund Spenser," in Essays, p.379. Cf. the descriptions of allegory in Schopenhauer, Chapter I, p. 68, and Mockel, Chapter I, p.26 of this thesis.

[140] "William Blake and his Illustrations to the Divine Comedy," in Essays, p.116.

[141] "Symbolism in Painting," in Essays, p.147.

suspended; it is not an image consciously chosen to express a preconceived idea, but an image which arises from the unconscious mind, and which may be possessed of greater significance than the poet knows.[142] It would not be possible for the symbol, as Yeats defines it, to be the concrete translation of something already formulated in the abstract, because the symbol is "the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual flame...."[143] For the symbolic artist, Yeats says, and for the beholder of his art, the intellectual or emotional content[144] of his work and its sensual form are inseparable; the spiritual state which a symbol expresses cannot be comprehended separately from it:

> It is not possible to separate an emotion or a spiritual state from the image that calls it up and gives it expression. Michelangelo's Moses, Velasquez' Philip the Second, the colour

[142] For the fact that the complete significance of the symbols is not necessarily known to the poet, see "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry," in Essays, pp.78-9. The significance which a symbol possesses may be the result either of "preordained energies" or "long association" among men. See "The Symbolism of Poetry," pp.156-7. Unlike Carlyle (see Chapter I, p. 72 of this thesis) Yeats sees no point in distinguishing between symbols whose significance is inherent and symbols whose significance is the result of an agreement among men. See "Magic," pp.49-50, and "Symbolism in Painting," p.147.

[143] "William Blake and his Illustrations to the Divine Comedy," in Essays, p.116. My italics.

[144] Note that Yeats, in his discussion of symbols in "The Symbolism of Poetry," in Essays, pp.160-161, attributes to the true "intellectual" symbol both intellectual and emotional power. Cf. Pound's "image," which "presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time," discussed in Chapter VII, p.430 of this thesis.

> purple, a crucifix, call into life an emotion or state that vanishes with them because they are its only possible expression, and that is why no mind is more valuable than the images it contains.[145]

Like Pater, Yeats couples his views about the organic development of the poem's rhythmical form, and about the discovery of significance involved in the spontaneous appearance of its images, with an insistence on the discipline and precision involved in the act of its construction. He writes to Mrs. Patrick Campbell of his desire to express himself "without waste," to remain "impassioned and yet to have a perfect self-possession, to have a precision so absolute that the slightest inflection of voice, the slightest rhythm of sound or emotion plucks the heart-strings."[146] A crucial part of the poetic discipline, moreover, is for him as for Pater and Mallarmé an acute awareness of the intrinsic properties of the words employed. Yeats' remarks on this matter touch what we shall see to be a central theme in the writings of Gourmont, Hulme, and Pound: the opposition to the blind, unthinking use of cliché. His insistence on the matter is linked, in his mind, with the sense that the poet must at all costs not be a kind of automaton, uttering commonplace opinions in commonplace terms. With an intent similar to Hulme's when, as we shall see, he depicted expression in cliché as a blind exchange of "counters,"[147] Yeats speaks

[145] "Discoveries," in Essays, p.286.

[146] Letter to Mrs. Patrick Campbell, November 1901, in Letters, p.360.

[147] See Chapter V, p.362 of this thesis.

disapprovingly of the "substitution of phrases as nearly impersonal as algebra" for what should be "words and rhythms varying from man to man...."[148] In a variation of the metaphor used by Mallarmé, he likens the exchange of such algebraic phrases to the trading of "paper money"[149] rather than "gold." To write in cliché, he implies, is to employ words as if they possess no intrinsic value, but are only currency for some external, stipulated significance.

If Yeats' description of the ideal artist resembles Mallarmé's in its insistence on his sensitivity to the intrinsic properties of language, his references to the product of his labours are equally compatible with the ideals of the French writer. In his journal he criticizes newspapers for the fact that "They prefer mere logic, even when they do not understand it, to suggestion, which alone is the foundation of literature."[150] Most of Yeats' remarks on the ideal poem, as his comments about its affinity with the talisman would suggest, point to the view of its function held by Mallarmé and which we have traced back to Schopenhauer: the view that it should hold its reader in a kind of spell, that the

[148] "The Well of the Saints," in Essays, p.301.

[149] "J. M. Synge and the Ireland of his Time," in Essays, p.314. In this essay, Yeats represents the use of cliché as one with the glib exchange of popular, not personally developed, opinion. Cf. his observation in his journal, that as the result of education and the newspapers "a thousand impersonalities have filled the world with the imitation of what once was gold.... We have everywhere new counterfeit that is thought better, instead of merely more obtainable, than true metal." Memoirs, pp.169-70.

[150] "Journal," in Memoirs, p.207. My italics.

significance it subtly suggests should not be translatable into any abstract terms which the reader may formulate when no longer in its presence. Yeats reinforces his suggestion that the ideal poem holds its reader in a fixed trance by remarking that it must contain hypnotic rhythms, which, he says, have the power to blur "definition, clear edges, everything that comes from the will...."[151] He says of the poem, too, that it should have "the perfections that escape analysis, the subtleties that have a new meaning every day."[152] Like Schopenhauer's art of Idea, it is to be endlessly generative, never exhausted by paraphrase into abstract concepts.

Yeats makes a number of references to specific ways in which the ideal poem works to elude analysis. In "The Symbolism of Poetry," for example, he describes the poem as evocative of a single emotion, an emotion greater, he implies, than the sum of the evocative powers of the individual sensual elements into which it might be analysed:

> All sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their preordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions, or, as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions; and when sound, and colour, and form are in a musical relation,

[151] "The Well of the Saints," in Essays, p.299. Note that unlike Hulme, Yeats was dedicated to the idea that poetry should be read aloud. In "The Return of Ulysses," in Essays, p.199, he regrets the loss of "the subtle art of listening," and asserts that the delights of poetry "cannot be perfect when we read it alone in our rooms...." Contrast Hulme, Chapter V , p.374 of this thesis.

[152] "The Symbolism of Poetry," in Essays, p.164. My italics.

> a beautiful relation to one another, they become, as it were, one sound, one colour, one form, and evoke an emotion that is made out of their distinct evocations and yet is one emotion.[153]

That he understands the poem to be unanalysable, however, is best evident from his descriptions of the symbols out of which it is made. The work composed of symbols, as we have seen him describe them, could never be entirely susceptible to analysis, because the meaning of the symbols is by definition inseparable from them. The symbols, moreover, are in his view possessed of "numberless" meanings, meanings no more completely accessible to the reader than they are to the poet in whom they arise:

> It is only by ancient symbols, by symbols that have numberless meanings besides the one or two the writer lays an emphasis upon, or the half-score he knows of, that any highly subjective art can escape from the barrenness and shallowness of a too conscious arrangement into the abundance and depth of Nature.[154]

Yeats' sense that no individual symbol in the ideal poem could be singly, exhaustively translated, or the whole of the poem explained as the sum of its parts, is evident too from comments which indicate his awareness of how an element of a poem may acquire extra significance from its context, of how it may lend significance to the elements which surround it, and of how, therefore, the whole of the poem will elude translation into terms other than its own. He hints at how

[153] "The Symbolism of Poetry," in Essays, pp.156-7.

[154] "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry," in Essays, p.87.

meaning may be augmented through juxtaposition in "The Symbolism of Poetry":

> If I say 'white' or 'purple' in an ordinary line of poetry, they evoke emotions so exclusively that I cannot say why they move me; but if I bring them into the same sentence with such obvious intellectual symbols as a cross or a crown of thorns, I think of purity and sovereignty.[155]

Describing this phenomenon further, in "Art and Ideas," he uses the very Mallarméan image of the mutual reflection of light. One might take some line out of a symbolic story, he says, "and see how it flickers with the light of the many symbols that have given the story its beauty, as a sword-blade may flicker with the light of burning towers."[156]

Yeats cites Mallarmé's image of the glittering stones of poetry directly in "The Autumn of the Body."[157] His remarks there point, too, to a special admiration for the type of poetry which, like Mallarmé's, presents an entire symbolic system. Endorsing Symons' support for the Mallarméan notion of a poetry of "essences," he goes on to disagree with Symons' understanding that these essences should be "separated one from another in little and intense poems."[158] The highest poetic achievement is not, he says, that of a "fragmentary" symbolist like Keats, whose work brings the reader into contact with

[155] "The Symbolism of Poetry," in Essays, p.161.

[156] "The Symbolism of Poetry," in Essays, p.156.

[157] Essays, pp.193-4.

[158] "The Autumn of the Body," in Essays, p.194.

"a part of the Divine Essence,"[159] but only for a brief, intense moment. The ultimate achievement, rather, is to him the creation of a consistent, symbolic world through which such contact might be sustained, the world of a "systematic"[160] symbolist like Blake, or Dante or Shelley. Yeats expresses great pleasure in exploring the symbolic world of Shelley, with its "system of ordered images":[161]

> ...I only made my pleasure in him contented pleasure by massing in my imagination his recurring images of towers and rivers, and caves with fountains in them, and that one Star of his, till his world had grown solid underfoot and consistent enough for the soul's habitation.[162]

He looks forward, in "Art and Ideas," to the creation of more long poems like the Divine Comedy, "vast worlds moulded by their own weight like drops of water."[163] Yeats values poetry, in short, which achieves that condition which we have seen sought by Baudelaire and Mallarmé, the condition of constituting a kind of autonomous world. Like Baudelaire, he says that the material world is not to be simply mirrored in the poem, but is to serve as " a dictionary of types and symbols"[164] from

[159] "Symbolism in Painting," in Essays, p.149.

[160] "Symbolism in Painting," in Essays, p.150. The reference to Dante is in "Discoveries," p.293.

[161] "Discoveries," in Essays, p.293.

[162] "Discoveries," in Essays, p.294. Cf. p.293, where he claims that "the soul can only achieve a distinct separated life where many objects at once distinguish and arouse its energies in their fullness."

[163] "Art and Ideas," in Essays, p.354.

[164] "The Autumn of the Body," in Essays, p.192. My italics.

which the poet builds a new universe. Of the composing poet he says:

> ...the more his mind is on fire or the more creative it is, the less will it look at the outer world or value it for its own sake. It gives him metaphors and examples, and that is all.[165]

The poetic world, in his account, is analogous to the natural one only in being, unlike the world of the positivist, a vessel of great mystery:

> 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.[166]

iv) Conclusion.

Pater's account of the creative activity has been seen, for the most part, to corroborate the claims for his place in the Symbolist tradition. He has been seen, first of all, to define a moment of apprehension for the poet in which the analytical intellect is suspended. He has described, secondly, an act of articulation in which neither meaning, nor form, is to be predetermined. His likeness to the Symbolists on the question of the discovery of meaning is

[165] "Discoveries," in Essays, pp.276-7.

[166] "The Return of Ulysses," in Essays, pp.201-2.

clinched by his assertion, after Hegel, that images are to be "twin-born" in the poet's mind with their significance. They are not, in his account, to be selected for the purpose of illustrating quite separately formulated abstract thoughts, or principles, as we have seen them to have been chosen in Parnassian poetry, or in that other favourite Symbolist target, the art of allegory.

The one problematic aspect, however, of the identification of Pater with the Symbolist tradition, has been seen to lie with the question of whether he conceives the poet's gaze to extend only as far as, or beyond, the world of appearances. He cannot, ultimately, be pinned down either to a strict supernaturalism, or a strict naturalism. One aspect of his thought which is indisputable, however, is his dedication to the experience and preservation of the fleeting details of the Heraclitean flux. This dedication sets his aesthetic quite apart from the sort of claims for art made by Schopenhauer and Mallarmé. In illustrating how a non-analytical apprehension, analogous to a mystical one, may nonetheless have something other than a transcendental Idea or spiritual realm as its object, his account of art significantly foreshadows what we shall encounter in Bergson and in Hulme.

A certain vacillation between the material and the transcendental has also been seen to mark the views of the young Yeats. His dedication to the world of sense, rooted, like Pater's, in a suspicion of abstract theory, prevents him,

too, from making any Mallarméan claims about transcending this world absolutely. He has been seen to achieve some kind of reconciliation of his material and transcendental interests by speaking of the artist's duty to apprehend what is recurring in the world. The true reconciliation, however, of his views that the poet should both experience the world, and render it timeless, lies in his definition of an art which draws on the symbols of the Anima Mundi. His account of the process by which such art is created incorporates the principle of the discovery of form; and, in its definition of symbol, the principle that the recognition of significance and its concrete manifestation are simultaneous. Yeats' aesthetic coincides most firmly with the Symbolist ideal, too, in its emphasis upon the qualities of mystery and inscrutability which the work of art will possess. It coincides strikingly with the Symbolist view, finally, in its suggestion that the work of art will function as a kind of talisman, or an aperture for its beholder onto the world of spirit. It was because of this kind of claim for the power of art, we shall see, and thus for the nobility of the artistic vocation, that T. E. Hulme was to take great exception to the "chief representative" of the Symbolist movement in England.

CHAPTER III

SCIENTIFIC REINTERPRETATIONS: RIBOT AND GOURMONT

i) A New Perspective.

The accounts of creative activity presented by Théodule Ribot and Remy de Gourmont, although analogous at some points to those which we have been considering, differ significantly from these in that they spring out of quite different concerns. Both Ribot, one of the most prominent psychologists in France in the late nineteenth century, and Gourmont, the noted writer, literary critic, and one time champion of Symbolism, were concerned with providing accounts of creativity based upon the findings of science. Ribot was one of the foremost publicists in France of the new science of experimental psychology. His account of the workings of the inventing mind, which owes many of its presuppositions to the English empiricist and associationist tradition, and which includes some speculation about the physiological causes and concomitants of creation, is supported by the findings of experimental investigation into the psychological activities of both men and animals. Gourmont's discussion of creative activity, which also relies upon the empiricist tradition, and which is avowedly, where Ribot's was uncommittedly, materialist, includes many references attesting to his familiarity with Ribot's work.

Ribot's L'Évolution des idées générales(1897) and Essai sur l'imagination créatrice(1900), and Gourmont's

Le Problème du style(1902) were important sources for T. E. Hulme's writings on language and style.[1] Ribot's work provided Hulme with descriptions of the distinctive psychological activities responsible for distinctive literary styles, among them the Parnassian and the Symbolist; it did not, as did Gourmont's, provide him with any argument for the value of any particular style. If Ribot's work was not important to Hulme, however, for any explicit argument which it presented, it was of a kind intrinsically attractive to the "classicist" in him, the man who valued any effort to deflate overblown, "romantic,"[2] claims about man's capacities. Hulme was particularly hostile to the tremendous amount of "hocus-pocus"[3] which he perceived

[1] Hulme mentions Ribot by name in "The Plan for a Book," Appendix B in Speculations, p.263. Alun Jones cites a letter written by Hulme to Edward Marsh, revealing that he read the Essai sur l'imagination créatrice before November 1912. See Jones, The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme, p.209.

J. C. Harmer notes Hulme's debt to Ribot in Victory in Limbo, p.117, as do René Taupin, in L'Influence du Symbolisme francais sur la poésie americaine (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1929), p.85, and Wallace Martin, in "The Sources of the Imagist Aesthetic," PMLA, 85, 2 (March 1970). Subsequent references to this article will be to "Sources."

Hulme never mentions Gourmont directly. A great number of critics, however, have noted that his Notes on Language and Style appear to owe a great deal to Le Problème du style. These include Taupin, in L'Influence du Symbolisme francais sur la poésie americaine, pp.84-5, Herbert Read, in the Introduction to Hulme's Notes on Language and Style (Seattle: Washington University Chapbooks, 1929), p.iv, William Van O'Connor in Sense and Sensibility in Modern Poetry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p.67, Michael Roberts in T. E. Hulme, p.117, Frank Kermode in Romantic Image, p.130, Glenn S. Burne in Remy de Gourmont, pp.115-7, Alun R. Jones in The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme, p.43, and Harmer in Victory in Limbo, pp.118-9. An interesting account of Gourmont's influence on Hulme is found in the unpublished thesis of David Marlin Heaton, "Two French Philosophical Sources of T. E. Hulme's Imagism," The University of Michigan, 1969.

[2] I use the terms according to Hulme's definitions. See Chapter V, pp. 293-303.

[3] See Hulme, "A Lecture on Modern Poetry," in Further Speculations, p.67.

in many descriptions of the creative activity. In the plan for a projected book on modern theories of art, he was to be openly appreciative of the work of Ribot, and of the fact that the new psychology provided the data and the terminology for a precise and restrained account of the process.[4] The kind of restraint which Hulme must have admired in Ribot did not lie in any strictly materialist view towards invention, for Ribot would not commit himself to such a view, and Hulme was himself hostile to any suggestion that man was the absolute puppet of his physiology. His attraction to Ribot, rather, had everything to do with his conviction that the "infinite," or supernatural, ought to be kept out of discussions of creative activity, that the artists who spoke of the experience of apprehending a transcendental realm were engaged simply in self-aggrandizement. In his description of the psychological activity behind literary invention, and particularly of the activity which he believed responsible for the literature of Symbolism, Ribot focused repeatedly on those aspects of the activity which had, in the accounts of some poets, been attributed to the intervention of the supernatural, and provided alternative explanations for these which instead drew only upon the intellectual, emotional, and unconscious factors in the human psychology. He represented the writer's activity, moreover, as only one of many forms of imaginative activity, and the imagination as something possessed by all men to some degree. As Albert Baron, Ribot's English translator, observed, Ribot's

[4] See Hulme, "The Plan for a Book," Appendix B in Speculations, pp.262-3.

work served to dispel the notion that the imagination is "an entity sui generis...a lofty something found only in long-haired, wild-eyed 'geniuses'...."[5] In words which might have been Hulme's, Baron praised Ribot as a Prometheus-figure, who brought the imagination from its long-standing place in the heavens down to its proper place on earth.

Ribot's work is of interest to us, then, for its description of the psychological activities behind distinctive literary styles, and for its reinterpretation of certain grand claims about the significance of the literary activity. Gourmont's discussion of specific literary styles in Le Problème du style holds something of the same attraction, incorporating as it does a number of Ribot's findings. Gourmont's work is of further interest, moreover, for being polemical as well as descriptive, for locating among the possible literary activities one which he held to be particularly commendable. In examining the process and the style which he recommended, we shall be conscious of its place in relation to those which we have seen recommended by the Parnassians, the Symbolists, Pater, and Yeats. This comparison is a telling one, for Gourmont's literary values were to a great extent to be both Hulme's, and Pound's.

ii) Ribot.

[5] Albert H. N. Baron, Preface to Ribot's Essay on the Creative Imagination (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1906), p.v. Hulme probably read this translation.

a) L'Évolution des idées générales.

The first of the two Ribot treatises significant for Hulme, L'Évolution des idées générales, is a study coming directly out of the empiricist tradition, the tradition which originated in England with Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, and which developed into the associationism of Hartley and James and J. S. Mill. The seeds of the English tradition had previously germinated in France with Taine's mammoth study De l'Intelligence(1870), a work to which Ribot frequently refers, and with which Hulme seems also to have been familiar.[6] Two aspects of Ribot's discussion in Idées générales were to have a significant impact upon Hulme. The first was his account of the process by which abstract ideas evolve from concrete sensations in the mind, and in conjunction with this a discussion of how words, signs for ideas from the abstract end of the scale, may be distinguished according to the degree of abstraction of the ideas which they represent. The second important issue discussed by Ribot was the nature of the rational activities facilitated by the idea in its progressive stages of development. Most importantly, he illustrated the difference between prelinguistic and linguistic modes of reasoning, between the type of reasoning based upon concrete images present to the mind, and that which involves the

[6] See for example Ribot, L'Évolution des idées générales (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Germer Baillière, 1897), pp.40, 101, and 146. Wallace Martin has inferred that Hulme read Taine from certain apparent allusions to De l'Intelligence in his Notes on Language and Style. See "Sources," p.198, and Chapter V, p.357 of this thesis. Hume's account of the evolution of general ideas from "impressions" is found in Part I of his Treatise on Human Nature(1739-40).

manipulation of words to which no concrete images are attached. An investigation of his account will greatly illuminate some of the more cryptic of Hulme's Notes on Language and Style, in which he describes what takes place in the poet's mind in the process of composition.

Before considering these two aspects of Ribot's discussion, which have direct relevance for his subsequent account of the creative imagination, it is worth noting something about the spirit in which the Idées générales was written. In the Introduction to his 1870 study La Psychologie anglaise contemporaine, in which he discusses the birth of experimental psychology, Ribot characterizes the new science as an inductive study of mental phenomena which is detached from larger metaphysical concerns. He describes the new science of the mind as a study "qui ne s'occupe que des phénomènes,"[7] pointing out that its birth is only the latest event in the long history of the breaking away of individual sciences from all inquiry into first causes. The particular link which is now being severed is the one between the study of mental activity, and questions about the fundamental nature of the human soul: questions, for example, like whether the soul is an independent spirit, or simply a manifestation of physical causes. Ribot makes it clear at the start of the Idées générales that although he will sometimes postulate the physical causes and concomitants of mental activity, his study

[7] Théodule Ribot, La Psychologie anglaise contemporaine (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Germer Baillière, 1896), p.23.

will ultimately honour this detachment.[8]

Ribot begins his account of the way abstract ideas develop in the mind by identifying two different operations which play a role in the activity. The sense data which strike the tabula rasa of the mind, he says, may be subject to processes both of dissociation, by which features of a sensum are separated out from it, and of association, by which elements dissociated from their original contexts are linked with each other (p.5). These key processes, which play crucial roles in Ribot's account of creative activity, will be seen on some occasions to be spontaneous, and on others wilful, sometimes occasioned by the emotive power of things, and sometimes by their objective properties.

Ribot's movement through the spectrum of mental entities produced by dissociation and association begins with a note on the image of perception, or percept. All experiences of perception, he observes, involve the dissociative tendency, the tendency to simplify: certain features of any perceived object will seem to the observer to be set in relief, and others to be cast in shadow (pp.8-9). The same kind of dissociation, which Ribot claims at this point to be determined by "l'intérêt ou l'utilité,"[9] is involved in the formation of the mental "image," the entity located on the spectrum at an

[8] See Ribot, L'Évolution des idées générales, p.2. Subsequent references to the Idées générales, in this section, will be included in parentheses in the text.

[9] See below pp.210 and 212 and 217 for dissociations governed by other forces: strong emotional impact and the will of the intellect to lighten its labour.

"étape intermédiaire entre le percept et le concept..." (p.9). Ribot illustrates convincingly that the relationship between any image in the memory and its corresponding reality is one of drastic simplification, that even the clearest of such images "n'est qu'une esquisse, une réduction de la réalité avec omission de beaucoup de détails" (pp.9-10).

Lying between the memory image and the concept, on Ribot's scale, is an entity which he calls "l'image générique" (pp.14-15), an image which is the product both of processes of dissociation, and association. In a procedure which is entirely passive, dissociated memory images, having a number of features in common with each other, become associated in the mind; the image which results from this association is the sum product of all of the features which the images hold in common. The possession of such an image enables the holder to recognize that a thing he sees in front of him possesses features which he has perceived in a number of objects in the past. Ribot cites examples from animal behaviour to illustrate the consequences which may ensue from the possession of such an image; he notes, for example, how thirsty dogs and horses will investigate the dry furrows left in a field by a plough, drawn to them because of the qualities which they possess in common with water-troughs (pp.22-3).

The final mental entity considered by Ribot, the concept, is distinguished from the generic image on two significant grounds. It is the result, first of all, not of a passive process of assimilation, but of an active process of judgment (p.105); it is distinguished, secondly, by always

being accompanied by a word (p.101). Ribot describes the activity in which, by careful judgment, an individual discerns well-obscured similarities between quite different objects. He also describes the act of reflection by which then a particular word is acquired, which will stand thereafter for any object possessed of these characteristics (p.102).

Ribot continues his discussion by relating how concepts, and the words which represent them, may manifest different degrees of abstraction. The level of abstraction is determined, in his view, by the amount of difficulty involved in discerning the characteristics common to the objects subsumed by the concept. To illustrate how concepts, or words, may be placed in a hierarchy according to their designation of "ressemblances de plus en plus difficiles à découvrir" (p.124), Ribot cites terms drawn from the long history of zoological classification. He notes that the earliest classifications for animals were based on the most obvious resemblances, such as common dwelling places or modes of locomotion; more abstract concepts came with Aristotle's determination of more obscure resemblances, such as the common possession of blood or of lymph; and the most abstract classifications with modern attempts to subsume, under one carefully defined title, the whole of animal life (pp.118-124).

The most significant aspect of Ribot's account of how concepts may be more or less abstract is his description of the way in which the words which represent these concepts will hold varying degrees of dominance in the mind. He

represents the movement along the spectrum, from the percept to the most abstract concept, as a movement from a state in which the mind is occupied entirely by concrete sensation, to a state in which a word, free of accompanying images, has achieved "la maîtrise absolue" (p.116). That concepts are less likely, the more abstract they are, to be accompanied in the mind by concrete images, is a fact which he substantiates by citing the results of an experiment in which he questioned a number of individuals about what was evoked in their minds by each in a series of words (pp.129-145). Their responses, we witness, attest sometimes to the presence only of the sound of the word, sometimes of its typographical image, sometimes of some related concrete image, and most often of some combination of these. On tabulating his results, Ribot concludes that the most abstract terms tend to evoke sounds or typographical images alone, that it is "à mésure que l'on descend vers le concret" (p.139), towards concepts based on less difficult judgments, that the likelihood of evoking concrete images increases. With this experiment, as our subsequent discussions of Gourmont, Hulme, and Pound will reveal,[10] Ribot provided a scientific foundation for the Imagist argument on behalf of the use of words from the concrete end of the scale.

With the results of his experiment as evidence, Ribot summarizes his discussion of concepts by drawing an extended, and for our purposes highly significant analogy, with which he attempts to summarize the different types of

[10] For Gourmont, see below p.235; for Hulme, Chapter V, p.358; for Pound, Chapter VII, p.446 of this thesis.

communication made possible by different types of words. In a manner which recalls similar analogies seen in Mallarmé and Yeats,[11] Ribot likens linguistic communication in general to commercial trade, and draws parallels between the exchange of words of differing degrees of concreteness, and the different modes of trade which have marked the historical development of representative currencies (pp.124-5; p.149). The exchange of highly concrete language, in his view, is analogous to the method of trade characteristic of primitive peoples: the trading of items which are intrinsically valuable. Communication with more abstract language, an activity in which the participating parties are less likely to be evoking concrete images in each other's minds, he likens to the exchange of silver and gold, materials of some intrinsic but also of some stipulated value. Finally, Ribot likens communication with supremely abstract words to the use of paper money. The utterance of such a word does not evoke any concrete images in the mind of the listener, but evokes the visual or auditory representation of that word, and with it an understanding of its meaning; such an utterance thus resembles the passing of a piece of currency which is in itself of no concrete value, but which, as a result of communal agreement, functions to represent a certain value. Ribot's representation of the experience typical of the use of highly abstract language recalls Mallarmé's account of the use of words as of a "numéraire facile et représentatif"; it foreshadows the aspect

[11] For Mallarmé, see Chapter I, p.106; for Yeats, Chapter II, p.181 of this thesis.

of Hulme's account of poetic communication which allies it with the Symbolist's: the conviction that neither the poet nor his reader should be blind to, or uninvolved with, the intrinsic properties of the words being traded.

A further important dimension of Ribot's description of the spectrum of entities from percept to abstract concept lies in his account of the different types of reasoning made possible by the different entities. The significant division in the types of reasoning is that between the prelinguistic and the linguistic, between the type which relies on images alone, and that which involves the manipulation of the words which represent concepts. Hulme, we shall see, was to cite an activity very like Ribot's prelinguistic one as basic to the experience of his ideal poet; he was to regard the ideal poem, too, as an attempt, the best possible attempt considering its necessary use of words, to recreate its conditions.

The "logique des images," the reasoning made possible by all of the kinds of images, percepts, memory images, or generic images, which may be present to a man's consciousness without being accompanied by words, is remarkable for one important feature. Ribot identifies it thus:

> Elle [la logique des images] n'a pour matière que des représentations concrètes ou des images génériques et ne peut sortir de ce cercle. Elle est capable de constructions assez complexes, mais n'admet pas la substitution. Tandis que l'écolier novice résout sans grande peine des problèmes d'arithmétique élémentaire (tels que: 15 ouvriers ont fait en 4 jours un mur de 3 mètres, combien de temps faudra-t-il à 4 ouvriers pour le même travail?) parce qu'il use de la logique des signes, remplaçant les

> données concrètes par des chiffres et n'ayant a opérer que sur leurs rapports; la logique des images est absolument réfractaire à tout stratagème de substitution. (p.33)[12]

The essence of reasoning by images is the recognition of the features which the images have in common, the recognition of analogy. One of Ribot's examples of such a recognition has been given with the case of the dogs and horses who recognize the features which gullies have in common with water-troughs, and act accordingly. What is striking about such recognitions is that they categorically demand the presence of the particular images involved. Because these pictures have for the animals no corresponding words, no signs which might act as their substitutes, no thought involving them is possible unless they themselves are present to the consciousness. The animals are capable only of responding to the demands of situations immediately present to them; they do not think about these situations in the hypothetical terms of a mathematical problem. It is interesting to note the parallel between the experience of Ribot's animals, and the type of non-transferable experience which Schopenhauer defined for the art of Idea, and to which the likes of Mallarmé, Pater, and Yeats gave their blessing. In his scientific account, Ribot provides a description of a type of recognition which is untranslatable into concepts without invoking any kind of transcendental presence to account for the fact. This demystified version of the experience, we shall see, was to prove important to Hulme.

[12] My italics.

Ribot makes an important auxiliary point in his account of the logic of images, in pointing out that the judgments based on these images, because they never take the form of general rules, are not the kind of judgments susceptible to questions about their truth or their falsehood. Bound as they are to particular situations, he says, these judgments may be evaluated only by the success or failure of the particular actions to which they give rise. This fact has important implications for Ribot's own views about the artistic activity. The recognition of analogy, he tells us, is "le nerf principal" (p.33) of the artistic activity, and because this is so the goal of the artist ought never to be the stating of general truths. In aesthetic invention, as in the rational activity of animals, "il ne s'agit pas d'établir la vérité ou l'erreur, mais de créer une oeuvre viable ou d'avorter" (p.34). In its implication, thus, that the highest art was not an art of "ideas," and not to be susceptible to questions about truth and falsehood, Ribot's primary aesthetic principle anticipated what we shall see in Hulme. The artist's simple recognition of analogy was to Hulme to seem the most valuable intellectual activity open to man, for he was to hold that the world would in any event be elusive to explanation by general "truths."

Ribot describes the kind of rational activity made possible by words, "la pensée symbolique" (p.147), with a passage borrowed from Leibniz:

> 'Le plus souvent, par exemple dans l'analyse d'une longueur, nous n'avons pas l'intuition

> simultanée de tous les caractères ou attributs d'une chose; mais à leur place nous employons des signes; Dans la pensée actuelle, nous avons coutume d'omettre l'explication de ces signes au moyen de ce qu'ils signifient, sachant ou croyant que nous avons cette explication en notre pouvoir; mais cette application ou explication des mots, nous ne la jugeons pas nécessaire actuellement.... J'appelle cette manière de penser aveugle ou symbolique.' (p.147)[13]

To think with highly abstract words, Ribot says, again providing Hulme with an important theme, is to manipulate these words as the mathematician does his "chiffres" (p.33; pp.143-144), or the miser his bank-notes (p.125). It is, in a sense, to be blind, for in their "maîtrise absolue"[14] the words so dominate the consciousness that one cannot see any of the concrete things for which they stand. It is a crucial fact about this activity, however, that if the thinker is not immediately conscious of the concrete import of his thought, he would be able, if summoned, to supply it; it is not, Ribot stresses, as if the thinker were turning over in his mind the incomprehensible words of a foreign language (p.146). Ribot focuses upon the fact that the symbolic thinker possesses more knowledge than may be immediately present to him as proof of the operation of the unconscious mind. It is clear, he asserts, that in any case of thinking or communicating with words "il y a deux éléments, l'un qui éxiste dans la conscience (le mot entendu ou l'image auditive), l'autre qui est au-dessous

[13] My italics.

[14] See above, p.198.

de la conscience, mais qui n'est pas pour cela sans valeur et sans action" (p.147). "Les termes généraux," he says, resurrecting a now familiar metaphor, "couvrent un savoir organisé, latent, qui est le capital caché sans lequel nous serions en état de banqueroute, manipulant de la fausse monnaie ou du papier sans valeur" (p.149). Whether the currency of the symbolic thinker be valid, or counterfeit, however, his habit of manipulating words without remaining in immediate consciousness of their concrete counterparts was to be anathema to both Gourmont and Hulme. Ribot's account of "la pensée symbolique" was to be the background for their versions of the argument against abstract theorizing which we have seen in Pater and Yeats, and their claims, once again, that it has no place in art.

b) Essai sur l'imagination créatrice.

The significance of Ribot's account of the evolution of mental images for his discussion in the Essai sur l'imagination créatrice rests with the fact that he holds such images to play a vital role in all creative activity. At the beginning of the later work, he proposes as his object to trace the transition from the mere "reproduction" of images in the mind, the operation of the "imagination passive," to the operation of the active "imagination créatrice."[15] He goes on to make the assertion that all types of creative activity

[15] Ribot, Essai sur l'imagination créatrice (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1921), p.1. Subsequent references to the Essai will appear in parentheses in the text.

depend on the presence of three essential factors (p.37). The first of these, he says, is the presence in the mind of some cluster, or combination of images, the intrinsic nature of which, and the principle of whose combination, have a vital impact upon the product created. This must be accompanied, further, by a physical need to objectify these images, and consequently by an act by which they indeed assume some external, concrete form.

Ribot's general view of artistic creation as an activity arising out of a physical need, and consisting in the objectification of mental images, can be seen at a number of points to corroborate Baron's observation that Ribot was a Prometheus-figure set upon bringing the imagination down to earth. Ribot presents the cluster of images in the artist's mind, first of all, which he labels the "conception idéale" (p.67), as a fact flying in the face of the kind of claim made by Schopenhauer: that the artistic process begins with the apprehension of some timeless archetype. He rejects such a notion explicitly:

> Au sens complet du mot (non en le restreignant à la création esthétique ou en le faisant synonyme de perfection comme en morale), l'idéal est une construction en images qui doit devenir une réalité.... Rien de moins justifié que la conception d'un archetype fixe (survivance non déguisée des Idées platoniciennes), illuminant l'inventeur qui le reproduit comme il peut. L'idéal n'est pas; il se fait dans l'inventeur et par lui; sa vie est un devenir. (pp.67-8)

Discussing the "idéal" again, later in the Essai (pp.130-133), Ribot describes how it may manifest, according to the manner

of its construction, either an "imagination combinatrice," or an "imagination intuitive." In the first of these cases, its construction entails a quite conscious process of adding up the constituent images, or ideas, into the whole, which is then translated; it is a movement "des détails à l'unité..." (p.133). In the second type of imagination, by contrast, the growth of the conception involves the movement "de l'unité aux détails" (p.132): the construct forms in the unconscious mind, erupts into the conscious one, and continues to develop during the process of objectification. It is clearly the latter, "intuitive" process which Ribot has in mind when he posits the presence, instead of an Idea, of the "idéal" whose "vie est un devenir." The parallel between this process and the process of discovery we have seen Schopenhauer define for the artist of Idea[16] is confirmed by Ribot's account of the organic nature of its development:

> Le sujet est d'abord embrassé d'un bloc; le développement est organique et on peut le comparer au processus embryologique qui fait sortir de l'ovule féconde un être vivant, suivant une évolution rigoureuse, analogue à une logique immanente. (p.133)

What Ribot accomplishes, by his detailed account of the formation and development of the "idéal," is a scientific redefinition of the general process of discovery which we have observed not only in Schopenhauer's account of the art of Idea, but also in the process which Carlyle described as

[16] See Chapter I, p. 67.

"the gift of a divinity,"[17] and in the organic experience which Pater described, after Coleridge.[18] His demystified version of the intuitive process, we shall see, was to be embraced thankfully by Bergson,[19] and after him by Hulme.[20]

Ribot furthers the demystification achieved in his discussion of the "idéal," with his description of that need felt by the artist to objectify it (pp.35-6). He describes this need, not as any kind of mysterious, or divinely inspired instinct, not even as a single "manifestation psychique spéciale qui soit l'instinct créateur," but rather as the combination of a number of basic physical appetites, of the same order as "la faim, la soif, le sexe, les instincts spécifiques de l'abeille, de la fourmi, du castor, de l'araignée..." (p.36). This likeness between the artist's impulse to create, and the impulses which lead animals to certain acts, is reinforced in the Essai by Ribot's inquiry into the physiological conditions of imaginative activity (pp.54-65). He asserts that sufficient evidence exists to prove that certain physical states are the accompaniments, the effects, and the causes of acts of imagination (p.58). Of particular interest to him are the physical stimuli used by various inventors to aid the creative process; he cites among these the use which artists like Baudelaire and Rimbaud make of

[17] See Chapter I, p.76.

[18] See Chapter II, p.149.

[19] See Chapter IV, p.266.

[20] See Chapter V, p.330.

drugs and alcohol (pp.61-2).

Ribot advances his general account of creative activity towards a more specific study of the faculties it involves by representing the cluster of images awaiting objectification as a "principe de coagulation" (p.69), an entity whose presence draws all of the inventor's emotional and mental powers together to work towards a common end. Borrowing the words of the poet Grillparzer, he describes how, when a writer is possessed by such a conception, his many mental powers will join together to form a greater power, focused upon a single point:

> 'L'inspiration,' disait le poète Grillparzer, 'est une concentration de toutes les forces et aptitudes sur un seul point qui, pendant ce moment, doit moins envelopper tout le reste du monde que le représenter. Le renforcement de l'état de l'âme vient de ce que ses divers pouvoirs, au lieu de se disséminer sur le monde entier, se trouvent contenus dans les limites d'un seul objet, se touchent, se soutiennent, se renforcent réciproquement.' (pp.70-71)

The three major forces fused in the activity, Ribot asserts, are those of the unconscious, the emotions, and the intellect. He devotes separate chapters in the Essai to each of these factors; his accounts of the first two, in particular, are interesting for their Promethean reinterpretations of certain aspects of Symbolist accounts of the process.

Ribot's account of the unconscious factor in the creative activity focuses primarily on its role as the fount of creative inspiration. He observes that the moment of inspiration is distinguished both by the suddenness of its

appearance, and by its apparent impersonality, and proceeds to explain these features by saying that the "idéal" which suddenly presents itself to the conscious mind has had its preparation in mental activity below the level of consciousness (p.43). Ribot presents the account of the unconscious preparation of the complex in direct opposition to claims that inspiration has "une origine surnaturelle..." (p.45). He intends this explanation, clearly, to counter any notion that inspiration is a gift from the gods, or that the inspired artist is in any way possessed by some supernatural spirit (pp.42-43). Ribot refuses in the Essai, as he does in Idées générales, to commit himself to a view about the essential nature of the unconscious.[21] He acknowledges both the materialist view that it may be "un événement purement physiologique," and the spiritualist contention that it is "un composé de petites consciences éparses, isolées, evanescentes, sans lien avec le moi,"[22] but asserts, in the manner appropriate to the new psychological science, that such questions are irrelevant to his purposes. The purpose of his non-commital account of the matter, however, is clearly, at least in part, a desire to describe the phenomenon of inspiration without invoking any transcendental power, or spirit. The unconscious mind he describes is tinged by none of the mystery

[21] See Idées générales, p.151, and Essai, Appendix B, pp.283-7. Ribot made the same point in a chapter contributed to Hugo Munsterberg's Subconscious Phenomena (London: Rebman, 1910), a volume to be read by Pound. See pp.35-39.

[22] Idées générales, p.151.

surrounding sources of inspiration like Rimbaud's "autre self," or Yeats' "great memory."

The most significant role which Ribot ascribes to emotion in the creative activity is the part it plays in the formation of the "conception idéale." More specifically, Ribot regards the emotions as potentially responsible for each part of a two-fold process. The cluster of images is the result, inevitably, of "un double travail, négatif et positif, de dissociation et d'association" (p.68); the images have been somehow "morcelées, fragmentées, mises en pièces" (p.19), and then somehow linked with each other. Elaborating upon a point discussed in Idées générales, Ribot stresses first of all that emotion may be the force responsible for determining which elements of a percept will survive to form the image in the mind. The elements which form the image, he says, have probably survived because in the original experience of perception they aroused some strong emotion, positive or negative:

> Dans tout événement passé, les parties intéressantes se ravivent seules ou avec plus d'intensité que les autres. Intéressante signifié ce qui nous touche en quelque manière, sous une forme agréable ou pénible. (p.31)[23]

In addition to governing the survival of the images, according to this "loi affective," Ribot says that emotion may also be the power responsible for drawing the images together. He describes how a particular emotion may act as a kind of magnet, drawing together images which were accompanied by that emotion

[23] My italics.

when they were originally experienced (pp.31-2). The emotional magnet may, most significantly, draw together the most unusual combinations, associating images between which there may exist no objective resemblances. The examples which Ribot cites to illustrate this observation will be familiar ones:

> Deux sensations absolument hétérogènes (comme la couleur bleue et le son i) peuvent se ressembler par le retentissement commun qu'elles ont dans l'organisme de quelques privilegiés, et ce facteur émotionnel devient un lien d'association. Remarquons que cette hypothèse explique aussi les cas beaucoup plus rares d'olfaction, de gustation, de douleurs colorées, c'est-à-dire une association anormale entre des couleurs déterminées et des saveurs, odeurs, douleurs déterminées. (pp.32-33)

Here, of course, Ribot is attributing to the magnetic power of the emotions the kind of strange combinations of images which we have seen Baudelaire and Mallarmé ascribe to mysterious spiritual relations. This is not the last time in the Essai that Ribot's efforts at demystification will focus on phenomena which it was the Symbolist habit to attribute to mystical causes.

Like his discussion of the emotional factor in creative activity, Ribot's account of the intellectual factor is especially interesting for what it says about the phenomena of dissociation and association. His views on the potential role of the intellect in these activities are somewhat obscured by an unfortunate organizational choice in the Essai; he mentions under the title of "Le Facteur intellectuel" all types of dissociation and association, including those

ascribed specifically to the emotions. At various points throughout the Essai, however, he does make a distinction between dissociative and associative activities which are controlled by other forces, and those which are specifically intellectual. He describes the dissociative activity controlled by the intellect, at one point, unlike the process in which elements of a percept survive spontaneously because of their emotional power, as a wilful process conducted with the intent of simplifying mental labour (p.18). Elsewhere he cites, as an example of such an activity, a case in which a thinker deliberately dissociates from some mental entity a fundamental property which may become a new substitute for that entity: "Ainsi, l'étendue ou la résistance ou l'impénétrabilité, représentent par simplification et abréviation ce que nous appelons matériel" (p.164).[24] The properly intellectual associative process, clearly distinguished from the process powered by emotional magnets,[25] is one which draws images together because of their objective properties, rather than because of any feelings which may have accompanied their perception. Ribot identifies the quintessential power of "l'imagination créatrice dans l'ordre intellectuel" as "la faculté de penser par analogie..." (p.22). The intellect brings images together because it recognizes that they are analogous, that they possess some number of objective attributes in common.

[24] My italics.

[25] See Essai, p.31, where emotional association is distinguished from "l'association par ressemblance au sens intellectuel."

Ribot follows his account of the essential factors in creative activity with an inquiry into the principal types, or manifestations of imagination. His approach to this issue carries with it an implicit rebuttal of any notion that the artistic imagination is a power fundamentally distinct from all other types of imagination. He places the aesthetic imagination alongside what he identifies as the mechanical, scientific, commercial, military, political, and social imaginations. The only grounds he identifies for its distinctiveness are "ses matériaux et sa fin..." (p.160). From his accounts of the two types of aesthetic imagination particularly relevant to our study, the "plastique" and "diffluente" imaginations, we can see that he also holds as grounds for distinguishing types of imagination the nature of the associative activity by which the imaginative materials are drawn together. It is worth noting carefully these distinctive modes of association, for these will prove useful in Chapter V, when we come to compare Hulme's Imagist verse with that of Mallarmé.

In defining "l'imagination plastique," Ribot draws directly from two of the major issues discussed in Idées générales and in the earlier parts of the Essai. Attempting to establish the types of image which constitute its "idéal," first of all, he refers directly to that spectrum of mental entities which structured his discussion in Idées générales:

> Entre la perception, synthèse très complexe de qualités, d'attributs, de rapports et le concept qui n'est que la conscience d'une

> qualité, d'une quantité ou d'un rapport, souvent d'un simple mot accompagné de quelques schèmes vagues et d'un savoir potentiel, latent; entre le concret et l'abstrait, l'image occupe une position intermédiaire et peut courir d'un pôle à l'autre, tantôt impregnée de réalité, tantôt presque aussi pauvre et pâle qu'un concept. La représentation que nous appelons plastique descend vers son point d'origine; c'est une imagination extérieure, issue de la sensation plus que du sentiment et qui a besoin de s'objectiver. (pp.153-4)

In the operation of the plastic imagination, the components of the image-cluster which awaits objectification are images belonging to the concrete end of the scale of abstraction: "images nettes...se rapprochant de la perception, donnant l'impression de la réalité..." (p.153).[26] In defining the plastic imagination, moreover, Ribot cites the mode of association which earlier in the Essai he attributed to the intellectual factor in creative activity. The concrete images of the plastic imagination, he says, are drawn together because of "les associations à rapports objectifs, déterminables avec précision" (p.153); their association is dependent "plus de la nature des choses que de l'impression personnelle du sujet" (p.162). Unlike the associative process typical of the diffluent imagination, that of the plastic imagination is based upon the objective properties common to the images. Ribot stresses that in their strong appeal to sensation, the works of the plastic imagination are

[26] Contrast Ribot's description of the materials of the related "imagination sèche et rationaliste," the "images ternes qui confinent au concept." Essai, p.162.

distinguished by a certain "Infériorite de l'élément affectif..." (p.154).

Ribot provides a number of literary samples which he holds to be the products of the activity of the plastic imagination. Among these are examples in which visual images are linked with images of movement ("le clocher troue l'horizon, le mont crève la nue, le mont se soulève et regarde" (p.157)), and those in which visual or motor images are linked with images of sound ("'Les dentelles du son que le fifre découpe; la flûte monte sur l'alto comme sur la colonne un frêle chapiteau'" (p.158)). In this connection, he observes that the images which the plastic imagination associates often differ significantly in the degree of their abstraction, that the associative process involves "un mouvement tour à tour ascendant et descendant entre les deux points-limites: la perception, l'idée." As an example of the "ascending" process, Ribot cites a passage from Michelet in which the concrete images of river and ocean are fused with the more abstract ideas of certain human desires and passions: "'Les grands fleuves des Pays-Bas ennuyés de leur trop long cours, meurent comme de langueur dans l'indifférent Océan.'" The "descending" process, in which quite abstract ideas are likened to material things, is illustrated by Michelet's depiction of the Middle Ages: "Le moyen-âge devient 'un triste enfant, arraché des entrailles du christianisme, qui naquit dans les larmes, qui grandit dans la prière et la rêverie, dans les angoisses du coeur, qui mourût sans achéver rien'" (p.155).

Ribot identifies the plastic imagination as the

kind typical of most sculptors, painters, and architects (p.156). He also locates it, pondering the concentration of images in their work, in the literary endeavours of Hugo, Gautier, and the Parnassians (pp.157-8). Two of Ribot's notes on these writers are of particular interest to us because they will be echoed in Hulme's descriptions of his Imagist verse. In connection with Hugo, first of all, Ribot cites Gautier's dictum that "'Un livre est fait pour être lu, non parlé à haute voix'" (p.157); Hulme was to recall this in a lecture on the new poetry, in which he contended that this poetry was meant not to be chanted, but to be read silently in the study.[27] Ribot also cites a passage from Gautier which captures, in a vivid metaphor, the Parnassian passion for concrete language. Lending to his hypothetical poet's words the solidity of the images which accompany them, Gautier describes these words as jewels, "pierres précieuses qui ne sont pas encore taillées et montées en bracelets, en colliers et en bagues; ils charment le connaisseur qui les regarde et les tire du doigt dans la petite coupe où ils sont mis en réserve." The image of the poet at play with his jewels was to reappear in Hulme's personal notes on language and style.[28] That Hulme would have approved of Gautier's use of it is indisputable, for the French writer uses the picture of the jeweller to illustrate a very Hulmean theme: that the poet is above all "un ouvrier" (p.158), and that there is nothing at all mysterious, or spontaneous, about

[27] See Chapter V, p.374.

[28] See Chapter V, p.359.

his craft.

Ribot characterizes the second important type of imagination, "l'imagination diffluente," as a type which differs from the plastic on a number of essential points. Lying at the root of the differences, in his view, is "la suprême maîtrise" (p.171) of the emotional factor in diffluent imagination; emotion is invariably responsible for both the dissociative activity determining its materials, and for the associative activity by which they are clustered together. Ribot calls the products of the emotionally determined dissociative activity "abstraits émotionnels..." (p.163). They consist, he says, reiterating the point made in his discussion of the emotional factor, of qualities whose survival from their original perception has been due to the intense emotion which they aroused in that experience (p.164). Ribot's identification of the emotional basis of the dissociative activity characteristic of the diffluent imagination does not have any direct counterpart in his description of the plastic imagination. As part of his account of diffluent imagination, he contrasts the "abstraits émotionnels" with those abstractions for which the intellect is responsible (p.164), but it is not immediately apparent that the images of the plastic imagination, whose only stipulated property has been the quality of relative concreteness, could not have been determined by emotional causes. The direct contrast between the plastic and the diffluent imaginations is better illustrated by considering their characteristic associative activities. Unlike the

association of the plastic imagination, Ribot says, which is dependent upon clear and objective points of comparison, the association characteristic of the diffluent imagination relies much more upon chance. Its materials may be haphazardly linked by virtue of "contiguitiés accidentelles et rares," or "analogies lointaines et vacillantes..." (p.164). Or, most importantly, they may be linked because of their "ressemblance à base émotionnelle" (p.165), because when originally experienced they aroused a common emotion. Ribot asserts that because of the nature of the associative process behind their creation, the products of the diffluent imagination are marked by a certain appearance of instability. Unlike the creations of the plastic imagination, whose associated ideas and images possess strong, clear lines of likeness, they are noticeably lacking in "un centre stable d'attraction..." (p.165).

It will be of no surprise, given what we have seen of such verse in Chapter I, that Ribot found the best literary manifestation of the diffluent imagination in the work of the Symbolists. His "abstraits émotionnels" seem perfectly exemplified by Mallarmé's synecdochic images, and we have seen that a quality of quivering instability was crucial to his poetry of "essences." Ribot echoes Mallarmé's account of poetry in describing the language of the verse of diffluent imagination as "une monnaie sans titre fixe" (p.170). He reiterates the Symbolist's distinction between the ordinary and the poetic uses of language by describing a "langage

intellectuel," which functions like a representative currency, and a "langage émotionnel," which moves its reader by its intrinsic powers, in particular its sound:

> Le langage intellectuel, la parole, est un agencement des mots qui sont les signes d'objets, de qualités, de rapports, d'extraits des choses; pour être compris, ils doivent évoquer dans la conscience les représentations correspondantes. Le langage émotionnel, la musique, est un agencement de sons successifs ou simultanés, de mélodies et d'harmonies qui sont les signes d'états affectifs: pour être compris, ils doivent évoquer dans la conscience les dispositions affectives correspondantes. (p.184)

Ribot stresses that he writes neither as a critic nor as an advocate of Symbolist writing, but uses it simply "comme un document psychologique propre à nous instruire sur la nature de l'imagination diffluente" (p.169). His approach to Symbolist writing, however, as documentary evidence of a specific type of psychological activity, has as its important corollary the dismissal of any notion that its style or content is the result of some supernatural interference or decree. We have already noted how he sees the synaesthetic combinations in Symbolist writing simply as manifestations of emotionally based examples of association, thus relegating to the capricious behaviour of feeling what Baudelaire and Mallarmé claimed was the reflection of a mysterious, but objective network of universal relations. In the same way in which he deflates the significance of these combinations, Ribot deflates the significance, in general, of the kind of evocative techniques found in Symbolist writing: the

clustering together of words in ways which render their meanings imprecise, the many techniques of alluding rather than naming directly (pp.169-170). Whereas Mallarmé, as we have seen, accounted for these techniques as efforts to convey the development of the Hegelian Geist, or the essential Ideas of the ephemeral objects in the world, Ribot regards these methods as undertaken solely in the interest of conveying the poet's emotional state, "l'état affectif pur et sans contenu" (p.169): a psychological fact whose larger metaphysical significance is of no importance to him.

Ribot pursues the demystification of the Symbolist aesthetic further in his account of a type of imagination closely related to the diffluent: "l'imagination mystique" (pp.185-197). One specific target here is none other than the Symbolist "symbol" itself: the image charged with significance, which Carlyle called an "intrinsic" symbol because of its objective connection with the divine, which Baudelaire envisioned opening up to reveal the Swedenborgian spirit world, which Yeats saw possessed of "preordained" energies. Ribot accurately summarizes the common representation of the symbol in describing it as "une tendance à incarner l'idéal dans le sensible, à découvrir une idée cachée dans tout phénomène ou événement matériel, à supposer dans les choses un principe surnaturel qui se révèle à qui sait le pénétrer." He himself, however, refuses to grant any validity to claims that symbolic meaning is due to some mystical endowment, and again offers a reinterpretation of the

experience of symbol which makes reference only to psychological phenomena. Contrasting them with single "images concrètes," he describes the "images symboliques" (p.186) experienced by the mystic simply as composites of such images, the products of "une synthèse de l'esprit, d'une association de perception à perception, de perception à image ou d'image à image" in his mind. The mystic's experience is never one, in his view, of recognizing some objective, supernaturally ordained analogy, some divinely determined "intrinsic" meaning. It is one instead, he asserts, of being possessed by the mystic imagination, which will, by association, transform perceptions and concrete images "en sorte que toutes les manifestations de la nature ou de l'art humain prennent une valeur de signes, de symboles" (p.187). If the symbolic writing of the mystic is difficult to understand, Ribot says, this difficulty is due not to the mysterious mystical truths it embodies, but rather to the highly subjective, emotional, and arbitrary grounds on which the import of the symbols came to be determined. The mystic imagination "est guidée par la logique du sentiment qui est purement subjective, pleine de soubresauts, de secousses et de lacunes":

> En paraissent parler comme tout le monde, le mystique se sert d'un idiome personnel: les choses devenant des symboles au gré de sa fantaisie, il n'use pas de signes à valeur fixe et universellement admisé. Rien d'étonnant si nous ne le comprenons pas. (p.188)

Ribot's intent to dispel any notion that the mystic's apprehension is one of objective supernatural truth

is conclusively illustrated by his comments on one final aspect of that experience: the intense belief on the part of the mystic that it is so. He categorically rejects the view of the mystic's visions, or associations, which is commonly held by theologians, the view "qui tient ces phénomènes pour réels et révélateurs" (p.191) and which thus sees nothing to question in the fact that these are intensely believed. He asserts instead that all supposedly mystical visions are illusory imaginative constructions (p.190), and attributes the mystic's intense belief in their reality simply to the intensity of the emotion which governs their construction:

> L'imagination mystique suppose une croyance inconditionnelle et permanente. Les mystiques sont des croyants au sens complet; ils ont la foi. Ce caractère leur est propre et il a son origine dans l'intensité de l'état affectif qui suscite et soutient cette forme de l'invention. (p.191)[29]

In saying that mystical belief is groundless, and accounting for it simply by citing the psychological factor of intense emotion, Ribot deals a definitive blow to the overestimations of artistic imagination which have been his target throughout the whole of the Essai. The way is paved for Hulme, and, before him, for Remy de Gourmont.

ii) Gourmont.

Le Problème du style, the work of Gourmont most

[29] Second italics mine.

relevant to Hulme's Imagism, has been said by one critic to constitute an elaboration of the two works of Ribot just considered. This critic, Wallace Martin, sets himself apart from most commentators on Hulme[30] in arguing that Gourmont was not necessarily a source for the former's writings on language and style; any likeness between Hulme's work and Gourmont's, he says, may be attributed to the fact that both borrowed from Ribot.[31] The unlikelihood of Martin's position will become apparent in Chapter V, where we shall note the sharp similarities, in both substance and expression, between the writings of the two men. At this point, however, we may note the significant feature of Gourmont's work which both set it apart from Ribot's and was its strongest bond with Hulme's. Gourmont, like Hulme, was not a disinterested scientist but a publicist. Where Ribot used the findings of science simply to account for the fact of distinctive literary styles, explicitly disavowing any opinion about their relative values, Gourmont used such findings to argue for the value of a particular creative process, a particular style. This was, in certain essentials, the style to be advocated by Hulme, as by the young Pound and Eliot.[32]

[30] See above, note 1.

[31] See Martin, "Sources," p.198.

[32] I shall consider the influence of Gourmont in Pound's early aesthetic in Chapter VII. The most complete study of this influence to date has been Richard Sieburth's Instigations (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

The influence of Le Problème du style on Eliot is especially clear in essays like "Studies in Contemporary Criticism," in The Egoist for October, 1918, "The Metaphysical Poets," in The Times Literary Supplement for 20 October, 1929,

Gourmont's interest in the scientific basis of style had its roots in his efforts, as one of the founders and editors of the Symbolist journal Le Mercure de France, to defend Symbolist practice against its many opponents in the early 1890s. Gourmont's definition of Symbolism, from the Preface to his introductory study of the subject, Le Livre des masques(1896), reveals precisely what he understood himself to be defending:

> Que veut dire Symbolisme? Si l'on s'en tient au sens étroit et étymologique, presque rien; si l'on passe outre, cela peut vouloir dire: individualisme en littérature, liberté de l'art, abandon des formules enseignées, tendances vers ce qui est nouveau, étrange et même bizarre; cela peut vouloir dire aussi: l'idéalisme, dédain de l'anecdote sociale, antinaturalisme, tendance à ne prendre dans la vie que le détail caractéristique, à ne prêter attention qu'à l'acte par lequel un homme se distingue d'un autre homme, à ne vouloir réaliser que des résultats, que l'essentiel; enfin, pour les poètes, le symbolisme semble lié au vers libre, c'est-à-dire démaillotté, et dont le jeune corps peut s'ébattre à l'aise, sorti de l'embarras des langes et des liens.... Admettons donc que le symbolisme, c'est, même excessive, même intempestive, même prétentieuse,

---

and those collected in The Sacred Wood(1920). Eliot makes special reference to Gourmont's views on the physiological basis of style, and on the essential role of the metaphor-making faculty in poetry. The greatest contribution which Gourmont's theory made to Eliot's, of course, was its definition of the psychological basis for his theory of the "dissociation of sensibility." As F. W. Bateson has succinctly summarized it, what Eliot effectively did in this doctrine was "to transfer to the nation Gourmont's analysis of the mental processes of the individual": he saw in English history, that is, the development of "mots-images" into "mots-idées" and "mots-sentiments" which Gourmont, as we shall see, traced in the experience of the individual mind. See "Contributions to a Dictionary of Literary Terms: Dissociation of Sensibility," in Essays in Criticism, I, 3 (July 1951), p.307. Italics mine.

l'expression de l'individualisme dans l'art.[33]

The essential fact about Symbolist writing, as Gourmont sees it, is that it is informed primarily by the idiosyncrasies of its author: hence its frequent strangeness, its obscurity, the unique forms of each of its lines and verses. Gourmont provides a metaphysical justification for this highly idiosyncratic verse in the Preface, by adopting the stance of a subjective idealist. Like many of his Symbolist contemporaries, including most notably Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, he finds great appeal in the view that the only reality known to any man, and indeed the ultimate reality, is the product of his own mind.[34] Like many of his contemporaries, too, he cites Schopenhauer as an authority for this view, ignoring that philosopher's faith in the objective reality of the Will, and lighting only upon the dictum "The world is my representation":

> Une vérité nouvelle, il y en a une, pourtant, qui est entrée récemment dans la littérature et dans l'art, c'est une vérité toute métaphysique et toute d'a priori (en apparence), toute jeune, puisqu'elle n'a qu'un siècle et vraiment neuve, puisqu'elle

[33] Gourmont, Preface to Le Livre des masques (Paris: Mercure de France, 1923), pp.8-13.

[34] See Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Axël (Paris: Maison Quantin, 1890), pp.219-20:

> Sache une fois pour toujours, qu'il n'est d'autre univers pour toi que la conception même qui s'en réflechit au fond de tes pensées, car tu ne peux le voir pleinement, ni le connaître, en distinguer même un seul point tel que ce mystérieux point doit être en sa réalité.... Si tu veux posséder /la vérité/ crées-la! comme tout le reste! Tu n'emporteras, tu ne seras que ta création.

> n'avait pas encore servi dans l'ordre esthétique. Cette vérité, évangélique et merveilleuse, libératrice et rénovatrice, c'est le principe de l'idéalité du monde. Par rapport à l'homme, sujet pensant, le monde, tout ce qui est extérieur au moi, n'existe que selon l'idée qu'il s'en fait. Nous ne connaissons que des phénomènes, nous ne raisonnons que sur des apparences; toute vérité en soi nous échappe; l'essence est inattaquable. C'est ce que Schopenhauer a vulgarisé sous cette formule si simple et si claire: Le monde est ma représentation. Je ne vois pas ce qui est; ce qui est, c'est ce que je vois. Autant d'hommes pensants, autant de mondes divers et peut-être différents.[35]

The connection between the metaphysic of subjective idealism and Gourmont's understanding of the aesthetic of Symbolism is clear: if there are as many different worlds as there are thinking men, he implies, it is acceptable, indeed natural, that there should be as many unique poems as there are poets. In the world of the subjective idealist "La seule excuse qu'un homme ait d'écrire, c'est de s'écrire lui-même, de dévoiler aux autres la sorte de monde qui se mire en son miroir individuel; sa seule excuse est d'être original...." "Le crime capital pour un ecrivain," accordingly, "c'est le conformisme, l'imitativité, la soumission aux règles et aux enseignements."[36] Gourmont provides in the broadest sense, thus, a justification both for the strange obscurity of much Symbolist poetry, and for the formal revolution it pioneered.

The subjective idealism expressed in Le Livre des masques, and before it in L'Idéalisme(1893), was significantly

[35] Preface to Le Livre des masques, pp.11-12.

[36] Preface to Le Livre des masques, p.13.

modified by Gourmont by the end of the century, as he attempted to devise not merely a metaphysical, but a scientific argument for Symbolist individualism. By the time of the publication of the first volume of his Promenades philosophiques(1905), he had transformed his subjective idealism into an assertion about the existence of an objective, material world, and a claim simply that there are innumerable, highly individualistic ways of sensing and interpreting it. By "idéalisme," he maintains there, one may now understand simply that "il y a, selon les espèces, ou même les individus, des manières différentes de réagir contre une sensation externe ou interne."[37] He goes further, moreover, to locate the cause of the idiosyncratic ways of reacting to sensation in material, physiological conditions. From studying the findings of the biologist Lamarck, Gourmont became familiar with the ways in which animals sense the world about them, and with how the physical organs responsible for sensation will vary from species to species according to the environment in which the species dwells.[38] In writings like Le Chemin de velours(1902), Physique de l'amour(1903), and the Epilogues(1903, 1904, 1905), Gourmont adopts a firmly materialist view of man, asserting that his constitution is entirely physical.[39] Accordingly he represents the differences in sensual response among men as

[37] Gourmont, Promenades philosophiques, Vol.I (Paris: Société du Mercure de France, 1905), p.81. Subsequent references to this volume will be to Promenades.

[38] See Promenades, pp.98-9.

[39] See, for example, Le Chemin de velours (Paris: Mercure de France, 1924), pp.87-9.

functions of the differences in their physical make-ups. The influence of a man's physiology extends further, moreover, to shape the thoughts which fill his mind: for Gourmont, as we shall see, had come also to adopt the empiricist view that all ideas are the direct products of sensation. It determines, too, as he goes to some lengths to explain in Le Problème du style, the form in which they are retained in the memory, and the way in which, accordingly, they will be expressed. In short, the idiosyncratic worlds which Gourmont held it to be the duty of individual writers to express were determined entirely by physiological variations: "L'idéalisme se fonde, en définitive, sur la matérialité même de la pensée, considérée comme un produit physiologique."[40]

Gourmont's belief in the physiological basis of thought and expression was the foundation for his discussion of the literary activity in Le Problème du style. It was the base from which he directed an attack on the ideas of Antoine Albalat, an author of several influential manuals on the art of writing. Albalat's central message was that the key to writing well lay in the conscientious imitation of past masters. Such a viewpoint offended, of course, Gourmont's conviction that the poet's only obligation was a fidelity to his own, idiosyncratic responses to the world. It offended him, too, as he had made clear in an earlier book, by its unscientific presupposition that style was something strictly acquired, and not innate.[41] Throughout Le Problème du style

[40] Promenades, p.104.

[41] See La Culture des idées (Paris: Mercure de France,1916), p.17. This volume first appeared in 1900.

he is at pains to stress that the style of a writer, like his sensations and his thoughts, is essentially the consequence of his distinctive physiology. "'On ne se donne pas son style,'" Gourmont says, quoting Taine; its form "'est déterminée par la structure du cerveau,'"[42] just as "le chant des oiseaux est déterminée par la forme de leur bec, l'attache de leur langue, le diamètre de leur gorge, la capacité de leurs poumons" (pp.32-3).

However inevitable Gourmont believed the particular style of any writer to be, he was not prevented by this belief from asserting that certain styles are intrinsically of greater value than others. In Le Problème du style he considers two general styles of writing, and consistently asserts the superiority of one over the other. To appreciate the rationale behind his judgment, it is important to note his basic understanding of what the literary imagination was, and how it worked. A succinct description from Le Problème du style reveals that his conception of imagination was essentially the empiricist and associationist one we have seen in Ribot; he rejected any suggestion that imaginative activity involved creation ex nihilo, and asserted instead that it was always a matter of the association of materials which have originated in sensation and been stored in the memory:

> Il ne faut point borner l'art aux données immédiates des sens. L'imagination est plus riche que la mémoire, mais elle n'est riche

[42] Remy de Gourmont, Le Problème du style (Paris: Société du Mercure de France, 1907), p.81. Subsequent references to this work will be incorporated in parentheses into the text.

> que des combinaisons nouvelles qu'elle impose aux éléments que lui fournit la mémoire. Imaginer, c'est associer des images et des fragments d'images; cela n'est jamais créer. L'homme ne peut créer ni un atome de matière ni un atome d'idée. (pp.124-5)

The materials subject to association in the writer's mind include, in Gourmont's account as in Ribot's, both concrete images and the abstract ideas which have evolved from such images. Gourmont's adherence to the empiricist view about the origin of ideas in sensation is confirmed in Le Problème du style by his citation of Locke's famous dictum: "Nihil in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu" (p.69). He was to describe the dependence of intellect upon sensation in his own, metaphorical terms in a 1906 article in the Mercure de France:

> L'homme est une sensibilité et ne peut être autre chose. L'intelligence n'est que de la sensibilité détachée de sa racine, séchée et en voie de périr, comme des fleurs coupées, si on ne renouvelle pas l'eau du vase....[43]

Gourmont makes some effort, in his treatise on style, to outline the kind of spectrum of images and ideas discussed in detail by Ribot in Idées générales. In a manner significant for his discussion of the two major and distinct styles of writing, however, styles distinguished, like those in Ribot, by the nature of the materials associated in the mind, he extends the spectrum beyond the abstract idea to identify an abstract idea charged with emotion: "La sensation," he says,

[43] Gourmont, "Dialogue des amateurs: La réclame," in Mercure de France, LX (15 March 1906), p.247.

"se transforme en mots-images; ceux-ci en mots-idées; ceux-ci en mots-sentiments" (p.81).[44] Unlike the "mots-images," by which Gourmont means the most concrete of linguistic materials, the "mots-sentiments" are highly abstract concepts which have also acquired strong emotional associations: concepts, one might say, like "justice," or "beauty," or "immortality," or "decadence."[45] Gourmont's valuation of the two types of style is based on his sense of the relative reliability of the "mots-images" and "mots-sentiments" involved in their production, on the relation which each of these types of mental entity bears to the real world. In a passage whose subtle qualification is perhaps a lingering remnant of the time when Gourmont would not have admitted the possibility of achieving contact with any objective reality, he asserts that "Même fausse, une sensation est vraie physiologiquement et peut avoir les effets mêmes de la réalité...." Since he regards sensation as an essentially reliable witness, it is understandable that he should regard the words most closely born of sensation, the "mots-images," as the most accurate terms with which reality might be described, and the most reliable linguistic materials from which conclusions about reality might be drawn. The witness of the senses still attached to these words is superior to the "témoignage

[44] My italics.

[45] "Decadence" was just one of many such words, in common usage, which Gourmont attempted to "dissociate," or strip of their acquired emotional associations, in La Culture des idées; see pp.109-128. He describes this technique on p.69; Garnet Rees has noted that it was similar to a clinical technique recorded by Ribot in La Psychologie des sentiments (1896). See Remy de Gourmont (Paris: Boivin, 1939), p.157.

intellectuel" manifested by the "mots-sentiments," a witness of reality "toujours vicié par une émotion née à propos de l'objet et non sortie de l'objet même" (p.54). Like Ribot, Gourmont distinguishes, too, between the types of reasoning made possible by images and abstract ideas, between what the psychologist called the "logique des images," and "pensée symbolique." He goes beyond Ribot, however, in expressing a strong opinion about which mode is the most dependable, and therefore preferable:

> Une idée n'est qu'une sensation défraîchie, une image effacée; raisonner avec des idées, c'est assembler et combiner, en une laborieuse mosaïque, des cubes décolorés, devenus presques indiscernables: l'ouvrier qui les manie ne les reconnaît qu'à la secousse particulière qu'il éprouve à leur contact, à l'émotion qui s'en irradie, au sentiment qui les enveloppe d'un réseau électrique.... Le raisonnement au moyen d'images sensorielles est beaucoup plus facile et beaucoup plus sur que le raisonnement par idées. La sensation est utilisée dans toute sa verdeur, l'image dans toute sa vivacité. La logique de l'oeil et la logique de chacun des autres sens suffisent à guider l'esprit; le sentiment inutile est rejeté comme une cause de trouble.... (pp.69-70)

The understanding of the evolution of ideas which Gourmont derived from the empiricist tradition led him to the same feeling of suspicion towards abstract theorizing which we have witnessed in Pater and in Yeats. He was particularly conscious of the importance of sense experience in the making of moral judgments. As he remarks in a passage translated by Ezra Pound:

> If in the midst of nihilism the most complete of ideas needs only a feminine smile or the squalling of an infant to drive

> everything out of our heads, why pledge ourselves to reject the arguments of feeling? Is life a problem of mathematics?...
>
> The most terrible tyrants have been those who have had the horror of action, those who would not shed blood themselves; who never laid eyes on their victims, but had them coldly eliminated; as if making mental operations which dealt with abstractions only.[46]

Before we look more closely at the two imaginative activities contrasted in Le Problème du style, it is worth noting Gourmont's views on one further general aspect of imaginative activity: the role played by what he calls the subconscious mind. In La Culture des idées, he says that the clearest manifestation of the working of the subconscious mind, in the waking state, is the sudden presentation of images to the mind in the moment of creative inspiration.[47] Creative experiences very often begin, he observes, with the sudden eruption into the consciousness of groups of images and ideas whose selection and association has taken place below the level of consciousness, automatically and according to some strict deterministic logic; the intervention of the consciousness in this activity, he says, "peut être nuisible, par son pouvoir de modifier la logique déterministe, de rompre la série des associations...."[48] His account of inspiration thus, of course, resembles the one which we have seen in Ribot. It is interesting, however, that Gourmont explicitly takes Ribot

[46] "Dust for Sparrows," in The Translations of Ezra Pound (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), pp.378-9.

[47] See La Culture des idées, p.55.

[48] La Culture des idées, p.44.

to task for his claim that neither reflection, nor will can play any role in the experience.[49] His own position allows a certain amount of power to the conscious mind for the selection and association of images and ideas. It holds only that if the artist's memory is, as he describes it in Le Problème du style, a "réservoir d'images où puise l'imagination pour de nouvelles et infinies combinaisons" (p.35), the subconscious is the more able fisherman,[50] because it is capable of recalling images and ideas which have been both consciously and unconsciously acquired.[51]

We may turn finally, then, to those two major types of style discussed in Le Problème du style: the "style abstrait," and the "style concret" (p.45). Gourmont distinguishes these on the basis both of the types of language which typify them, and on the types of physiological conditions, and corresponding kinds of mental activity, which make it so. All writers, in his view, may be divided into two classes, "les idéo-émotifs" or "les sentimentaux," and "les sensoriels" or "les plastiques" (p.53). Their status as such is determined, he says, by the ways in which their brains process and retain the data of sensory experience. The ideo-emotive writer, whose activity he regards with some suspicion, is the writer whose brain, after such experience, either retains only the

[49] In La Culture des idées, p.62, Gourmont quotes a statement to this effect made by Ribot in his La Psychologie des sentiments (1896).

[50] See La Culture des idées, pp.47-8, and 64. Cf. "Dust for Sparrows," in The Translations of Ezra Pound, p.366.

[51] See La Culture des idées, p.64.

imprint of the emotion accompanying that experience, and none of the sensory data, or else very rapidly transforms that data into an abstract notion or an emotional idea (p.53). The brain of the sensorial writer, by contrast, is one with a tendency to retain in its cells the concrete sensation, untransformed; the sensorial style, Gourmont says, "s'affirme à mesure que les sensations s'accumulent dans les cellules nerveuses et font plus denses, plus riches et plus complexes les archives du souvenir" (p.73). As support for this distinction, interestingly, Gourmont alludes to the results which Ribot recorded in a clinical work called Les Maladies de la mémoire(1881), which led him to distinguish a "mémoire verbale," and a "mémoire visuelle" (p.143).[52]

Because of the tendency of his brain to retain emotional imprints rather than sensations, Gourmont's ideo-emotive writer dedicates himself not to the description of his perceptions, but to the declamation of his sentiments. This characteristic of his brain, moreover, is also in part responsible for the nature of his experience of expression, and of the terms of his expression. Gourmont points out, first of all, that the ideo-emotive writer belongs firmly to one of those categories of thinker identified by Ribot, in his account of the experiment in which he recorded responses to general words: an experiment to which he alludes directly in La Culture des idees.[53] This kind of writer is one of those

[52] See Ribot, Les Maladies de la memoire (Paris: Alcan, 1881), p.50. Karl-D.Uitti discusses this aspect of Ribot's influence in La Passion littéraire de Remy de Gourmont (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), p.257.

[53] See p.90.

men, that is, who, when they hear a word pronounced, are not conscious of any of the images of the things which it represents, but only of its typographical image. "Au lieu qu'au prononcé du mot océan une immensité glauque, ou une plage de sable ou des falaises," he will see "le mot même écrit dans l'espace en caractères d'imprimerie, OCÉAN." In his mind, Gourmont says, the "monde des choses" is characteristically replaced by the "monde des signes" (p.37); words have achieved, as Ribot put it, "la maîtrise absolue." The experience by which the ideo-emotive writer himself utters words is interesting, furthermore, in that Gourmont says it may even involve the consciousness of no sense images at all, not even the typographical image of the word. The words may "passent directement de leurs cases au bout des lèvres ou au bout de la plume, sans aucune intervention de la conscience et de la sensibilité" (p.37).[54] This writer may be, like the writers whom we have seen deprecated by Yeats, and whom we shall later see criticized by Bergson, Hulme, and Pound,[55] nothing more than a "mécaniste," from whom "les mots, les epithètes viennent sans heurt, fluidement..." (p.38).

In describing the ideo-emotive writer as a man whose brain quickly transforms sense-data into "mots-idées," and "mots-sentiments," Gourmont seems to imply that he will tend to express himself in highly abstract language. The clearer and most important point Gourmont makes, however,

[54] My italics.

[55] For Yeats, see Chapter II, p.181; Bergson, Chapter IV, p.256; Hulme, Chapter V, p.352 of this thesis.

about the consequence of the ideo-emotive writer's characteristic brain activity for style, has in fact little to do with the degree of abstraction common to his words, but is rather simply that he is a habitual user of clichés. In Le Problème du style, as in La Culture des idées, Gourmont places much importance on the fact which we have already seen noted by Carlyle and Pater, that many commonly used words and phrases derive from the recognition of some physical image which is a suitable analogy for some more abstract meaning:

> La langue est plein de clichés qui furent à l'origine des images hardies, d'heureuses trouvailles du pouvoir métaphorique. Tous les mots abstraits sont la figuration d'un acte matériel; penser, c'est peser. (p.36)[56]

Like Carlyle and Pater, however, and also like Yeats, Gourmont notes that when these expressions enter into common usage they may often be employed without any recognition of the concrete images from which they spring. It is this kind of usage which typifies the ideo-emotive writer. The "travail de passage du réel à l'idée et de l'idée au réel ayant été fait d'avance...par les écrivains antérieurs" (p.38), he uses them without seeing them, treats them, pieces of coloured glass, as if they are clear. Gourmont likens clichés to "médailles usées," coins which are borrowed, second-hand, not of the writer's own minting: "Le cliché est une monnaie jetée dans la circulation; la métaphore est le premier exemplaire de cette monnaie..." (p.93). He also likens them to flowers

[56] For Carlyle, see Chapter I, p.77 ; Pater, Chapter II, p.157 of this thesis.

which have grown out of the sensual experiences of other writers, and which have been cut and placed on sale: "Ne possédant pas de jardin," the ideo-emotive writer "achète des fleurs et rêve qu'il les a cueillies" (p.39).[57] Most significantly for Hulme, he also refers to such expressions with the term which Ribot had used to designate those highly abstract words which achieved absolute dominance in the mind: the ideo-emotive writer, "le plagiaire," thinks and expresses himself in "chiffres" (p.142).[58] Gourmont maintains that the ideo-emotive writer was probably moved by these expressions when he first encountered them, and that he uses them with the view that they will move his readers in the same way. In uttering them, unaware of any of the images at their hearts, he may well be conscious only of the powerful sentiments, radiating from them like an electric field: they are "noyaux de cristallisation sentimentale" (p.39), expressions of the same order as "mots-sentiments."[59]

Gourmont the empiricist has been seen to regard

[57] Cf. Gourmont's use of this image in the Mercure de France passage, cited above p.230.

[58] My italics. Cf. La Culture des idees, p.89. Hulme, as we shall see, was to disparage the use of a language of "counters" in both senses found in Ribot and Gourmont. At different points, that is, he was to mean by "counters" both individual words of a high degree of abstraction, and thus devoid of images in the mind, and clichés, phrases which have passed from their original minting into common usage, and are uttered blindly there.

[59] See above, p.231. Cf. Pound, Chapter VII, p.445. Here of course, in a sense, Gourmont is tracing the same transition in the way such expressions are experienced through history, which he has said words may undergo in the individual mind. Cf. Eliot, as discussed in note 32 above.

the kind of reasoning which proceeds by images as superior to that which proceeds by abstract ideas. He has been seen to regard with suspicion the activity of thinking in "mots-sentiments," words charged with emotion which has been born " à propos" of objects and not inspired directly in their perception. These attitudes are at the root of his belief, upheld consistently throughout Le Problème du style, that the work of the ideo-emotive or sentimental writer is intrinsically inferior to that of the "sensoriel," or "plastique" one. When a man possesses a brain which does not retain the images of sensation, Gourmont says, "l'art n'est plus possible, car il n'y a d'art que plastique et la matière a fui, ne laissant que sa trace le long du chemin" (p.53).[60] Gourmont had remarked in La Culture des idées that if the art of writing could be defined, "ce serait l'art même de sentir, l'art de voir, l'art d'entendre, l'art d'user de tous les sens, soit réellement, soit imaginativement...."[61] The ideal writer, he implied, is the one who involves all his faculties in the act of expression: the antithesis of the detached "mécaniste." The plastic writer described in Le Problème du style fulfils this prescription: "Il est tout en sensations; ses organes sont en communication constante avec le monde extérieur: il regarde, il écoute, il sent, il touche..." (p.51). Of all the senses which the writer may bring to his art, however, Gourmont believes that the most important is the vision (p.45). The

[60] My italics.

[61] La Culture des idées, p.16.

"mémoire visuelle" identified by Ribot is for him the "faculté maîtresse du style..." (p.34). The finest writing will in his view be produced by the writer who sees things clearly, who retains these images in his memory, and who reproduces these in clear visual pictures. It will be complete, finally, if the writer can recall and convey the emotions which accompanied his original visual perceptions, the emotions truly inspired by objects and not born "à propos" of them:

> Si, à la mémoire visuelle, l'écrivain joint la mémoire émotive, s'il a le pouvoir, en évoquant un spectacle matériel, de se replacer exactement dans l'état émotionnel qui suscita en lui ce spectacle, il possède, même ignorant, tout l'art d'écrire. (p.35)

If Gourmont does not go to any lengths in discussing the particularly abstract nature of the language of the ideo-emotive writer, he is emphatic about the highly concrete nature of that of the visual one. The "moisson sensorielle" (p.51) resulting from his perceptual experiences, and somehow stored in the cells of his brain (p.53), makes its way into his style in the form of concrete images. Citing, like Ribot, Victor Hugo as "le type visuel presque pur" (p.52), Gourmont says of him that "Toutes les sensations qu'il éprouve, et ce sont les yeux surtout qui l'enrichissent, il les traduit en verbe au moyen d'images visuelles, uniformément..." (pp.51-2). For the poet like Hugo, he says, furthermore, "Il...serait plus difficile d'user de clichés que d'ordonner des combinaisons de mots nécessairement nouvelles" (pp.52-3): it is his vocation, "La comparaison" being "la forme élémentaire

de l'imagination visuelle" (p.86), to mint new metaphorical expressions, new coins for circulation by others (pp.52-3). Acutely conscious of the sensory power of his terms, he will mould his language as if it were clay in his hands:

> /L'écrivain visuel/ avec des mots qui ne sont rien que des poignées de glaise, construit les membres de son oeuvre et dresse une statue qui, belle ou gauche, lourde ou ailée, gardera tout de même, en son attitude, un peu de la vie qui animait les mains dont elle fût pétrie. (p.40)

Gourmont speaks highly of the image-studded writing of philosophers like Schopenhauer, Taine, and Nietzsche, praising it for its "solidité" (p.70). The habit of attributing a material solidity to concrete language, we shall see, was picked up by Hulme,[62] who, with Pound, was to share Gourmont's view that such language was the essence of fine writing.

From his position as apologist for what he held to be the general features of Symbolism, then, Gourmont sharpened his focus to define a more specific ideal in the person of the plastic, or visual writer. The fierce individualism which he praised as the essential quality of Symbolist art, newly justified as the function, not of man's confinement in idealist dream-worlds, but of the idiosyncratic working of their physiologies, he recommended anew in the guise of the plastic writer's sincerity: his dedication of the whole of his being to his art, his acute retention of his own sensual experiences, and the emotions aroused in them, his sensitivity to the images attached to the words he utters. When Gourmont

[62] See Chapter V, p.360 of this thesis.

himself commented, in 1915, on the affinity he perceived between the Symbolist and Imagist movements, it was to what he saw as their common horror of cliché, and their dedication to a sincere, complete involvement in the process of expression, that he pointed.[63] In subsequent chapters, we shall see how his specifications for the plastic writer, rooted in the new psychology and thus notably devoid of the mystical claims marking Symbolist accounts, were echoed in the accounts of the creative activity formulated by Hulme and Pound, and thus, how he himself significantly contributed to the bridging of the Symbolist/Imagist gap.

[63] Glenn S. Burne cites Gourmont's remarks in an article in La France of 5 May 1915, in Remy de Gourmont, p.147.

CHAPTER IV

BERGSON AS THE PHILOSOPHER OF SYMBOLISM

i) A Philosophy for Hulme, and for Symbolism.

When T. E. Hulme, in his proposal for the projected book on modern theories of art, sketches out his plan for the chapter on Henri Bergson, he appears to admire in Bergson's work precisely that aspect which he admires in Ribot's. He celebrates the fact that Bergson's "psychological results" enable him "to describe the indescribable process of artistic creation";[1] Bergson's work is linked with Ribot's in belonging to the "new psychology," in whose terms the "rough analyses" which artists have given of the creative activity may be more precisely translated.

Bergson's writings on the creative activity do, as both Thomas Hanna and Enid Starkie have observed, and as Ben-Ami Scharfstein has discussed at some length,[2] draw heavily from the data of the experimental sciences. Like Ribot, from whom he borrowed, Bergson sought to demystify the activity by giving it a scientific basis. He went beyond the French psychologist, however, in concerning himself also with fundamental metaphysical issues. Hulme was to embrace his

[1] T. E. Hulme, "The Plan for a Book," Appendix B in Speculations, p.263.

[2] See Hanna's "The Bergsonian Heritage," and Starkie's "Bergson and Literature," in The Bergsonian Heritage, ed. Thomas Hanna (London: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp.10-11 and 90-91, and Ben-Ami Scharfstein, Roots of Bergson's Philosophy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943).

arguments against a materialist view of mind, and a determinist view of human behaviour, finding relief in them from prevailing interpretations of the universe which he found deeply disturbing. The foundational importance of Bergson's philosophy, and his metaphorical expression of it, for Hulme, is best summarized by Hulme's own words:

> His phraseology formed, indeed, the spectacles through which I have seen everything; but the spectacles were not external to me, fixed on my nose, removable at will, but were - if I may extend the metaphor illegitimately - fixed right in the centre of my mind, where I was not even aware myself of their existence.[3]

Speaking of Bergson's account of art, in the plan for his book, Hulme speculates that there is in his theory perhaps "too much founded on analysis and experience of modern art - particularly symbolism...."[4] Many critics have expressed the view that Bergson's discussion of the artistic activity and its product was less notable for any universal applicability than for being an accurate account of Symbolist art. Tancrède de Visan was one of the first to note the kinship, seeing a parallel between Bergson's opposition to materialism and mechanism and the Symbolist reaction against the naturalistic content and mechanical form of the literature of the Parnasse.[5]

[3] T. E. Hulme, "Bergson Lecturing," in The New Age, X, 1 (2 November 1911), p.15.

[4] Hulme, "The Plan for a Book," in Speculations, p.263. My italics.

[5] Tancrède de Visan, L'Attitude du lyrisme contemporain, p.433.

F. S. Flint saw Symbolist ideals perfectly formulated in Bergson's "philosophy of intuitiveness."[6] Bergson is frequently depicted as the philosopher who came along to put Symbolist affairs in order. Enid Starkie says that he was for the Symbolists "the heaven-sent thinker, who carried their theories further, who had the authority of a trained mind, and who was not merely a sentimental and emotional aesthetician...."[7] E. Fiser remarks that in his work "nous trouvons formulé, avec la plus grande clarté, ce que les symbolistes ont obscurément senti et la plupart du temps mal exprimé."[8] The critics who find in Bergson's writings a precise description of the Symbolist activity invariably remark on the appropriateness both of his account of the poet's apprehension, and of his description of how the poet articulates that apprehension. Looking at his remarks systematically, we shall see that the first of these claims is problematic, for Bergson defined quite a different realm for his artist's gaze than we have seen identified by idealists and Symbolists. His description of the second part of the process, and its product, will be seen more fully to justify the claims for his position as the philosopher of Symbolism; but where they prove analogous to the "rough analyses" we have seen in previous chapters, they will also prove, rooted in psychological theory,

[6] F. S. Flint, "Contemporary French Poetry," in Poetry Review, I, 8 (August 1912), p.355.

[7] Starkie, "Bergson and Literature," in Hanna, p.79.

[8] E. Fiser, Le Symbole littéraire (Paris: Jose Carti, 1941), p.10.

stripped of any mysterious implications.

ii) Apprehension.

a) The Veil.

Bergson's theory of art, as it was relevant to Hulme, may be reconstructed largely out of five major works: the Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience(1889), Matière et mémoire(1896), Le Rire(1900), "Introduction à la métaphysique"(1903), and L'Évolution créatrice(1907).[9] The majority of the comments on art in these works emerge as examples and illustrations for Bergson's discussions of larger metaphysical and epistemological issues; the question of the artistic activity is rarely addressed directly, and

[9] The Essai sur les données immédiates was translated into English as Time and Free Will(1910); Matiere et memoire as Matter and Memory(1911); Le Rire as Laughter(1910); L'Évolution créatrice as Creative Evolution(1911). Hulme did the first translation of the "Introduction à la métaphysiques," as An Introduction to Metaphysics(1913).

I shall refer to the French texts: Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1921); Matière et mémoire (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1906); Le Rire (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964); L'Évolution créatrice (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948). References to the "Introduction" will be to its reprint in the collection La Pensée et le mouvant (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1946). Other miscellaneous speeches and articles will be cited from this volume, as well as L'Energie spirituelle (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1944).

All references to the French volumes will be incorporated into the text, with the following abbreviations, respectively: EDI, MM, R, EC, PM, ES. Because of its prominence for Hulme, the "Introduction" will be indicated separately from PM, as I.

nowhere comprehensively.[10] Bergson does, however, in Le Rire, express his view about the ultimate purpose of art. Whether it be painting or sculpture, poetry or music, he says, art must work "nous mettre face à face avec la réalite même" (R, p.120); were it the case that we were ever in "communication immédiate avec les choses et avec nous-mêmes," we should have no need of artists, "ou plutôt que nous serions tous artistes, car notre âme vibrerait alors continuellement à l'unisson de la nature." In distinguishing the artist from the ordinary man, Bergson uses an image which we have seen repeatedly in idealist and Symbolist writings: the image of an interface, or veil, hanging between man and reality:

> Entre la nature et nous, que dis-je? entre nous et notre propre conscience, un voile s'interpose, voile épais pour le commun des hommes, voile léger, presque transparent, pour l'artiste et le poète. (R, p.115)

We have seen Schopenhauer envision a "veil of deception" obscuring man's vision of the will, Carlyle a dream-painted "Canvas" hanging between man and God, and Mallarmé and Yeats a window-pane which the artist would smash to achieve contact with Eternity. In each of these cases it has been suggested that the construction of the interface is the work of the intellect, and that its penetration requires the suspension

[10] Some other useful attempts at reconstructing Bergson's aesthetic theory are found in A. E. Pilkington's Bergson and his Influence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), Arthur Szathmary's The Aesthetic Theory of Bergson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1937), and Jeanne Priley McLean's unpublished doctoral thesis, "Immediate Experience and the Problem of Expression: A Study in the Philosophy of Bergson," Loyola University of Chicago, 1975.

of both the intellect and the urge towards action which it serves. The reality contacted when the idealist and Symbolist veils are penetrated, if variable in the details of its description, is invariably spiritual, universal; in the case of Schopenhauer and Mallarmé, in particular, it is a realm of immutable Ideas, devoid of all of the "accidents" of the flux. Turning from Le Rire to Bergson's other works, we find a very detailed account of both how the veil is woven and how it is penetrated, and also of the nature of the reality which lies on its other side. In considering this account, we may assess the validity of the suggestion that Bergson supplied a description of the poetic apprehension equivalent to the Symbolist one.

Bergson speaks in the passage from Le Rire not of one veil to be pierced, but of two: a veil hanging between ourselves and nature, and one dividing our true selves from our own consciousness. We shall proceed, accordingly, to consider Bergson's views about the nature of the realities both without and within man, and of the means by which both may be directly contacted. It is interesting to note that in dividing our investigation thus we demarcate the realms and the awarenesses which Bergson attributes to the painter and the poet respectively. When he elaborates in Le Rire the claim that it is the special gift of the artist to see beyond a veil which is opaque for the common man, he asserts that for any individual artist the veil will be lifted "dans une direction seulement..." (R, pp.118-9). It is the unique capacity of the painter to pierce that interface which hangs

before most men's eyes, to transcend the "préjugés de forme et de couleur" (R, p.119) which come between most men and the external, visible world. It is the poet's gift, on the other hand, to go beyond a commonplace sense of what is happening within his own self, to be aware of the reality of his own mental states, his own moods (R, pp.120-1).

b) The Inner Life.

The detailed account Bergson gives of the inner life of man is of great significance for his theory of art. It provides the foundation, we shall see, for his argument on behalf of the essential freedom of the creative activity: an argument which frees art from the kind of determinist bonds identified for it, for example, by the likes of Taine. One strain of Bergson's attack against determinism is found in the extended argument, in both the Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience (pp.112-4), and Matière et mémoire (Chapters II, III), on behalf of the essential freedom of the memory from the material body; Bergson argued, that is, against the view of memory which we have seen in Gourmont, that memory-images have some kind of dwelling-place in the cells of the brain (MM, pp.123-8; p.138). The more important line of attack for the theory of art, however, and the one I shall consider in greater detail, is Bergson's argument against the determinist view of human behaviour which had arisen out of the associationist psychology. To understand this argument we must establish, first of all, the basic features which Bergson's knowledge of the results of experimental psychology

led him to ascribe to the self, and secondly the ways in which he believed the analytical intellect, the associationists' primary means of approaching it, must inevitably, therefore, distort it.

Bergson's basic conception of the "moi fondamental" (EDI, p.97) is, as I have suggested in Chapter II, not unlike the one expounded by Pater.[11] He shares Pater's attraction, that is, to the Heraclitean view that the essence of reality is change, rejecting, in the "Introduction à la métaphysique," and elsewhere (EC, pp.316-7) the contrary view expounded by Plato, that "'Il y a plus dans l'immuable que dans le mouvant, et l'on passe du stable a l'instable par une simple diminution'" (I, p.217). The essential fact about the inner life, accordingly, is for him its quality of being in perpetual flux, of constituting a "continuité d'écoulement" (I, p.183). The human soul, in his view, is made up entirely of "progrès" (EDI, p.99), of inner states which are like "des êtres vivants, sans cesse en voie de formation..." (EDI, p.178). These inner states, moreover, are not separate from, but penetrate each other: each one "annonce ce qui suit et contient ce qui précède" (I, p.183). At one point Bergson, like Pater, likens the inner life to a constantly flowing river (I, p.209). Elsewhere he speaks of it as a "mélodie ininterrompue" (R, p.115), its constituent states like the notes in a tune, which in the listening seem to permeate one another (EDI, pp.79-80). Two important ramifications, we shall see, emerge from this conception of the self, to form the crux of Bergson's

[11] See Chapter II, pp.140-141 of this thesis.

argument against associationist determinism. The first is that since every state is permeated by the memory of previous states, no state can ever recur exactly as it has been before. The second is that it would be impossible for any individual state somehow to dominate, or control the development of the whole soul, for "tout le contenu de l'âme" (EDI, p.126) will be present in every feeling.

A continuity such as the fundamental self, Bergson maintains, can only be distorted by any attempt to comprehend it by means of the analytical intellect, and the conceptual language which is its tool. It is the habit of the intellect, he observes in the Essai, when confronting any entity which is an indivisible unity, nevertheless to divide that unity into its constituent parts; it is "tourmentée," he says, "d'un insatiable desir de distinguer..." (EDI, p.97).[12] The intellect will regard a continuous melody only in terms of its constituent notes. It will regard an indivisible motion as divisible simply into the points which make up the line it traverses. Accordingly, when confronted by the flux of interpenetrating states which make up the inner life, it will regard these states, falsely, as discrete entities, which succeed each other but which are utterly distinct from each other. The tendency of the intellect to divide the continuous process of the self into a series of stable, lifeless states, is reinforced by the intellect's habit of assigning symbols, words, to the real entities which it isolates (EDI, p.125). An experience of shifting moods will become through language,

[12] My italics.

for example, a series in which a distinct "anger" is followed by a distinct "sorrow" and then by a distinct "despair." In addition to lending discreteness and solidity to mental states, moreover, the words which the intellect wields work to blind the individual who analyses to the unique, or particular character of the states: he will recognize in them only those qualities which they have in common with other states of the same name.

It is just this kind of misrepresentation of the self which Bergson exposes as the fundamental fallacy behind associationist determinism. Mill and his successors, he points out, represented the self as an aggregate of discrete feelings and ideas, a "poussière de moments dont aucun ne dure, chacun étant un instantané" (I, p.208). Having thus divided the self, they proceeded to propose causal relations between its constituent states, to assert that any individual state is determined by the series of states which has preceded it (EDI, pp.119-20). When a number of psychic states coexist, they believed, the strongest of these exerts a prevailing influence, and carries the others with it, thus determining the individual's actions (EDI, p.122). The future moods and actions of the individual, therefore, seemed to them to be entirely predictable, as predictable, Bergson says, as the movements of solid, undeveloping physical objects like the planets (EDI, p.147). The associationist theory of how behaviour is determined, then, rests for Bergson on an unacceptable assumption: the view that the living self is divisible. The kind of causal series which the associationists envisioned, moreover, seems to him

to presuppose a further fallacy about the self: the view that its states will recur, identically, in the presence of identical conditions. The associationists, he says, were aided in the making of this mistake by the power of language to blind its user to the uniqueness of things. In observing, for example, that a state of "anger" had recurred, they would have been conscious only of the qualities of this state which it shared with other states of "anger," and not of those which rendered it unique: they would have ignored, for example, the presence of that memory which makes every state new (EDI, pp.124-5). Bergson asserts, on the contrary, that the uniqueness of every new state in the developing self renders all future states unpredictable. He also rejects the associationist notion that the soul is not ultimately free because it may be dominated and controlled by a single strong state, contending that if the whole of the soul permeates every state, it follows that the soul cannot somehow be ruled by a state separate from it, but must always be self-determining (EDI, p.127).

In addition to discussing how the analytical intellect led the associationist psychologists astray, Bergson goes to some lengths to describe how it may be responsible for distorting any man's understanding of his own nature, for weaving, in effect, that veil between his consciousness and his fundamental self. When an individual reflects upon the states he experiences, Bergson says, it is not his essential, flowing self he will see, but a self which has formed upon it

somewhat as a layer of ice may form on the surface of a flowing river (I, p.209). He will see a self divided into elements which language has rendered separate, solid, and simple, a "moi superficiel" (EDI, p.95) which slowly becomes the only self of which he is aware (EDI, p.97). The intellect, moreover, does not stop at creating a false image of the self; it also causes a new self to be active. Bergson describes how the very mechanism by which a man only means at first to explain his conduct will end by also controlling it, turning all his actions into reflex ones:

> Nos états psychiques, en se détachant alors les uns des autres, se solidifieront; entre nos idées ainsi cristallisées et nos mouvements extérieurs des associations stables se formeront; et peu à peu, notre conscience imitant le processus par lequel la matière nerveuse obtient des actions réflexes, l'automatisme récouvrira la liberté. (EDI, p.182)[13]

When a man responds to the striking of a bell in the morning by immediately leaping out of his bed, Bergson says, it is only his superficial self which is in operation; the impression of the bell "au lieu d'ébranler ma conscience entière comme une pierre qui tombe dans l'eau d'un bassin, se borne á remuer une idée pour ainsi dire solidifiée à la surface, l'idée de me lever et de vaguer à mes occupations habituelles" (EDI, p.129). The self active in such a case, he points out, is a self which is in fact explainable by the laws of associationism, whose future states and their ensuing actions are not free, but entirely predictable. Bergson observes that social interests

[13] My italics.

are often at the root of the process by which a man loses touch with his genuine impulses. There is a likeness, he asserts, between the slow progress of "une vie sociale de plus en plus pacifiée," and the life of our planet, which has been "un long effort pour récouvrir d'une pellicule solide et froide la masse ignée des métaux en ébullition" (R, p.122). Many of the ideas which make up the superficial self, he says, and direct an individual's everyday actions, are ideas which an individual has acquired through "une education mal comprise, celle qui s'adresse à la mémoire plutôt qu'au jugement" (EDI, p.127).

The intellect may be responsible, then, for obscuring a man's sense of his own self, for creating an interface which is also a kind of prison, depriving him of his power to act freely. When the poet, therefore, exercises his special gift of piercing that interface, of being in direct contact with a genuine mood which is "le sien, et le sien seulement, et qui ne sera jamais plus" (R, p.123), he is fulfilling the conditions specified by Bergson in L'Evolution creatrice for the recovery of that basic freedom:

> Plus nous prenons conscience de notre progrès dans la pure durée, plus nous sentons les diverses parties de notre être entrer les unes dans les autres et notre personnalité tout entière se concentrer en un point, ou mieux en une pointe, qui s'insère dans l'avenir en l'entamant sans cesse. En cela consistent la vie et l'action libres. (EC, p.202)

Bergson's poet is free because he is in touch with the flux of his essential, evolving self, whose moods and ensuing

actions are unpredictable, undetermined. In a 1902 article on "L'Effort intellectuel," Bergson discusses the tension of mind required to maintain such contact, and such freedom. He sets the expressive process of the man who sustains it in direct contrast to the "reflex speech"[14] typical of much social interaction, by which "réponses toutes faites" are automatically uttered from the crystallized surface of the superficial self. His contrast of the intensely involved poet, and the man who expresses himself "machinalement" (ES, p.168), recalls Gourmont's contrast between the poet and ideo-emotive "mécaniste," impassively uttering his clichés.[15] We have seen a similar opposition, too, in Carlyle, who set the deep, mysterious, divinely connected self from which poetry springs against the "mere upper surface" of the mind which occupies the debater or logician.[16] In Bergson's account, however, the fundamental self is posited merely as an observable psychological phenomenon, mercifully free, in Hulme's eyes, from any suggestion of higher spiritual connections.

c) The External World.

Bergson's account of the world outside of men, first of all, sets him definitively apart from the subjective idealist strain of Symbolist thought. In Matière et mémoire,

[14] In "L'Effort intellectuel," in ES, p.168, Bergson paraphrases an article on "Reflex Speech," by the English psychologist George Robertson, which appeared in the Journal of Mental Science for April, 1888.

[15] See Chapter III, p.236 of this thesis.

[16] See Chapter I, p. 76 of this thesis.

he presents an extensive argument against the view that what men see is merely a projection of their own minds. He posits, instead, as Gourmont had done, the existence of "un ordre objectif et indépendant de nous, c'est-à-dire d'un monde matériel distinct de la sensation" (MM, p.55): an order which is selectively, but essentially accurately, perceived. The second important fact about his account, although it was not until the publication of L'Évolution créatrice that it was entirely the case,[17] is his endowment of the realm outside of man with all the essential qualities he attributes to the inner life. Like Pater, Bergson envisages the world assaulting the senses as a kind of kaleidoscopic continuity of sounds, odours, tastes, and visual images (MM, p.218; p.233). The same "discontinuité que notre perception établissait à la surface" (MM, p.224) of things, moreover, is in his view true also of their fundamental physical construction; he cites with approval the findings of the physicist Thomson, which countered the view of matter as composed of inert, solid atoms, and resolved it instead into a fluid continuity of forces (MM, pp.223-4). Finally, Bergson asserts that this continuous flux always preserves within it the mark of what it has been before, and that like the states within the human spirit, therefore,

[17] Jeanne Priley McLean traces Bergson's developing conception of the material world in the first chapter of "Immediate Experience and the Problem of Expression." She notes that his position in Evolution is not entirely consistent, although the weight of his remarks fall in favour of the position stated here. A notable exception to the view of matter as possessed of the continuity and duration true of the human spirit will be observed in our discussion of Bergson's and Hulme's "cinders." See below, p.271 and Chapter VI, p.340.

its conditions can never identically recur (EC, p.11; p.39).

The external world, then, the realm which is veiled to most men's vision but immediate to the painter's, is represented ultimately by Bergson as a realm which will be elusive to the attempts of the intellect to comprehend it. It becomes increasingly clear, from his discussion, that the intellect's technique of dividing its object into discrete constituent parts is a technique as ill applied to the continuity of the material world as it is to the flux of the human spirit. Just as men for social purposes, however, simplify and divide the flux of their inner lives, so for practical reasons, Bergson points out, they simplify and divide the indivisible world outside of them. Physical needs, he observes in Matière et mémoire, teach them to discern distinct bodies in the continuity (MM, p.262). Their analytical intellect, he notes in Le Rire, with the aid of conceptual language, blinds them to those unique properties of things which may be irrelevant to their practical purposes; it weaves between their eyes and the external world the same kind of veil as the one which obscures the individuality of the states within their fundamental selves:

> L'individualité des choses et des êtres nous échappe toutes les fois qu'il ne nous est pas matériellement utile de l'apercevoir. Et la même ou nous la remarquons (comme lorsque nous distinguons un homme d'un autre homme), ce n'est pas l'individualité même que notre oeil saisit, c'est-à-dire une certaine harmonie tout à fait originale de formes et de couleurs, mais seulement un ou deux traits qui faciliteront la reconnaissance pratique. (R, pp.116-7)

In penetrating the veil, therefore, which customarily hangs between practical man and the external world, Bergson's ideal painter will apprehend a fluid, continuous, interpenetrated realm, in all its particularity. Bergson might well have been addressing the painter when outlining, in Matière et mémoire, a certain way of reversing normal processes of thought:

> Reliez les uns aux autres, en un mot, les objets discontinus de votre expérience journalière; résolvez ensuite la continuité immobile de leurs qualités en ébranlements sur place; attachez-vous à ces mouvements en vous dégageant de l'espace divisible qui les sous-tend pour n'en plus considérer que la mobilité, cet acte indivisé que votre conscience saisit dans les mouvements que vous éxecutez vous-même: vous obtiendrez de la matière une vision fatigante peut-être pour votre imagination, mais pure, et débarrassée de ce que les exigences de la vie vous y font ajouter dans la perception extérieure. (MM, p.232)

That the painter ought to apprehend and record the momentary, fleeting qualities of this flux is something Bergson makes clear in Le Rire. "Ce que le peintre fixe sur la toile," he says, "c'est ce qu'il a vu en un certain lieu, certain jour, à certaine heure, avec des couleurs qu'on ne reverra pas" (R, p.123).[18]

d) Intuition.

Bergson calls the experiences in which the poet and painter penetrate the intellect's veils experiences of "intuition." In the "Introduction à la métaphysique" he

[18] Bergson was cited as an authority by the Futurist painters. See Chapter VI, p.399 of this thesis.

defines intuition as "la sympathie par laquelle on se transporte a l'intérieur d'un objet..." (I, p.181). In L'Évolution créatrice, he pictures the artist engaged "en se replaçant à l'intérieur de l'objet par une espèce de sympathie, en abaissant, par un effort d'intuition, la barrière que l'espace interpose entre lui et le modèle" (EC, p.178). In strictly psychological terms, the experience of intuition is one which demands a degree of mental tension, or effort, to counter the simplifying ways of seeing born of habit: "Il faut pour cela qu'il /l'esprit/ se violente, qu'il renverse le sens de l'opération par laquelle il pense habituellement, qu'il retourne ou plutôt refonde sans cesse ses catégories" (I, p.213). The fresh, non-analytical quality of the experience, and the penetration of a veil which it entails, render it analogous, certainly, to the experiences of apprehension which we have seen defined by Schopenhauer and Carlyle, Baudelaire and Mallarmé, and Yeats. But to what extent, in fact, are we justified in identifying it with them?

At the end of the "Introduction à la métaphysique," Bergson stresses that there is "rien de mystérieux" (I, p.225) about the intuitive experience. His remark is important because it is indicative of the attitude which permeates all his remarks on the subject, and which is responsible, accordingly, for rendering his account in fact significantly different from the idealist and Symbolist one. Bergson describes what the artist apprehends in the experience, first of all, as something "absolu," or "parfait," or "infini" (I, pp.179-80). In doing so, however, he does not imply a

contact with God, or with any other kind of universal spirit.[19] He means simply, rather, that the artist, in suspending his divisive, analytical powers, will know from the inside, absolutely, what the intellect, wheeling around the outside, would take an infinite amount of time to reconstruct with its concepts:

> Dans son désir éternellement inassouvi d'embrasser l'objet autour duquel elle est condamnée à tourner, l'analyse multiplie sans fin les points de vue pour compléter la représentation toujours incomplète, varie sans relâche les symboles pour parfaire la traduction toujours imparfaite. Elle se continue donc à l'infini. Mais l'intuition...est un acte simple. (I, p.181)[20]

Using to striking effect the metaphor which we have encountered, with some variation, in Mallarmé[21] and Ribot,[22] Bergson describes the object absolutely apprehended by the poet as "la pièce d'or dont on n'aura jamais fini de rendre la monnaie" (I, p.180):

> Je ne nie pas l'utilité des idées abstraites et générales, - pas plus que je ne conteste la valeur des billets de banque. Mais de même que le billet n'est qu'une promesse d'or, ainsi une conception ne vaut que par les perceptions éventuelles qu'elle représente. (PM, p.145)

[19] The only possible counter-argument to this claim might be one built on the basis of certain passages in L'Évolution créatrice, where Bergson ceases to use the fundamental self in its usual function as an analogy for the universal "élan vital," and appears to identify the two. See EC, pp.240, 261-2, 264, 267. Such cases are the exception, however, rather than the rule.

[20] Cf. EC, pp.177-8.

[21] See Chapter I, p.106 of this thesis.

[22] See Chapter III, p.199 of this thesis.

In its elusiveness to translation into concepts, the object of Bergson's artist's attention would seem, at first, to coincide with the object defined for the artist by Schopenhauer:[23] the Idea. With a moment's consideration, however, it will be apparent that Bergson diverges from Schopenhauer in precisely the manner in which Pater has done.[24] The non-analytical apprehension of his poet discloses a mood "qui ne sera jamais plus,"[25] that of his painter a visual impression "qu'on ne reverra pas."[26] The intuitive moments of his artists, that is, do not entail the recognition of timeless universals, but maintain in sharp focus all those "accidental" features of passing phenomena which in Schopenhauer's account were to dissolve away. Bergson himself explicitly distinguishes his account from Schopenhauer's, pointing in doing so to his belief that the intuitive experience need not entail the transcending of the world of time:

> Parce qu'un Schelling, un Schopenhauer et d'autres ont déjà fait appel à l'intuition, parce qu'ils ont plus ou moins opposé l'intuition à l'intelligence, on pouvait croire que nous appliquions la même méthode. Comme si leur intuition n'était pas une recherche immédiate de l'éternel! Comme s'il ne s'agissait pas au contraire, selon nous, de retrouver d'abord la durée vraie. Nombreux sont les philosophes qui ont senti l'impuissance de la pensée conceptuelle à atteindre le fond de l'esprit. Nombreux, par conséquent, ceux qui ont parlé d'une faculté supra-intellectuelle d'intuition. Mais, comme ils ont cru que l'intelligence opérait dans le temps, ils en ont conclu que dépasser l'intelligence consistait à sortir du temps. Ils n'ont pas vu que le temps

[23] See Chapter I, p. 66 of this thesis.

[24] See Chapter II, p.145 of this thesis.

[25] See above, p.255.

[26] See above, p.259

> intellectualisé est éspace, que l'intelligence travaille sur le fantôme de la durée, mais non pas sur la durée même, que l'élimination du temps est l'acte habituel, normal, banal, de notre entendement, que la relativité de notre connaissance de l'esprit vient précisément de là, et que dès lors, pour passer de l'intellection a la vision, du relatif à l'absolu, il n'y a pas à sortir du temps (nous en sommes déjà sortis); il faut, au contraire, se replacer dans la durée et ressaisir la réalité dans la mobilité qui en est l'essence. (PM, pp.25-6)

The experience of apprehension which Bergson defined for his artist, then, although analogous to the idealist and Symbolist one in its suspension of the analytical intellect, in fact differs sharply from it in having as its ultimate object nothing higher than the objects in the fleeting, material realm. This, we shall see, was just one significant way in which Bergson's account appealed strongly to Hulme's "classical" spirit.

iii) Articulation.

At no place in his work does Bergson devote any sustained attention to the question of how the poet goes about articulating the unique states which he encounters in his "moi fondamental." From remarks scattered throughout his work, however, we may piece together a picture of the process which traces some familiar Symbolist lines: a picture which makes it clear that Bergson conceived the process, in a number of respects, to be one of discovery.

The first Symbolist tenet to be found in Bergson's account is his assertion that the expressive process does not

begin with the formulation of some clear, abstract idea. He voiced his objection to a process involving the mere translation of pre-existent ideas in a lecture on "L'Intuition philosophique," delivered on 10 April 1911 at the Philosophical Congress in Bologna, and having among its audience Hulme. His specific reference, there, was to the philosophical activity, but philosopher and poet are closely identified throughout his work:

> Le philosophe ne prend pas des idées préexistantes pour les fondre dans une synthèse supérieure ou pour les combiner avec une idée nouvelle. Autant vaudrait croire que, pour parler, nous allons chercher des mots que nous cousons ensuite ensemble au moyen d'une pensée. La vérité est qu'au dessus du mot et au-dessus de la phrase il y a quelque chose de beaucoup plus simple qu'une phrase et meme qu'un mot: le sens, qui est moins une chose pensée qu'un mouvement de pensée, moins un mouvement qu'une direction.... Le philosophe ne part pas d'idées préexistantes; tout au plus peut-on dire qu'il y arrive. Et quand il y vient, l'idée ainsi entraînée dans le mouvement de son esprit, s'animant d'une vie nouvelle comme le mot qui reçoit son sens de la phrase, n'est plus ce qu'elle était en dehors du tourbillon. (PM, pp.133-4)

Falling back through his superficial self, into the "tourbillon," or vortex, of his fundamental one, the philosopher poet renounces his hold on any fixed ideas, and instead follows the development of new ones. Bergson's account of how meaning begins to take some concrete form in the philosopher's mind coincides closely with the Symbolist principle which we have seen clearly stated by Hegel, Pater, and Yeats. In contrast to the Parnassian view of the poetic process, that is, as one in which clearly formulated ideas are translated into

illustrative images, his view is that the images appear first, that they arise as the primary manifestation of the meaning which may only subsequently be translated into abstract language:

> Nous n'avons que deux moyens d'expression, le concept et l'image. C'est en concepts que le système se développe; c'est en une image qu'il se resserre quand on le repousse vers l'intuition d'où il descend: que si l'on veut dépasser l'image en remontant plus haut qu'elle, nécessairement on retombe sur des concepts, et sur des concepts plus vagues, plus généraux encore, que ceux d'où l'on était parti à la recherche de l'image et de l'intuition. (PM, pp.131-2)

That Bergson believed images and conceptual language to present themselves in the same sequence in the poetic process is evident from a remark in the Essai, where he defines the poet as "celui chez qui les sentiments se développent en images, et les images elles-mêmes en paroles, dociles au rythme, pour les traduire" (EDI, p.11).

A second testament to Bergson's conviction about the discovery implicit in the creative activity is found in a 1902 article on "L'Effort intellectuel," where he considers the nature of the alternative expressive activity to that "reflex speech" involving only the superficial self. Among his examples of "les formes les plus hautes de l'effort intellectuel" (ES, p.174), he cites the effort involved in the inventor's attempt to objectify the schema of images, or "ideal," in his mind; his allusion is explicitly to the account of such a process which we have noted in Ribot's Essai sur l'imagination

créatrice.[27] Echoing Ribot's assertion that there is "rien de mystérieux" (ES, p.187) about such a schema, he adheres, too, to the view of its life as a "devenir" (ES, p.188). The highest form of invention, he claims, is not that mosaic-building activity which proceeds "'des détails à l'unité,'" but one which proceeds "'de l'unité aux détails,'" in which the initial "idéal" is modified throughout the process of finding its concrete expression:

> En d'autres termes, au lieu d'un schéma unique, aux formes immobiles et raides, dont on se donne tout de suite la conception distincte, il peut y avoir un schéma élastique ou mouvant, dont l'esprit se refuse à arrêter les contours, parce qu'il attend sa décision des images mêmes que le schéma doit attirer pour se donner un corps. (ES, p.176)

Bergson attempts to illuminate this process by drawing a parallel with the process involved in "l'effort corporel" (ES, p.178), pointing out how the images of movement which form in the mind of a dancer become modified, clarified, and more particularized as he subjects them to the test of performance with a limited, peculiarly constructed, physical body (ES, pp. 178-9). Once again, but now in the more detailed terms of psychological science, we see the experience of the dancer cited as a model for an expressive process in which content is only realized through form.

In the "Introduction à la métaphysique," Bergson represents the process of discovery involved in literary

[27] See Chapter III, p.205 of this thesis.

composition as a function of the writer's submission, after concentrated mental effort, to a fundamental impulse, an impulse whose progress will be halted the moment he stops to reflect upon it:

> Quiconque s'est exercé avec succès à la composition littéraire sait bien que lorsque le sujet a été longuement étudié, tous les documents recueillis, toutes les notes prises, il faut, pour aborder le travail de composition lui-même, quelque chose de plus, un effort, souvent pénible, pour se placer tout d'un coup au coeur même du sujet et pour aller chercher aussi profondément que possible une impulsion à laquelle il n'y aura plus ensuite qu'à se laisser aller. Cette impulsion, une fois reçue, lance l'esprit sur un chemin ou il retrouve et les renseignements qu'il avait recueillis et d'autres détails encore; elle se développe, elle s'analyse elle-même en termes dont l'énumération se poursuivrait sans fin; plus on va, plus on en découvre; jamais on n'arrivera à tout dire: et pourtant, si l'on se retourne brusquement vers l'impulsion qu'on sent derrière soi pour la saisir, elle se dérobe; car ce n'était pas une chose, mais une incitation ou mouvement, et, bien qu'indéfiniment extensible, elle est la simplicité même. (I, pp.225-6)[28]

His instructions about how the writer submits to this impulse are identical to those which he lays down elsewhere to describe how an individual may sustain contact with the self responsible for free action:

> Dès qu'il n'est plus simplement question de sentir en soi un élan et de s'assurer qu'on peut agir, mais de retourner la pensée sur elle-même pour qu'elle saisisse ce pouvoir et capte cet élan, la difficulté devient grande, comme s'il fallait invertir la direction normale de la connaissance. (PM, p.103)

These references to a controlling impulse, arising out of the

[28] Note also R, p.81, where Bergson says that poetic expression demands a degree of "oubli de soi...."

fundamental self, tie in directly with the most extensive, and for Hulme most memorable, account of the artistic process found in Bergson's work. This is the picture which he draws in L'Évolution créatrice, as an analogy for the process of creation in external nature; "Si la vie est une création," as he says, "nous devons nous la représenter par analogie avec les créations qu'il nous est donné d'observer" (PM, p.274). In this treatise, he parallels, and indeed at some points identifies,[29] the artist's impulse and the "élan vital": the current of life whose meeting with the matter of the world he believes to be responsible for shaping all natural species. His objections to the view that the creative activity somehow involves the mechanical arrangement of fixed elements according to a rigid, predetermined plan, that it is a process moving, in Ribot's terms, "des détails à l'unité," are offered here as part of an argument against mechanistic and finalist theories of evolution. To the adherents of mechanism, he explains, all events in natural life are the manifestations of the operation of fixed particles according to fixed and discernible laws (EC, p.38). The adherents of finalism, he says, also see the elements and laws of the universe as given, but they regard their operation simply as the fulfilment of some programme previously arranged (EC, pp.39-40). For both the mechanists and the finalists, most importantly, every development in nature is entirely predictable, calculable by any individual with sufficient knowledge of nature's matter and its laws; the time through which matter passes does not change it

[29] See above, p.261.

intrinsically, or in any unforeseeable way. Bergson likens the evolutionary process presented by the finalists to the process of putting together a jig-saw puzzle, a process for which the pieces are given, the end result is known, and the speed of execution makes no difference to the product (EC, p.339). It is the process, he observes, typical of the manufacturer, who fits together pieces of material according to some previously sketched blue-print, whose product will be precisely the sum of these pieces, the joints of their assemblage readily accessible to the eye (EC, pp.93-4). He counters such a view of evolution by pointing instead to what he believes to be the true process of artistic creation. In a passage which describes the painter, but which would seem equally descriptive of the poet, he notes that time is a crucial, informative factor in the act of execution. If the time taken does not make any difference to the ultimate achievement of the child constructing a jig-saw puzzle,

> pour l'artiste qui crée une image en la tirant du fond de son âme, le temps n'est plus un accessoire. Ce n'est pas un intervalle qu'on puisse allonger ou raccourcir sans en modifier le contenu. La durée de son travail fait partie intégrante de son travail. La contracter ou la dilater serait modifier à la fois l'évolution psychologique qui la remplit et l'invention qui en est le terme. Le temps d'invention ne fait qu'un ici avec l'invention même. (EC, pp.339-40)

The "évolution psychique" which guides the execution is, quite clearly, the evolution of shifting, interpenetrating states which Bergson prescribed for the fundamental self in the Essai.

As the interpenetration of these states made it impossible, in his view, to predict what any state at any future moment might be, so the nature of any invention to which it leads can never be known prior to the moment when it is completed:

> Le portrait achevé s'explique par la physionomie du modèle, par la nature de l'artiste, par les couleurs délayées sur la palette; mais, même avec la connaissance de ce qui l'explique, personne, pas même l'artiste, n'eût pu prévoir, exactement ce que serait le portrait, car le predire eût été le produire avant qu'il fût produit, hypothèse absurde qui se détruit elle-même. (EC, p.6)[30]

Creation in both nature and art, then, is for Bergson not a matter of "fabrication," but one rather of the "organisation" (EC, p.93) of matter by a simple, indivisible impulse. There is present in any living creature, he says, a "mouvement simple qui court à travers les lignes, qui les lie les unes aux autres et leur donne une signification..." (EC, p.178). A painting is "la projection d'une intuition indivisible" (EC, p.91); in a poem, an "acte indivisé," an "état simple," has been "éparpillé en phrases et en mots" (EC, p.210). Two of the images, in particular, which Bergson cites to illustrate the essential indivisibility of the process were to capture Hulme's imagination, and to occupy a central place in his metaphorical account of creative activity. The first is the one conjured up when he asks "quelle juxtaposition de courbes connues equivaudra jamais au trait de crayon d'un grand artiste?" (EC, p.240); his objection to the Pestalozzian technique of drawing with "courbes géometriques" (PM, p.278)

[30] Cf. PM, p.102.

was cited by Hulme's source, Visan, as a statement about the futility of trying to create a living beauty out of mere atoms of the beautiful.[31] The second is his representation of the living impulse as a rocket, which presses through fragments of matter and lights them up into organisms. Matter, in this picture, is something which falls back from the movement of the impulse, like "les débris qui retombent des fusées éteintes" (EC, p.251). It is made of what were called by Arthur Mitchell, in his 1911 translation of L'Évolution créatrice, the "cinders"[32] which remain when the rocket of life has been spent; "cinders" which wait, however, to be reorganized or regrouped by impulses yet to come.[33]

Perhaps the most important point, finally, about Bergson's account of the natural, or poetic impulse is his description of it as an entity loaded with potential tendencies, or significances, which depend for their very realization upon the struggle with matter:

> Si, dans son contact avec la matière, la vie est comparable à une impulsion ou à un élan, envisagée en elle-même elle est une immensité de virtualité, un empiètement mutuel de mille et mille tendances qui ne seront pourtant "mille

[31] See Visan, L'Attitude du lyrisme contemporain, pp.439-440. See Chapter V, p.347 of this thesis.

[32] See Bergson, Creative Evolution, trans. Arthur Mitchell (London: Macmillan, 1911), pp.264-5. Michael Roberts has noted Hulme's general debt to Bergson for the philosophy of "cinders," in T. E. Hulme, p.86, but no one, to my knowledge, has previously located the precise source of the image.

[33] Cf. EC, p.95, where Bergson pictures a hand passing through a dense collection of iron filings, shaping them by its motion.

> et mille" qu'une fois extériorisées les unes par rapport aux autres, c'est-à-dire spatialisées. Le contact avec la matière décide de cette dissociation. La matière divise effectivement ce qui n'était que virtuellement multiple, et, en ce sens, l'individuation est en partie l'oeuvre de la matière, en partie l'effet de ce que la vie porte en elle. C'est ainsi que d'un sentiment poétique s'explicitant en strophes distinctes, en vers distincts, en mots distincts, on pourra dire qu'il contenait cette multiplicité d'éléments individués et que pourtant c'est la matérialité du langage qui la crée. (EC, p.259)[34]

Like the "conception idéale" which is developed and honed through the process of concretization, the impulse depends upon "la matérialité du langage" for the individuation of its interpenetrated potentialities. Bergson's view of the role played by the poet's words, therefore, is very much like the one which we have seen in Mallarmé[35] and Valéry:[36] the poet recognizes what waits in his self to be expressed not by formulating abstract ideas about it in his mind, but by struggling, on paper, with the intrinsically powerful matter of words.[37] Bergson's version of how "Devant le papier, l'artiste se fait," with its implicit argument for the essential freedom of the process, was to be embraced by Hulme, and to shape, therefore, a significant point of likeness between his thought and the aesthetic of Symbolism.

[34] My italics.

[35] See Chapter I, p.104 of this thesis.

[36] See Chapter I, p.131 of this thesis.

[37] Cf. PM, p.102, where Bergson describes what the sculptor wishes to express as "imprévisible comme la forme donnée par le sculpteur à la terre glaise."

iv) The Product.

Were it not for Bergson's insistence that there is something to be discovered through a struggle with language, we might conclude from his account of the poetic apprehension that he sets his poet an impossible task. It is the poet's vocation, in his view, to apprehend his fundamental self and to express its true nature through language. Yet he describes this self as "confus, infiniment mobile, et inexprimable, parce que le langage ne saurait le saisir sans en fixer la mobilité, ni l'adapter à sa forme banale sans le faire tomber dans le domaine commun" (EDI, p.98),[38] and says that it is only the false, superficial self, the self of "nos idées qui nous appartiennent le moins," which can be adequately explained by words (EDI, p.103). The hostility with which Bergson regards language, as the accomplice of the intellect in dividing and immobilizing and obscuring the uniqueness of reality (R, pp.115-7; I, pp.181-2), emerges in L'Évolution créatrice as an utter despair that anything worth expressing can ever be expressed in words:

> La pensée la plus vivante se glacera dans la formule qui l'exprime. Le mot se retourne contre l'idée. La lettre tue l'esprit. (EC, p.128)

Bergson was preoccupied with the fact of the unsuitability of language as a vehicle for describing the fundamental self, or indeed as a vehicle for describing anything which is intuitively, absolutely, apprehended. There are,

[38] My italics.

however, sufficient comments scattered throughout his work to indicate that he had some conception of a use of language which might, in fact, adequately convey the absolute. These comments, too, are sufficient to establish that he shared the Symbolist ideal of a poem as elusive to analysis as the realm which the poet apprehends. Just as he envisions the inner life, "un être vivant, dont les parties, quoique distinctes, se pénètrent" (EDI, p.76), so he envisions the linguistic body which will convey it: "un organisme tout à fait unifié, incapable de se scinder en organismes independants..." (R, p.99).

Bergson's affinity with the Symbolists is evident, first of all, in his insistence that the language of poetry must be used not to convey an understanding, but an experience. The artist, he says in the Essai, on experiencing some deep emotion, "vise à nous introduire dans cette emotion si riche, si personnelle, si nouvelle, et à nous faire éprouver ce qu'il ne saurait nous faire comprendre" (EDI, p.13).[39] Poets, he asserts in Le Rire,

> s'ingénieront à nous faire voir quelque chose de ce qu'ils auront vu: par des arrangements rythmés de mots, qui arrivent ainsi à s'organiser ensemble et à s'animer d'une vie originale, ils nous disent, ou plutôt ils nous suggèrent, des choses que le langage n'était pas fait pour exprimer. (R, pp.119-20)[40]

That Bergson objects to a discursive use of language is not surprising, for the "absolute" feeling which the poet aims to convey will, by definition, elude an infinite number of attempts

[39] My italics.

[40] My italics.

to describe it. The poet will only be successful, it would seem, if he can somehow convey the "pièce d'or" of his apprehension directly, for to explain it would require an unlimited amount of conceptual "monnaie." We recognize here, of course, a stance similar to Mallarmé's, when he insisted that poetry should not entail the passing of a "numéraire facile et représentatif," but rather make its reader feel directly the essences of things, the horror of the forest and the thunder in its leaves.

Bergson's kinship with the Symbolists, and with Mallarmé in particular, is substantiated by his only explicit description of the technique whereby the reader may be made to share in the poet's intuition. The essential vehicle for poetic expression, he holds, must be that image which is the primary manifestation of the intuition in the poet's mind. In the "Introduction à la métaphysique" he expresses the Gourmontian sentiment that the image has the natural advantage "qu'elle nous maintient dans le concret" (I, p.185).[41] He also says that the poem will require not just one, but a number of images, and describes how these must be arranged:

> Nulle image ne remplacera l'intuition de la durée, mais beaucoup d'images diverses, empruntées à des ordres de choses très différents, pourront, par la convergence de leur action, diriger la conscience sur le point précis ou il y a une certaine intuition à saisir. En choisissant les images aussi

[41] Bergson was a nominalist, accepting the empiricist view about how abstract ideas evolve from perceptions, rather than the realist one that they precede them. See for example PM, pp.145-7 and 257. Also note, of course, his objection to Plato's view about the essential reality of the Ideas, mentioned above, p.262.

> disparates que possible, on empêchera l'une quelconque d'entre elles d'usurper la place de l'intuition qu'elle est chargée d'appeler, puisqu'elle serait alors chassée tout de suite par ses rivales. (I, pp.185-6)

In his insistence that the arrangement of images should create an impression of instability, that its constituents should be too "disparates" to coalesce into a coherent picture, Bergson appears to be describing a verse of the same order as that which Ribot attributed to the diffluent imagination, and thus to Symbolism: a verse of images lacking "un centre stable d'attraction...."[42] His description would seem, to a degree, an appropriate one for the kind of sequence of images which we have seen in the poetry of Rimbaud, the sequence in which each image seems displaced by, or transformed into, the ostensibly unrelated one which follows it.[43]

Bergson's specification that the images coexist in a state of tension, none resting comfortably, for very long, in the reader's mind, would seem best fulfilled, however, by the poems of Mallarmé. These, we recall, work on the principle that if an exact relation is established between certain images, "un tiers aspect fusible et clair"[44] will become evident to the reader: a third aspect which is the "Idea" of a thing, or the state of soul which it evokes, never simply the sum total of the images set side by side. Mallarmé, we have seen, frequently makes it impossible for the reader to keep a poem's images in focus in his mind, because after

[42] See Chapter III, p.218 of this thesis.

[43] See Chapter I, p. 93 of this thesis.

[44] See Chapter I, p.116 of this thesis.

naming things he proceeds to deny their existence. On reading a poem like "Sainte," for example, the reader is left with a sense of a stained-glass window on which there is a certain picture. If he should try, however, looking closely at the text, to construct that picture clearly in his mind, he will find it quite impossible, for what he has sensed has been a mirage of elements whose existence Mallarmé denies. The reader will be similarly frustrated if he attempts to focus clearly on the images which evoke the "ptyx," for he is told of this object that it is not an urn, not a trinket, that it appears in an empty room.[45] As well as building a number of his poems around this ultimate tension, the tension between existence and non-existence, Mallarmé has been seen frequently, too, to introduce the tension of paradox; he subjects his reader to the discomfort of a curtain which both conceals and reveals,[46] of gardens which are separated from themselves,[47] of a "cristal obscurci"[48] and a "musicienne de silence."[49] Bergson notes, in the "Introduction," that the poem composed of conflicting images will force the consciousness of its reader to adopt precisely the disposition "qu'elle devra adopter pour s'apparaître à elle-même sans voile" (I, p.186). He implies by this that in presenting the reader with a text

[45] For a discussion of "Ses purs ongles" and "Sainte," see Chapter I, pp.113-4.

[46] See Mallarmé, "Une dentelle s'abolit," l.8, in OC, p.74.

[47] See Mallarmé, "Prose: pour des Esseintes," l.28, in OC, p.56.

[48] Mallarmé, "Sonnet," l.4, in OC, p.61.

[49] Mallarmé, "Sainte," l.16, in OC, p.54.

which will frustrate not only any expectation he may have of a clear, discursive exposition, but also any attempt he may make to add the images together into a coherent picture, the writer will force upon him that violent reversal of habitual modes of thought which a man must undergo in any experience of intuition.[50] Bergson provides a justification, thus, in purely psychological terms, for techniques which Mallarmé attributed to the cause of invoking the Hegelian Geist, or the eternal Ideas.

The state of mind required by the reader of Bergson's ideal poem, then, is a state of the same kind as the one experienced by the poet, in both apprehension and expression. Bergson notes in the Essai that it is one of the purposes of art to put to sleep "les puissances actives ou plutôt résistantes de notre personnalité...." Like Yeats, he acknowledges how this function may be aided by the use of hypnotic rhythms; the poem's images, he says, "ne se réaliseraient pas aussi fortement pour nous sans les mouvements réguliers du rythme, par lequel notre âme, bercée et endormie, s'oublie comme en un rêve pour penser et pour voir avec le poète" (EDI, p.11). The work of art will reveal itself absolutely only to the reader who maintains an internal tension, resisting his urge to analyse it into its constituent parts. He must, in effect, allow himself to enter into the single, indivisible, inspiration which created it, and not relax into focusing upon the individual elements by means of which that inspiration has

[50] See above, p.260.

been realized:

> Quand un poète me lit ses vers, je puis m'intéresser assez à lui pour entrer dans sa pensée, m'insérer dans ses sentiments, revivre l'état simple qu'il a éparpillé en phrases et en mots. Je sympathise alors avec son inspiration, je la suis d'un mouvement continu qui est, comme l'inspiration elle-même, un acte indivisé. Maintenant, il suffit que je relâche mon attention, que je détende ce qu'il y avait en moi de tendu, pour que les sons, jusque-là noyés dans le sens, m'apparaissent, distinctement, un à un, dans leur matérialité. Je n'ai rien à ajouter pour cela; il suffit que je retranche quelque chose. À mesure que je me laisserai aller, les sons successifs, s'individualiseront davantage: comme les phrases s'étaient décomposées en mots, ainsi les mots se scanderont en syllabes que je percevrai tour à tour. (EC, p.210)

When the reader comes to express what he has found in the poem, Bergson says, or the translator to translate it, he will face the same difficulty encountered by the poet when he came to articulate his absolute apprehension:

> Toutes les traductions d'un poème dans toutes les langues possibles auront beau ajouter des nuances aux nuances et, par une éspèce de retouche mutuelle, en se corrigeant l'une l'autre, donner une image de plus en plus fidèle du poème qu'elles traduisent, jamais elles ne rendront le sens intérieur de l'original. (I, p.180)

Bergson's poem, then, like all those Symbolist poems we have traced from Schopenhauer, is an entity which holds its reader's attention as if in a spell, which bodies forth some infinitude which cannot be translated. It is Bergson's great achievement, however, as Hulme was greatly to appreciate, that the spell and the infinitude are no longer shrouded in mystery.

CHAPTER V

THE PHILOSOPHER OF IMAGISM: T. E. HULME

i) Hulme's Writings on the Creative Process.

The exercise of investigating Hulme's understanding of the creative process is one made especially difficult by the fact of his untimely death in the First World War. Many of his most compelling observations on the subject existed at that time only in the form of fragmentary notes. These jottings, collected by Herbert Read and published in 1925 as Notes on Language and Style,[1] together with those in which he expounded his personal philosophy, printed in Speculations as the "Cinders," present a considerable challenge to any attempt at organisation. Hulme himself was dubious about such

[1] These were first published in The Criterion, III (July, 1925), then as a University of Washington Chapbook in 1929, then in Further Speculations (1962), pp.77-100. My references will be to the latter; I shall incorporate these into the text with the abbreviation NLS.

References to the other lectures, essays, and notes in Speculations and Further Speculations will also be incorporated into the text, with the following abbreviations:

Speculations:

"Humanism and the Religious Attitude": HRA
"Romanticism and Classicism": RC
"Bergson's Theory of Art": BTA
"The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds": PIM
"Cinders": C

Further Speculations:

"Searchers after Reality I. Bax": SRI
"Searchers after Reality II. Haldane": SRII
"Searchers after Reality III. De Gaultier": SRIII
"Notes on Bergson": NB
"A Lecture on Modern Poetry": LMP

an exercise:

> Danger that when all these notes are arranged, the order will kill them in commonplace. When isolated at least there is hope they suggest great unities, which I am at any rate at present quite unable to carry out. (NLS, p.87)

Hulme's hesitation about systematizing his notes was a reflection, in part, of a profound scepticism, a prevailing theme throughout the "Cinders." As he warned there:

> All these various little notes will never combine because in their nature they cannot. The facts of Nature are solid enough, but Man is a weathercock standing in the middle, looking first at one part and then at another. A little idea in one sentence appears to contain a whole new world philosophy. So it does. But then a world philosophy is only a certain direction, N. or S. It is quite easy to change this direction. (C, p.238)

His hesitation had much to do also, as we shall see, with his sense that the brief, bright images in which he expressed himself were the images of a Bergsonian poet/philosopher embodying his intuitions. They were, he saw, the foundation upon which systematic theories might be built, but were themselves not conceived as part of any system.

There is good reason to worry, then, that on arranging Hulme's notes we will find no complete or consistent theory of creativity. Repeated forays into the imaginative world of the notes, however, with some knowledge of the sources for the ideas found there, and with reference also to various other lectures and articles in which Hulme alluded to the creative activity, will confirm that he did in fact have a

fairly complete and coherent picture of how an ideal poet would create his verses.

I shall consider the Notes and the "Cinders" in conjunction with Hulme's "Lecture on Modern Poetry," delivered in 1908 or 1909, his "Romanticism and Classicism" lecture of 1912, and the long essay first published in instalments in The New Age in 1915, and reprinted in Speculations as "Humanism and the Religious Attitude." I shall also refer to numerous other articles written for Poetry and Drama, The Commentator, and The New Age between 1909 and 1913. Among these, the most relevant are those in which Hulme presents a general defence of Bergson's philosophy and his theory of the creative activity. The most extensive account of Bergson's aesthetics, in the New Age articles, is reprinted in Speculations as "Bergson's Theory of Art"; it is joined there by the notes for four lectures delivered in 1913, and entitled "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds."

In looking at these writings as a group, I am rejecting the contention of a number of Hulme's critics that his work divided up into three discrete stages. J. B. Harmer, for example, sees the Notes on Language and Style, along with the "Lecture on Modern Poetry," as being distinctly representative of an early phase in Hulme's poetics.[2] A most insistent writer on this point is Wallace Martin, who not only argues that the Notes and the "Cinders" represent an early

[2] See Victory in Limbo, pp.18 and 30.

stage in Hulme's thought,[3] but also that these pre-date his preoccupation with Bergson. Martin sees Hulme's work as dividing easily into three stages, the first, ending in 1907 or 1908, a stage of fascination with empiricist psychologists like Taine and Ribot, the second, from then until 1912, a phase of overriding interest in the organicist psychology of Bergson, and the third, until his death, a reaction against Bergsonism which took the form of an enthusiastic interest in the new abstract art.[4] A close look at Hulme's writings, however, will reveal that it is only the latter of these divisions which has any significance for his creative theory. It is patently false, first of all, that the Notes and "Cinders" pre-date Hulme's reading of Bergson, for both sets of fragments contain a number of allusions to unmistakably Bergsonian ideas.[5] There is, secondly, in spite of Bergson's arguments against associationism, no conflict between the elements of Ribot's and Bergson's accounts which Hulme chooses to borrow. Bergson himself, we have seen, alludes to a number of Ribot's conclusions in his own work; Hulme acknowledges "L'Effort intellectuel," the essay in which most of these are concentrated,

[3] See Wallace Martin, "The Sources of the Imagist Aesthetic," p.199.

[4] See Martin, "Sources," p.198 and "'The Forgotten School of 1909' and the Origins of Imagism," in A Catalogue of the Imagist Poets, ed. J. Howard Woolmer (New York, 1966), p.31. K. E. Csengeri follows Martin's lead in his, rather superficial article, "T. E. Hulme's Borrowings from the French," in Comparative Literature, XXXIV, 1 (Winter 1982), p.18.

[5] See for example the statement, p.85, that a joke is "the decadent form into which all forms of literary expression can be shown to pass by degeneration of function" - a clear reference to Bergson's discussion in Le Rire. Also note the references to "cinders," pp.88, 89, 94 and 97; Bergson's relation to the "cinders" metaphor is discussed below.

in the plan for his never to be realized book on art.[6] Equally inapplicable, as regards Hulme's own poetic theory, finally, is David Marlin Heaton's thesis that Hulme shifted from a support for Gourmont, and his avowed materialism, to a support for Bergson, with his anti-materialist arguments.[7] As our study of Ribot has shown, an acknowledgement of the physical causes and concomitants of creative activity does not necessarily constitute a commitment to an anti-spiritualist metaphysic. Neither Hulme's allusions, after Gourmont and others, to poetry's physiological foundations, nor his recommendations about the use of a language close to sensation, are at all incompatible with his championship of Bergson. It is clear, in fact, from his discussion in "Bergson's Theory of Art,"[8] that Hulme uses Gourmont to complement Bergson's account where it is perhaps weakest: on the question of what the language of poetry should be.

It seems to me, then, that it would be a meaningless exercise to attempt separate studies of what are supposedly the first two stages of Hulme's thought. I shall regard all of Hulme's writings until his fascination with the visual arts took over as part of a single body. The shift away from Bergsonism which marked the last phase of his thought will be the subject of my discussion in Chapter VI.

[6] See "The Plan for a Book," in Speculations, p.263.

[7] See David Marlin Heaton, "Two French Philosophical Sources of T. E. Hulme's Imagism," a doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1969.

[8] See the shift in BTA, p.151, from an obvious paraphrase of Bergson's views to an obvious paraphrase of Gourmont's.

ii) Hulme's Conception of his Role.

In the first review of Speculations, Henry King attacked Hulme for his failure to support his ideas with clear, rational arguments. Hulme was, in his view, a "mere dilettante," who "insists on clarity, and is himself rather vague," who "stimulates, but fails to satisfy."[9] The complaint about the lack of systematic discourse in Hulme's work is a common one among his critics.[10] When we become familiar with the sweep of Hulme's writing, however, we see that he assumed a role for himself which was quite different from that of systematic philosopher. The account which he gives of this role, furthermore, contains within it the key to understanding the precise nature of his battle against "romanticism," and so to appreciating the injustice of claims, like those of Jones, Hough, Krieger, and especially Kermode,[11] that it was the battle of a man in fact blind to the tradition to which his own work belonged.

Hulme's clearest exposition of his views about the nature of philosophical writing is found in the essay on "Humanism and the Religious Attitude." He asserts there that such writing must properly be seen as comprising two distinct elements. The first of these is the element in whose execution he apparently fails: what he calls the "purely scientific and

[9] Henry King, "The Contributor's Club," in The Adelphi, II, 10 (March, 1925), p.848.

[10] See my Introduction, p.5.

[11] See my Introduction, pp.10 and 15-18.

impersonal" (HRA, p.15) element, the element of clear, logical argument. The objective, mathematical face of philosophical writing is, in his view, the cover for a deeper, subjective element, which is not often recognized, and even more rarely questioned. This is the philosopher's "Weltanschauung," his innermost attitude concerning "the relation of man to the world" (HRA, p.24). The philosopher may himself not even be aware of the fact of this inner prejudice - Hulme envisions, elsewhere, a pair of spectacles planted at the centre of his mind, colouring the world without his realizing they do so - but it is on behalf of it that all of his logical argument proceeds.[12] A philosopher's Weltanschauung, in sum, is the rock upon which the edifice of all of his rational argument rests;[13] he constructs that edifice with the aim not of discovering truths about the cosmos, but rather of expressing his "personal attitude" (SRIII, p.18) towards it.

The significance of Hulme's vision of the two strata behind philosophical writing for his own work becomes clear when we become familiar with his opinion about the time in which he lived. In both the "Humanism" essay and the "Romanticism and Classicism" lecture he asserts that the moment at which he writes is a notable one in the history of philosophy: a time when the fundamental Weltanschauung which has coloured all philosophical writing since the Renaissance

[12] See Hulme, pseud. Thomas Gratton, "Bergson Lecturing," in The New Age, X, 1 (2 November 1911), p.15. Also note "A Note on the Art of Political Conversion," The Commentator, II, 42 (8 March 1911), p.266.

[13] See Hulme, "A Tory Philosophy," in The Commentator, IV, 101 (1 May 1912), p.362.

is changing. It is his role, as he conceives it, to further this process, to aim at the conversion of his readers from a "humanist" to a "religious," a "romantic" to a "classical," a "Whig" to a "Tory" point of view.[14] It is his firm belief, moreover, as his remarks in the New Age and Commentator articles reveal, that the experience of conversion which he is aiming to effect will never be a "definite rational act" (NB, p.56), but rather a subtle shift on an individual's innermost "plane of quality and feeling" (NB, p.57). "All conviction," he says, "and so necessarily conversion, is based on the motor and emotional aspects of mind"; no "intellectual conception," therefore, or "mere idea," will have any moving force "unless it be hinged on to an emotion or an instinct."[15] Hulme's answer to the critics who were to dismiss his work for its failure to present systematic, logical arguments, is simply that there would be no "motive power" in such arguments. Logical discussion between individuals of differing Weltanschauungen, he holds, "is like a game of draughts, which one person plays on the black squares and the other on white. You simply don't meet each other." It is his intention, instead, as it is the achievement of the contemporary philosophers he most admires,[16] to appeal to his reader's

[14] See "A Tory Philosophy," p.362.

[15] Hulme, pseud. Thomas Gratton, "The Art of Political Conversion," in The Commentator, II, 40 (22 February 1911), p.234.

[16] Like Bergson; see Chapter IV, p.244 of this thesis, and Jules de Gaultier; see SRIII, pp.19-20. Bergson's work was attacked by Bertrand Russell for precisely this fact. See A History of Western Philosophy (London: Unwin, 1946), p.764.

fundamental instincts and emotions, to meet "one vague ideal by another vague ideal."[17] He aspires to be a writer of the type of Marcus Aurelius, who expresses his own fundamental attitude in a "personal, literary and unsystematic way" (HRA, p.27).

Such is Hulme's ambition. He goes further, moreover, to specify more clearly the form his personal, literary and unsystematic writing will take. In his essay on Jules de Gaultier, he credits Bergson with the definition of the philosophical style in which he intends to write (SRIII, p.17). In an essay in the same series, on Haldane, he effectively paraphrases the account of the philosopher's creative experience presented in the "Introduction à la métaphysique":

> There is no system of philosophy which did not originate in an act of intuition, or as I have previously put it, a perception of a physical analogy. Dialectic is necessary to develop the primary intuition, and to put it into concepts for the purposes of communication. Once having received the impulse from the act of intuition, the philosopher has to continue in the other plane of abstraction. But he must not go too far in this medium or he loses foot and must return to the primary act of intuition. Like Antaeus, he must touch the earth for renewed strength. (SRII, p.12)

Like Bergson, both in the "Introduction" and in the lecture which he would deliver at the Philosophical Congress in Bologna, in 1911,[18] Hulme depicts the philosopher's experience as one

[17] Hulme, pseud. Thomas Gratton, "The Art of Political Conversion," in The Commentator, II, 48 (19 April 1911), pp.357-8.

[18] See Chapter IV, p.265 of this thesis. In HRA, p.18, Hulme also acknowledges some debt for this notion to Hüsserl.

in which intuitions develop first into images, and only subsequently into ordered explication in abstract concepts. He recognizes some value in the latter part of the process, but sees the crucial factor to be the discovery of the images, the recognition of the analogies or metaphors which capture the fundamental intuitions. The "history of philosophy," he says, "should be written as that of seven or eight great metaphors" (SRII, p.11).[19] The only criterion by which he feels the philosophical "art" may be judged, moreover, is not its referential "truth," but whether or not its metaphors work to create a "good picture," on a "canvas that is whole" (SRII, p.20). An important part of its artistic merit, and indeed of its persuasive power, rests with the "freshness," and the "unexpectedness" of its constituent metaphors.[20] The style which Hulme self-consciously pursued, then, in the writings dedicated to countering prevailing "humanist," "romantic," or "Whig" attitudes, was to be emotive in purpose, and largely metaphorical in substance, with occasional, but never too extended, ventures into logical exposition. Hulme's friend Francis Tancred drew a vivid sketch of his literary activity, in verse:

[19] Hulme cites, for example, "the mirror in the theory of perception, and the wheel in Eastern thought." Cf., of course, the attitude towards philosophical thinking, and thus the perspective on Hulme and Bergson, in Abrams' The Mirror and the Lamp, pp.53-8. Cf. also Dorothy Emmett, The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking (London: Macmillan, 1945), pp.3-5.

[20] "The Art of Political Conversion," in The Commentator, II, 48 (19 April 1911), p.358. Hulme's praise for the "visual," as opposed to "counter" philosopher (SRII, p.12), we shall see, runs exactly parallel to his views on the ideal poet.

From dawn to dusk,
Brandishing a blade of elephant tusk,
With corrugated brows he broods
At marshalling a vast array
Of foolscap sheets in some new way
To please his million moods:
First will he deal a hand, and then
Shuffle and deal round again;
This process now he will repeat
Until the thousandth turn's complete;
Then, pausing, some slips, for their sins,
He'll savagely transpierce with pins,
Whereafter with his pen, perhaps,
He'll draw crude chess-boards in the gaps.[21]

Hulme's self-conscious account of the intuitive basis of philosophy, and the metaphorical form its first expression takes, does more, however, than merely to excuse him from accusations about the lack of system in his work. We learn from it to expect in his writings simply some attractive "metaphors modified into theories of aesthetic and rhetoric" (RC, p.129). But we learn from it, too, what many of his critics have failed to appreciate: that when he launched his attack on "romanticism" he was seeking specifically to counter a fundamental attitude about man's capacities, and with it the kind of language, of images and metaphors, in which it was expressed. When Frank Kermode dismisses the "enthusiastic anti-Romanticism of a Hulme" as "the sad heresy of the slightly misinformed, who seek a primitive purity with eyes blinded by tradition,"[22] he has in mind a specific definition of "romanticism," which he stipulates:

[21] Cited by Michael Roberts, in T. E. Hulme, p.36. Cf. NLS, p.99.

[22] Romantic Image, p.28.

> As throughout this essay I here use 'Romantic' in a restricted sense, as applicable to the literature of one epoch, beginning in the late years of the eighteenth century and not yet finished, and as referring to the high valuation placed during this period upon the image-making powers of the mind at the expense of its rational powers, and to the substitution of organicist for mechanistic modes of thinking about works of art.[23]

Kermode is joined by the likes of Krieger, Jones and Roberts[24] in saying that Hulme's opposition to "romanticism" cannot consistently coexist with his opposition to the rational powers, and his adherence to an "organic" theory of imagination. All of these writers, however, ignore the fact that Hulme himself argued, in his New Age article on "A Tory Philosophy," for his own right to stipulate a definition for the term:

> It seems to me that in the history of such words there are three stages. In the first and earliest stage a word has a definite and precise meaning. You are certainly justified in using it, then. After this there comes a period when the word has about a dozen meanings. At this stage it is dangerous, and should be left alone. But, finally, you get to the stage when it has three hundred meanings. It has then once again become useful and innocuous, for no one will have any preconceived notion of what it means, and will attentively wait to see exactly the shade of meaning, and the sense, which you yourself intend to give it. Their minds are in the receptive state; they are prepared to receive once again an accurate impression from a word. Now the words "classic" and "romantic" have, after their long history from their first use by Goethe, at last reached this stage; and as I am prepared to give

[23] Romantic Image, p.43.

[24] See Krieger, The New Apologists, p.39; Jones, The Life and Opinions, p.57; and Roberts, T. E. Hulme, pp.68-70.

> precise and accurate definitions, I think that I am justified in using them.[25]

The precise definition which Hulme gives to "romanticism," moreover, and which I shall now examine, emphatically does not incorporate either the anti-intellectualism or organicism which his critics subsume under the term. The "romanticism" he sought to counter, rather, was a fundamental attitude, which not only did not imply, but in an odd way ran counter to such notions. His self-proclaimed "classicism," similarly, did not as it was defined preclude the anti-intellectual and organicist aesthetic, but was, in a circuitous way, conducive to it.

iii) Romanticism and Classicism.

Hulme identifies the source for his definitions of "romanticism" and "classicism" at the beginning of his 1912 lecture. He uses those words, he says, "in a perfectly precise and limited sense": the sense given them by "Maurras, Lasserre and all the group connected with L'Action Française" (RC, p.114).[26] L'Action Française was a right-wing political

[25] Hulme, "A Tory Philosophy," in The Commentator, IV, 97 (3 April 1912), p.295. Cf. RC, pp.113-4. J. B. Harmer is another critic who fails to acknowledge that Hulme stipulated a precise definition, saying that he denounced "romanticism at large." See Victory in Limbo, p.176. Jones, similarly, wrongly refers to Hulme's "whole-hearted rejection of Romanticism in all its manifestations." See The Life and Opinions, p.63.

[26] In this respect, of course, Hulme had much in common with Eliot. Hulme's influence on Eliot's concepts of "romanticism" and "classicism" has been widely discussed. Although the prevailing critical view is that his knowledge of

group formed in the 1890s in France. Proclaiming themselves "classicists," its members spoke out against the democratic, "romantic" ideals which had prevailed since the Revolution, and argued for the restoration of the monarchy. The fact that Hulme derived his definitions from a French source is of special interest to us, because it links his work with the national tradition which bore Parnassianism and Symbolism. In echoing Maurras' and Lasserre's complaints about romanticism's literary manifestations, which they regarded as an extension of its political ones, Hulme aligns himself, in one sense, with both Parnassianism and Symbolism, for it will be recalled that these movements were alike in their objection to certain features of the work of the French Romantics.[27] The details of the definition of romanticism which he borrowed from L'Action Française, furthermore, will illuminate the problem of where his allegiances lie on the basic issues over which the Parnassians and Symbolists differed: the question of the realm which the poet apprehends, and of the potential role, in life and art, of the intellect.

Republican France was founded on the view, as Hulme summarizes it, "that man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities; and if you can so arrange society

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Hulme's ideas came, for the most part, after the publication of Speculations in 1924, Ronald Schuchard has presented compelling evidence for his familiarity with Hulme's definitions as early as 1916. See "Eliot and Hulme in 1916: Towards a Revaluation of Eliot's Critical and Spiritual Development," in PMLA, 88 (October 1973), pp.1083-94.

[27] See Chapter I, p.132.

by the destruction of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will get Progress!" (RC, p.116). The conviction that man is essentially good, that if left to his own devices he will prove himself capable of infinite progress, is the essence of the "romantic," or, as Hulme labels it elsewhere, the "humanist" (HRA, p.47) attitude: the attitude which inspired the heroic overreachers of the Renaissance, and which achieved its most sentimental expression in the writings of Rousseau. The "classical" attitude asserted by L'Action Française, by contrast, holds that man is "an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal whose nature is absolutely constant"; it sees no hope for progress for him if he is left to live in absolute freedom, and is convinced that "It is only by tradition and organisation that anything decent can be got out of him" (RC, p.116). Lasserre and Maurras supported their political authoritarianism with the tenets of Catholicism, maintaining that the romantic view of man contradicts the fact of Adam's fall from Grace, and that the state, like the Church, must act as a check upon his irrevocably flawed nature.[28] Hulme defines "romantic" thinkers, accordingly, as "all who do not believe in the Fall of Man."[29] He equates the classical attitude with the "religious" one, which he says prevailed in the Middle Ages: it is the "realisation of the tragic significance of life" (HRA, p.34),

[28] See for example Pierre Lasserre, Le Romantisme français (Paris: Mercure de France, 1907), p.16.

[29] Hulme, Introduction to Sorel's Reflections on Violence, Appendix A in Speculations, p.256. Hulme's translation of Sorel appeared in 1916; he acknowledges Le Romantisme français explicitly in the Introduction.

the recognition that, in partaking of the forbidden fruit, man condemned himself to a life in which he must remain separated from Perfection.

The French Republicans celebrated their faith in man's innate capacity for progress by overturning the monarchist order which they believed had been oppressing it. The parallel revolution in literature, according to Lasserre, had been the refusal of writers like Hugo and Lamartine to submit the content and the form of their work to any degree of discipline. If a man's self was intrinsically wonderful, what could be more valuable than its spontaneous expression?

> La divinisation du moi avait pour conséquence necéssaire de décharger l'art de ces préparations profondes, de ces lentes méditations de ce choix sévère. Elle le rendit accueillant à la première idée venue; et la première idée venue, c'est, moralement, la plus anarchique, c'est, esthétiquement, la moins résistante, la plus facile à developper; c'est, de toutes façons, celle qui représente le moindre effort.[30]

Hulme reiterates this view of the French romantic poet in "A Tory Philosophy":

> The romantic imagines that everything is accomplished by the breaking of rules. The romantics of 1830 thought that they had, by freeing themselves from rules and traditions, attained liberty - that is to say, absolute spontaneity in artistic creation.[31]

To a classicist like Lasserre, the refusal of the individual

[30] Lasserre, Le Romantisme français, pp.229-30.

[31] Hulme, "A Tory Philosophy," in The Commentator, I, 98 (10 April 1912), p.310. Cf. Le Romantisme française, p.16.

to control his impulses by time-honoured restrictions had led to the decomposition of art, just as it had led to the decomposition of society.[32] Similarly Hulme, as a corollary to his authoritarian politics, stands by the view that no fine art can spring from "a personal inspiration jumping all complete from nature," that "there are certain rules which one must obey...."[33] The classical spirit in art, then, for Hulme, means much the same thing as it does for Pater [34] and Pound.[35] It is the kind of impatience, articulated also by the Parnassians and Symbolists, with an untrammelled subjectivism in poetry, with the use of verse as a vehicle for histrionic expression. It is the desire to submit the poetic impulse to a degree of discipline: a desire which does not, we will note, preclude the possibility of the organic growth of form.

The romantic faith in man's infinite capacities which led to the disrespect for discipline brought with it also, in Hulme's view, a belief in his ability to participate in a supernatural realm. Speaking about the romantic ballads of Ossian, Hulme stresses that these present "a supernatural, and heightened conception of man, and it /is/ that which makes

[32] See Le Romantisme français, p.320. Also see Maurras, Romanticism and Revolution(1922), excerpts translated by John Frears and included in F. S. McClelland, ed. The French Right (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), pp.250-1.

[33] Hulme, "A Tory Philosophy," in The Commentator, IV, 97 (3 April 1912), p.295.

[34] See Chapter II, p.148.

[35] See Chapter VII, p.440.

any movement properly a romantic one."[36]

Hulme probably owed this, highly significant association of romanticism and mysticism, once again, to the theorists of L'Action Française. Lasserre devoted a good part of his Le Romantisme français to discussing the mystical dimension of romanticism, and to lamenting the infiltration into French thought of German pantheism. His great objection was to the dissipation of authority characteristic of a world in which God is revealed in everything:

> La souveraineté est dans Dieu; mais elle est dans chacun et dans tous. La souveraineté est dans chacun; mais elle est dans Dieu et dans tous. La souveraineté est dans tous; mais elle est dans chacun et dans Dieu.[37]

The pantheistic world view brought with it also, of course, a preoccupation with nature, and with the kind of contemplative experience in which the "infinity" which pervades it may be apprehended. Lasserre maintains that the "'sentiment romantique de la nature'" had its first exponent in Rousseau, and cites one of Rousseau's letters to illustrate the phenomenon:

> 'L'esprit perdu dans cette immensité, je ne pensais pas, je ne raisonnais pas, je ne philosophais pas, je me sentais avec une sorte de volupté, accablé du poids de cet univers, je me livrais avec ravissement à la confusion de ces grandes

[36] "A Tory Philosophy," in The Commentator, I, 98 (10 April 1912), p.310. My italics. Cf. Karl Shapiro, In Defense of Ignorance (New York: Random House, 1952), p.58: "Hulme formulated for Eliot the attack on Romanticism and the attack on mysticism (for the Romantic and the mystical are always related...)."

[37] Le Romantisme français, p.501.

> idées, j'aimais à me perdre en imagination dans l'espace, mon coeur resserré dans les bornes des êtres s'y trouvait trop à l'étroit; j'étouffais dans l'univers; j'aurais voulu m'élancer dans l'infini.'[38]

Hulme reveals himself in total agreement with Lasserre's disapproval of the pantheistic element in romantic thought. He denounces the romantic notion of the pervasiveness of God, representing it as an unfortunate misdirection of man's innate faith in a Deity. The belief which man ought to be directing towards a perfectly transcendent Being, he says, is in romanticism spilled indiscriminately over the world within and in front of him:

> You don't believe in a God, so you begin to believe that man is a god. You don't believe in Heaven, so you begin to believe in a heaven on earth.... The concepts that are right and proper in their own sphere are spread over, and so mess up, falsify and blur the clear outlines of human experience. It is like pouring a pot of treacle over the dinner table. Romanticism then, and this is the best definition I can give of it, is spilt religion. (RC, p.118)[39]

Romanticism, Hulme remarks, "confuses both human and divine things, by not clearly separating them" (HRA, p.10). Its pantheistic aspect is just another manifestation of its failure to acknowledge Adam's Fall; it insists on a state of unity between man, nature and God which has in fact been irretrievably lost.[40]

[38] Rousseau, letter to M. de Malesherbes, in Le Romantisme français, pp.50-1. My italics.

[39] My italics.

[40] Cf. Le Romantisme français, p.16.

One of the most offensive consequences, for Hulme, of the romantic Weltanschauung, is the linguistic form, the particular "pitch of rhetoric" (RC, p.120) in which it is given expression. One of its primary manifestations, he observes, is the metaphor of flight: Hugo, for example, "is always flying, flying over abysses, flying up into the eternal gases" (RC, p.120). Or to put it another way, he says, the romantic "is always just about to escape from something. Always 'escaping,' that is it.'"[41] Most annoying to his ears, however, is the habit of romantic thinkers always to be "talking about the infinite..." (RC, p.119). He points, in particular, to the German idealist philosophers, who insisted in their aesthetic philosophy upon collating all beauty "to an impression of the infinite involved in the identification of our being in absolute spirit." To the romantic critic, he says, "any poetry which confines itself to the finite can never be of the highest kind" (RC, p.131). Although Hulme cites Ruskin as his example of a romantic critic (RC, pp.128-9), and Lamartine, Hugo, Ossian, Keats, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Swinburne as poets who are overly preoccupied with the "infinite," it will be apparent that the attitude to which he is objecting is an attitude, too, which pervades the writings of Symbolism. Hulme would not have looked kindly on Baudelaire's aspiration to escape into "les Cieux inconnus."[42] Nor would

[41] "A Tory Philosophy," in The Commentator, I, 98 (10 April 1912), p.310.

[42] See Chapter I, p.80.

he have approved of Mallarmé's speculation before the window-pane:

> Est-il moyen, ô Moi qui connais l'amertume,
> D'enfoncer le cristal par le monstre insulté
> Et de m'enfuir, avec mes deux ailes sans plume
> - Au risque de tomber pendant l'éternité?[43]

Hulme's aversion to references to the "infinite," we shall see, is a major theme in his notes on the poetic activity. It is the foundation, undoubtedly, for his insistence on restricting his poet's gaze to a material realm: a fact which allies his aesthetic with the positivism of the Parnasse, rather than with Symbolist idealism. It is also the cause of his strong attraction to the work of Ribot, with its repeated efforts to deflate claims about the artist's experience of the supernatural; and one important factor in his appreciation of Bergson, who, as we have seen, made important strides towards demystifying talk about the apprehension of the "infinite."

If Hulme's antipathy towards the romantic spirit results in a suspicion towards claims about the poet's power to apprehend the "infinite," and thus towards an essential tenet in the theory of Symbolism, it also leads him, in a roundabout way, to assert a typically Symbolist kind of anti-intellectualism. The essential failing in the romantic attitude, we have seen, is for him its failure to observe the separation between the divine and the human, between a realm which is Perfect, and one which can never be so. In "Humanism and the Religious Attitude," he employs the image of the

[43] See Chapter I, p.98.

discontinuous realms to illustrate how romantic thinkers have also failed to respect some other important chasms: the chasms dividing certain absolute kinds of knowledge from kinds of knowledge which are necessarily relative. He pictures the world of knowledge thus:

> Let us assume that reality is divided into three regions, separated from one another by absolute divisions, by real discontinuities. (1) The inorganic world, of mathematical and physical science, (2) the organic world, dealt with by biology, psychology and history, and (3) the world of ethical and religious values. Imagine these three regions as three zones marked out on a flat surface by two concentric circles. The outer zone is the world of physics, the inner that of religion and ethics, the intermediate one that of life. The outer and inner regions have certain characteristics in common. They have both an absolute character, and knowledge about them can legitimately be called absolute knowledge. The intermediate region of life is, on the other hand, essentially relative; it is dealt with by loose sciences like biology, psychology and history. A muddy mixed zone then lies between two absolutes. To make the image a more faithful representation one would have to imagine the extreme zones partaking of the perfection of geometrical figures, while the middle zone was covered with some confused muddy substance. (HRA, pp.5-6)[44]

It is crucial, in Hulme's view, that man respect the division between physical and ethical laws, which are as certain as geometrical shapes, and the biological, psychological and historical truths which will always remain "muddy." One of the worst manifestations of humanist or romantic hubris, he

[44] Last italics mine. T. S. Eliot noted that Hulme's vision of the discontinuity between certain realms of knowledge was partially suggested by Pascal. See the Introduction to Pascal's Pensées (London: J. M. Dent, 1932), p.xviii.

says, has been the presumption of some thinkers who have held that there are fixed laws to be discovered which will account definitively for events in the realm of life. He subsumes under "romanticism," that is, the enthusiastic faith of the positivists who held that a process of observation, analysis, and induction could account for every mystery of biology, psychology, and history.[45] One of the most insidious examples of a misplaced claim about absolute knowledge, he says further, is the one which has led to the mechanistic model of life: the view that "Vital phenomena /are/ only extremely complicated forms of mechanical change" (HRA, p.7). He regards this view, with its attendant determinist claims, as a great "nightmare" (NB, pp.30; 36) from which he has felt great need of escape. His release from the nightmare, he asserts, came when he encountered the anti-determinist arguments laid down by Bergson, in the Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience. By a somewhat circuitous route, therefore, Hulme establishes a place for Bergson in the battle against the "romantic" attitude. Bergson's arguments for the freedom of the fundamental self, and thus for the unpredictable, organic quality of the creative experience, are part of the countering forces, in his view, to a hubristic intellectualism.[46]

[45] In "The New Philosophy," in The New Age, V, 10 (1 July 1909), p.198, Hulme, like Pater, identifies such a faith with Platonic realism. Hulme's objection, as a nominalist, to the notion of the pre-existence of universals is discussed below, pp.320-323.

[46] Bergson is not to be identified with the "romantic" attitude simply because of the Coleridgean organicism for which he argues. Krieger is especially guilty of this identification. See The New Apologists, p.33.

Hulme's general campaign against the romantic attitude points, in sum, to four principles which shape his account of the poetic process. He upholds, first of all, the importance of discipline in poetic creation, refusing to acknowledge any intrinsic nobility in the free expression of the human spirit. Secondly, he will not countenance any claims about the poet's participation in the realm of the supernatural, asserting instead that the poet is, by virtue of Adam's Fall, confined to the material world. He shows, thirdly, no respect for the positivist faith in the power of intellect, seeing only a self-congratulatory arrogance in the belief that it may eventually account for all of the world's mystery. This suspicion of the intellect leaves him favourably disposed, finally, to a view of the creative activity which asserts the freedom of organic development.

iv) <u>The Cindery World</u>.

The view that general laws will never be able to account for events in the realm of life, and that it is important, therefore, that an individual not sacrifice any part of concrete experience for abstract theorizing, is a central theme in Hulme's philosophical "Cinders." The metaphorical terms in which he makes this point there are worth discussing briefly at this juncture, for they are to form the basis for many of his more cryptic notes on the creative activity. The link between the "Cinders" and the

discussion of the discontinuous realms in "Humanism and the Religious Attitude" is the image of a realm of dirt, or mud, or ash: a confused, "cindery" world which will ultimately elude all of the intellect's attempts to make some sense of it. Hulme represents the abstract theories of scientists, and philosophers, as "railway lines" laid down over a "desert of grit" (C, pp.223; 225). They trace "certain ordered routes" through an "ash-pit of cinders"; or they resemble the simple lines of a "chess-board " perched atop a "cinder-heap" (C, p.219).[47] Hulme's source for the "cinder" image, as for so many of the views he uses it to convey, is Bergson. In L'Évolution créatrice, we have seen,[48] Bergson used the image of a rocket to depict the "élan vital" passing through nature; matter, in his metaphorical world-picture, was the equivalent of the ashes which fall back from the rocket once its life has been spent. It is, significantly, in a 1909 review of L'Évolution créatrice that Hulme makes his earliest published reference to the world of "cinders," in an attempt to describe the Bergsonian vision:

> On the one hand the complicated, intertwined, inextricable flux of reality, on the other the constructions of the logical intellect, having all the clearness and 'thinness' of a geometrical diagram. To use another metaphor, on the one hand a kind of chaotic cinder-heap, on the other a chess-board. In the latter, movement is from one square to another, always just so; in the other it is indefinite. The first is an analogy for the world of sensation - the many: the

[47] Cf. PIM, p.176.

[48] See Chapter IV, p.271.

other for the constructs of the intellect.[49]

Like Bergson, as indeed like Pater, Hulme is wary of the thinkers who will not allow themselves to experience the "complicated, intertwined, inextricable flux of reality," but who choose instead to focus on its simple symbolic substitutes. "Heaven," to them, is "the short summary paradise of words" (C, p.230), a Gourmontian "monde des signes" which gives them an illusory sense of their authority over the cindery chaos:

> The aim of science and of all thought is to reduce the complex and inevitably disconnected world of grit and cinders to a few ideal counters, which we can move about and so form an ungritlike picture of reality - one flattering to our sense of power over the world. (C, p.224)

Hulme locates "the foundation of all science and all philosophy," amusingly, in "humpty-dumpty's remark about human faces" (C, p.222), in the great egg's inability, that is, to see beyond a "veil" of the concepts of eyes and nose and mouth to distinguish the particular features which make Alice's face unique.[50] Like the larger theories into which they are spun, he asserts, general concepts cause their holders to miss all of the world's idiosyncratic, gritty details:

> Something is always lost in generalisation. A railway leaves out all the gaps of dirt between. Generalisations are only means of getting about.
> Cf. the words love, sex, nude, with the actual details. (C, p.230)[51]

[49] Hulme, "The New Philosophy," p.198.

[50] See Through the Looking-glass (1896), in The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll, ed. Alexander Woollcott (London: Nonesuch, 1940), p.202.

[51] My italics.

Hulme's vision of the world as "an infinitude of cinders," for which "there is no finite law encompassing all" (C, p.222), and his conviction, after Bergson, that every concept compromises the uniqueness of the things to which it is applied, leads him to the conclusion that the best way to comprehend the world will be through immediate, non-analytical sense-experience. In this conclusion, of course, he resembles not just Bergson, but Pater, Yeats, and Gourmont. "Philosophical syntheses," he says, in a somewhat Gourmontian fashion,[52] "are only possible in arm-chair moments. They are seen to be meaningless as soon as we get into a bus with a dirty baby and a crowd" (C, pp.228-9); he pictures Aphra, the fictional philosopher hero of his notes, as someone who is repeatedly touching his finger to "the rough cinders of the world" (C, p.236), and cites the "definite cinder" as a nearly "criterion of all judgment, philosophic and aesthetic" (C, p.243). It is in the context of this cindery world, and in acute awareness of the limitations of the intellect in comprehending it, that his ideal poet embarks on his creative process.

v) The Creative Process.

a) Apprehension.

If there is a single theme which unifies all of Hulme's remarks on the poetic activity, it is the view that the activity must be kept in its proper place. He rejects

[52] See Chapter III, p.233.

the "romantic" vision of the poet as "something greater than a statesman" (NLS, p.93), and of poetry as a significant aid to social progress:

> Poetry after all for the amusement of bankers and other sedentary arm-chair people in after-dinner moods. No other. (Not for inspiration of progress.) So no infinite nobleness and function about that. (For one person in a thousand hence uselessness of schoolteaching.) (NLS, p.92)

Equally reprehensible to the overestimation of poetry's social function, he maintains, is the exaggeration of its mystery. He is tired, he says in the "Lecture on Modern Poetry," of the "tremendous amount of hocus-pocus" which surrounds most discussions of verse. It is his own intention "to speak of verse in a plain way," as he would "of pigs" (LMP, p.67).

Hulme objects strongly, in the "Lecture," to the assertion of some critics that poetry is akin to religion. His impatience with this careless "spilling" of religion is never more apparent than when he considers the realm which the poet contacts in his moment of apprehension. He repeatedly speaks of the importance of dispelling the "popular idea of /the/ poet as in communion with the infinite" (NLS, p.92). The introduction of the "soul" into discussions of verse, he says, is often nothing more than a method of accounting for features of the poetic activity which are not easily understood:

> I always suspect the word soul when it is brought into discussion. It reminds me of the way that the medieval scientists spoke of God. When entirely ignorant of the cause of anything, they said God did it. If I use the word soul,

> or speak of higher realities...you will know that at that precise point I didn't know of any real reason and was trying to bluff you. (LMP, p.67)

Hulme writes of the temptation he himself has felt, after certain intense perceptual experiences, to account for their strangeness by speaking of some contact with an "Ideal." He reminds himself, however, that one "Must avoid the word, the Ideal, like a plague, for it suggests easy comprehension where there is no easy comprehension" (NLS, p.90).[53] One writer, he thinks, who has introduced an unnecessary metaphysical dimension into his account of the poetic apprehension is Ruskin, who has insisted on speaking of an "Imagination" penetrating "the melancholy deeps of things" (RC, p.129)[54] in order simply to justify his own preference for verse which is serious. Hulme regards writers' claims about the power of the Imagination to pierce through to some "higher world" as attempts simply to aggrandize their own vocation:

> The literary man deliberately perpetrates a hypocrisy, in that he fits together his own isolated moments of ecstasy...and presents them as a picture of higher life, thereby giving old maids a sense of superiority to other people and giving mandarins the opportunity to talk of "ideals." Then makes attempt to justify himself by inventing the soul and saying that occasionally the lower world gets glimpses of this, and that inferentially he is the medium. (NLS, pp.99-100)

One poet whose exaltation of his own work Hulme

[53] My italics.

[54] The Ruskin quotation is from Modern Painters (1843), Vol.II, Part III, Chapter III.

disparages is Yeats: "W. B. Yeats attempts to ennoble his craft by strenuously believing in supernatural world, race-memory, magic, and saying that symbols can recall these where prose couldn't" (NLS, p.98). In attacking Yeats, Hulme expresses what was very probably, too, his attitude towards the French Symbolist poets, for Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé perpetuated what he would have perceived as the same sort of self-serving myths about their craft. One of the few direct references Hulme makes to the French movement is in a 1909 article entitled, significantly, "Belated Romanticism."[55] His purpose there is to dispute the opinion of F. S. Flint, a source, undoubtedly, for much of what he knew about French writing, that literary developments across the Channel had far surpassed anything accomplished in England. In a highly influential special issue of The Poetry Review, in 1912, where he was to summarize what, in the French achievement, excited him most, Flint spoke enthusiastically about Mallarmé's aspirations for the "infinite":

> Mallarmé dreamed the superhuman dream of putting the reader in direct contact with the infinite, by the choice of words which could give the sensation thereof, and in such a way that the poem would convey simultaneously the divination of musical, plastic, philosophical and emotional analogies.[56]

He celebrated the power of Symbolist verse, in general, "to

[55] The New Age, IV, 16 (18 February 1909), p.350.

[56] F. S. Flint, in "Contemporary French Poetry," a special edition of The Poetry Review, I, 8 (August 1912), p.356. My italics.

set vibrating the infinity within us, by the exquisite juxtaposition of images,"[57] the power of the Symbolist imagination to evoke "the infinity" which has its "culminating point"[58] in the poetic apprehension. When Hulme expresses his contempt for the "belated romanticism" implicit in Flint's enthusiasm for French Symbolism, he undoubtedly has in mind Flint's apparent acceptance of the mystical, or supernatural dimension of its aesthetic: the dimension, we remember, "which makes any movement properly a romantic one."

Knowing what we do of Hulme's aversion to claims about the supernatural dimension of the creative experience, it is easy to see why he was attracted to the new science of psychology, with its attempt to find, among other things, an account of creativity which did not involve any metaphysical claims.[59] Among the psychologists and psychologically inclined philosophers he acknowledges directly, besides Bergson, are Gabriel Séailles, Jean-Marie Guyau, and Jules de Gaultier.[60] Given separate, special mention in the "Plan for a Book," however, is Ribot, whose account of the creative imagination

[57] Flint, "Contemporary French Poetry," p.355. My italics.

[58] "Contemporary French Poetry," p.357. My italics.

[59] In "A Metaphysic [sic] Group," in The New Age, IX, 24 (12 October 1911), p.575, Hulme announces, with E. Belfort Bax, and J. Stuart Hay, the formation of a group "for the discussion of metaphysical and psychological problems."

[60] Séailles, the author of Essai sur le génie dans l'art (1883), and Guyau, of Les Problèmes de l'esthétique contemporaine (1884), and L'Art au point de vue sociologique (1889), are acknowledged in "The Plan for a Book," p.263; Gaultier, of Le Bovarysme (1902), and an interesting article called "Essai de physiologie poétique," in La Revue blanche, VI, 3 (May 1894), is the subject of SRIII, pp.15-20.

was, as we have seen, especially concerned with bringing phenomena which had previously been explained with reference to the supernatural down to earth.

Ribot's scientific reinterpretation of the creative activity, we have seen, drew upon both physiological and psychological factors, and Hulme's work reflects this two-fold argument. Ribot's investigation into the physical stimuli used to aid the creative process is paralleled by a section of the Notes entitled "Drink." There Hulme describes a group of drunkards who in their state of intoxication enjoy a sense of communion with nature, a state strongly resembling that enjoyed by Baudelaire while under the influence of hasheesh.[61] Hulme views their sense of themselves as "heroes" with some irony:

> They followed the road with the knowledge that they were soaring along in a supporting medium, possessed of original and profound thoughts, themselves and surrounding nature forming an organism of which all the parts harmoniously and joyously interpenetrate each other.
>
> Heroes occasionally, drink influence only for a time like effect of church or music. (NLS, p.99)

Hulme follows his description of the drunkards with a statement about the hypocrisy of literary men who claim contact with some infinite realm. The visionary moments enjoyed by poets, he says impatiently, are in fact nothing more than "certain moments of ecstasy perhaps brought on by drink." Claims for their supernatural significance are, therefore, patently false,

[61] See Chapter I, p.81.

for it is "Surely obvious that drink and drugs have nothing to do with a higher world..." (NLS, p.100).

If Hulme is blunt in deflating romantic claims about poetry by attributing poetic visions to physical causes, he betrays a more subtle attempt to discredit the romantics with his frequent, implicit attribution of an emotional basis to their supposed experiences of the "infinite." Ribot, we will remember, accounted for a number of purportedly mystical phenomena by pointing to the emotional factor in the human psyche. The part of his discussion which has the strongest parallel in Hulme is his insistence on crediting the intensity of belief which accompanies supposedly mystical visions, to the intensity of the emotion which he believes is responsible for creating them.[62]

Hulme's meditations on the nature of political conversion, we have seen, reveal his belief that all "conviction ...is based on the motor and emotional aspects of mind."[63] In the "Cinders" he says that for men "certain illusions or moods are pleasurable and exhilarating," and that therefore they are "deliberately and knowingly" cultivated. It is perfectly fitting, therefore, that we find him representing "romantic" claims about contact with the "infinite" as simply the verbal expressions of intense emotions. He represents the "escape to the infinite" experienced by a man in love, for example, as an illusion fuelled by mere sentiment:

[62] See Chapter III, p.222.

[63] See above, p.287.

> The sentimental illusion of a man (invalid) who takes pleasure in resting his head in a woman's lap - it is a deliberate act, work on her part. While he may feel the sentimental escape to the infinite, she has to be uncomfortable and prosaic. (C, p.232)

Hulme almost invariably mentions the notion of infinitude in association with certain emotions. To the romantic critic, verse "always means a bringing in of some of the emotions that are grouped round the word infinite" (RC, p.127).[64] To him, on the contrary, there may be fine verse "even though the subject be trivial and the emotions of the infinite far away" (RC, p.138).[65] Among the poets he cites as guilty of invoking the "infinite" for the purpose of expressing intense emotion is Swinburne, the poet who, indeed, once exclaimed that

> In the infinite spirit is room
> For the pulse of an infinite pain.[66]

For Hulme all claims about experiences of the "infinite" are merely metaphors of extensity for emotional intensity. They are appropriate expressions, but that is all. Of the statement that the artistic expression entails "the revelation of the infinite in the finite," accordingly, he concludes: "It may convey the kind of excitement which art may produce in you, but it in no way fits the actual process that the artist goes

[64] My italics.

[65] My italics.

[66] Algernon Swinburne, "Satia te Sanguine," ll.31-2, in Poems and Ballads (London: Chatto and Windus, 1898), p.97.

through" (BTA, p.148).[67]

Hulme is adamant, then, that any claims about a poet's apprehension of an infinite realm are false. He does not equivocate, as does Yeats, in deciding whether the poet's commitment is to a transcendental realm or to a material one: his poet is, like all sons of Adam, irrevocably confined to the latter. In the "Cinders," he paints a definitive picture of the "World as finite, and so no longer any refuge in infinities of grandeur" (C, p.231). In "Romanticism and Classicism," he stresses the implications of this fact for verse: it must properly confine itself to the "small, dry things" (RC, p.131) of the material world, restrict itself to subjects which are "earthly and...definite" (RC, p.127).

In addition to bringing the poet's gaze down from the heavens to earth, and so dispensing with the kind of claims about the supernatural typical of the Symbolist aesthetic, Hulme makes it clear that he regards that world both as objective, and as accessible to an essentially reliable witness by the senses. He dispenses also, that is, with the sort of subjective idealism which was the metaphysic of Symbolist poets like Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. As he announces in the "Cinders":

> There is an <u>objective</u> world...so not <u>idealist</u>, as that assumes that there is nothing but a fixed number of persons, and without them nothing. (C, p.225)

The things viewed through a microscope, he says to illustrate his point, are things "revealed, not created, but there before..." (C, p.226). That he believes men capable of reliable, sensual

[67] My italics.

contact with this world is implied by remarks in both "Bergson's Theory of Art," and "Romanticism and Classicism." He identifies the essential function of poetry, in the former, as the communication of the poet's "actual contact with reality" (BTA, p.167);[68] he says, in the latter, that the crucial question to be asked about any poetic experience is whether the poet had "an actually realised visual object before him in which he delighted" (RC, p.137).[69]

Hulme's view about the realm apprehended by the poet, then, resembles the positivist and Parnassian one rather than the idealist and Symbolist. It is the material realm defined by the later Gourmont, rather than the spiritual one of a Baudelaire or a Mallarmé. Its true model, however, is the objective,[70] "complicated, intertwined, inextricable flux" defined by Bergson: the "cindery" world.[71] At the beginning of "Bergson's Theory of Art," Hulme makes a statement about the general principles he has had to formulate in order to be able to state "the nature of the process" which he thinks "is involved in any art":

> I have had to suppose a reality of infinite variability, and one that escapes all the stock perceptions, without being able to give

[68] My italics.

[69] My italics.

[70] Bergson argued for the objectivity of the world, and the essential reliability of sense-experience, in Matière et mémoire. Hulme acknowledges this discussion in "Bergsonism in Paris," in The New Age, IX, 8 (22 June 1911), p.189.

[71] See above, p.304.

> any actual account of that reality. I have had to suppose that human perception gets crystallised out along certain lines, that it has certain fixed habits, certain fixed ways of seeing things, and is so unable to see things as they are. (BTA, pp.145-6)

He says of these suppositions, however, that they have been on a "merely literary level" (BTA, p.146), and that it has been in the account of reality, and of knowledge, which he encountered in Bergson that he found much firmer ground in which to root them. He identifies the crucial elements in Bergson's philosophy thus:

> (1) the conception of reality as a flux of interpenetrated elements unseizable by the intellect (this gives a more precise meaning to the word reality which has been employed so often in the previous pages, when art has been defined as a more direct communication of reality); and (2) his account of the part played in the development of the ordinary characteristics of the mind by its orientation towards action. (BTA, pp.146-7)

The texts of "Bergson's Theory of Art" and "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds" attest to Hulme's familiarity with all of the Bergson texts considered in Chapter IV, and to how appreciatively he embraced his demystified account of the artistic apprehension. Grasping Bergson's view of reality as an "intensive" complexity, he also accepts his representation of the intellect as a power which can only comprehend "extensive" (PIM, pp.177-81) ones; which is always separating and dividing the flux into discrete, atomistic components.[72] He also paraphrases, in simple terms, Bergson's account of

[72] See C, pp.226 and 231.

how the intellect, in the interests of action and with the aid of conceptual language, interposes a veil between the ordinary man and reality which enables him only to see stock types:

> Everybody is familiar with the fact that the ordinary man does not see things as they are, but only sees certain fixed types. To begin with, we see separate things with distinct outlines where as a matter of fact we know that what exists is merely a continuous gradation of colour. Then even in outline itself we are unable to perceive the individual. We have in our minds certain fixed conceptions about the shape of a leg. Mr Walter Sickert is in the habit of telling his pupils that they are unable to draw any individual arm because they think of it as an arm; and because they think of it as an arm they think they know what it ought to be. If it were a piece of almond rock you could draw it, because you have no preconceived notions as to the ways the almonds should come. As a rule, then, we never ever perceive the real shape and individuality of objects. We only see stock types. We tend to see not the table but only a table. (BTA, p.159)

Most importantly of all, however, he accepts Bergson's description of the moments of "intuition" with which the artistic experience begins, those moments, about which there is "nothing mysterious" (PIM, p.188), when habitual psychological processes are reversed, and the individual's eyes pierce through the veil of concepts to apprehend the contents of the flux, in all its interpenetrated uniqueness (PIM, p.187). Hulme accepts, therefore, that view of the apprehension which was analogous to the mystical Symbolist one in its suspension of the analytical powers, but which differed sharply from it in defining not a spiritual or universal but a material and particular object. He seems especially to have appreciated Bergson's attempts to

redefine the "infinite" thing thus apprehended, by suggesting simply that it would require an unlimited amount of time to reconstruct through concepts; for he warns, in the context of his account of "intuition," of the danger of taking "words like infinite in the much bigger sense than is really intended" (BTA, p.148).

At this point we may, once again, take some of Hulme's critics to task. In defining what they see as Hulme's surreptitious "romanticism," Jones, Krieger and Heaton assert that in spite of his objections to the bringing of the "infinite" into accounts of art, he in fact admits a transcendental element into his own. They see his picture of the artistic apprehension as being effectively the same as the Platonic ones of Coleridge[73] or of Shelley, as in "A Defence of Poetry"(1821):

> A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not...it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms...poetry defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions.... It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos.[74]

Both Jones and Krieger, moreover, attribute Hulme's supposed lapse into transcendentalism to the influence of Bergson.

[73] See Coleridge on the apprehension of the Idea, as cited in Romantic Image, p.66.

[74] Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," in The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Vol. VII, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck (London: Benn, 1930), pp.112 and 137.

Jones says that "Through Bergson, Hulme has been led back to what amounts to a re-statement of the romantic theory of poetry and to a re-affirmation of romantic Platonism."[75] For Krieger, no account of Hulme's anti-romanticism can explain satisfactorily how he "in his 'Romanticism and Classicism,' can deny to the poet the possibility of moving beyond the world about him and yet, in his 'Bergson's Theory of Art,' can import the term 'intuition' to allow precisely for this possibility."[76] What both Jones and Krieger fail to recognize, of course, is that Bergson and Hulme after him, although describing an experience analogous to the Platonic one, in its suspension of the analytical powers, define as the object of the apprehension the finite particulars of the material world. The "veil" their poets penetrate is not the veil of transient phenomena, but rather the veil of concepts woven by the intellect.

I have presented the evidence for Bergson's conviction that the poet's eye remains within the world of time in Chapter IV. Cyrena Pondrom, alerted to this fact, interestingly, by an insightful 1911 article by John Middleton Murry,[77] is one critic who has recognized that Bergson's influence in fact brought the Imagist eye down from the spiritual realm contacted by the Symbolist one. The evidence for Hulme's

[75] Alun Jones, The Life and Opinions, p.46.

[76] Murray Krieger, The New Apologists, p.37.

[77] See John Middleton Murry, "Art and Philosophy," Rhythm, I, 1 (Summer 1911), in Cyrena N. Pondrom, The Road from Paris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp.54-57. Also note Pondrom's Introduction, pp.15-17, where she relates Murry's stance to Hulme's.

commitment of the poet's gaze to "the accident of surrounding impressions," and not to any universal archetypes which lie beyond them, is abundant. The artist's object, he says in "Romanticism and Classicism," is "'individual not universal'" (RC, p.136).[78] A poet like Tennyson, he asserts in the Notes, would have before him an object which was "greatly different from what it was at any other moment or to any other man" (NLS, p.91). In the "Lecture on Modern Poetry," he reveals his conviction about the poet's apprehension of the flux of particulars by drawing a parallel between the impressions captured in verse, and the momentary glimpses of the world which the Impressionist painters fix upon their canvases (LMP, p.72). Although his general view of the matter was, as we shall see in Chapter VI, to change when he came to appreciate the timeless, universal, geometrical forms apprehended by many of the new painters, as a poetic theorist he was a firm advocate of the recording of the fleeting particulars of the Heraclitean flux.

Hulme's contention that the ideal artist concerns himself with the world's flux, with what Pater called the "torrent of mere phenomena " as opposed to the "insoluble immovable granite" of the Platonic Ideas, is not, moreover, merely an expression of his aesthetic preference, but a manifestation of a well defined philosophical stance. We have already noted the anti-intellectualism connected with Hulme's campaign against the "romantic" attitude. In his series of

[78] My italics.

New Age articles on contemporary philosophers, he equates the men who place ultimate faith in intellectual constructs with those who admire Platonic "Rest" rather than Heraclitean "Motion" (SRI, p.7).[79] Realists like Richard Haldane, he observes, assert that reality consists in a fixed system of universals which is a construction of the intellect; they regard the immediate sensations of the moment as transient, as having no abiding reality (SRI, p.13). Nominalists, however, like de Gaultier and Bergson, assert that only the flux of sensations is real, that the concepts and systems with which men attempt to describe it are nothing but inadequate substitutes for its complexity (SRIII, p.19). It is clear from Hulme's discussion of the conflicting philosophies that his sympathies lie entirely with nominalism and with Bergson. The view that the poet's highest aim is to record his fleeting sensations is a result, in part, of his conviction that these are the very essence of reality.

The misunderstanding among Hulme's critics about the end-point of his poet's gaze is due in part to the fact that, in "Bergson's Theory of Art," he himself identifies Bergson's account with that of Schopenhauer. Kermode in particular is guilty of drawing the wrong conclusion from his remarks.[80] Hulme's equation of the two accounts of art, as a close reading of the passage in question reveals, does not mean that he misunderstood Bergson to define, and so himself

[79] See also "The New Philosophy," in The New Age, V, 10 (1 July 1909), pp.198-9.

[80] See Romantic Image, p.130.

accepted, a universal object of apprehension for the artist, but rather that he rejected Schopenhauer's theory as an overblown, "romantic" way of describing the feeling of the experience of apprehension, and appreciated Bergson's as an account which described it successfully, without making unacceptable claims about the nature of the object apprehended. Hulme dismisses Schopenhauer's claim about the apprehension of a universal Idea, the claim to be echoed so many times by the Symbolists, as simply a load of "metaphysical baggage " brought forth to account for a fairly simple feeling about art. The feeling is the same, he maintains, as the one felt by Bergson, but Bergson refrains from expressing it in excessive, "romantic" terms:

> In essence, of course, /Bergson's/ theory is exactly the same as Schopenhauer's. That is, they both want to convey over the same feeling about art. But Schopenhauer demands such a cumbrous machinery in order to get that feeling out. Art is the pure contemplation of the Idea in a moment of emancipation from the Will. To state a quite simple thing he has had to invent two very extraordinary ones. In Bergson it is an actual contact with reality in a man who is emancipated from the ways of perception engendered by action, but the action is written with a small "a," not a large one. (BTA, p.149)

Hulme is able to equate Schopenhauer's theory of the Ideas with Bergson's account of art because he refuses to accept that it can in any way be literally true: it is to him a cumbrous myth, a fiction of the same order as Ruskin's claim that the artist penetrates to "the melancholy deeps of things." As a nominalist, refusing to countenance even the existence of the timeless Ideas, he says that what Schopenhauer

experienced and explained as the apprehension of universals ante rem, is better explained by speaking of the birth, for the artist apprehending reality and the audience his art, of a universal post rem. The only "universal" conveyed by art, that is, is in his view a concept[81] generated out of the experience itself, a concept which will enable its holder to recognize something similar to what he has experienced, if he should ever encounter it:

> "Art should endeavour to show the universal in the particular." This is a phrase that constantly recurs...Of course this is perfectly correct if you give the words the right meaning. It seems at first to be the exact contrary to the definition that we have arrived at ourselves, which was that art must always be individual and springs from dissatisfaction with the generalised expressions of ordinary perception and ordinary language. The confusion simply springs from the two uses of the word "universal." To use Croce's example. Don Quixote is a type, but a type of what? He is only a type of all the Don Quixotes. To use again my comparison of the curve, he is an accurately drawn representation of one of the individual curves that vary round the stock type which would be represented by the words loss of reality or love of glory. He is only universal in the sense that once having had that particular curve pointed out to you, you recognise it again. (BTA, p.153)[82]

Hulme's artist gazes, then, in a state of utter "detachment" at all the unique details of the world's flux (NLS, p.82; RC, p.136). His moment of apprehension is comparable to the one experienced by Bergson's painter, who gazes with

[81] Cf. Schopenhauer's distinction of Idea and concept, Chapter I, p.67.

[82] Last italics mine. Cf. Benedetto Croce, Aesthetic, trans. Douglas Ainslie (London: Macmillan, 1909), p.56.

virginal eyes upon the forms and colours of the world about him. One further feature must be noted, however, to complete the picture of Hulme's poet's apprehension, a feature which establishes him as an amalgam of both the Bergsonian painter and the Bergsonian poet. Hulme's poet is always described, not merely as seeing the world clearly, but also as being in touch with a strong emotional response to what he sees; unlike the Bergsonian artist, who penetrates the generalizing veil "dans une direction seulement,"[83] Hulme's poet pierces both the veil which shrouds the external world, and the one which divides him from the moods of his fundamental self. His experience is one in which, apprehending "absolutely" an object in the external world, he experiences a strong, unique, emotional response, a new state in his "inner flux," which he then "endeavours to fix" (BTA, p.149) in his art. In the "Lecture on Modern Poetry," Hulme describes the beginning of the creative process as a moment when "the poet is moved by a certain landscape..." (LMP, p.73). The poet responds to the details of the finite world, he says, with "zest" (RC, p.136), with "ecstasy" (NLS, p.99), with "delight" (RC, p.137). Hulme himself says that his own first impulse to write poetry came with the desire to reproduce "the peculiar quality of feeling which is induced by the flat spaces and wide horizons of the virgin prairie of western Canada" (LMP, p.72).

Hulme's picture of the ideal poetic apprehension, as an experience in which an acute sense perception gives rise

[83] See Chapter IV, p.248.

to some peculiar new emotion, is indicative, finally, of an important attitude which he shares with Remy de Gourmont. Just as the author of Le Problème du style disapproved of the sentimentality of the ideo-emotive writer, whose emotion is born "à propos" of objects, and not inspired by his own experience of them,[84] so Hulme insists that any emotion not arising out of immediate experience is an invalid subject for artistic expression. All valid poetic emotion, he says, "depends on real solid vision or sound. It is physical" (NLS, p.78). Like Gourmont, Hulme condemns the sort of false sentiment typical of the rhetorician (NLS, p.78; pp.97-8). One writer guilty of expressing such emotion, he says, is Whitman:

> Whitman had a theory that every object under the sun comes within the range of poetry. But he was too early in the day. No use having a theory that motor-cars are beautiful, and backing up this theory by working up emotion not really felt. Object must cause the emotion before poem can be written. Whitman's theory, that everything in America must be glorious, was his snare, because it was only a theory. (NLS, pp.97-8)[85]

Throughout "Romanticism and Classicism" Hulme implies that the kind of sentiment indulged by Whitman, emotion without basis in genuine sense-experience, is a characteristic ingredient of the poetry of romanticism. The valid poetic emotion, he suggests there, is that typical of the poetry of classicism: the feeling evoked through man's experience of the small, dry

[84] See Chapter III, p.232.

[85] My italics.

things in his fallen world (RC, p.127; p.137).

b) Articulation.

Hulme's discussion of the process by which the poet articulates his emotions is informed by the same stubborn classical spirit which causes him to restrict the apprehension to a finite world. This classical spirit inspires him, above all, to attack romantic illusions about the ease of the process, and to stress instead the painful struggle which it entails:

> People anxious to be literary men think there is no work, just as haymaking - but just as monotonous grinding it out. Concerned in the field with ecstasy, but the pains of birth and parturition are sheets and sheets of paper. (NLS, p.98)

The poet's emotion does not spring spontaneously into art, but is transformed only by "agony and bloody sweat" (NLS, p.96). His work, Hulme says, is a matter not of the unchecked expression of feeling, but of the struggle of feeling with the resistant medium of language; it is "No flowing on of words, but tightly clutched tense fingers leaving marks in the clay" (NLS, p.80). The struggle Hulme imagines is reminiscent of the one pictured by the Parnassian Gautier, in reaction against the sloppy ease of Romantic writing:

> Sculpte, lime, ciselle:
> Que ton rêve flottant
> Se scelle
> Dans le bloc résistant![86]

Hulme found support for his conviction about the

[86] See Chapter I, p.52.

difficulty of the poet's task in the writings of Bergson. One of the poet's major problems, in Hulme's view, stems from the fact that his desire for expression is accompanied by "a passionate desire for accuracy..." (BTA, p.162). He is concerned, Hulme says, with expressing the unique nature of his experience, with capturing the precise quality of the mood inspired by his perception. At the same time, however, as Bergson had shown him, the conceptual language which is the poet's medium is by nature a language of compromise:

> The straightforward use of words always lets the individuality of things escape. Language, being a communal apparatus, only conveys over that part of the emotion which is common to all of us. (BTA, p.162)[87]

In the light of this fact, Hulme recognizes, "a concentrated effort of the mind" (RC, p.132) will be required to bend language to fit the precise curve of the unique mood to be expressed. In an important metaphor, Hulme illustrates the sort of mental tension required by likening language to the set of fixed, geometrical curves used by architects:

> Suppose that the various kinds of emotions and other things which one wants to represent are represented by various curved lines. There are in reality an infinite number of these curves all differing slightly from each other. But language does not and could not take account of all these curves. What it does do is to provide you with a certain number of standard types by which you can roughly indicate the different classes into which the curves fall. It is something like the wooden curves which architects employ - circles, ellipses, and so forth - by suitable combinations of which they can draw approximately any curve they want, but only approximately. (BTA, pp.159-60)

[87] Cf. above, p.305.

He then varies his metaphor slightly to demonstrate the pressure which the poet must apply to force the mechanism of expression out of its natural rigidity, and into the supple, precise mechanism he desires:

> Suppose that in order to draw a certain individual curve which we perceive, you are given a piece of bent steel spring which has a natural curvature of its own. To make that fit the curve you want you will have to press it to that curve along the whole of its length with all your fingers. If you are unable to keep up this pressure,+ then at that end you will not get the curve you were trying to draw, but the rounded-off curve of the spring itself. (BTA, p.161)

+ and at one end slacken the pressure

The origin of Hulme's metaphor may well have been the reference to Pestalozzi's "courbes géometriques" in Bergson's essay on Ravaisson, for he would have encountered a reference to it in Visan's book, if he did not know the original. Or it may have been that passage, which we have already noted, from L'Évolution créatrice:

> Dans le composition d'une oeuvre géniale comme dans une simple décision libre, nous avons beau tendre au plus haut point le ressort de notre activité et créer ainsi ce qu'aucun assemblage pur et simple de matériaux n'aurait pu donner (quelle juxtaposition de courbes connues équivaudra jamais au trait de crayon d'un grand artiste?)[88]

Hulme would also have encountered Bergson's description, in the article "L'Éffort intellectuel," of the contrasting states of "tension" and "relâchement" which mark states of mental effort and mental rest, and his assertion that of all states of mental tension the greatest is the one demanded by the

[88] See Chapter IV, p.270.

act of invention.[89] Among the other psychological accounts of articulation which Hulme read, he would also have encountered Guyau's depiction of it as a process corresponding "physiologiquement à une certaine tension du système nerveux...."[90] In both Bergson's account and Guyau's, as we shall see, and consequently for Hulme, such tension was an assurance against a mechanical mode of expression: an assurance, effectively, of the essential freedom of the expressive process.[91]

The sustained effort which Hulme sees as the foremost fact about the poetic process has much to do, then, with the poet's attempt to work with the naturally clumsy medium of language. It does not, however, begin there: Hulme acknowledges the necessity of a sustained mental process which must take place before the poet even begins his search for words. This prelinguistic activity is the one of constructing, in the mind, some "inside image" (NLS, p.88) of what the poem is to be: a mental construct, it seems, of the same order as the "conception idéale" whose objectification was for Ribot[92] and Bergson after him[93] the essence of all inventive activity. Hulme says, at one point, that no man can write "without seeing at the same time a visual signification before his eyes," that

[89] See Chapter IV, p.265.

[90] Guyau, Les Problèmes de l'esthétique contemporaine (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Germer Baillière, 1891), p.255.

[91] See below, pp.352-3.

[92] See Chapter III, p.205.

[93] See Chapter IV, p.266.

"this image...precedes the writing and makes it firm" (NLS, p.79). He represents poetic creation, at another, as the process of giving some ephemeral "idea" solid form; a process through which, as both Ribot and Bergson had stressed, the "idea" itself is transformed:

> The idea is nothing: it is the holding on to the idea, through the absolutely transforming influence of putting it into definiteness. The holding on through waves.... The resistance of the ὕλη, ἐνεργής . The process of invention is that of gradually making solid the castles in the air. (NLS, pp.80-81)

As well as corresponding to Ribot's notion of the "idéale," Hulme's notion of the "inside image" may have been inspired in part by Jules de Gaultier, whose philosophy of "Bovarysme" was based on the recognition of men's capacity for projecting and transforming mental images.[94] Hulme may also have had in mind the discussion of "ideas" or "ideals" which Allen Upward presented in The New Word, a book which he read, according to the testimony of Ezra Pound.[95] In this work, which was dedicated to uncovering the true meaning of "Idealism," Upward distinguishes the "idea" from the "idol," calling it "not the appearance of a thing already there, but rather the imagination of a thing not there...not the look of a thing, /but/...a looking forward to a thing." He goes on to use the image also employed by Hulme:

[94] See for example Le Bovarysme (Paris: Mercure de France, 1902), p.58.

[95] See Ezra Pound, "This Hulme Business," in Townsman, II, 5 (January 1939), p.15.

> The ideal is not the realisation in brick and mortar of the builder's plan, as the idol is the realisation in marble of the sculptor's plan. The ideal is not a house made with hands; it is a castle in the air.[96]

Whatever other accounts may have contributed to Hulme's understanding of the way an ideal construct forms in the poet's mind, it is certainly Ribot's which corresponds most closely to the overall account of it present in the Notes. Ribot's description of how the poet, when in possession of such a construct, brings all his faculties into focus "sur un seul point,"[97] may have inspired Hulme's description of the poet as a man "who dwells on a point":

> Dwelling on a point in poetry. The main function of analogy in poetry is to enable one to dwell and linger upon a point of excitement. (NLS, pp.91-2)

Of special importance to Hulme's account, however, was Ribot's depiction of the ideal conception as the product of a process of the dissociation and association of mental images (NLS, p.99). Ribot, it will be recalled, stressed that the images of memory are always simplified versions of a man's original perceptions, and that their particular dissociation has been determined by the strong emotion which they evoked when initially experienced.[98] Hulme concurs with this view with a remark that "Literature, like memory, selects only the vivid patches of life. The art

[96] Allen Upward, The New Word (Geneva: Georg, 1907), p.56.

[97] See Chapter III, p.208 of this thesis. Also note Bergson's paraphrase of this in "L'Effort intellectuel," in L'Energie spirituelle, p.161.

[98] See Chapter III, p.217.

of abstraction" (NLS, p.99). Ribot identified the essential motive behind the association of the images, further, and thus "le nerf principal de l'imagination constructive," as the recognition of some analogy, or likeness, between them.[99] Once again Hulme concurs with his stance, representing the moment of inspiration, throughout his Notes, as the moment when the poet becomes conscious of some analogy. The poet's activity, he says, is one of finding the "subtle analogies" (NLS, p.82) which will express the feelings he experiences. On apprehending some vivid picture, he will worry until he can "find the exact model analogy that will reproduce the extraordinary effect" (NLS, p.82) it produces in him. The moment of recognizing the analogy may be, Hulme says, the result of some deliberate search (NLS, p.85; p.93), or it may strike the poet quite unbidden (NLS, p.84). It is always, however, an instant when the image apprehended becomes associated with the memory-image of some previous, comparable experience.[100] It is a significant feature, finally, as we shall see when we come to compare the product of Hulme's ideal process with those of the Symbolists, that he expresses a special attraction not to the weak, vacillating, merely emotion-based analogies which Ribot defined for the "diffluent" imagination, but to those, typical of the "plastic" one, which are objective enough to give "intellectual pleasure":

> The only intellectual pleasure in recognizing

[99] See Chapter III, p.202.

[100] Cf. NLS, pp.78, 83, 90, 91, 92.

> old friends.
>
> (i) At a race. Look first and see the horses in the paper described. Then excited about result.
>
> (ii) Picture gallery(a) recognition of names. (b) progress to recognition of characteristics. Galleries full of strange names no interest.
>
> (iii) Climate and landscape. The only pleasure in comparison, e.g. Waterloo Bridge and Canada by the river in the morning. (NLS, p.89)

As well as pointing to the recognition of analogy as the basis of all instances of constructive imagination, of course, Ribot also established its place as the essence of all prelinguistic thought. Hulme's Notes and "Cinders" contain many references attesting to Hulme's familiarity with this phenomenon. "Thought is prior to language," he recognizes, "and consists in the simultaneous presentation to the mind of two different images"; it consists, essentially, in "the discovery of new analogies" (NLS, p.84). Ribot, we remember, illustrated the working of the "logique des images" with reference to animal behaviour. The "Cinders,"appropriately, are full of references to the affinity between man's recognition of analogies, and rational processes typical of animals. After speaking of the distortions of reality effected by the kind of abstract theorizing enabled by "symbolic language," Hulme wonders:

> What would an intelligent animal (without the language disease), or a carter in the road, think of it all? (C, p.218)

"Animals," he says, "are in the same state that men were before symbolic language was invented" (C, p.229). Therest of his discussion, moreover, strongly recommends such a state as being conducive to the only acceptable mode of recognizing

some order in the "cindery" world. Ribot, we remember, had observed that the rational process involved in an animal's recognition of the analogy between present and past impressions is not one which gives rise to judgments which may be deemed true or false. Animals, he said, and indeed artists, move directly from the recognition of the analogy to some action, without formulating any abstract theory whose truth may be questioned; the only matter to be judged, in such experience, is the success of the action to which the recognition gives rise. Hulme, accordingly, contends that "We must judge the world from the status of animals, leaving out 'Truth,' etc" (C, p.229). The relevance of such a conviction for his theory of poetry is clear from his assertion that writing will never begin with some "pure thought," which will then be "made manifest in some counter-like way" (NLS, p.80). Its product, consequently, will never be susceptible to judgments about its truth or falsehood; the only appropriate question to be asked of art, he says, is not "is it correct? but is it a good picture?" (SRIII, p.20).

Perhaps the most interesting parallel to be found between Ribot's and Hulme's accounts of prelinguistic reasoning is the stress they both place on the fact that the recognitions which take place there are non-transferable: inseparable, that is, from the actual experiences which give rise to them. Ribot, we have seen, had stressed that the "logique des images," in sharp contrast to "la pensée symbolique," is "réfractaire à tout stratagème de substitution."[101] The illumination

[101] See Chapter III, p.201.

sparked by the recognition of the analogy, he asserted, completely vanishes when the animal, or artist, is no longer in the presence of the relevant images. Hulme makes just this point in the Notes:

> Very often the idea, apart from the analogy or metaphor which clothes it, has no existence. That is, by a subtle combination of allusions we have artificially built up in us an idea, which apart from these, cannot be got at. As if a man took us on a rocky path and said look - and we saw the view. i.e. the analogy is the thing, not merely decoration. (NLS, p.83)[102]

In noting that at the most basic level of thought, in the recognition of some analogy, the artist grasps some significance which is not translatable into abstract terms, Hulme, like Ribot, is describing a phenomenon comparable in some important respects to the one which occupied a central place in the Symbolist account of art. In the accounts of Schopenhauer, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Mockel, Hegel, Pater, Yeats, and Bergson, we have seen the poet's experience variously but consistently depicted as one which involves the primary appearance of an imagistic representation, which is somehow inseparable from its significance. The meaning such representations generate, that is, is said by all of these theorists to be unaccountably diminished by any attempt to translate it into the terms of an abstract, conceptual language. The essential fact about the "symbol," be it a single image, charged with meaning, or, as in Mallarme's definition, a complex of suggestive images, is that it is, to quote Yeats, "the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual

[102] My italics.

flame."[103] It stands in contrast to the image of allegory, or the image employed by the Parnassian artist to illustrate some thought which he first "conçoit fortement."[104] It is a picture said to be twin-born with its meaning, possessed of intrinsic, not stipulated, power. The imagistic representation which Hulme envisions arising in the poet's mind is strongly akin in all these respects to the "symbol": its significance, apart from it, "cannot be got at"; it is prior to abstract thought, not merely the "counter-like" substitute for such thought. Its one notable difference, however, is that it has nothing to do with any of those metaphysical entities cited by the idealists and Symbolists to account for its intrinsic power: the saturating "Infinite," the "spiritual flame," the transcendental "Idea." Once again, Hulme is dispensing with all "metaphysical baggage," and stating his case with reference only to psychological phenomena.

Such, then, is the nature of the "inside image" which forms in Hulme's poet's mind: a brace of images of analogous emotive properties embodying some significance which could not be conveyed through any other representation. We may proceed now to consider Hulme's account of the process by which this mental construct is translated into linguistic form, by which the ephemeral "castle in the air" is transformed into a solid edifice.

Hulme's opinion about the ideal process of transforming the mental representation into language corresponds neatly with the one expressed by Bergson, when, in "L'Effort

[103] See Chapter II, p.179.

[104] See Chapter I, p.51.

intellectuel," he recalled Ribot's distinction between the two potential procedures it might involve. Hulme accords with Bergson, that is, in rejecting the mechanical way of transforming a fixed "schéma," the one which proceeds simply "des détails à l'unité," and recommends instead the "intuitive" process which, moving "de l'unité aux détails," promises continual discovery.[105] In an essay on contemporary German poetry written for Poetry and Drama in 1914, Hulme comments disparagingly on much current German verse, including that of Ernst Blass, Elsa Schuler, Georg Heym, and Arthur Drey, for what he calls the "rational process" behind its construction. He presents as utterly unacceptable the manner of composition typical of "the intelligent man who is not a poet":

> All that he can do is to mention one by one the elements of the scene and the emotions it calls up. I am moved in a certain way by a dark street at night, say. When I attempt to express this mood, I make an inventory of all the elements which make up that mood. I have written verse of that kind myself. I understand the process. The result is immediately recognisable. Qualities of sincere first-hand observation may be constantly shown, but the result is not a poem.

Hulme rejects the "rational process" not only because it involves the simple analysis and description of a mood, a process which is anathema to his Bergsonian sense of the self, but also because it is one "which keeps all its elements clear before its eyes all the time."[106] The process which depends upon the simple arrangement of elements, elements which "exist

[105] See Chapter IV, p.266, and Chapter III, p.206.

[106] Hulme, "German Chronicle," in Poetry and Drama, II, 6 (June 1914), p.228.

side by side in the mind," is the direct opposite of the one which Bergson described in the "Introduction à la métaphysique," and which Hulme condones; the one in which, as he puts it in "Intensive Manifolds," the given elements are "gathered up together" in an act of "intuition," and the creative "impulsion" carries the writer forward to draw into his work not only all of these, but many more not previously recognized (PIM, p.190).[107] Hulme points out the contrast between the intellectual and intuitive processes, too, in the Notes, where again he indicates his preference for the latter. Formerly, he says, he imagined the poet's activity to be one of collecting a number of details, words and phrases and images, "in a box," and of proceeding, after some time, to build these up into the unity of a poem. Now, however, he sees that the true creative process is one in which new details are continually being discovered:

> ...the very act of trying to find a form to fit the separate phrases into, itself leads to the creation of new images hitherto not felt by the poet.... In the actual making accidental phrases are hit upon. Just as musician in striking notes on piano comes across what he wants, the painter on the canvas, so the poet not only gets the phrases he wants, but even from the words gets a new image.
>
> Creative effort means new images. (Lobster and me.) The accidental discovery of effect, not conscious intellectual endeavour for it. (NLS, p.95)

The ideal construct which may have begun as a simple pair of analogous images will grow in complexity, Hulme suggests, as the poet struggles to transform it into a poem. The new images arise without being in any way consciously sought: Hulme concurs with Gourmont in ceding responsibility for the new associations

[107] See Chapter IV, p.267.

to the unconscious mind.[108]

The struggle with the resistant "ὕλη" which is the essence of Hulme's classical view of poetic articulation is not, then, a gratuitous exertion, but an effort which is crucial to the development and definition of the inspiring "inside image." The notion that the struggle with language plays a critical role in cultivating and individuating the elements interpenetrated in the creative impulse was, of course, a central aspect of the account of creation in Bergson's L'Evolution créatrice, an account which Hulme summarizes in "Intensive Manifolds":

> You may start writing a poem in an endeavour to express a certain idea which is present in your mind in a very hazy shape. The effort to express that idea in verse, the struggle with language, forces the idea as it were back on itself and brings out the original idea in a clearer shape. Before it was only confused. The idea has grown and developed because of the obstacles it had to meet. (PIM, p.211)[109]

Impelled in part by his revulsion at determinist models for human behaviour, Hulme enthusiastically embraces Bergson's arguments on behalf of the unpredictable, organic development of the fundamental self, and with it, implicitly, for the "organic" development of the works of art whose creation it controls. In "Intensive Manifolds," again, he summarizes Bergson's descriptions of how the work of art "ripens":

> If a child has to fit together a jig-saw puzzle, it can learn to do it quicker and quicker.

[108] See Chapter III, p.233.

[109] See Chapter IV, p.272.

> Theoretically indeed it requires no time to do it, because the result is already given. The picture is already created and the work of recomposing it can be supposed going faster and faster up to the point of being instantaneous. But to the artist who creates a picture, time is no longer an interval that can be lengthened or shortened. To contract it would be to modify the invention itself. The time taken up by the invention is one with the invention itself. It is the actual living progress of the thought, a kind of vital process like ripening. (PIM, p.196)[110]

The account of the free, unpredictable process in L'Evolution créatrice is clearly responsible for a good number of the more cryptic of the Notes and "Cinders." A number of these fragments, as I have already suggested, are based upon Bergson's image of the living impulse in nature, an impulse which passes through the "cindery" matter falling back from impulses gone before. Hulme traces again, for example, Bergson's picture of how the impulse draws matter together into living beings, which disintegrate again into random cinders when they die:

> Death is a breaking up into cinders.... The eyes, the beauty of the world, have been organised out of the faeces. Man returns to dust. So does the face of the world to primeval cinders. (C, pp.220-7)

In Bergson's account of evolution, we have seen, the effect of the life impulse on matter was not one of "fabrication," of the simple addition of elements one to the other, but rather one of the "organisation" of elements with an indivisible and unpremeditated motion. Hulme recounts Bergson's description of the "simple unanalysable" (PIM, pp.206-7) action of the

[110] See Chapter IV, p.269.

"élan vital" in "Intensive Manifolds"; the "Cinders" are full of references to its specifically "organising" power:

> The cosmos is only organised in parts; the rest is cinders.... The eyes, the beauty of the world, have been organised out of the faeces.... Man is the chaos highly organised, but liable to reverse to chaos at any moment. (C, pp.220; 227)[111]

One very significant example of the image of the "organisation" of "cinders" in Hulme's work is its use as a metaphor for the art of dancing:

> Dancing to express the organisation of cinders, finally emancipated (cf. bird). (C, p.235)[112]

Hulme refers to the dancer again, in the Notes, as "a built-up complex of cinders..." (NLS, p.88). She is the model, in his eye, for a mode of expression directly contrary to the methodical, referential delineations of discursive "prose," her activity an organically synthetic way "of grouping some ideas together, just as powerful a means as the one called logic which is only an analogy to counter-pushing" (NLS, p.89). In alluding to the dancer thus, of course, Hulme is tying in to the tradition of modern writers, including Mallarmé,

[111] Last two italics mine. Cf. NLS, p.97, for another use of "organisation," in a Wildean comment about the origin of the beautiful, and BTA, p.144, where Hulme notes that it is the power of intuition to enable one to see the features of a living being as "mutually organised," rather than "merely as assembled."

[112] Hulme's association of "emancipation" with the organisation of cinders is an allusion to Bergson's view that the "élan vital," or current of consciousness, which traverses matter charges it with liberty as it passes. See Hulme's paraphrase of this part of Bergson's theory in PIM, p.210.

Yeats, Bergson and Valéry,[113] who use the dance as a model of an expressive process in which what is to be articulated is only discovered through the articulation, content only realized through form. All of Hulme's references to the ways in which the poet makes discoveries as he creates, to his discovery of significance in new analogies, of new images in the "inside image's" objectification, point to his agreement with this essential tenet of the Symbolist aesthetic. He has been seen to say, after all, of the "inside image" or "idea":

> The idea is nothing: it is the holding on to the idea, through the absolutely transforming influence of putting it into definiteness. The holding on through waves....[114]

It is only through the struggle with the resistant matter of language, for Hulme, that the poet himself really comes to know the fundamental mood he is experiencing. It is "Devant le papier" in his view, as in Mallarmé's, that "l'artiste se fait":

> Poet's mood vague and passes away, indefinable. The poem he makes selects, builds up, and makes even his own mood more definite to him. Expression builds up personality. (NLS, p.94)[115]

Hulme supplements his support for the Symbolist

[113] Kermode discusses the use of the dancer metaphor in Romantic Image, passim. Cf. Hulme's quotation, NLS, p.91, of Rossetti's remark that "'Soul is form and doth the body make,'" and his description, NLS, p.93, of the boys who, in whistling, find "a new way (a mental dance)...of synthesizing certain of their own emotions."

[114] My italics.

[115] Cf. Chapter I, p.131.

tenet about the discovery of significance in the act of making by supporting also the vers libriste campaign for the discovery of form. "The form of the poem," he remarks in the Notes, must always be "shaped by the intention" (NLS, p.95). Hulme's most extensive remarks on the principle of vers libre are found in the "Lecture on Modern Poetry." His account there owes much, we may discern, to the discussions of Beaunier, Guyau, and Kahn.[116] Following Beaunier, he represents the new technique as a manifestation of the natural progression of literary history. It is an innovation, he says, which has arisen to deliver French verse from the "sterile feebleness" (LMP, p.70)[117] into which it declined with the strict, formal regulations of Parnassianism. Hulme attributes the first definition of vers libre to Kahn, but his own account of the matter echoes the passage I have quoted from La Poésie nouvelle:

> The new technique was first definitely stated by Kahn. It consisted in a denial of a regular number of syllables as the basis of versification. The length of the line is long and short, oscillating with the images used by the poet; it follows the contours of his thoughts and is free rather than regular; to use a rough analogy, it is clothes made to order, rather than ready-made clothes. (LMP, p.70)[118]

[116] Hulme also owes some of his remarks on vers-libre in the "Lecture" to Vildrac and Duhamel's Notes sur la technique poétique (1910), and to Kahn's Preface to his Premiers poèmes (1897).

[117] Cf. Beaunier, La Poésie nouvelle, p.11. Hulme mentions reading La Poésie nouvelle in his review of Tancrède de Visan's L'Attitude du lyrisme contemporain. He would have read it in 1905 or 1906. Note that Sully Prudhomme is one of the Parnassians Hulme mentions by name in the "Lecture."

[118] Cf. Chapter I, p.57.

The main rationale which Hulme provides for vers libre, interestingly, is a curious extension of the anti-intellectualism which underlies his restriction of the poet's apprehension to the world's flux. Echoing a passage in Guyau's Les Problèmes de l'esthétique contemporaine, he argues that the desire for "an absolute perfection of rhyme and form" (LMP, p.70) is a manifestation of the same need for security in the face of the flux which has in the past revealed itself "Materially in the pyramids, spiritually in the dogmas of religion and in the hypostatized ideas of Plato."[119] Men have found in such absolutes, he asserts, "a static fixity where their souls might rest" (LMP, p.71). To contemporary thinkers like himself, however, who have no faith in absolute truth, no sense of the reality of "Ideas," there is no sense of the need for fixed poetic forms:

> We no longer believe in perfection, either in verse or in thought, we frankly acknowledge the relative. We shall no longer strive to attain the absolute perfect form in poetry. Instead of these minute perfections of phrase and words, the tendency will be rather towards the production of a general effect; this of course takes away the predominance of metre and a regular number of syllables as the element of perfection in words. We are no longer concerned that stanzas shall be shaped and polished like gems, but rather that some vague mood shall be communicated. (LMP, p.71)[120]

Although Hulme is an advocate of a "classical" discipline in expression, he does not recommend a strict adherence to classical

[119] My italics. Cf. Guyau, p.176.

[120] Cf. Guyau, p.176. This point of view about the function of art for modern man was to be overturned in Hulme's Worringerian discussion of the visual arts.

forms. To put the modern spirit, he believes, the "tentative and half-shy manner of looking at things," into regular metre seems comparable to "putting a child into armour" (LMP, p.73). He agrees with Yeats in regarding a regular rhythmical pattern as an invention of the will, an intellectual straight-jacket interfering with the wavering, organic rhythms which spring from a man's deeper self. In the "German Chronicle," for example, he laments the rational poet's inability to abandon himself to the "obscure world from which rhythm springs."[121] In the "Lecture" he suggests that regular metres serve the lazy writer in the same way as do the ready-made expressions of cliché, allowing him to write verse without submitting his mind to the sincere tension which true poetry demands (LMP, p.75); his implication is that these enable the poet to write from his superficial self, and not to bring to bear, as is proper, the fundamental one.[122]

Hulme shares with both Parnassians and Symbolists, then, the general "classical" view that the execution of a poem entails a struggle with resistant material, that it is never an easeful expression, but always an agonizing craft. Where Parnassians and Symbolists diverged, however, on certain major principles of procedure, he shows his sympathies to be entirely

[121] "German Chronicle," in Poetry and Drama, II, 6, p.228.

[122] Cf. Hulme's account of cliché, and reflex speech, in section v) c) of this chapter.
Note also the awareness of the physiological basis of rhythm indicated by Hulme's note, "Conductor's baton and foundation in body rhythm" (NLS, p.96). Cf. Guyau, pp.180 and 206.

with the latter. He rejects, that is, the Parnassian view that articulation involves the translation of ideas first clearly formulated in the mind, and the strict adherence to predetermined verse-forms, standing instead by the Symbolist conviction that the ideas and form of a poem are never known clearly before the process of articulation, but only realized through it.

Hulme would have known of the essential distinction between the Parnassian and Symbolist views of the expressive process from his reading of Beaunier and Guyau. He would have been alerted to the constricting effect of the strict formal requirements of the Parnasse by the discussion in La Poésie nouvelle; Beaunier's view of Symbolism was one primarily of a movement which set the metre of French poetry free from Parnassian shackles.[123] Although Guyau does not in his Esthétique contemporaine explicitly mention the Symbolist movement, he speaks out against the view that creation is a rational process, and identifies the Parnassian poets as writers who are misled in believing it to be so:

> Quoi qu'en pensent nos 'parnassiens' modernes, le calcul, la patience, la méthode, la bonne volonté sont impuissants à produire une grande oeuvre: dans la morale, la bonne volonté est tout, a dit Schopenhauer, dans l'art et surtout dans la poésie, elle n'est rien. Le raisonnement même, en tout qu'il précède la conception de l'oeuvre, semble un signe de médiocrité: c'est l'opposé du génie.[124]

[123] See Beaunier, pp.32-3.

[124] Guyau, p.137.

Guyau is upholding an essentially Symbolist view of the artistic process when, shortly after these remarks, he speaks of the necessary difference between the methods of poetry and of science: "c'est qu'il a découvrir son objet même, le beau, au lieu d'avoir simplement à analyser, à décomposer cet objet par le raisonnement."[125]

The closest Hulme comes to expressing his allegiance to one or other of the conflicting French aesthetics is in a review of Tancrède de Visan's L'Attitude du lyrisme contemporain (1911). He offers, in this article, concise accounts of the two schools which both paraphrase Visan's descriptions, and pick up the French writer's tone of enthusiasm for the Symbolist one. Of the art of the Parnasse he remarks:

> It was an endeavour always to keep accurate description. It was an endeavour to create poetry of "clear" ideas. They employed always clear and precise descriptions of external things and strove by combinations of such "atoms of the beautiful" to manufacture a living beauty.

For the Symbolists, however, this seemed a futile aspiration:

> For life is a continuous and unanalysable curve which cannot be seized clearly, but can only be felt as a kind of intuition. It can only be got at by a kind of central vision as opposed to analytical description, this central vision expressing itself by means of symbols.[126]

Visan's aim in Lyrisme contemporain is, as we have noted, to illustrate that the art of Symbolism anticipated the philosophy

[125] Guyau, p.140. My italics.

[126] Hulme, Review of Tancrède de Visan's L'Attitude du lyrisme contemporain, The New Age, IX, 17 (24 August 1911), p.401. Cf. Visan, p.439.

of Bergson, that the aesthetic experience which the Symbolists attempted to explain, inadequately, in their manifestos found a full and adequate expression in Bergson's account of the human spirit. Implicit in this stance, as Cyrena Pondrom has noted,[127] is a reinterpretation of the Symbolist process comparable to Hulme's reinterpretation of Schopenhauer: one which would have made it palatable to him because it stripped it of all the metaphysical "hocus-pocus" which he so despised. Although Visan acknowledges the formative influence of German Idealism upon the Symbolists' definition of their aesthetic, recording Symbolist claims about the artist's apprehension of Ideas, and his participation in some "moi universel,"[128] in conflating all to Bergson he effectively dispenses with the mystical dimension of the aesthetic. The developing "états d'âme,"[129] for example, which he sees reflected in all Symbolist art, which in Symbolist theory had been identified with cosmic principles like the Hegelian Spirit, or the Schopenhauerian Will, or the Platonic Oversoul, appear to him to have an entirely adequate description in Bergson's account of the fundamental self: an account which did not invoke any kind of transcendental realm, but confined itself, for the most part, to descriptions based upon the observation of psychological phenomena.[130] Visan, like Hulme in the "Plan for a Book,"

[127] See The Road from Paris, p.58.

[128] Visan, p.107. For the Ideas, see, for example, Visan's description of Gide, pp.374-5. The full discussion of the impact of German idealism on French Symbolism is found in pp.409-23.

[129] See for example Visan, pp.119, 270, 272-3, 276, 442.

[130] The only exceptions to this, as we have noted, are

expresses his appreciation for the scientific aspect of Bergson's work, praising its "délicates et profondes analyses psychologiques," its "saveur d'une métaphysique 'positive,' dégagée d'intellectualisme."[131] The essence of Bergson's attraction for him, and a most important fact for Hulme, is that he respected the limitations of realm required by a positivist or "classical" Weltanschauung, without also having a positivist's faith in the potential exhaustiveness of general laws. Bergson was a positivist without being an intellectualist, a champion of intuition without being a "romantic" transcendentalist. The balance he achieved was also the balance maintained by Hulme, whose support of a Symbolist or Coleridgean organicism in his account of poetic expression did not, as his critics have suggested, constitute a lapse into "romanticism." Hulme's borrowings from the new psychology, in describing a fundamentally free, organic creative process, assured his adherence to "classicism," as he defined it, simply by making it unnecessary for him to "drag in the Infinite" to support his claims.[132]

c) The Language of Poetry.

Hulme's specifications about poetic language rely

Bergson's occasional moments of identifying the fundamental self and the "élan vital." Hulme follows suit, in PIM, p.213.

[131] Visan, p.425.

[132] In RC, pp.134-140, Hulme calls the ideal poetic faculty "fancy," as opposed to "imagination." His use of the terms is not Coleridge's: they describe, in his opinion, processes which are essentially the same, except that the fancy, admirably, confines itself to "the contemplation of finite things," instead of soaring up into the infinite "realm of the emotions" (RC, p.134).

upon certain clear distinctions. He sets the language of poetry, first of all, in direct opposition to the language of prose. He bases this distinction largely upon what he sees as the fundamentally different relationships which exist between these writers and the words and phrases which pass through their minds as they write: two different degrees of awareness, that is to say, of the intrinsic properties of these words and phrases. The issue of this relationship, which applies, ultimately, not just to the writer, but also to his reader, is foreshadowed in the theories of language which we have seen in Rimbaud and Mallarmé. It has to do with the place of these expressions on the two scales of progress which I have discussed in Chapter III. The first is the scale of abstractions outlined by Ribot in L'Évolution des idées générales. The other is the movement, memorably described by Gourmont, by which new expressions are minted and then pass into common usage. The overriding message in Hulme's remarks is that the true poet is acutely conscious of, or sensitive to the words he uses. This involvement is the assurance both of his essential freedom as an artist, and of his ultimate power to effect fundamental changes in those who read his work.

Hulme outlines the essential difference between poetry and prose in the "Lecture on Modern Poetry":

> The difference between the two is, roughly, this: that while one arrests your mind all the time with a picture, the other allows the mind to run along with the least possible effort to a conclusion.
>
> Prose is due to a faculty of the mind something resembling reflex action in the body. If I had to go through a complicated mental

> process each time I laced my boots, it would waste mental energy; instead of that, the mechanism of the body is so arranged that one can do it almost without thinking. It is an economy of effort. The same process takes place with the images used in prose. For example, when I say that the hill was clad with trees, it merely conveys the fact to me that it was covered. But the first time that expression was used by a poet, and to him it was an image recalling to him the distinct visual analogy of a man clad in clothes.... (LMP, pp.74-5)

The poet, we are told, differs profoundly from the writer of prose in being acutely conscious of the language he uses; he never expresses himself mechanically, never plays the role of an indifferent conductor of words. Hulme would have come across a number of references to this type of distinction in his reading of French writers. Guyau, for example, had asserted in L'Esthétique contemporaine that the true artistic process will never be like a game: "le mouvement qui se rapproche le plus de la simple action réflexe ou instinctive...."[133] Gourmont, of course, had based his distinction of two kinds of writers in Le Problème du style squarely on the fact that while one brings his whole sensibility to the act of expression, the other expresses himself mechanically, "sans aucune intervention de la conscience et de la sensibilité."[134] Undoubtedly the most significant version of the distinction which Hulme encountered, however, was the one which Bergson had laid down in "L'Effort intellectuel," when he opposed the stressful activity of proper poetic expression to the sort of "reflex

[133] Guyau, p.78.

[134] See Chapter III, p.236.

speech" typical of much ordinary social interaction. Hulme acknowledges George Robertson, the English psychologist whose work Bergson had cited in his article, in the lecture on "Romanticism and Classicism":

> The amount of freedom in man is much exaggerated. That we are free on certain rare occasions, both my religion and the views I get from metaphysics convince me. But many acts which we habitually label free are in reality automatic. It is quite possible for a man to write a book almost automatically.... Some observations were recorded more than twenty years ago by Robertson on reflex speech, and he found that in certain cases of dementia, where the people were quite unconscious so far as the exercise of reasoning went, that very intelligent answers were given to a succession of questions on politics and such matters. The meaning of these questions could not possibly have been understood. Language here acted after the manner of a reflex. (RC, pp.123-4)

In this passage Hulme reveals that he has grasped what had been the most important implication of Robertson's distinction for Bergson. He recognizes, that is, that the difference between an automatic kind of "reflex speech" and a speech in which one is intensely involved with words and meaning, is the difference between one which is utterly determined and another which is essentially free. The "metaphysics" which has convinced him that men do sometimes act freely, of course, is Bergson's argument for the freedom of the fundamental self. The "reflex speech" of the prose-writer, as he well understands, is an action of the same order as the reflex actions which Bergson had ascribed to the superficial self, the acts of automatic response which perfectly satisfy the predictions of the determinist psychology. Hulme knows and accepts Bergson's

argument that it is "only at moments of tension and crisis that we choose in defiance of what is generally called a motive" (PIM, p.191); his poet, with all of the acute mental tension which distinguishes his activity from that of the prose writer, is tapping the unpredictable flux of spirit which Hulme has been relieved to discover is his essential condition.

The particular property of language which occupies the attention of Hulme's poet and his audience, is what he calls its accompanying "vision": the visual images, that is, for which the words are mere symbols. Hulme makes this point repeatedly in his lectures, and most vividly in some metaphors in the Notes on Language and Style. Verse, he says, "always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process" (RC, p.134). If the "ideal of modern prose is to pass to conclusions without thinking" (NLS, p.79), he maintains, the ideal of poetry is to make the reader feel each step; poetry is "a pedestrian taking you over the ground, prose - a train which delivers you at a destination" (RC, p.135). In one of his more whimsical metaphors, Hulme likens the words in poetry to the segments of a "hairy" caterpillar, where "the hair on /the/ segment is the vision the poet sees behind it." The "ordinary" words of prose, by contrast, are like segments "with no hair, used for getting along":

> The ordinary caterpillar for crawling along from one position to another. The hairy one for beauty, to build up a solid vision of realities. (NLS, p.78)

In contrast to the "visual" or "concrete" language of the

poet, Hulme calls the one used by the prose writer a language of "counters." His definitive use of the "counter" image is found in "Romanticism and Classicism":

> In prose as in algebra concrete things are embodied in signs or counters which are moved about according to rules, without being visualised at all in the process.... Poetry, in one aspect at any rate, may be considered as an effort to avoid this characteristic of prose. It is not a counter language, but a visual concrete one. (RC, p.134)

Hulme also makes numerous references to this kind of colourless "counter" language in the Notes. He speaks there, for example, of his ideal philosopher poet Aphra, who in writing sees "each word with an image sticking on it, never a flat word passed over a board like a counter" (NLS, p.78). Every word in the ideal poem, he stipulates, is "not a counter " but "an image seen..." (NLS, p.79). The image of a set or system of counters, as we have seen, is a central one, too, in the "Cinders," where it represents the kind of abstract theory which is so flattering to its creators, yet so fatally divorced from, and so inadequate to describe, the "cindery" world:

> The aim of science and of all thought is to reduce the complex and inevitably disconnected world of grit and cinders to a few ideal counters, which we can move about and so form an ungritlike picture of reality - one flattering to our sense of power over the world. (C, p.224)

Hulme would have encountered the analogy between words and counters, or mathematical "chiffres," at a number of points in his reading. It is possible that he came across Gaultier's use of the image in an article in the Revue Blanche

for 1894, an account similar to his in that its purpose is specifically to identify the difference between poetry and prose.[135] He certainly came across it in Visan's Lyrisme contemporain, where it was used to illustrate the differences between the indifferently expressed idea of a philosopher, and the passionately uttered idea of a poet:

> Le philosophe fait taire les mouvements de son coeur; le poète les exalte. Pour celui-là l'idée est un chiffre, une équation; pour celui-ci c'est une émotion, un sentiment, quelque chose qui vibre et qui s'élance comme une fleur.[136]

Visan had also, of course, as we have seen in Chapter I,[137] used this contrast to distinguish between the modes of thought and expression typical of Parnassian and Symbolist writers. Hulme's conviction that the poet should not use his language merely as if blindly offering a characterless symbol for some reality does, of course, link him with Rimbaud and Mallarmé, in their belief that a writer ought to be conscious of, and to exploit the intrinsic properties of words, rather than merely to use them in their capacity as dictionary words,[138] or as elements in a representative currency.[139]

[135] See Jules de Gaultier, "Essai de physiologie poetique," in La Revue Blanche, VI, 3 (May 1894), pp.393-408. Note especially p.405. Gaultier also discusses the physiological basis of poetic rhythms.

[136] Visan, p.40.

[137] See p.109.

[138] See Chapter I, p.92.

[139] See Chapter I, p.106 of this thesis. Hulme differed from Mallarmé in particular, however, by being concerned totally with the "vision" clinging to language, and not with the sound of the words. See below, p.374.

Hulme's many references to the "counter" language, however, seem most closely to reflect the two, distinct usages of the "chiffre" which we have seen in Ribot and Gourmont. Ribot, it will be recalled, saw a likeness between a mathematician's "chiffres" and the words designating concepts belonging to the abstract end of the empiricist scale of mental abstractions.[140] The rational activity corresponding to these highly abstract words, unlike the "logique des images," was "aveugle": one in which the thinker was conscious only of the words being manipulated, and not of the sensible realities for which they stood. The "chiffre" in Gourmont's account, by contrast, did not necessarily indicate a term of any particular degree of abstraction. Gourmont used it simply to denote any expression, or "cliché," which, having passed from its inception into common usage, had lost for its user all of the visual, metaphorical power which it had had for the poet who coined it.[141] The poetic language which Hulme sets in opposition to the "counter" language of prose will be seen to correspond to kinds of language defined in both Ribot's and Gourmont's discussions. It is both a language of words drawn from the concrete end of Ribot's spectrum of images and ideas, and one of expressions newly minted, situated at the beginning, in other words, of the social progress of language mapped by Gourmont.

That Hulme had the empiricist theory of the evolution of abstract concepts in mind when he spoke of the language of "counters" is suggested by a number of the Notes. In one

[140] See Chapter III, p.200.

[141] See Chapter III, p.238.

cryptic fragment, for example, he appears to be summarizing the process of abstraction and generalization involved in the formation of general words:

> Regard each word as a picture, then a succession of pictures. Only the dead skeleton remains. We cut the leaves off. When the tree becomes a mask, the leaves become unnecessary. But now only the thick lines matter and the accompanying pictures are forgotten. (NLS, p.83)

The specific account of the process which Hulme has in mind here may well be, as Wallace Martin has pointed out,[142] the opening passage in Taine's De l'Intelligence. He is clearly referring, at any rate, to the same process described in Ribot's L'Évolution des idées générales: the process by which a number of images, a "succession of pictures," is reduced to a single concept. The moment when the "tree" becomes a "skeleton," as he puts it, is the moment when the word which designates the concept displaces the pictures completely, achieves in the consciousness what Ribot had called "la maîtrise absolue."

Hulme extends his empiricist account of the evolution of abstract ideas further by describing the modes of reasoning and of communication made possible by highly abstract language. He refers, in his description, to the phenomenon which Ribot used as evidence for the existence of an unconscious mind, the fact that although a man may use the "counters" blindly, he will, if challenged, be able to recall some of the pictures

[142] Martin, "The Sources," p.198. The relevant passage is found in Taine, On Intelligence, Vol.I, trans. T. D. Haye (London: Reeve, 1871), pp.3-4.

for which they stand:

> Analysis of the attitude of a man reading an argument
>
> (i) Compare in algebra the real things are replaced by symbols. These symbols are manipulated according to certain laws which are independent of their meaning. N. B. At a certain point in the proof we cease to think of x as having a meaning and look upon it as a mere counter to be manipulated.
>
> (ii) An analogous phenomenon happens in reasoning in language. We replace meaning (i.e. vision) by words. These words fall into well-known patterns, i.e. into certain well-known phrases which we accept without thinking of their meaning, just as we do the x in algebra. But there is a constant movement above and below the line of meaning (representation). And this is used in dialectical argument. At any stage we can ask the opponent to show his hand, that is to turn all his words into visions, in realities we can see. (NLS, pp.77-8)[143]

Although Hulme sees the ability to translate counters back into "vision" as a capacity of all men who engage in counter reasoning, he represents the activity repeatedly as one in which the absence of any accompanying images is for its employers its most welcome aspect. The "type of all reasoning," Hulme says, is that of contentedly "arranging counters on the flat, where they can be moved about, without the mind having to think in any involved way" (NLS, p.79). Any "necessity to visualise the words you are using," he observes, "would be an impediment, it would delay the process of reasoning" (BTA, p.165). As we have seen in our discussion of Hulme's "cindery" world, of course, Hulme has little but contempt for such an easeful mode of thought. Like Gourmont, he is suspicious of any form

[143] Cf. Bergson's discussion of the mental process involved in manipulating mathematical "chiffres" in "L'Effort intellectuel," in L'Énergie spirituelle, p.169.

of abstract reasoning in which an individual remains oblivious to the realities for which his concepts stand. Like Bergson, too, he realizes that to think about the flux of reality in terms only of fixed, discrete "counters" is to treat "as fixed entities things which are not so - which run into one another in inextricable blurs, and are not separate and distinct" (SRI, p.13).[144]

In contrast to the first kind of "counter" language which Hulme defines, then, the language of poetry is a visual, concrete one, made up of the kind of words which command a simultaneous awareness of the things for which they stand.[145] That it is such a concrete language which fills the poet's mind has been implied, in part, by all of those occasions when Hulme suggests that his characteristic mode of reasoning is the recognition of analogy, the mode which Ribot called, in contrast to "la pensée symbolique," the "logique des images." Further confirmation of this fact is found in one of the most memorable of the Notes, a brief poem depicting the poet at work:

> Over a large table, smooth, he leaned in ecstasies,
> In a dream.
> He had been to woods, and talked and walked with trees
> Had left the world
> And brought back round globes and stone images

[144] For the danger of mistaking "counters" for reality, see also C, pp.218 and 236.

[145] In Ribot's account, of course, the presence or absence of a "vision" accompanying words had to do both with the low difficulty of the recognition of the points of likeness between the things subsumed under the concept, and with the particular inclination of the individual to see images, rather than, say, to hear the word's sound. See Chapter III, p.198.

> Of gems, colours, hard and definite.
> With these he played, in a dream,
> On the smooth table. (NLS, p.88)

This picture may have been inspired by Gautier's description of the poet at play with his "pierres précieuses": a passage cited by Ribot to illustrate the concrete nature of the materials of the "imagination plastique."[146] Hulme comes close to Ribot's account, too, with a statement that unlike expositional prose, which communicates in terms having "only counter value," "literary expression is from Real to Real with all the intermediate forms keeping their real value" (NLS, p.78). The implication of this remark appears to be precisely that of the passage in Idées générales in which Ribot likens different kinds of communication to different kinds of trade. To Ribot, it will be recalled, the use of highly abstract words seemed comparable to the use of a representative currency, the exchange of pieces of paper of no value in themselves. Communication in concrete words, by contrast, struck him as being analogous to the trading of real goods, of intrinsic value. Throughout his work, Hulme represents the words of poetry as "physical things," like pieces of string, or worms (NLS, p.86), or jewels (NLS, p.88), or carved chess-pieces (NLS, p.85). In such a vision, of course, he resembles Mallarmé, whose sense of the intrinsic powers of words also led him to liken them to precious gems, and fleshy bodies, and stones for the poet to sculpt.[147] The inspiration for Hulme's favourite metaphor

[146] See Chapter III, p.214.

[147] See Chapter I, p.110.

to describe the palpability of words, however, could well have been Gourmont. He, we remember, in Le Problème du style, had envisioned his visual writer moulding words like "poignées de glaise."[148] Hulme says in the "Lecture on Modern Poetry" that it is a poet's vocation "to mould images, a kind of spiritual clay, into definite shapes" (LMP, p.75). To convey the effort involved in writing, we have seen, he pictures the poet's "tightly clutched fingers leaving marks in the clay."[149] He points in sum, like Gourmont, to a solid, imagistic, clay-like quality as the essence of "perfect style":

> With perfect style, the solid leather for reading, each sentence should be a lump, a piece of clay, a vision seen; rather, a wall touched with soft fingers. Never should one feel light vaporous bridges between one solid sense and another. No bridges - all solid: then never exasperated. (NLS, p.79)

When Hulme envisions the poet moulding his solid little poems, he is not only placing the language of poetry at the concrete end of a scale of abstractions, but also specifying its place at the beginning of the process by which new expressions are created and pass into common usage, where they become clichés. He is setting it in opposition, that is, to the language of "chiffres" which Gourmont had credited to the ideo-emotive writer, or the "plagiaire."[150] Hulme echoes Gourmont's sense of the "chiffre" in observing,

[148] See Chapter III, p.241.

[149] See above, p.326.

[150] See Chapter III, p.238.

for example, that "Every word in the language originates as a live metaphor, but gradually of course all visual meaning goes out of them and they become a kind of counters" (BTA, p.152). He also recalls Gourmont's image of the progress of language as one in which expressions are newly minted by the poet, and employed by other men as "médailles usées"; he speaks disparagingly, at one point, of the kind of expression which "is not the result of any actual process of thought inside the mind of the man who utters it, but is a dead, ready-made thing, passed on like a worn-out coin."[151] In the Notes Hulme likens the body of conventional expressions from which the prose writer draws to a museum where the once glittering weapons of the poet are left to rust and decay.[152] He also draws a parallel between the "armoury" (NLS, p.87) of clichés and the collection of phrases one may be taught to use in learning to speak a foreign language. A prose writer treats his stock phrases, he implies, with the same lack of regard for their principles of construction as a Berlitz student treats his model sentences: each one knows not "how to make counters but a list of them" (NLS, p.86).

When Hulme remarks in the "Lecture" that the writing of "prose" resembles a reflex action, he supports his comment by describing an activity identical to that which Gourmont attributed to the sentimental, or ideo-emotive writer.

[151] Hulme, "Theory and Practice," in The Commentator, III, 77 (8 November 1911), p.388.

[152] Guyau used the notion of their different places in the social progress of language to distinguish the language of poetry from the language of prose. See Esthétique contemporaine, p.179.

He refers to a certain "poem" in wide circulation, which he does not identify which is composed entirely of "clichés or tags of speech." The man who composed it, he states emphatically, "not being a poet, did not see anything definitely himself, but imitated other poets' images" (LMP, p.75). Gourmont depicted the sentimental writer, we recall, as the man who discovered expressions in his reading which he found moving, and used them as if he had invented them himself. He purchased cut flowers from a green-house of clichés, and offered them as if he had grown them in his own garden. Hulme describes just such a character in his Notes: a "greengrocer" who, on experiencing a powerful feeling of love, "was satisfied by reading Tennyson and sending the lines he seemed to have experienced to his beloved" (NLS, p.95). In "Bergson's Theory of Art" he refers in general terms to an experience like the greengrocer's, observing that the expression of love is a frequent occasion for the use of cliché. Claims about arrows piercing the heart, he observes, are among the most worn examples of linguistic coinage (BTA, p.151). Hulme summarizes the social contribution made by the poet in the Notes, when he describes his accomplishment as the building up of a communal "state of reference." When a would-be poet or a greengrocer is gripped by some emotion, the legacy of a Tennyson is the rack upon which he may hang up his hat; among the beautifully minted expressions of poets like Tennyson, he says, there will inevitably be one "to which, when for a surging moment we have a feeling (really the cinders drunk for

a minute) we can refer it" (NLS, p.90).[153] He also illustrates the contrast between the poet struggling with his solid images, and the "sentimental" man who borrows what he has made, with a variation upon his image of linguistic communication as a game of chess. In any game on the "chessboard of language expression," he says, the sentimental man will have been like a player who simply pushed around his pieces. The poet, by contrast, will have been the player "who became interested in the pieces themselves and carved them, and gazed at them in a kind of ecstasy" (NLS, p.85). The poet, Hulme stresses, dedicates himself to crafting unique chessmen which other writers will then incorporate into their own games: the "hereditary (sentimental) chessboards" of ordinary men will "remain the same until changed by the survival of some of those of the literary men" (NLS, p.94).

The importance of the fact that a poet carves his own expressions, and never relies on those crafted by others, is something which Hulme traces to the nature of the "essentially aesthetic emotion" (BTA, p.145) which any artist would have his work convey. The subject of this aesthetic feeling, like the Gourmontian description of the progress of language, is a topic which Hulme grafts onto an otherwise entirely paraphrased account of Bergson, in "Bergson's Theory of Art." After summarizing Bergson's explanation for the peculiar

[153] It is interesting to note that Bergson, in Le Rire, referred to the unthinking use of cliché as an important ingredient in the comic. Hulme appears to acknowledge his discussion of this phenomenon in NLS, p.85: "A joke analysed and viewed as the decadent form into which all forms of literary expression can be shown to pass by degeneration of function."

freshness or immediacy of the poet's apprehension, Hulme veers away from Bergson's account to make the assertion that the purely aesthetic emotion evoked by his art will depend on his convincing the reader of the fact of this immediacy. The greatest achievement the poet can hope for, Hulme implies, is to come into "direct communication" (BTA, p.168) with his reader, to convey directly to him his "vividly felt actual sensation" (BTA, p.151). The use of concrete language is the first prerequisite for such an accomplishment; Hulme would probably have been familiar with Ribot's experimentally proven assertion that the more concrete the language, the more likely its evocation of images.[154] But it is entirely possible, he realizes, that the use of concrete language alone may not be sufficient to make the reader share in the poet's visions. He notes elsewhere how a poet may offer imagistic expressions to his reader, but succeed only in having him accept counters:

> If I say: putting in the "finer touches," it expresses what I mean by the refinement of language.
>
> But the damnable thing is that if I use that phrase to another person, it produces no equal effect on him.... What to me is an entirely physical thing, a real clay before me, moulded, an image, is when used nothing but an expression like "in so far, etc."
>
> The pity is that in this all the meaning goes.
>
> A word to me is a board with an image or statue on it. When I pass the word all that goes is the board, the statue remains in my imagination. (NLS, pp.81-2)

It is entirely possible that the poet, in using a common

[154] See Chapter III, p.198.

expression like "putting in the finer touches," will see the image at its heart, but that his reader will remain blind to it, will treat coloured glass as if it were clear. The only way, Hulme asserts, that the poet can be sure of making his reader share in his vision, is to surprise him with unexpected expressions, to startle him with metaphors which he has never encountered before. The importance of such originality, or "freshness" in expression, and the "real communication" it enables, is a point which Hulme stresses, not just in the essay on Bergson (BTA, p.152) and the lecture on "Romanticism and Classicism" (RC, p.135), but also in the Commentator articles on the nature of political conversion. The "counters " or cliché́s there become "political catch-words,"[155] the poet's striking new metaphors the key to effecting fundamental changes in the hearts of the political masses. The accomplishment of the poet, carving his striking new chessmen, is one with the accomplishment of the "visionary" philosopher, to which Hulme himself aspires. The intense struggle with language which ensures his freedom also ensures his success.

iv) The Product.

Hulme's account of the ideal poetic process points, in a number of ways, to a product having much in common with the Symbolist one. In the light of what we have seen of his

[155] "The Art of Political Conversion," in The Commentator, II, 48 (19 April 1911), p.357. See also "Theory and Practice," in The Commentator, III, 77 (8 November 1911), p.388.

theory so far, and with reference both to some further remarks in which he discusses the poetic product specifically, and to his own poetic experiments, we may now proceed to assess the nature of this resemblance. Although it is considerable, we shall see, it is not, for significant reasons, absolute.

One of the basic similarities between Hulme and the Symbolist theorists is their conviction that poetry should body forth some reality directly, and not merely represent it by proxy. Hulme, as we have just seen, made this point by rejecting a communication which proceeds by "counters" and by insisting instead upon one which involves the presentation of striking new analogies, thus achieving the "direct and unusual communication" (BTA, p.163) of the poet's impression. Rimbaud, as we have noted in Chapter I, revealed a similar aspiration in his desire for a language which would function not simply through the specific referential meanings recorded in a dictionary, but by exploiting the intrinsic powers which could be universally appreciated, which could communicate directly "de l'âme à l'âme."[156] Mallarmé too, of course, had disapproved of the naming of states of soul, favouring instead poetry which would suggest it directly; he saw poetic language not as a kind of "numéraire facile et représentatif," but as a body of "signes purs" possessed in themselves of magical power.[157] We have seen the Symbolist hope for language, so different from the longing for scientific precision expressed by poets like Sully Prudhomme, succinctly

[156] See Chapter I, p.92.

[157] See Chapter I, p.108.

summarized by Bergson, in his remark that it is the poet's function "à nous faire éprouver ce qu'il ne saurait nous faire comprendre."[158]

One of the essential ingredients of the suggestive Symbolist poem had been the concrete, sensory image. Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé, after all, had all seen an essential function of poetry to be the juxtaposition of images of sense so as to reveal the mysterious synaesthetic relations ordained in a higher world. The Parnassians too, of course, had assigned a special place to the concrete image in their verse, but the Symbolists had differed from them in defining for it a different structural role. While Sully Prudhomme and Leconte de Lisle incorporated their images into an extended logical structure, Rimbaud and Mallarmé laid theirs down without reference to any such framework. While the Parnassian's images served as effective, but ultimately ornamental illustrations for quite separately conceived abstract themes, the Symbolist's images were essential to his poem's significance. The meaning of the Symbolist poem was not preconceived, but the product of a synthesis ensuing from the juxtaposition of these particular images: a significance which could never be exhaustively translated into other terms. Bergson, once again, had aptly summarized its working in his description of the arrangement of diverse images which direct the reader's mind towards an absolute, intuitive apprehension.

Hulme makes a great number of remarks which attest to his desire for a poem of images structured on Symbolist,

[158] See Chapter IV, p.274.

rather than Parnassian, principles. His claims about the intimacy of the poet's thought with the analogies he recognizes preclude the possibility that his mental images function simply as the illustrations for abstract themes. Transferred into verse, these images constitute for him "the thing, not merely decoration" (NLS, p.83).[159] He states emphatically that "Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language" (RC, p.135). Hulme's vision of the poem is of a structure in which distinct images are juxtaposed in different lines (LMP, p.73). "Poetry is neither more nor less than a mosaic of words" (NLS, p.84), he says, and the craft of choosing and arranging them is an exacting one. Hulme's image of the mosaic, however, is not to be taken in Bergson's sense, to suggest the product of "fabrication": the structure which is the sum total exactly of its constituent parts, in which the parts coexist without interacting. The analogical images, Hulme says, in fact "add something to each..." (NLS, p.88). They appear to work, according to his description, as Mallarmé spoke of images working, when he said that a juxtaposed pair releases "un tiers aspect fusible et clair":

> Two visual images form what one may call a visual chord. They unite to suggest an image which is different to both. (LMP, p.73)

Another striking description of poetic style recalls both Mallarmé's vision of the words in poetry exchanging mutual

[159] My italics. Cf. Guyau, L'Art au point de vue sociologique (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1889), p.305: "L'image ne doit donc jamais être un ornement surajouté...."

reflections, and Coleridge's picture of the imagination uniting its materials by fire:

> Style short, being forced by the coming together of many different thoughts, and generated by their contact. Fire struck between stones. (NLS, p.80)[160]

Hulme's vision of the poem is one of an organic synthesis. We have already noted his analogy between the poem and that archetypal image of organic expression, the dancer, and his assertion that poem and dancer group ideas together in a manner quite contrary to the linear and atomistic method of logic. In "Romanticism and Classicism" he borrows Coleridge's definition of the organic complexity, to describe the way the ideal poem is organized:

> Coleridge uses it in a perfectly definite and what I call dry sense.... A mechanical complexity is the sum of its parts. Put them side by side and you get the whole. Now vital or organic is merely a convenient metaphor for a complexity of a different kind, that in which the parts cannot be said to be elements as each one is modified by the other's presence, and each one to a certain extent is the whole. The leg of a chair by itself is still a leg. My leg by itself wouldn't be. (RC, pp.138-9)

Such descriptions, of course, set Hulme's product firmly in line with all those "aesthetic monads" which Kermode identified in the English Romantic and French Symbolist tradition. It is, indeed, like these, "analogous not to a machine but to an organism; coextensive in matter and form; resistant to explication...."[161] The only major flaw in Kermode's description

[160] Cf. PIM, p.190.

[161] See my Introduction, p.16.

as a paraphrase of Hulme's, however, is his representation of the poem as something which participates "in a higher order of existence." In just the same way as he restricts the poet's apprehension to the finite, material realm, Hulme is insistent that there is nothing at all "vaguely /or/ mysteriously significant" about the organic synthesis. There is an "infinitude" about such art (C, p.222; NLS, p.89), but this, once again, is simply the infinitude redefined, and thus demystified, by Bergson. It is the absolute, or perfect, or infinite quality of something which would require an eternity to be translated into the concepts of the intellect:

> The intellect always analyses - when there is a synthesis it is baffled. That is why the artist's work seems mysterious. The intellect can't represent it. This is a necessary consequence of the particular nature of the intellect and the purposes for which it is formed. It doesn't mean that your synthesis is ineffable, simply that it can't be definitely stated. (RC, p.139)

One final aspect of the Symbolist ideal which is observable in Hulme's remarks on the poetic product is the notion of its autonomy. Baudelaire, we remember, in his very Coleridgean description of the imagination, had spoken of the poet's creation of "un monde nouveau."[162] Mallarmé had pictured poetic "architecture," seemingly "spontanée et magique": an edifice whose autonomy depended on the removal of all the "échafaudage" which might link it to its creator.[163] The ideal poem, in his opinion, would appear not as any kind of token

[162] See Chapter I, p.86.

[163] See Chapter I, p.124.

passed from one individual to another, but as an edifice which simply and serenely exists. Hulme articulates his own sense of the serene autonomy of the poem, in the Notes:

> And the words moved until they became a dome, a solid, separate world, a dome seen in a mist, a thing of terror beyond us, and not of us. Definite heaven above worshippers, incense hides foundations. A definite force majeure (all the foundations of the scaffolding are in us, but we want an illusion, falsifying us, something independent of foundations). A long pillar.
>
> Aphra took the words, and they grew into a round smooth pillar and the child wondered and the merchant paused. Putting bricks together to imitate the shape of a dome, but the mist effect, the transformation in words, has the art of pushing it through the door. (NLS, p.82)

Aphra's tie with his creation is severed as soon as its execution is completed. The poem passes through his workshop door; its scaffolding falls away; mist rises to obscure its foundations.[164] It is a curious feature of this, and of other passages in which Hulme speaks of poetic autonomy, that the pitch of his discussion rises above his approved, "classical" level, and he makes reference to a higher, mystical realm. He says elsewhere, for example, that the analogies in a poem cohere to give "a sense of being united in another mystical world" (NLS, p.88). The implication of such claims is best understood, and Hulme's apparent slip from "classicism" perhaps forgiven, by looking at another note in which he couples the image of the "other world" with the image, again, of the

[164] Cf. Hulme's image in a poetic fragment, in Appendix B of Further Speculations, p.215: "Old houses were scaffolding once, and workmen whistling."

dancer. From this passage, it is clear that in speaking of the poem as a kind of heaven above its worshippers, he is not suggesting that it in any way genuinely partakes of the spiritual realm, but simply that it, although born out of an individual man's feelings, must in its final form betray no evidence of its low human origins. The dancer is costumed, in other words, to disguise her humanity, and to preserve her impersonality:

> In a sense all ideals must be divorced, torn away from the reality where we found them and put on a stage. They must appear separate and far from all dirt and laughter at their low and common relations. They must be posed and moved dramatically, and above all, their gestures must express their emotions. This is the art of literature, the making of this other world.
>
> They must wear high-heeled shoes which make them appear free movers, and not sprung from that low thing Earth. The separation of the high heel and the powdered face is essential to all emotions, in order to make a work of art. (NLS, p.90)[165]

These, then, are the ways in which Hulme's description of the poetic product coincides with the prescriptions of the Symbolists. He has a number of other things to say about it, however, which jar against the spirit of the Symbolist aesthetic. From these remarks, and from the evidence of his own small body of verse, we may see that his ideal poem differs markedly from the Symbolist one in some of the specific ways it works upon its reader.

One of the clearest differences between Hulme and

[165] Cf. also NLS, p.88: "All literature and poetry is life seen in a mirror; it must be absolutely removed from reality, and can never be attained."

the Symbolists is his almost total lack of concern for the musical properties of verse. He does not, that is to say, place great store in the influence upon a reader of the sound of the words in poetry. A contemporary of Hulme's has recalled that he had little time for listening to music.[166] He himself admits that the auditory properties of poetry are not of great concern to him, remarking in the "Lecture on Modern Poetry" that the verse for which he is speaking is meant not to be recited, but to be read silently to oneself in one's study (LMP, pp.73; 75).[167] Hulme does in his speech acknowledge the potentially hypnotic power of rhythms (LMP, p.73), the power which Yeats had valued for its effect of blurring a poem's sense.[168] He is emphatic, however, that the particular kind of verse he envisions does not work through any such somnific effect. It works, he says, not by lulling the reader's mind but by gripping it; it depends not "on a kind of half sleep produced, but on arresting the attention ...so that the succession of verbal images should exhaust one" (LMP, p.73).

The Symbolist emphasis upon the music of poetic language was one sign of what might be called the distinctively

[166] Letter from Ethel Kibblewhite to Michael Roberts, 16 May 1937, in the archives of Keele University library.

[167] Cf. Ribot's quotation from Gautier, in Chapter III, p.216.

[168] See Chapter II, p.182 of this thesis. Bergson had written in the Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience about the power of rhythm to increase the sensibility. See p.11. Hulme's reference to rhythm in the "Lecture" seems influenced by Bergson's discussion, which he paraphrases in "Bergson's Theory of Art," p.157.

diachronic quality of their art. Symbolist verse works through the presentation of impressions which are distinctly fleeting, the passage of what Yeats described as "footsteps over our hearts...."[169] The quality of movement, or progression in Symbolist verse is a fact which Visan stresses repeatedly in his Lyrisme contemporain. It is the "continuité d'écoulement"[170] this verse suggests, he holds, which allies it so strongly with the philosophy of Bergson, and particularly with his description of the continual flux of the self. He describes this quality thus:

> Ce qu'ils ont voulu chanter c'est moins une chose que des phénomènes psychologiques, moins une fin statique qu'un processus dynamique, moins les objets extérieurs, qu'à travers leur mirage mouvant, un ensemble de tendances vitales, moins un contentement qu'une succession d'aspirations en perpétuel recommencement.[171]

In Chapter I, we have seen such a quality of dynamism or process in the poetry of Rimbaud, in those verses particularly in which he pictures himself drifting along in a boat, down a river he cannot control. The impressions which pass along the shore, or in the current, in "Le Bateau ivre," "La Rivière de Cassis," and "Mémoire," have been seen to be typical of the images throughout Rimbaud's verse, in their tendency to displace each other, rather than to coalesce into any coherent

[169] See Chapter II, p.182.

[170] Visan, p.275.

[171] Visan, p.276.

picture.[172] We have also seen how Mallarmé's use of negation and ambiguity makes it impossible for his reader to hold the images in poems like "Sainte," or "Une dentelle s'abolit," or "Ses purs ongles," steadily in the mind;[173] each, as Bergson has been seen to describe it, will be "chassée tout de suite par ses rivales."[174] The quality of movement may also be sensed in the poetry of Verlaine. In poems like "Kaléidoscope" and "Donc, ce sera par un clair jour d'été," for example,[175] he presents the reader with a series of light images which touch his consciousness and then fade, evoking in him the sense of a city or a summer day without presenting any strong picture upon which his mind may settle. Verlaine himself spoke of his poetic images as being "soluble dans l'air,"[176] like leaves which have been scattered on the wind. The overall empression left by a Symbolist poem, in sum, is one of an entity which is shimmering, flickering, and unstable.

The quality which sets Hulme's ideal poem apart from the Symbolist one is precisely its impression of stability.

[172] See Chapter I, pp.93-4.

[173] See Chapter I, pp.113-4.

[174] See Chapter IV, p.276 of this thesis. Guyau is another of the theorists read by Hulme who spoke of the technique of bringing together "images qui semblent discordantes...." See Esthétique contemporaine, p.238.

[175] See Verlaine, Oeuvres, pp.201 and 113.

[176] Verlaine, "Art poétique," ll.33-36, in Oeuvres, p.207.

If the working of Symbolist poetry is distinctively diachronic, or musical, Hulme's is intentionally synchronic, or sculptural:

> This new verse resembles sculpture rather than music; it appeals to the eye rather than to the ear. It has to mould images, a kind of spiritual clay, into definite shapes. This material, the ὕλη of Aristotle, is image and not sound. It builds up a plastic image which it hands over to the reader, whereas the old art endeavoured to influence him physically by the hypnotic effect of rhythm. (LMP, p.75)

Hulme regards the images in the ideal poem not as notes in a transient melody, but as pieces of clay simultaneously visible to the eye; if these images bear any likeness at all to music, in his conception, it is that they constitute the notes in a "visual chord" (LMP, p.73). Perhaps the best terms for describing the difference between Symbolist and Hulmean verse are those used by Ribot to distinguish the plastic and diffluent imaginations. Products of the diffluent imagination, it will be recalled, among which Ribot includes the poems of Symbolism, have as their associative principle the subjective and capricious force of emotion. They have, in emotion, no "centre stable d'attraction";[177] their association rests not so much in "l'ordre et...connexion des choses que des dispositions changeantes de l'esprit...."[178] By contrast, the images of the plastic imagination are associated because they have in common certain objective, clearly discernible attributes. They are brought together not by the whims of emotion, but for reasons which satisfy the intellect. Their effect upon the

[177] Ribot, Essai sur l'imagination créatrice, p.165.

[178] Ribot, Essai, p.164.

reader will be not to lead him through an emotional process, but to strike him with clear, stable, significant analogies.

Hulme has already been seen to regard the recognition of analogy as an experience which carries with it much "intellectual pleasure."[179] His sense that poetic analogies function by what Ribot called "une influence directe," rather than by "evocation, suggestion, /ou/ sous-entendus"[180] is confirmed by a remark in the Notes, that "Analogies must be substituted for what suggests something, a cloud of fancies" (NLS, p.89). It is implied, too, by his claim that unlike the prose writer, who to convey a point to his reader "must work it up into a froth, like stirring eggs" (NLS, p.91), the poet makes meaning "stand on end and hit you" (NLS, p.86). Hulme's own tendency towards employing the sort of analogy typical of the plastic imagination is evident in his own poems and poetic fragments. The majority of these consist simply in the presentation of one or two pairs of visual images, and the features which render these images analogous are always easily ascertained. The perfect circle of the moon, for example, corresponds with the curve of a balloon,[181] its red surface with the ruddy face of a farmer.[182] The bright stars

[179] See above, p.332.

[180] Ribot, Essai, p.164.

[181] Hulme, "Above the Dock," in Jones, The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme, p.158. This, with the poems "Autumn," "Mana Aboda," "The Embankment," and "Conversion," was included in an appendix to Ezra Pound's Ripostes (1912), under the title of "The Complete Poetical Works of T. E. Hulme."

[182] "Autumn," in Jones, p.156.

are the fresh faces of a crowd of children,[183] or the bites which a moth has taken out of the blanket of the sky.[184] The clouds which move across the sky are paralleled in shape and colour by chestnut leaves scuttling along the ground,[185] or by the cattle who graze over a prairie;[186] at sunset they take on the appearance of a gaping wound, or a trailing scarlet petticoat,[187] or a red sail puffed out by the evening breeze.[188]

Hulme does not share the wariness of an idealist like Mallarmé towards the reality of material appearances. He does not hold, therefore, that the poem should merely suggest the existence of objects, but is willing to name them directly, and to paint them in vivid colours. True to his prescriptions about the poetic apprehension, he focuses on the world he sees around him, and does not aspire, through any of those techniques which Mallarmé devised for the purpose, to convey a kind of transcendental realm. The stable, synchronic impact of his poetry, furthermore, and the intellectual pleasure its strong

[183] See "Autumn."

[184] See "The Embankment," in Jones, p.159.

[185] See "Susan Ann and Immortality," in Jones, p.162.

[186] See "At Night," in Jones, p.167.

[187] See "The Sunset," in Jones, p.174.

[188] With regard to Hulme's use of analogy, note his statement about the criterion of poetic value in RC, p.138:

> If it is sincere in the accurate sense, when the whole of the analogy is necessary to get the exact curve of the feeling you want to express - there you seem to me to have the highest verse, even though the subject be trivial and the emotions of the infinite far away.

analogies give, perform for him a very deliberate function. In spite of his claims about the essential chaos of the world, Hulme regards the poem not as a vehicle for conveying its disorder, but as an attempt to make some sense of it. When he highlights the analogical features between two images, he is consciously attempting to trace some coherence in the world, consciously trying to make some sense of the "cinders," without resorting to the dangerous simplifications of abstract thought. Analogies, he asserts in the "Cinders," "help us along, and give us a feeling of power over the chaos when we perceive them" (C, p.233).

The pairs of images presented in Hulme's own poetry dutifully fulfill the role of striking the reader with meaning. It would not be possible to translate into other terms quite the effect produced by his juxtapositions of moons and balloons, of clouds and petticoats. If some account of it could be given, however, it would say something about the affinity between the contents of the awesome sky, and the common objects encountered on the earth, a theme which subtly ridicules "romantic " or Symbolist fancies about the sky as an aperture onto a mystical world. Hulme's poems, like his prose, are infused with his "classical" Weltanschauung. Their effect is sometimes whimsical, sometimes ironical, and always curiously poignant:

> Above the quiet dock in midnight,
> Tangled in the tall mast's corded height,
> Hangs the moon. What seemed so far away
> Is but a child's balloon, forgotten after play.[189]

[189] "Above the Dock," in Jones, p.158.

v) Conclusion.

It has been possible, then, in spite of the scepticism of Hulme's critics, to construct a coherent and comprehensive poetic theory out of his literary remains. His view of poetry in its broad terms resembles the Symbolist one, but in detail it is the Symbolist one demystified, a fact which plays an important role in defining his ultimately quite different poetic style. The desire to strip the poet's experience of any mystery has been seen as a manifestation of Hulme's stern classical outlook. He has been shown to despise those thinkers who exaggerate the poet's achievement beyond the bounds of human possibility. It remains, for us, in conclusion, to establish what he himself believed this achievement truly to be.

The achievement of Hulme's poet may be placed in the same class as that of his "visionary" philosopher. Both of these artists, in keeping contact with the "cinders" of the world, are gripped by some insight which they then translate into a language of images. Through their craft they succeed not only in clarifying their experiences for themselves, but also in providing a body of references which alert the reader to what he may have known previously, without knowing it:

> Just as Aristotle asserts that Matter the unlimited contains Forms embedded in it, and that they are not thrust upon it from some ideal world, so all the effects that can be produced by the literary man (here assuming his apprenticeship and marshalling of isolated moments to produce a mystic separation, aided by old metaphors), are to be found dormant, unused in the reader, and

are thus awakened. (NLS, p.93)[190]

Hulme values the poetic achievement above that of any "systematic" thinker. It is to him, as to Gourmont, a more reliable treatment of reality, being inspired by rather than compromising the world of sense. It is also more significant in the kind of influence it may have on its reader, appealing to him not at the superficial level of the logical intellect, but at the most fundamental level of his being. If the systems of philosophy, he says, are like houses perched upon the rocks of instinct and feeling, the poet is "concerned entirely with these rocks."[191]

Hulme values and respects the insights which are bound into the images of poetry. His praise of them is often, however, undercut by a streak of scepticism. "Analogies in poetry," he observes in the Notes, are "like the likenesses of babies, to be taken half seriously, with a smile" (NLS, p.85). Ultimately, he says, poetry is an amusement, an entertainment for "bankers and other sedentary arm-chair people in after-dinner moods" (NLS, p.92). The limitations which Hulme places around the poet's accomplishment may be traced to his most fundamental conviction: that the world will ultimately elude any attempt to make sense of it, even at the most basic level. He puts poetic insights in their place with a remark in the "Cinders" that there is a "fringe of cinders which

[190] Cf. NLS, p.94.

[191] Hulme, "A Tory Philosophy," in The Commentator, IV, 101 (1 May 1912), p.362.

bounds any ecstasy" (C, p.236). Around the edges of any insight, he observes, there are aspects of reality with which it will not tally:

> All these sudden insights (e.g. the great analogy of a woman compared to the world in Brussels) - all of these start a line, which seems about to unite the whole world logically. But the line stops. There is no unity. All logic and life are made up of tangled ends like that.
>
> Always think of the fringe and of the cold walks, of the lines that lead nowhere. (C, pp.235-6)

Hulme views all insights into the nature of reality as answers corresponding to the particular needs of the man who makes them, to "the personal circumstances and prejudices of his class, experience, capacity and body" (C, p.229).[192] Their hold over reality is temporary: Hulme describes the basic philosophic faculty as a "weathercock," the "easiest moveable thing in nature," and likens its power to unify nature to the kind of power which music has in creating a fleeting kind of synthesis:

> A melancholy spirit, the mind like a great desert lifeless, and the sound of march music in the street, passes like a wave over that desert, unifies it, but then goes. (C, p.245)[193]

Hulme's attitude towards the achievement of poetry is poised between an attraction to its striking presentation of meaning, and a despairing sense that any meaning must in the end yield to the world's chaos. His final word on the

[192] Cf. C, p.240.

[193] Cf. NLS, p.96.

matter is perhaps that found in a note where he speaks of the delicacy of the condition in which man feels a sense of power over the chaos. Such a sense of power, he says, is the essence of happiness, and it is the effect of art to prolong this strong, if artificial, source of joy:

> Many necessary conditions must be fulfilled before the counters and the chess-board can be poised elegantly on the cinders. Illness and death easily disturb and give falls from this condition. Perhaps this is an illustration of Nietzsche's image of the tight-rope walker. When all is arranged the counters are moved about. This is happiness, moving to enthusiastic conclusions, the musical note, perhaps Art. But it must be largely artificial. (Art prolongs it, and creates it by blur.) (C, p.220)[194]

Poetry, in Hulme's cosmos, constitutes the kind of gesture which Nietzsche prescribed in the face of chaos. If it is only in "the fact of consciousness" that there is "a unity in the world" (C, p.222), if there is "no end at all but in our own constructions" (C, p.243), then that is all the more reason for us to exercise our power. In art Hulme recognizes a house in the cinders, an oasis in the desert of grit. Its comfort may be illusory, he says, but thank God for it:

> ...thank God for the long note of the bugle, which moves all the world bodily out of the cinders and the mud. (C, p.238)

[194] Nietzsche's tale of the tight-rope walker is found in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp.41-8.

CHAPTER VI

HULME AND THE VISUAL ARTS

i) New Departures.

When Hulme happened upon the Byzantine mosaics at Ravenna, during a trip to Italy in 1912, he was gripped by an excitement as profound as any he had experienced since his first discovery of the writings of Bergson. In the highly stylized, geometrical images of the Byzantine artists he sensed an expression of that "classical" or "religious" attitude whose resurgence in the modern world he was eager to trace and to advocate. Why it was that Byzantine art seemed to express this attitude was something Hulme came to understand fully only later in that year, when he encountered the aesthetic theories of Wilhelm Worringer. Through Worringer he became convinced that the persistent use of geometrical form in art was a manifestation of a tragic sense of man's limitations in the face of the world's flux, an attitude utterly contrary to the smug confidence in man's capacities characteristic of humanism. It is not at all surprising, then, that when Hulme returned to England he became increasingly caught up in the battle to legitimize a newly emerging abstract art: "The re-emergence of geometrical art at the present day," he prophesied enthusiastically, "may be the precursor of the re-emergence of the corresponding general attitude towards the world, and so of the final break-up of the Renaissance."[1]

[1] Hulme, "Modern Art.II. A Preface Note and Neo-Realism," in Further Speculations, p.119. This essay first appeared in

From December 1913 until the outbreak of war, in August 1914, Hulme's interest was to be devoted almost exclusively to developments in the visual arts. His virtual retirement from the defence of Bergson, and of the new poetry, was to result in the only segment of his life's work to receive unequivocal praise. In 1931 Jacob Epstein mourned Hulme's death as the loss of "the one man who could have shown up all the nonsense that is being written about art at the present day."[2] Wyndham Lewis asserted in his autobiography that "It was mainly as a theorist in the criticism of the fine arts that Hulme would have distinguished himself, had he lived."[3] Epstein and Lewis were only two of the many artists and intellectuals who frequented the weekly salons which Hulme hosted in the London home of Ethel Kibblewhite between 1912 and 1914. They were joined there by writers like Ford Madox

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The New Age for 12 February 1914, the second in a series including "The Grafton Group"(15 January), "The London Group" (26 March), and "Mr. David Bomberg's Show"(9 July), all reprinted in Further Speculations. Subsequent references to these articles will be incorporated into the text with the abbreviations PN, GG, LG, and DB. Hulme's first New Age article on the visual arts, "Mr. Epstein and the Critics"(25 December 1913), also in Further Speculations, will be indicated by EC.

The other major source for Hulme's views on contemporary art, the lecture on "Modern Art and its Philosophy" which he delivered to the Quest Society on 22 January 1914, is reprinted in Speculations. References to it will be incorporated into the text with the abbreviation MAP.

The best account of Hulme's association with the visual arts to date is found in Richard Cork, Vorticism (London: Gordon Fraser, 1976).

[2] Jacob Epstein, The Sculptor Speaks (London: William Heinemann, 1931), p.151.

[3] Wyndham Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, p.106.

Ford, Rupert Brooke, Richard Aldington and Ezra Pound, and by many of the artists who, in November 1913, banded together under the banner of the "London Group": Sickert, Gore, Gilman, Ginner, Nevinson, Bomberg and Gaudier-Brzeska. Hulme's first written work of behalf of the new art came in the form of a rebuttal of the hostile criticisms of Epstein's first one-man show, exhibited in London in December 1913. It was followed in January 1914 by a lecture on "Modern Art and its Philosophy," and during that spring by a number of reviews of contemporary exhibitions written for the New Age. He soon acquired the reputation of chief spokesman for the developing aesthetic of the "London Group":[4] an aesthetic which in its eager radicalism scorned the too civilized dabblings of Bloomsbury, which was exhilarated by the energy of Italian Futurism, and inspired by the cool, geometrical images of analytical Cubism, but which charged rapidly past both to the assertion of an almost totally abstract art, with the pronouncement of Vorticism, in July, 1914.

In being drawn towards an abstract, geometrical art, Hulme was, inevitably, being drawn away from an important aspect of his theory of poetry. In the "Lecture on Modern Poetry," we recall, he spoke of the likeness between the new

[4] See, for example, Bomberg's remark to Alun Jones, that Hulme "became the spokesman for the innovators in the first exhibition of the London Group." Letter to Jones, 23 December 1953, cited in The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme, p.116. Jones also quotes Bomberg, praising Hulme's writings on the visual arts, "T. E. Hulme, Wilhelm Worringer, and the Urge to Abstraction," in The British Journal of Aesthetics, I, 1 (November, 1960), p.7.

poetry and Impressionist painting.[5] The basis for the affinity, clearly, between Hulme's ideal poet and the Impressionist painter, was their common dedication to the apprehension of the unique, fleeting details of the Heraclitean flux. Like the ideal artists defined by Pater and by Bergson, we have seen, Hulme's poet apprehended an object which was "greatly different from what it was at any other moment or to any other man."[6] Monet and his associates shared this ideal, seeking to capture on their open-air canvases the precise qualities of light and shade which touched particular scenes, at particular moments. As Lilla Cabot Perry remembered about Monet:

> He told me that in one of his "Peupliers" the effect lasted only seven minutes, or until the sunlight left a certain leaf, when he took out the next canvas and worked on that. He always insisted on the great importance of a painter noticing when the effect changed, so as to get a true impression of a certain aspect of nature and not a composite picture, as too many paintings were, and are.[7]

Among many of the continental artists who informed the movement of Hulme's associates toward Vorticism, however, and the

[5] See Chapter V, p. 320.

[6] See Chapter V, p. 320.

[7] Lilla Cabot Perry, "Reminiscences of Claude Monet from 1889 to 1909," in The American Magazine of Art for March, 1927; cited by Linda Nochlin, in Impressionism and Post-Impressionism: 1874-1904 (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p.36. Where they are not otherwise readily available, I shall cite a number of documents as they appear in this source book.

aesthetic theory laid down in Blast, the Impressionist dedication to the flux no longer seemed an acceptable motive for art.[8] As August Wiedmann has illustrated at length, in the admirable Romantic Roots in Modern Art,[9] the art theory of Expressionist artists like Kandinsky and Marc belonged to the same idealist tradition which shaped French Symbolism: they spoke of the artist's vocation as the apprehension and revelation of a spiritual reality transcending visible creation. Especially significant for Hulme, moreover, were some of the idealist justifications posed for the art of Cubism. Some of these, as we shall see, related the clean, geometrical forms of such art to the attempt to convey the transcendental Ideas of objects, devoid of momentary accidents of form, perspective and light. Hulme himself was well aware of such claims, remarking, predictably, of the "people...who try to connect cubism with Plato," that they suffer from "mere confused sentimentality" (MAP, pp.75-6). However much his classical spirit caused him to recoil from statements about art's revelation of the transcendental Ideas, however, we shall see that his support for an art of clean, geometrical lines, devoid of accidental variation, constituted a significant

[8] In this regard, note Desmond MacCarthy's objections to Impressionism in the catalogue to the first Post-Impressionist exhibition, in 1910; cited by Richard Cork, in Vorticism, p.18.

[9] August K. Wiedmann, Romantic Roots in Modern Art (Old Woking, Surrey: Gresham, 1979). Wiedmann traces the Romantic themes of inwardness, transcendentalism, and organicism in the theory of "Expressionist" painting. For the second of these, see especially pp.99-143.

shift from the commitment to the flux which marked his remarks on poetry.

If as advocate of the new art Hulme was to alter his position about the artist's apprehension, he encountered in much contemporary art theory only a reiteration of his views about the act of articulation. For all his insistence on the importance of the experience of vivid impressions, we recall, Hulme had by no means imagined the poet's craft to be one simply of describing what came before his eyes. His poet was dedicated, rather, to expressing the feelings evoked in him by the world's spectacle, an ambition he achieved by selecting the images provided by nature's "dictionary," and arranging these so as to highlight significant analogies. His vocation was essentially the same as that of the artist described by the painter Signac, in a passage pin-pointing the fundamental shift from imitative to constructive aspirations which had been revolutionizing the visual arts:

> What a difference between the one who, while walking, stops by chance at a spot in the shade and "imitates" the motif which he has before him - and the one who, confronting a canvas or a sheet of paper, tries to convey, through beautiful lines and beautiful colours, the emotion which, at a given moment, he has experienced before a beautiful view of nature.[10]

The most eloquent and influential spokesman for what Pound was to call, on behalf of Vorticism, the "musical" view of form,[11]

[10] Paul Signac, journal entry of 15 September 1898, cited in Nochlin, pp.128-9.

[11] See the more extensive account of this theory in Chapter VII, pp.427-9.

was Kandinsky. In Ueber das Geistige in der Kunst(1912), he devoted a good deal of energy to investigating the auditory, tactile, and emotive properties of individual forms and colours, and their combinations.[12] His concern was analogous, we may note, to the one Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé pursued in their exploration of the synaesthetic potential of letters and words. The analogy between Kandinsky's aspiration for the artist and Hulme's for the poet becomes apparent when we recall Hulme's description of poetry as a "mosaic of words...."[13] A painting like Kandinsky's "Shaking"(1925) would seem an appropriate product for the poet who had gone into the world to collect "round globes and stone images / of gems, colours, hard and definite," and who had returned to play with them, "in a dream, / On the smooth table."[14]

Hulme's interest in the new art would have led him, finally, to an affirmation of the opinion he shared with Mallarmé about the artistic product: the view that it should present the appearance of an entity autonomous from the world which has given rise to it. Kandinsky conceived of the painting not as a mirror of the world, but as an organism of planes, lines and colours arranged according to its own unique law. "Every serious work," he maintained, "resembles in poise

[12] See Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, trans. M. T. H. Sadler (New York: Dover Publications, 1977). This, the first translation into English, appeared in 1914.

[13] See Chapter V, p.369.

[14] See Chapter V, p.359 of this thesis. Kandinsky's own attempts at creating mosaics in words may be seen in his Klänge (1912), translated as Sounds by Elizabeth R. Napier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

the quiet phrase: 'I am here'";[15] it possessed for him the same kind of serene autonomy which Hulme attributed to the mysterious dome passing through Aphra's workshop door. The Cubist conception of the autonomy of the work of art was articulated by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger in 1912, in a book to which Hulme alludes in his "Modern Art" lecture (MAP, p.103):

> Let the picture imitate nothing; let it nakedly present its motive, and we should indeed be ungrateful were we to deplore the absence of all those things - flowers, or landscape, or faces - whose mere reflection it might have been.[16]

The logical conclusion to the quest for an art which was a world unto itself was an art which contained no allusion at all to the real one. Jean Cocteau traced the movement towards such a complete emancipation in the work of Picasso, speaking, in a manner reminiscent of both Mallarmé and Hulme, of Picasso's eventual elimination of all his art's "scaffolding":

> The life of a picture is independent of the life it imitates...
> We can go on to imagine an arrangement of living lines in which the object which motivates the lines ceases to play the leading part and becomes merely a pretext. From this stage to conceiving the disappearance of the pretext is only a step. The end has become the means - and this is the stroke of audacity we witnessed in 1912, the most dramatic in the history of painting. An artist's sense of decorum used to

[15] Kandinsky, quoted by Wiedmann, p.183.

[16] Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger, Cubism (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1913), pp.27-8. This was the English translation of Du Cubisme (1912).

> lead him to take away the 'scaffolding' when he had finished drawing a bottle or a lady. Picasso carries the same sense of decorum to the point of considering the lady or the bottle as the scaffolding which made his construction possible; so he makes them disappear in their turn.
>
> What is left? A picture. This picture is nothing but a picture.[17]

In the discussion which follows, I shall attempt to illustrate the ways in which Hulme's interest in the visual arts changed or corroborated his general view of the creative activity. I shall first investigate his Worringerian reinterpretation of the antithesis between the "romantic" and "classical" Weltanschauungen, and how it led him to espouse a view of the artist's apprehension quite contrary to the Bergsonian one which informed his poetic. I shall observe, secondly, how his special praise for one particular strain in contemporary art was a natural extension of his view of poetry as the careful arrangement of materials into expressive patterns. Finally, I shall consider the extent to which Hulme allowed himself to support the notion of art's autonomy from the natural world; and locate the point where he bowed out of supporting the modern movement, in its spiralling ascent towards pure abstraction.

ii) Worringer.

Listening to Worringer speak, at the Berlin Aesthetic Congress in 1911, Hulme encountered a thinker whose general

[17] Jean Cocteau, Picasso (1923), cited by Edward Fry in Cubism (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), pp.163-4.

approach to cultural matters was in keeping with his own. In Abstraktion und Einfühlung(1907), Worringer had taken an approach to the history of art which paralleled Hulme's approach to philosophy, its primary thesis being that all artistic endeavours spring from particular attitudes about man's place in the world, and particular psychic needs arising out of those views. Envisioning an as yet unwritten book on the history of art, he wrote:

> It would be a history of the feeling about the world and as such would stand alongside the history of religion as its equal. By the feeling about the world I mean the psychic state in which, at any given time, mankind found itself in relation to the cosmos, in relation to the phenomena of the external world. This psychic state is disclosed in the quality of psychic needs, i.e. in the constitution of the absolute artistic volition, and bears outward fruit in the work of art....[18]

Worringer's insistence that the character of art was determined by particular Weltanschauungen, and their corresponding needs, an opinion which he had confirmed in his reading of the Viennese theorist, Alois Riegl,[19] was a stance he took up in conscious opposition to the kind of materialist stance taken by writers on aesthetics like Semper. Semper had argued that the nature of any work of art was the combined effect of the

[18] Wilhelm Worringer, Abstraction and Empathy, trans. Michael Bullock (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), p.9. Subsequent references appear in the text.

[19] Riegl's works included Stilfragen(1893) and Spätrömische Kunstindustrie(1901). Hulme said that he found a reference to Riegl and Worringer in an article on Byzantine art by Paul Ernst. See MAP, p.82, and PN, p.120.

three factors of "utilitarian purpose, raw material, and technics," and that the history of art was essentially a history of changing "ability" (pp.8-9). For Riegl and Worringer, however, the character of art could be traced back further than this, to the artist's idiosyncratic inner needs. The "'absolute artistic volition'" (p.9), they said, could find satisfaction only in the creation of certain types of form.

Worringer's concern for the subjective foundation of art would have appealed strongly to Hulme's conviction about the determining Weltanschauungen behind philosophical writings, and his view that men construct their "truths" to correspond to their particular needs. His appeal for Hulme was clinched, however, by the fact that he saw as the major forces in art history two kinds of artistic volition which corresponded to Hulme's conceptions of "romanticism" and "classicism." Worringer identified these two urges in defiance of Lipps' view that men's sense of the beauty of objects depends on their conduciveness to an apperceptive kind of contemplation, in which the spectator projects and enjoys his own life through them (pp.4-8). His recognition that this was not the only kind of pleasure men had taken in objects of art, in particular, was for Hulme a revelation of the greatest importance: it shook up presuppositions about the necessary character of art in just the way he hoped to shake up the humanist presumptions at the root of much contemporary philosophy.

The kind of objectified self-enjoyment, or "empathy," which Lipps believed to be involved in the contemplation of

art was something which Worringer regarded not as inevitable, but as dependent upon an individual's being basically at peace with himself and with the world. It demanded of the individual the capacity to enjoy the motions of his own inner life, as they were projected onto objects in the world around him, the capacity to enjoy a feeling of "free self-activation" (p.6) in giving himself over to the demands of a line. For Hulme, Worringer's description of such a state of harmony with existence seemed to describe perfectly what he understood to be the "romantic" or "humanist" attitude: the belief, contrary to the doctrine of Original Sin, that "man as a part of nature.../is/ after all something satisfactory" (MAP, p.80) or is "one with nature and not separate from it..." (MAP, p.87). It was a state of existence, he said, like that described by Goethe, in which man "'looks upon the outside world not as something strange, but as something which he recognises as answering to his own feelings'" (MAP, p.88). As his prime example of the kind of form which best satisfied the psychic needs of such a man, Worringer cited the organic and naturalistic images of the art of the Renaissance: another fact perfectly suited to Hulme's anti-humanist purposes.

The aspect of Worringer's discussion which most excited Hulme was his identification of a feeling about the world, and a corresponding artistic volition, quite contrary to that which manifested itself in the naturalistic forms of Renaissance art. Worringer described this feeling as a profound sense of fear, or at least unrest, in the face of the "entangled interrelationships and flux of the phenomena of the outer

world..." (p.16). It was a sense of separation from nature: a sense which Hulme took to correspond to the "classical" or "religious" sense of alienation resulting from Adam's Fall. The psychic need arising out of this attitude was a need, Worringer held, not for particular, vital images, but for forms which are universal, geometrical. Men who are not at ease with the world, he believed, are in need of the tranquillity of such timeless forms, shapes devoid of the obscurity and caprice of the fluctuating images surrounding them in nature. It was such a motive, in Worringer's opinion, which had dictated the predominance of abstract forms in primitive art, and which had lent to the Byzantine mosaics at Ravenna the geometrical qualities which had so appealed to Hulme. It was to such a motive, thus, that Hulme felt he could attribute the geometrical forms emerging in contemporary art, and so have reason to proclaim the resurgence of the desirable "religious" attitude.

When he encountered the work of Worringer, then, Hulme saw clearly for the first time how his two essential Weltanschauungen could be forces shaping the appearance of visual art. This revelation, however, signified more than just an application of an old distinction to a new realm: it was a recognition which subtly changed his attitude towards the creative activity and the function of art. To appreciate this fact we need only recall some of the remarks he made in the 1908 lecture on modern poetry. There, we remember, he had argued that the need for strict verse forms, like the need for monuments like the pyramids, or for religious dogma,

or for the hypostatized Ideas of Plato, had been the need of men who were frightened of the flux and who "wished to create a static fixity where their souls might rest."[20] He had said quite happily that contemporary man had no need of such refuges, that he had come perfectly to accept the flux of the world and the relativity of his knowledge about it. It was thus, he maintained, that the new poets could be satisfied with free verse forms, and with using their poetry simply for an instant to stabilize their fleeting impressions. Now, after his education by Worringer, the attitude which Hulme had attributed to the poet seemed suspiciously humanistic, the manifestation of a "happy pantheistic relation between man and the outside world" (MAP, p.86). The artist, it now seemed to him, must take seriously Adam's legacy, not only of separation from a transcendental world, but also of alienation from the flux of his earthly garden.

iii) Apprehension.

In his "Modern Art" lecture, Hulme singles out one movement in the contemporary art scene as a dead end, and points to another as an essential transitional stage towards the kind of art he believes holds most promise for the future (MAP, p.94). The movement he disparages is Italian Futurism; in June, 1914, he was to vocalize this dislike in a less dignified fashion by joining Lewis, Epstein and Wadsworth in heckling the Futurist leader, F. T. Marinetti, at the Doré

[20] See Chapter V, p.344.

Galleries. Hulme's antipathy towards Futurism was a significant register of the shift in his view of the artistic apprehension which had been effected by Worringer. The Futurists stated their intentions as being to apprehend "universal dynamism," and to render it on canvas as "dynamic sensation."[21] Citing Bergson as an authority, they described the realm to be apprehended as one of unique objects, in perpetual flux, interpenetrating both in their material existence and in the form they take as memories in the mind.[22] In rejecting Futurism, Hulme was, in effect, rejecting the Bergsonian view of what the ideal artist apprehends: he denounces it in the lecture as "the last efflorescence of impressionism" (MAP, p.94), and says that it is precisely because of its "deification of the flux" that he cannot accept it.[23]

Hulme gives some indication of his new view of the artistic apprehension when, in a New Age article, he singles

[21] See Boccioni et al., "Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto 1910," an English translation from the catalogue to the "Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters," Sackville Gallery, London, March 1912. Included in Futurist Manifestos, ed. Umbro Apollonio (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), p.27.

[22] For an allusion to Bergson, see Umberto Boccioni, "The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting," first published in Lacerba (Florence), 15 March 1913, reprinted in English translation in Futurist Manifestos, pp.88-90. Also note the Technical Manifesto of Futurist painting, signed by Boccioni et al., originally published as a leaflet by Poesia (Milan), 11 April 1910, reproduced in English in Futurist Manifestos, pp.27-31, for a vivid description of how the images in a Futurist painting interpenetrate. For this principle at work, see for example Boccioni's "The Forces of the Street," and "The Street Enters the House."

[23] "Bergson, the philosopher of Impressionism," was "blasted" by the Vorticists. See Blast, 1 (20 June 1914), pp.132 and 21.

out the art of "analytical cubism" as constituting a quite welcome departure from Impressionism, and a necessary step on the way to a "constructive geometrical art" (GG, p.114).[24] Cubism, as he notes in his lecture,[25] had been conceived by some of its supporters as an effort to transcend the Heraclitean flux of Impressionism, and to apprehend and preserve instead the Platonic Ideas. In Quelques intentions de cubisme(1919), Maurice Raynal claimed to speak on behalf of Cubist artists in endorsing Plato's dictum that "'the senses perceive only that which passes, the understanding that which endures.'"[26] He maintained that it was in an effort to capture the timeless forms present to the understanding, an effort to make art a "sensible manifestation of the Idea,"[27] that the Cubists sought to eliminate from their painting those features which situated their subjects at particular moments in time or places in space. Juan Gris made the same point about the Cubist desire to apprehend the essential, rather than the accidental, in a retrospective essay of 1925:

> By way of natural reaction against the fugitive elements employed by the impressionists, painters felt the need to discover less unstable elements in the objects to be represented. And they chose that category of elements which remains in the mind through apprehension and

[24] In MAP, p.94, he hints at some reservations about this art, but fails to elaborate.

[25] See above, p.389.

[26] Raynal, Quelques intentions du cubisme(1919), trans. J. Griffin and cited in Fry, Cubism, p.152.

[27] Raynal, Quelques intentions du cubisme, p.153.

> is not continually changing. For the momentary effects of light they substituted, for example, what they believed to be local colours of objects. For the visual appearance of a form they substituted what they believed to be the actual quality of this form.[28]

Although Hulme cannot bring himself to speak of his artist apprehending universal Ideas, he does express his enthusiasm for an art which reveals an "austerity and bareness, a striving towards structure and away from the messiness and confusion of nature and natural things" (MAP, p.96). He reveals his admiration, in particular, for an art in which the unique, vital lines of objects are approximated to geometrical, machine-like ones. One of the artists he most admired was Wyndham Lewis, who portrayed human figures with "a few mechanical relations," showing no interest "in living flesh as such," or in "all that detail that makes it vital..." (MAP, p.106). We may observe this practice in paintings like "Two Mechanics" and "Two Women"(1912); the same sort of simplification is evident in Epstein's 1913 figures in flenite, for which Hulme also expressed great admiration (LG, p.134).

The shift of opinion about the artistic apprehension which Hulme's repudiation of Futurism and attraction to Cubism constituted is succinctly illustrated, finally, by a passage in his lecture which recalls his earlier, metaphorical, use of the image of the fixed, geometrical curves of the architect. He had, we remember, in his discussion of poetry, used the image of these curves to convey the inadequacies of

[28] Juan Gris, "Reply to a Questionnaire"(1925), trans. D.-H. Kahnweiler, in Fry, Cubism, p.169.

general, conceptual language to account for all the idiosyncratic properties of the poet's apprehension. The poetic effort, he had stressed, was essentially one of bending language's curves to capture the precise contours of what the poet had experienced. The probable origin of his image has been seen to be a passage in L'Evolution créatrice, where Bergson represented the vital line traced freely by a great artist as infinitely superior to any juxtaposition of "courbes géometriques."[29] It is Hulme's view now, however, since his education by Worringer, that sensitive free-hand drawings which capture accidental, empirical details, are manifestations of that suspect celebration of vitality characteristic of humanism:

> In all art since the Renaissance, the lines used are what may be called vital lines. In any curve there is a certain empirical variation which makes the curve not mechanical. The lines are obviously drawn by a hand and not by a machine. You get Ruskin saying that no artist could draw a straight line. As far as sensibility goes you get a kind of shrinking from anything that has the appearance of being mechanical. An artist, suppose, has to draw a part of a piece of machinery, where a certain curve is produced by the intersection of a plane and a cylinder. It lies in the purpose of the engine and it is obviously the intention of the engineer that the line shall be a perfect and mechanical curve. The artists in drawing the two surfaces and their intersection would shrink from reproducing this mechanical accuracy, would instinctively pick out all the accidental scratches which make the curve empirical and destroy its geometrical and mechanical character. (MAP, pp.96-7)

Hulme now shows no qualms about the use of fixed, universal

[29] See Chapter V, p.328 and Chapter IV, p.270 of this thesis.

curves to substitute for particular perceptions. It has become preferable to him that the artist approximate the vital individual to the lifeless universal, than that he shrink from generalization in an effort to capture idiosyncratic detail:

> In the new art on the contrary there is no shrinking of that kind whatever. There is rather a desire to avoid those lines and surfaces which look pleasing and organic, and to use lines which are clean, clear-cut and mechanical. (MAP, p.97)[30]

iv) Expression.

However much Hulme approved of the efforts of analytical Cubism, he made it quite clear that this achievement was not the thing which excited him most in contemporary art. For all his enthusiasm at discovering the connection between the apprehension of universal, geometric shapes and the "religious" attitude, his fascination with the new art had less to do, ultimately, with the nature of the artist's apprehension than with the nature of the power exercised in the painting's actual construction. His last word on the

[30] L. S. Dembo is one critic who has recognized this distinction. "It would seem," he says, "that whereas the Bergsonian artist would seek to capture things in their particularity (or haeccitas), the formalist artist would seek to capture them in their universality (or quidditas)"; Conceptions of Reality in Modern American Poetry, p.3.
Ford Madox Ford was one writer whose association with Lewis, Epstein and their circle led him to recognize the death of the "Flaubertian Impressionism" which characterized his work. See Cork, Vorticism, I, p.184.

"analytical" form of Cubism is that it has broken nature down into geometric forms, which have since become the materials for a more meaningful "constructive" art (GG, p.114). He likens its analysis of nature to a "man whose form is...dimly discerned in hay," a man who in a constructive art "shakes the hay off him, and proceeds to walk..." (MAP, p.103).

Hulme's conviction that it was the second, constructive part of the creative process which most distinguished the new art is made clear in an article in the New Age, in which he responds to an article written by one of the more realistic painters in the London Group: Charles Ginner. It had been Ginner's thesis that the art of Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh did not in fact constitute a reaction against Impressionist realism. It was still, he had said, like his own "Neo-Realist" art, the product of direct intercourse with Nature, and an effort primarily to illuminate the contents of the visible world:

> Neo-Realism must be a deliberate and objective transposition of the object (man, woman, tree, apple, light, shade, movement, etc.) under observation, which has for certain specific reasons appealed to the artist's ideal or mood, for self-expression. When the artist is carried away by an intense desire to interpret an object or an agglomeration of objects, the only sure means at his disposal to find and express that unknown quantity in the object which raised his desire, mood, or ideal, and which united his inner self with the aforesaid unknown quantity, is a deliberate research, concise study and transposition. It is only this intimate relation between the artist and the object which can produce original and great work. Away from this we fall into unoriginal and monotonous Formula.[31]

[31] Charles Ginner, "Neo-Realism," in The New Age, XIV, 9 (1 January 1914), p.272.

In his response to Ginner's article, Hulme objects to what he sees as the romantic presupposition at the root of his argument: the assumption, as he puts it, that "it is the artist's only business to reproduce and interpret Nature, 'source of all good'..." (PN, p.126). He objects to Ginner's suggestion that the value of the kind of simplifications of natural forms found in Cézanne rests with what they reveal about the objects which inspired them. The true value of such simplification, he asserts, has in fact "nothing whatever to do with its descent," but lies rather "in itself and in the use made of it..." (PN, p.127).[32] The most important thing about the artist's experience, he maintains, is not what he apprehends in the world, but how he makes expressive use of the materials he finds there:

> All art may be said to be realism...in that it extracts from nature facts which have not been observed before. But in as far as the artist is creative, he is not bound down by the accidental relations of the elements actually found in nature, but extracts, distorts, and utilises them as a means of expression, and not as a means of interpreting nature. (PN, p.128)[33]

Most of the preferences which Hulme voices in his reviews of contemporary art are based on his sense that form and colour are being used expressively, to body forth some emotion the artist feels. The difference between a merely analytical and an expressive use of abstractions will be evident, he says,

[32] My italics.

[33] Cf. MAP, p.102.

if one compares the works reprinted in Jean Metzinger's book Cubism with the works exhibited by Epstein and Lewis in recent exhibitions (MAP, p.103).[34] Hulme criticizes the paintings of Roger Fry and the Bloomsbury artists for their failure to make constructive use of colour (GG, p.115). One of his highest accolades for a painting, by contrast, goes to Bomberg's "Mud Bath," where "the colour is used in an entirely constructive way, and /is/ in no sense derivative from nature" (DB, p.142).

Hulme asserts that the essential difference between a realist and a constructive art is that while the first honours an obligation to the nature which engendered it, the second "cuts its umbilical cord" (PN, p.128). The constructive artist, he implies, chooses the pattern and the details of his work by deferring not to the example provided by the outer world but to the demands of his feelings - what Kandinsky had called the sense of "Inner Necessity."[35] The other obligation which the constructive artist honours, Hulme says, are the demands of the overall, autonomous structure of the painting. This "abstract organizing tendency" (PN, p.125), he asserts in his counter-attack to Ginner, is evident in a

[34] The paintings reproduced in Gleizes' and Metzinger's book include Dérain's "Still Life," Metzinger's "Refreshment" and "Landscape," Marie Laurencin's "Young Girls," Gleizes' "Portrait of Jacques Nayral," Léger's "Houses and Smoke," and Gris' "Portrait of a Man," all of which quite clearly illustrate the analysis of natural images to reveal their constituent planes.

[35] See Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, p.33, for the "inner need"; "Inner Necessity" is Wadsworth's rendering of the expression, in the translation he provided for Blast, 1, p.119. Hulme emphasizes the artist's obligation to his feelings in PN, passim.

painting like Cézanne's "Large Bathers"(1896-1907), where approximations of natural images to geometrical form are used not simply to highlight the underlying structures in nature, but in the interest, also, of the pyramidal structure of the work itself.[36] The notion of this organizing tendency, we will note, causing the artist to avert his eyes from nature and concentrate instead on the quite autonomous demands of the picture, serves to explain the sense of a floating, newly acquired freedom conveyed by the canvases falling on the cusp of analytical and synthetic Cubism: Picasso's of 1910, and Braque's of 1911.[37]

Hulme supplements his assertion about the importance of an artist's dedication to his painting's internal organisation by outlining the basic principles which he believes should govern that organisation. He summarizes these by stating that they are the same principles "which are at present exemplified ...in machinery" (MAP, p.104).[38] The kind of machine-like properties he has in mind are evident from the grounds he gives, in his review of the London Group's March 1914 exhibition, for dismissing the paintings of Gore, Gilman, and Ginner in favour of the more radical "Cubist" offerings of Lewis, Wadsworth, Hamilton, and Etchells. He values, first of all, an economy in the selection of parts, praising painting in

[36] Kandinsky used the same example, to make the same point, in Concerning the Spiritual in Art, p.31.

[37] See for example Picasso's "Portrait of Ambroise Vollard," "Wilhelm Ühder" and "Portrait of a Woman," and Braque's "The Candlestick" and "Seated Man with a Guitar."

[38] Cf. LG, p.131.

which "nothing is accidental," in which there are no "meaningless contours" (LG, p.129). He wishes, further, to see these parts in constructive interaction, admiring works in which "all the contours are closely knit together into definite structural shapes" (LG, p.130). In his lecture, Hulme cites Lewis as a particular master of machine-like design. We have only, indeed, to examine the works in the "Timon of Athens" series(1912-13) or the striking "Composition" (1913-14) to see how he created evocative and unified designs out of the complex interaction of geometrical forms.

It will be clear from these brief remarks that Hulme's conception of the second part of the painter's experience did not represent the same kind of departure from his poetic theory as did his view of the first. Like the poet who delves into his memory to find the images for his "mosaic of words," the painter extracts materials from nature, albeit geometrical, generalizing materials, which he then arranges into expressive patterns. The products in both cases constitute original alternatives to the expressions of cliché; Hulme emphasizes this affinity in defending Epstein from his conservative critics:

> It seems curious that the people who in poetry abominate clichés and know that Nature, as it were, presses in on the poet to be used as metaphor, cannot understand the same thing when it occurs plastically. They seem unable to understand that an artist who has something to say will continually 'extract' from reality new methods of expression, and that these being perfectly felt will inevitably lack prettiness and will differ from traditional clichés. (EC, pp.107-8)

In both poem and painting the significance springs out of the

effective juxtaposition of parts: in the poem the juxtaposition of analogical images, in the painting the close knitting together of forms. Hulme's conviction about the organic quality of the ideal painting is revealed in one of his rare criticisms of Lewis, where he disapproves of a pair of paintings for the appearance they give of a process in which "one form probably springs out of the preceding one as he works, instead of being conceived as part of a whole" (LG, p.132). Functioning primarily by the inner reflections of their parts, instead of by straightforward discursive or descriptive structures, both poem and painting have the quality of autonomous worlds, independent of the patterns present in nature. The depersonalization of the poem which Hulme, like Mallarmé, had represented as the removal of its "scaffolding," has its analogy in the tendency towards abstraction which marks the paintings Hulme admires: the simplification of forms to such a degree that their references to the natural world are only barely apparent. As we shall now see, however, Hulme could not quite bring himself to accept an art in which such natural allusions were entirely absent, in which the umbilical cord between art and nature was absolutely severed, the scaffolding completely dismantled.

v) Limitations of Allegiance.

In the same review of the London Group exhibition where he expresses his impatience with paintings which are

loaded with accidental, natural detail, Hulme states quite clearly that he cannot endure an art in which all references to nature are defiantly absent. He sees no future, he says, in the kind of painting now typical of Kandinsky, an art based on the assumption that "abstract form, i.e. form without any representative content, can be an adequate means of expression" (LG, p.130). The painting in the exhibition which seemed to him most disturbingly to manifest such an assumption was David Bomberg's "In the Hold": a canvas which, although originally designed as a straightforward simplification of natural images, was in its final form broken up into a myriad of scrambled squares, so as to foil any attempts to discern its natural correspondents. Hulme regards this painting as the "reductio ad absurdum" of the "heresy" (LG, p.133) about self-sufficient form, and expresses a preference for those of Bomberg's pictures in which one may still recognize something of the world which inspired them. Why he cannot let go of the desire for references to nature is one of his major themes in the London Group review, the lecture on modern art, and in a review of Bomberg's one-man show of July, 1914.

The first of the threads binding Hulme to the desire for natural allusion in painting may be traced back to his original, Worringerian view about the function of a geometrical art. The pleasure which primitive and Byzantine men had taken in geometrical form, he had learned, had been the pleasure of seeing the objects of the flux rendered eternal, stripped of all the details that bound them to a confusing, capricious world. The particular comfort provided

by these works, he now observes, arose out of the sense they gave of the process of this transmigration. The contemporary artist who wishes to provide the same sort of comfort, accordingly, can do so only by preserving in his abstractions recognizable references to the vital world from which they have come:

> All art of this character turns the organic into something not organic, it tries to translate the changing and limited, into something unlimited and necessary. The matter is quite simple. However strong the desire for abstraction, it cannot be satisfied with the reproduction of merely inorganic forms. A perfect cube looks stable in comparison with the flux of appearance, but one might be pardoned if one felt no particular interest in the eternity of a cube; but if you can put man into some geometrical shape which lifts him out of the transience of the organic, then the matter is different. (MAP, pp.106-7)

When he speaks of the satisfaction to be experienced in the contemplation of human forms, geometrically rendered, Hulme has in mind the recognizably human forms which populate many of Lewis' paintings. It is his sense of the importance of allusion to the organic world, too, which attracts him to the sculpture of Epstein: he expresses particular admiration for the series of works in which Epstein deals with the quintessentially organic theme of birth (MAP, p.107). The fascination with the transition from the vital to the geometric was undoubtedly the essence also of his attraction to the work of Gaudier-Brzeska. At the time Hulme delivered his lecture on modern art, Gaudier-Brzeska was exhibiting his "Red Stone Dancer" at the Alpine Gallery. No figure, as

Ezra Pound observed,[39] could speak more loudly of the transmigration of the vital to the geometrical than this frozen performer, whose tremendous vitality flows into a triangle and a circle embedded on its face and its breast.

Hulme's sense of the importance of preserving references to the real world in abstract art may be traced back, however, even further than his interest in Worringer. His comments on abstract form are determined, also, by a lingering allegiance to the empiricist view of imagination he had encountered in Ribot. In his response to Ginner Hulme concedes that the constructive art he advocates, however much it may exemplify a unique organizing power, will inevitably <u>begin</u> with the perception of natural forms. In explaining how the essentially autonomous constructive power is nonetheless dependent upon nature for its raw materials, Hulme makes a clear allusion to the kind of "blind" rational activity identified by Ribot, the activity in which the mind freely manipulates counters, which have nonetheless originated in perceptions:

> One can give an analogy in ordinary thought. The reasoning activity is quite different in character from any succession of images drawn from the senses, but yet thought itself would be impossible without this sensual stimulus. (PN, p.127)

[39] See Pound's description of this sculpture, in the Preface to the catalogue of "A Memorial Exhibition of the Work of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska," The Leicester Galleries, London, May-June 1918, in <u>Gaudier-Brzeska</u> (New York: New Directions, 1970), pp.137-8. Pound says that Gaudier-Brzeska "had planned an essay on 'The Need of Organic Forms in Sculpture'" for <u>Blast</u>, 2; <u>Gaudier-Brzeska</u>, p.25.

In his review of the Bomberg exhibition, Hulme asserts that the "genesis of abstract form" is always a matter of the simplification of perceptions. The mind, he says, "cannot create form, it can only edit it": in imaginative creation "as in other very different matters, existing here in this world, bound to this body, we have little spontaneity." It does not follow necessarily from the empiricist theory of the imagination that references to the inspiring perceptions will be preserved in the final artistic product (Bomberg had, after all, disproved any such hypothesis by his fragmentation of "In the Hold") but Hulme uses the theory at least to warn the abstract artist who would seek at the outset to "empty his mind of all recollection of the external world...." Denying himself thus his fundamental source, he says, such an artist will produce "nothing but a few arbitrary and uninteresting repetitions" (DB, p.138). It is interesting to note that Lewis, in an article in Blast,[40] saw just this failing in the paintings of Kandinsky.

The final, most extensive, and most problematic rationale Hulme provides for the retention of recognizable images in abstract art takes the form not of a statement about the necessary nature of the artistic process, but one about the inevitable nature of the response to its product. He outlines this last argument in his review of Bomberg's one-man exhibition, where he encountered and was frustrated by more canvases, like "Ju Jitsu " and "Zin," which reflected the

[40] See Lewis, "A Review of Contemporary Art," in Blast, 2 (July 1915), p.40.

commitment to total abstraction found in "In the Hold." Such works seemed to him decidedly inferior to those, like the "reading from Torak" and "Mud Bath," which contained representative elements: he admired the latter not just because they were interesting constructions of shapes, but because they had "a quite human and even dramatic effect."

Hulme launches his attack on Bomberg's completely abstract designs by focusing on what he regards as a false assumption behind their construction. This is the theory, he says, "that we contemplate form for its own sake - that it produces a particular emotion different from the ordinary everyday emotions - a specific aesthetic emotion" (DB, p.139). It is such a theory, he suggests, which inspires the creation of an art devoid of representative content, its corollary being that the recognition of natural shapes will introduce into the aesthetic experience an ordinary kind of emotion which will pollute the purely aesthetic one. Bomberg, Hulme notes, had voiced his desire to appeal solely to a "Sense of Form" in the Foreword to the exhibition's catalogue.[41] The

[41] See Bomberg, Foreword to the catalogue of "Works by David Bomberg," Chenil Gallery, July, 1914, cited in William Lipke's David Bomberg (London: Evelyn, Adams, and Mackey, 1967), p.118:

> I appeal to a Sense of Form. In some of the work I show in the first room, I completely abandon Naturalism and Tradition. I am searching for an Intenser expression. In other works in this room, where I use Naturalistic Form, I have stripped it of all irrelevant matter.
>
> I look upon Nature, while I live in a steel city. Where decoration happens, it is accidental. My object is the construction of Pure Form. I reject everything in painting that is not Pure Form. I hate the colours of the East, the Modern Medievalist, and the Fat Man of the Renaissance.

account of the matter which Hulme has most clearly in mind, however, appears to be the one laid down by Clive Bell in Art, which had appeared in February of 1914. Although much of the discussion in Bell's work is compatible with Hulme's views, it is founded upon an assumption about the existence of a distinctive "aesthetic emotion"[42] which Hulme could not accept. This emotion, Bell says, is the one aroused by form in itself, a feeling distinct from any which may be evoked by its resemblance to natural objects. Any representative content in a painting is in his view irrelevant, evocative of emotions belonging to the realm of life, which he insists is quite divorced from that of art. To appreciate a work of art, he says, "we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions":

> Art transports us from the world of man's activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation. For a moment we are shut off from human interests; our anticipations and memories are arrested; we are lifted above the stream of life.[43]

Bell's account is eloquent, by Hulme's definition, "romantic": he envisions the spectator, all his ordinary emotions set aside, being carried into the presence of "the God in everything...the universal in the particular...the all-pervading rhythm."[44] So convinced is he about the power of

[42] Clive Bell, Art (London: Chatto and Windus, 1914), p.7.

[43] Art, p.25.

[44] Art, p.69.

the aesthetic emotion to exalt the man who experiences it that he is driven to make just the kind of claim for art that Hulme would have found it impossible to tolerate:

> ...art is a religion. It is an expression of and a means to states of mind as holy as any that men are capable of experiencing; and it is towards art that modern minds turn, not only for the most perfect expression of transcendent emotion, but for an inspiration by which to live.[45]

Hulme, not surprisingly, is intent on demystifying such claims, and sets out to prove that the feelings involved in the contemplation of abstract forms are in fact identical with "ordinary everyday emotions." His attempt to do so, however, leads him into troublesome waters. Using a diagram to illustrate his point, he explains how all of the enjoyment involved in the contemplation of forms in art is the result of the projection of ordinary emotion onto these forms. The possibility of "living our own emotions <u>into</u> outside shapes and colours," he says, "is the basic fact on which the whole of plastic art rests" and there is "nothing mysterious" (DB, p.140) about the experience. It will immediately be clear that in this, fairly roundabout way of attacking the theory behind a totally abstract art, Hulme is calling upon the very view about the aesthetic experience which he has previously taken such pleasure in seeing Worringer refute. Denying the existence of a uniquely "aesthetic" emotion, he reinstates a condition identical to the objectified self-enjoyment, the

[45] <u>Art</u>, p.277.

"empathy " identified by Lipps.[46] He has apparently forgotten his commitment to the way of appreciating form supposedly characteristic of the resurging "religious" attitude: the contemplative experience in which the self and the natural world are transcended and the mind rests on the impersonal tranquillity of geometric form.

Why Hulme found it necessary in the end to fall back on Lipps is a matter for debate. It is possible that he found himself controlled by a lingering allegiance to Bergson, whose account of the "intuitive" experience of art was not unlike the experience of "empathy."[47] What is very clear, however, from each of the three arguments we have reviewed, is that Hulme could not bring himself to endorse an art which relied for its effect solely on the presentation of purely

[46] Alun Jones makes this point in the otherwise problematic article "T. E. Hulme, Wilhelm Worringer and the Urge to Abstraction." Jones maintains, as I do, that the ultimate disagreement between Hulme and Worringer is due to Hulme's sustained allegiance to Bergson. He is wrong, however, in asserting (pp.1-7), that Hulme believes the new art to differ from traditional representative art "only in so far as it emphasises different features of the natural scene" (p.6). He ignores Hulme's insistence on the expressive use of form.

[47] Arthur Szathmary has commented on the empathetic quality of Bergsonian intuition. See The Aesthetic Theory of Bergson, pp.47-8.

The empathetic and intuitive experiences of art are alike in the sense that they both imply the involvement of the deep-seated feelings of the fundamental self in the experience of contemplation, the experience in which the spectator feels a close identity with the lines before him. See Bergson's discussion of the aesthetic feelings in EDI, pp.9-11. Hulme indicates his familiarity with this section of Bergson's work, in BTA, p.157. Bergson's sense of the intuitive experience of the work of art is analogous to the artist's contemplative experience, in which he places himself back "within the object by a kind of sympathy," and breaks down "the barrier that space puts between him and his model." Hulme's paraphrase, BTA, p.144.

abstract forms. The new, geometrical art pleased him best when it retained within it a shadow of the flux. Whether it was a waning of interest in the work of his English contemporaries, which was taking an increasingly abstract direction, or just the displacing of this interest by the more pressing political ones aroused in him by the outbreak of war, Hulme published nothing more on the subject of the visual arts after his review of the Bomberg exhibition.[48] When Lewis and his company proclaimed the arrival of "Vorticism" in July, 1914, Hulme's voice was noticeably silent. The literary man who was to carry the flag for Vorticism was Ezra Pound.

[48] Hulme was asked to write an article on Epstein for Blast, but it never materialized, probably because of personal differences with Lewis. Kate Lechmere has said that Hulme told her he had finished a book on Epstein, just before going to the front for the last time; letter to Michael Roberts, 10 February 1938, in the archives of Keele University library. No manuscript, however, was ever recovered; Lechmere says he probably kept it on his person.

CHAPTER VII

THE VORTICIST POET: EZRA POUND

i) Vorticism and the Creative Process.

When he reviewed the London Group exhibition at the Goupil Gallery in March, 1914, Ezra Pound admitted to a difficulty in speaking about the abstract paintings of Lewis, Etchells and Wadsworth. This painting was, he said, "so close to one's poetic habit of creation that prose is ill got to fit it."[1] Pound's sense of affinity with the work being done by Lewis and his circle led him to join their ranks under the name of "Vorticism," an association formalized with his signature to the manifesto in Lewis' periodical Blast, in June, 1914. Until 1919 a good number of Pound's aesthetic writings were dedicated to expounding a nominally "Vorticist" aesthetic.

Pound's association with the abstract artists, and adoption of the Vorticist title, did not represent a break from the stance on poetry he had been developing during his previous years in London, as an "Imagiste." The significance of his Vorticist association, rather, was that it led him to see the general principles he had been formulating for poetry in the context of a general aesthetic, a view of the creative process applicable to all the arts; he continued, in fact, to use the word "Imagiste" to designate the Vorticist artist

[1] Ezra Pound, "Exhibition at the Goupil Gallery," in The Egoist, I, 6 (16 March, 1914), p.109.

whose possession of certain distinct capabilities made him a poet. If a general difference can be detected between Pound's comments on poetry in the Imagist and Vorticist periods, it is perhaps that the latter tend to take the form less of recommendations about style than of more theoretical formulations about the poetic activity. In his most extensive article on Vorticism, written in September, 1914, he expresses a desire to give a "psychological or philosophical definition"[2] of Imagist poetry, noting with some regret that hitherto "Imagisme, in so far as it has been known at all, has been known as a stylistic movement, a movement of criticism rather than creation" (V, p.82).

My aim in this chapter will be to focus on the

[2] Pound, "Vorticism"(1914), in Gaudier-Brzeska (New York: New Directions, 1970), p.85. Subsequent references to this major article will be indicated by V, and to this book by GB.

Other volumes of Pound's work to which I frequently allude, are, with their abbreviations:

The Spirit of Romance (London: Dent, 1910): SR
Collected Shorter Poems (London: Faber, 1952): CSP
Literary Essays of Ezra Pound (London: Faber, 1954): LE
Selected Prose 1909-1965 (London: Faber, 1973): SP
The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound (New York: New Directions, 1971): SL
Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts (New York: New Directions, 1980): PVA

I refer to the Vorticist periodicals Blast, 1 (20 June 1914) and Blast, 2 (July 1915) as B1 and B2, accordingly.

Frequently mentioned articles, with their abbreviations and the volumes in which they appear, are:

"I Gather the Limbs of Osiris"(1911-12): GLO SP
"The Wisdom of Poetry"(1912): WP SP
"The Serious Artist"(1913): SA LE
"Affirmations: Jacob Epstein"(1915): AJE PVA
"Affirmations: Analysis of this Decade"(1915): AAD PVA
"Affirmations: As for Imagisme"(1915): AAI SP
"Affirmations: Gaudier-Brzeska"(1915): AGB PVA
"Affirmations: Vorticism"(1915): AV PVA
"A Retrospect"(1918): R LE

general account of the creative activity which emerges from Pound's Vorticist writings, and within that context, but with reference also to previous comments on "Imagisme," to reconstruct his picture of the activity especially typical of the poet. Within this picture, it will be possible to ascertain some important points of likeness, and some other significant points of divergence, from the one which has been seen to emerge from Hulme's notes. We see more fully developed, first of all, in Pound's Vorticism, Hulme's dimly suggested analogy between poet and painter, grasping from nature their respective images and rearranging them in patterns expressive of their feelings. Interestingly, too, in spite of Wallace Martin's assertion to the contrary,[3] Hulme and Pound may be seen to incorporate into their work a number of the same tenets from the empiricist psychology, particularly as regards the formation of the mental image. These common borrowings are supplemented, too, by a number of points from Gourmont's account of what happens in the mind of the "visual" writer, and by the shared Gourmontian conviction about the supreme value of a "concrete" language for poetry. It is on the question, interestingly, of the nature of this concrete language that Hulme and Pound will be seen to differ; from his reading of Fenollosa, Pound derived the view that the truly concrete language would be

[3] In "Sources," p.198, Martin distinguishes Hulme and Pound on the grounds that Hulme derived his notion of the "image" from Bergson, and Pound from the empiricist writings of Ribot. In fact, as we have seen, Hulme's references to the poet's mental "images" reveal as much of Ribot's influence as of Bergson's.

one which traced the world's flux, rather than one which tried to arrest it with stable, sculptural analogies.

Perhaps the most interesting matter, however, on which Hulme and Pound may be compared, is that of the tone of their discourse in discussing the creative activity. Pound, we shall observe, did not share Hulme's absolute abhorrence of those "romantic" claims which brought the "infinite" into art. His own allusions to the transcendental realm, by the same token, are not entirely unselfconscious: he will be seen to offer alternative versions of these which incorporate metaphors from the perhaps more respectable worlds of mathematics and science.

ii) A Note on the Apprehension.

Pound's writings on creative activity during the Imagist and Vorticist years do not deal at all extensively with the issue of the poet's ability to apprehend a particular realm. He does not devote much time, that is, to outlining the conditions of a contemplative experience in which the poet gains special access to either a spiritual or material world; his greatest concern, as we shall see, lies more with the constructive than with the cognitive aspect of the activity. There is one article, however, where he touches upon the issue, and which serves to clarify his position on that matter which divided Hulme from the Symbolists: the question of whether or not the poet is engaged in some "communion with the infinite." This is "Psychology and

Troubadours," a piece which he contributed to G. R. S. Mead's journal The Quest in October, 1912. From this article, it is clear that Pound did not take great offence at the notion of a mystical apprehension. He states without embarrassment there that there are "certain times, a certain sort of moment more than any other, when a man feels his immortality upon him...."[4] Informed by the researches into the occult tradition conducted by G. R. S. Mead and Allen Upward, he contends that all men are surrounded by a "vital universe" (p.45), and that the artist is the man whose mind is most close upon it. He accepts without criticism the assertions of Greek and Troubadour poets that they have apprehended that realm in the form of "gods," and himself lays claim, in a contemporaneous poem called "The Flame," to the knowledge of such deities:

> There is the subtler music, the clear light
> Where time burns back about th'eternal embers.
> We are not shut from all the thousand heavens:
> Lo, there are many gods whom we have seen.[5]

Pound's support for the notion of a mystical apprehension would seem to unite him with the Symbolists, in what Hulme rejected as an intolerable overvaluation of the

[4] Pound, "Psychology and Troubadours," in The Quest, IV, 1 (October, 1912), p.47. Further references appear in parentheses in the text. My view about Pound's attitude towards the mystical is shared by Herbert N. Schneidau, in "Pound and Yeats: The Question of Symbolism," ELH, XXXII, 2 (June 1965), pp.220-237.

[5] Pound, "The Flame," in CSP, p.64. This poem first appeared in Canzoni (1911), under the title "Und Drang." See "Psychology and Troubadours," p.45, where Pound asserts that "the strength of the Greek beauty rests in this, that it is ever at the interpretation of the vital universe, by its signs of gods and godly attendants and oreads."

poet's accomplishment. It was not the case, however, that Pound espoused the notion without sensitivity to contentions that it lent an unnecessary degree of "hocus-pocus" to an account of art. As Ian Bell has illustrated in admirable detail, in his Critic as Scientist, Pound was one of a number of believers in mystical experience at the time who felt a certain need to legitimize their conviction in the eyes of the world by referring to the support provided for them by contemporary science.[6] In the Quest essay, Pound supplements his claims about the mystical apprehension with a metaphor inspired by the revolution in nineteenth century physics which reconstructed all matter into energies, lines of force. The apprehending poet, he asserts, is like a wireless telegraph receiver, possessed of a specially charged surface which enables him to register "movements in the invisible aether" (p.46), events in the "universe of fluid force" (p.45). The image of the poet as a man receptive to a universe of forces, or electrical energies, an image which Pound was to introduce elsewhere in his work, and which he was also to encounter in Fenollosa,[7] is one which strikes a kind of balance between

[6] See Ian F. A. Bell, Critic as Scientist (London: Methuen: 1981), passim. Note especially Chapters 4 and 5. It is unfortunate that Bell, who is concerned with precisely the change from mystical to scientific discourse intuited by Hulme, fails to acknowledge Hulme's awareness of the shift. His negative interpretation of Hulme's work suffers from a misunderstanding of Hulme's expressed hostility to "science," by which he meant only a sense of the limitation of abstract, scientific laws, and not the useful findings of, for example, the science of psychology.

[7] See below, p.448. For other examples of Pound's use of the metaphor, see GLO, pp.25 and 30. This vision was compatible with Bergson's resolution of matter into flux. Hulme, of course, did not use Bergson's account as a means of justifying notions about the artist's apprehension of the spiritual, but

the views of the apprehended realm espoused by Hulme and the Symbolists. The resolution of matter into energy achieved by the physicists rendered obsolete the absolute division between a material world and a spiritual world "beyond" it, for in the universe of energy the spiritual and the material were, in a sense, one. By offering the image of the telegraph receiver as an alternative to the descriptions of the poetic experience offered by the Greeks and the Troubadours, and by the occult tradition, Pound seems to be making an implicit statement about the legitimacy which physical science had given to their claims. He would, as Bell has observed, have approved heartily of Sidney Lanier's evaluation of the great contribution being made by the contemporary physicist:

> Here are thousands upon thousands of acute and patient men today who are devotedly gazing into the great mysteries of Nature and fruitfully reporting what they see. These men have not destroyed the fairies: they have preserved them in more solid shapes. Puck is not dead: he has only changed his name to Electricity....[8]

iii) A Constructive Activity.

Pound's major concern in his writings on behalf of Vorticism was not, however, to establish the fact of the poet's

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as a means of providing a less grand claim about the apprehension of the material.

[8] Sidney Lanier, Shakespeare and his Forerunners, cited by Bell, p.176. My italics.

special access to a transcendental or other realm, but to celebrate his constructive powers. In the series of "Affirmation" articles written for The New Age in 1915, he repeatedly makes the point that the Vorticist movement celebrates "humanity's ability to invent" (AJE, p.11). The affirmation of the "'creative, constructive individual,'" he says, "is just as definite a doctrine as the Renaissance attitude De Dignitate, Humanism" (AAD, p.28). The emphasis in Pound's Vorticist writings on the constructive, rather than contemplative aspect of the creative process recalls the attitude which Hulme expressed concerning the significance of the new abstract art: the view that what was exciting about it was not anything it revealed about the world outside of the artist, but rather what it revealed about the artist's ability to grasp the materials which the world offers, and to use them expressively.[9] "Our respect is not for the subject-matter," Pound proclaims, "but for the creative power of the artist; for that which he is capable of adding to his subject from himself; or, in fact, his capacity to dispense with external subjects altogether, to create from himself or from elements" (AJE, p.12).

The constructive activity of any Vorticist artist, as Pound describes it, entails perhaps four essential factors. It begins with a feeling, or emotion.[10] This emotion gives rise, Pound says, in a statement of what he calls the

[9] See Chapter VI, p.405.

[10] For the view that emotion is the prime motivating factor for the Vorticist poet, see SA, pp.51-2, AAI, pp.344-5. Elsewhere, as in "Vortex. Pound," in Bl, p.154, SA, p.51, and R, p.4, Pound locates the source of the primary pigment in the "complex" of both emotions and ideas.

"fundamental tenet" of Vorticism, to a certain "primary pigment" in the artist's mind, whose nature dictates the nature of the material in which he is to work:

> EVERY CONCEPT, EVERY EMOTION PRESENTS ITSELF TO THE VIVID CONSCIOUSNESS IN SOME PRIMARY FORM. IT BELONGS TO THE ART OF THIS FORM. IF SOUND, TO MUSIC; IF FORMED WORDS, TO LITERATURE; THE IMAGE, TO POETRY; FORM, TO DESIGN; COLOUR IN POSITION, TO PAINTING; FORM OR DESIGN IN THREE PLANES, TO SCULPTURE; MOVEMENT TO THE DANCE OR TO THE RHYTHM OF MUSIC OR OF VERSES.[11]

The appearance of this "primary pigment" is followed by the selection, accordingly, of the particular materials, colours, volumes or words which will express the feeling. These materials are then "arranged"[12] into a suitable pattern, with care taken to ensure that the parts work harmoniously together. All artists, Pound says, whatever their medium, are united in this "unending adventure towards 'arrangement'" (GB, p.122), this attempt to organize materials into a structure which will be expressive of their innermost feelings.

The Vorticist artist, thus, belonged to the tradition of artists which M. H. Abrams has traced in The Mirror and the Lamp: the group, which we have seen to include the Symbolists and Hulme, whose purpose was not to imitate the images of nature, but to select and regroup them into new, expressive artistic arrangements. The two theorists to whom Pound gave

[11] "Vortex. Pound," in B1, p.154.

[12] See V, p.81, AGB, p.22, AV, pp.6-7, GB, p.125. Cf. the references to "arrangement" by fellow Vorticists like Gaudier-Brzeska, in "Vortex. Gaudier-Brzeska," B2, p.34; and Wyndham Lewis, in "Fêng Shui and Contemporary Form," B1, p.138. Compare Mallarmé's remark, in Chapter I, p.120.

greatest credit for his version of the activity were Kandinsky and Whistler. Both of these painters had objected vociferously to the notion that the function of painting was the accurate representation of nature, seeing mere representation as an endeavour rendered redundant by photography. Both had spoken of nature as a field of resources, to be broken down and put to new uses. Pound referred to this, central principle of Vorticist art as the "musical conception of form" (AV, p.9).[13] His reference, in doing so, is probably to Whistler's "Ten O'Clock" lecture, where the musician's activity is posited as a model for the painter:

> Nature contains the elements, in colour and form, of all pictures, as the keyboard contains the notes of all music.
> But the artist is born to pick, and choose, and grasp with science, these elements that the result may be beautiful - as the musician gathers his notes, and forms his chords, until he bring forth from the chaos glorious harmony.[14]

Both Kandinsky and Whistler had emphasized the artist's freedom in choosing the new pattern for his materials by describing the work of art as an "arrangement." In The Art of Spiritual Harmony Kandinsky spoke of paintings as "artistic arrangements";[15] Whistler, as Pound noted in Gaudier-Brzeska (p.120), had originally exhibited the famous portrait of his

[13] My italics.

[14] J. A. M. Whistler, The Gentle Art of Making Enemies (New York: Dover, 1967), pp.142-3. Pound quotes this passage in GB, p.125. Cf. Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, pp.25 and 31; note that this translation of Ueber das Geistige in der Kunst, also cited in Chapter VI, is the same one that appeared in 1914 as The Art of Spiritual Harmony.

[15] Kandinsky, p.43.

mother as an "Arrangement in Grey and Black." It was the habit of both painters, too, to stress the care with which the constituents of the pattern must be juxtaposed, so that they blend, ultimately, into an organic synthesis. Kandinsky described the painting as "a mingling of colour and form each with its separate existence, but each blended into a common life...by the force of the inner need";[16] he devoted a good part of his treatise to examining the effects not merely of individual forms and colours, but of specific combinations of these.

With Pound's general vision of the expressive activity of the Vorticist artist in mind, we may look more closely at the experience he envisions for the poet in particular: the nature of the distinctive "primary pigment" which emotion gives to his mind, the "image"; the general forces which control the image's transcription; the sort of linguistic materials in which it is transcribed; and the qualities of the resulting "arrangement" which is the poem.

iv) The Appearance of the Image.

What precisely Pound meant by the term "image" is a matter much debated by his critics. It is, without question, a chameleon-like term, changing import from context to context to suit Pound's needs, designating sometimes single components in a poem, sometimes a brace of these, sometimes a complete poem, possessed of certain general stylistic properties and

[16] Kandinsky, p.43.

having a certain effect on its reader. In a number of contexts, however, and certainly in the statement of the "fundamental tenet" of Vorticism, it is clear that Pound uses it to designate a psychological entity arising in the mind of the poet: the first manifestation of the emotions, or, as Pound sometimes describes them, the emotions and unconscious ideas which wait in the poet to be expressed.

Pound's thoughts about the image as an entity arising in the writer's mind reveal the influence of contemporary writings in psychology. His famous definition of the image in the March 1913 issue of Poetry, as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time," indicates, for one thing, that he had in mind something related to the sensual, and particularly pictorial, dream image of Freud. The term "complex," Pound says in his article, is borrowed from "the newer psychologists" (R, p.4), among whose number he singles out the Cambridge man, Bernard Hart. In a paper contributed to Hugo Munsterberg's collection of writings on Subconscious Phenomena(1910), Hart had paraphrased Freud's view of the process by which an image is made to arise in the mind. In this account, unconscious "complexes" of emotions, or emotionally toned ideas, possessed of "both potential and kinetic energy," are said to war with each other until they cause a single idea, or image, to be "constellated" in the consciousness.[17] The theory that the appearance of a mental

[17] See Bernard Hart, "The Conception of the Subconscious," in Munsterberg's Subconscious Phenomena, pp.129-30. For Freud's account, see On Dreams, in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, Vol.V, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1958), p.660.

image may be the result of the jockeying of such complexes was not an uncommon one among contemporary psychologists. Hart reiterated it in his The Psychology of Insanity (1912).[18] Ribot, who had contributed with Hart to Munsterberg's anthology, and with whose work Pound may well have been familiar, articulated it in the section of the Essai sur l'imagination créatrice dedicated to "le facteur inconscient" in creative activity.[19]

That Pound was in debt to contemporary psychologists for his conception of the poet's mental image is suggested further by the fullest description which he was to give of it in any of his writings: in the 1915 article "Affirmations: As for Imagisme." Pound's assertion here is that the mental image may be of two kinds, the product either of an essentially passive mental activity, or of an active, constructive one:

> The Image can be of two sorts. It can arise within the mind. It is then 'subjective.' External causes play upon the mind, perhaps; if so, they are drawn into the mind, fused, transmitted, and emerge in an Image unlike themselves. Secondly, the Image can be objective. Emotion seizing up some external scene or action carries it intact to the mind; and that vortex purges it of all save the essential or dominant or dramatic qualities, and it emerges like the external original. (AAI, pp.344-5)

The two images which Pound identifies, the one a clear, if simplified remnant of perception, the other a construct built

[18] See The Psychology of Insanity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), p.61, where Hart describes the complex as "a system of emotionally toned ideas" present in the subconscious.

[19] See pp.51-53.

out of the materials of perceptions, but bearing no resemblance to any single one of them, would seem to correspond exactly to two kinds of image identified by Ribot and Freud. The "objective" and the "subjective" images resemble the products, respectively, of what these psychologists called the "reproductive" or "representative," and the "productive" or truly "creative" imaginations. Ribot had opened his study of the creative imagination, we remember, by identifying the basic "reproductive" faculty by which perceptions are merely repeated, in simplified form, in the mind.[20] He had gone on later, as Hulme after him, to say that the parts of a perception to survive in the memory are those which have made a strong emotional impression on the perceiver;[21] Pound seems to have precisely this kind of simplifying process in mind in referring to the purgation of a perception which results in the "objective" image. The feature which distinguished the "imagination créatrice" from the merely reproductive one, for Ribot, was its power of associating the simplified fragments into a cluster: the "conception idéale" whose externalization was the basic motive in artistic activity.[22] A similar power characterized the dream imagination of Freud, which was said to make use "of recent waking memories for its building material," but erect them "into structures bearing not the remotest resemblance to waking life...."[23] Pound's "subjective"

[20] See Chapter III, p.204.

[21] See Chapter III, p.217.

[22] See Chapter III, p.205.

[23] Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, in Complete

image, constituted of perceptual fragments fused and transformed, seems to be a construct of just this order.

One of the most interesting facts about Pound's insistence that the "primary pigment" to appear in the poet's mind is the "image" is that he sets it in contrast to the "FORMED WORDS" which mark the beginning of the creation of "LITERATURE."[24] The implication of this remark seems to be just the principle which we have seen to distinguish the Symbolist aesthetic from the Parnassian one, and which we have seen variously expressed by Pater and Yeats, Bergson and Hulme. Pound appears to be rejecting, that is, the notion that the art of poetry entails first of all the clarification in language in the mind of some general theme, which is only then translated into concrete images, and to be asserting that the mental image is the first manifestation of what the poet needs to say. Pound's Imagist and Vorticist writings contain many remarks which reinforce this point of view. One of the most intriguing of these, for its close approximation of a metaphor which we have seen in Bergson, was written in 1919, overtly about the experience of the painter:

> It is not necessary, either in the young or in the mature artist, that all the geometry of a painting be tossed up into the consciousness and analysed by the painter before he puts brush to canvas. The genius can pay in nuggets and in lump gold; it is not necessary that he bring up his knowledge into the mint of consciousness, stamp it into either the coin of conscientiously

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Psychological Works, Vol.IV, p.85.

[24] See above, p.427.

analysed form-detail knowledge or into the paper-money of words, before he transmit it.[25]

The view that the creative activity need not entail the primary formulation of conscious ideas in words was anticipated in many earlier essays. In 1912 Pound remarked that it was entirely unsatisfactory to define poetry simply as the "'expression of insensuous thought in sensuous terms,'" or the "'dignification of thought by analogically articulated imagery'" (WP, p.329). In 1913 he had warned against the practice of retelling "in mediocre verse what has already been done in good prose" (R, p.5). In the "Vorticism" essay of 1914, he said, in terms reminiscent of Hegel's,[26] that the true poet will use an image "because he sees it or feels it," never simply to "back up some creed or system of ethics or economics" (V, p.86). Pound's poet resembles the man whose knowledge, in Hegel's description, always "shapes itself into concrete images," never manifesting itself "in the form of general rules"; his images, Pound says, will never function as "ornaments" (V, p.88) chosen to hang upon a tree of clearly formulated themes, but will be the first, inextricable partners of the poet's unconscious thoughts and feelings, pre-dating any translation into words.

Pound's conviction that the poetic process must never be one of selecting images to illustrate thoughts already formulated in language, also manifested itself, not surprisingly,

[25] "Art Notes," in PVA, p.124. Cf. Chapter IV, p.261.

[26] See Chapter II, p.152.

in a disapproval of allegorical art. An objection to the arbitrary selection of concrete materials to stand in for fixed, stipulated meanings is one of the most forceful themes of the major essay on "Vorticism":

> Almost any one can realize that to use a symbol with an ascribed or intended meaning is, usually, to produce very bad art. We all remember crowns, and crosses, and rainbows, and what not in atrociously mumbled colour. (V, pp.92;86)[27]

Its distinction from the allegorical image, of course, had been a defining feature of the Symbolist "symbol." In a letter to René Taupin in 1928, Pound admitted that he had never read any Symbolist documents on the subject.[28] His lack of understanding of the Symbolists' intentions is well illustrated by his attribution to the symbol, in the "Vorticism" essay, of the very function which they vigorously denied it, what Mockel had called "la représentation éxplicite ou analytique, par une image, d'une idée abstraite PRÉCONCUE":

> The Symbolist dealt in 'association,' that is, in a sort of allusion, almost of allegory. They degraded the symbol to the status of a word. They made it a form of metonomy. One can be grossly 'symbolic,' for example, by using the term 'cross' to mean 'trial.' The Symbol symbolist's symbols have a fixed value, like numbers in arithmetic, like 1, 2, and 7. (V, p.84)

Pound misunderstood the Symbolist "symbol " to be the equivalent of a mathematical "chiffre," a mere "counter."

[27] Cf. AJE, p.11 and "Ezra Pound Files Exceptions"(1916), in PVA, p.221.

[28] See SL, p.218.

In spite of Pound's suggestions to the contrary, however, it will be clear that the "image" which arises as the "primary pigment" in his poet's mind has in fact much in common with the Symbolist "symbol" as it was actually defined. It shares with it, for one thing, an immediate, non-arbitrary relationship with its significance. It is, like the symbol described by Yeats,[29] inextricably bound with the emotional or spiritual state to which it gives expression. As with Hulme, however, we would look in vain to find in Pound any suggestion that this inextricable relationship has anything to do with the participation of the image in some supernatural realm. Pound makes it quite clear in the "Vorticism" essay that for him the image is a psychological fact, nothing more. As is entirely appropriate to the school of psychology which appears to have inspired it, he is content to note its existence without speculating about its metaphysical status; he does not indulge here in Yeatsian rhapsodies about the poet's contact with some transcendental world, with the "deathless light" cast by heaven's fires, or hovering over some mysterious moon-brightened sea:

> An image, in our sense, is real because we know it directly. If it have an age-old traditional meaning this may serve as proof to the professional student of symbology that we have stood in the deathless light, or that we have walked in some particular arbour of his traditional paradiso, but that is not our affair. It is our affair to render the image as we have perceived or conceived it. (V, p.86)

A number of Pound's references to the "image,"

[29] See Chapter II, p.179.

then, seem clearly to indicate that he thought of it as a psychological construct which demands to be objectified, a castle in the air, awaiting transformation in words. Its presence, moreover, and the effort to render it faithfully in language, were marks for Pound of the "sincere self-expression" (V, p.85) which he believed lay behind all truly serious art. The poet's dedication to the image, he held, is what distinguishes his work from the dishonest work of the rhetorician:

> The 'image' is the furthest possible remove from rhetoric. Rhetoric is the art of dressing up some unimportant matter so as to fool the audience for the time being.... Even Aristotle distinguishes between rhetoric, 'which is persuasion,' and the analytical examination of truth. (V, p.83)

That the poet's vocation is to express what he has quite genuinely experienced, and to do so as accurately as possible, was a frequent theme in Pound's Imagist and Vorticist writings. He gave it its fullest expression in the 1913 essay "The Serious Artist," where he represented the poet as a doctor committed to the accurate diagnosis of his own condition (SA, pp.42-8).[30] Pound found significant support for this conviction, moreover, in the writings of Remy de Gourmont. He noted the demand for a "sound surgical treatment" implicit in Gourmont's remark that "Franchement d'écrire ce qu'on pense" was the "seul plaisir d'un écrivain,"[31] and cited, too, Gourmont's dictum in Le Problème

[30] Cf. AJE, p.15.

[31] See "Remy de Gourmont" (1915-16), in SP, p.386. The most complete exposition of Gourmont's influence on Pound to date is Richard Sieburth's Instigations (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978).

du style, that "La seule excuse qu'un homme ait d'écrire" was "de s'écrire lui-même, de dévoiler aux autres la sorte de monde qui se mire en son miroir individuel...."[32] Gourmont had elevated the plastic or sensorial writer, we remember, with his dedication to the remnants of sense-experience in his mind, above the sentimental or ideo-emotive writer, whose act of expression began with the already formulated expressions of others. He had been full of praise for the plastic writer's sincerity, in contrast to the laziness of that writer who "thinks only thoughts already emitted, feels but feelings used up, and has but sensations as faded as old gloves."[33] Pound showed himself to share Gourmont's values, in condemning, at one point, the kind of writer who "thinks from books, convention and cliché, and not from life..." (R, p.11). In asserting the poet's dedication to the image, the product of his own genuine sensual experience, the manifestation of his own genuine unconscious thoughts and feelings, he appeared above all to be celebrating with Gourmont the deep authenticity of the true poet's contribution.

v) Expression.

"When an energy or emotion 'presents an image,'" Pound said in "Affirmations: As for Imagisme," "this may find

[32] Pound quotes Gourmont in "Remy de Gourmont: A Distinction, Followed by Notes"(1919), in LE, p.349. My italics.

[33] Pound quotes Gourmont, in "Remy de Gourmont," p.387.

adequate expression in words. It is very probably a waste of energy to express it in any more tangible medium" (AAI, pp.346-7). Before we consider his remarks concerning the linguistic materials in which the image was to be transcribed, it is worth our while to note his general view about the forces governing the act of expression. This view is, of course, applicable in Pound's scheme to Vorticist artists of all media. It is in accordance, again, with a point of view taken by Kandinsky in The Art of Spiritual Harmony.

Throughout his treatise, Kandinsky repeatedly emphasizes that the painter, in arranging his forms and colours, is answerable first and foremost to his feelings. In his conclusion, however, he proclaims the coming of an age of "reasoned and conscious composition," in which the artist will call upon "reason, consciousness, purpose"[34] to work in close cooperation with those feelings. In his Imagist and Vorticist writings, Pound reveals a similar view about the importance of both feeling and thought for art. He portrays the expressive process repeatedly as one involving the alliance of spontaneous and restraining forces: of emotion and intellect, or unconscious and conscious will, locked together in a highly pressurized struggle. Drawing another of his metaphors from the world of science, he says that art must always be a matter of the "use and limitation of force," comparable to the interaction of "the force of steam and the physical principles of the lever and piston" (AAD, p.29). The essential organiser

[34] Kandinsky, p.57.

of form, he says, may be emotion, but the energy of this emotion will dissipate if not harnessed by the machinery of a strong mind:

> Where the voltage is so high that it fuses the machinery, one has merely the 'emotional man' not the artist. The best artist is the man whose machinery can stand the highest voltage. The better the machinery, the more precise, the stronger, the more exact will be the record of the voltage and of the various currents which have passed through it. (AAI, p.346)

Pound expresses his contempt for the point of view of the "'artistic slop' crowd " that art is somehow "above" intellect. Art in fact comes, he objects, from "intellect stirred by will, impulse, emotion"; it is "emphatically not any of these others deprived of intellect, and out drunk on its 'lone, saying it is the 'that which is beyond the intelligence'" (AGB, p.18).

In asserting that the energy of a poet's emotion must be arrested by the machinery of his intelligence, Pound was aware of his affinity with the Parnassian poets, in their "opposition to...the swash of Hugo, De Musset & Co...."[35] In the discussion of this issue in his "Affirmations: Vorticism" article, moreover, we may detect a striking similarity to Pater's account of how art must combine both "romantic" and "classical" tendencies. Pater, we remember, had objected to the view, which he located, mistakenly, in Coleridge, that the creation of art should be a passive, "blindly organic" process. He had said that such creation, although impelled by intuition, should draw also upon "the power of the understanding," that

[35] Pound, "The Hard and Soft in French Poetry"(1918), in LE, p.286. See also "Landor(1775-1864)"(1917), in SP, p.354.

it should manifest a "supreme intellectual dexterity...."[36] Pound makes precisely Pater's point, in a passage in which he sets Vorticist art in contrast to the phenomenon of "Automatic painting." The work of a painter like Florence Seth, he says, who allows her hand to be controlled entirely by some "mysterious agency" over which she has "little or no control" (AV, p.7), who submits herself passively to a force resembling "the pattern-making faculty which lies in the flower-seed or in the grain or in the animal cell," is marked by a "softness and ultimate failure of interest" because of the "complete lack of conscious intellect" (AV, p.8) involved in its creation. Citing Gaudier-Brzeska's proclamation, in Blast, that "Will and consciousness are our vortex" (AV, p.7), he states emphatically that Vorticist art does not manifest this weakness. The Vorticist struggles, he says, to express his "complete consciousness," and knows that "One, as a human being, cannot pretend fully to express oneself unless one express instinct and intellect together" (AV, p.8).

Pound's sense of the importance of both energy and restraint in composition informs his view about the origin of a poem's rhythmical form. He is emphatic, on the one hand, that the poet should be willing to innovate, to tailor the rhythm of any poem to suit the unique quality of his feeling; he believes it necessary, on the other, that the poet be well disciplined, well practised in the use of traditional rhythmical devices. The poet should always aim to compose, he says, in

[36] See Chapter II, p.150.

a rhythm which "preserves some accurate trace of the emotive impression, or of the sheer characteristic of the fostering or parental emotion" (SA, p.51); there is in every case, he maintains, an "absolute rhythm" (R, p.59; V, p.84) to be sought, a rhythm, that is, which will correspond exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed. The poet must combine his dedication to innovate, however, with "the balance of study...."[37] He must "master all known forms and systems of metric" (R, p.9), and be prepared to draw upon his training. If he should find himself, then, in a particular case, unable to create an exquisitely sensitive new rhythm pattern, more suited to his feelings than any pattern previously employed, he will be capable of resorting to traditional measures which will at least lend to his work a time-tested beauty, or musicality.[38] Pound's ideal poet holds his tendency towards formal innovation in careful balance with a willingness to defer to classical techniques, recognizing each as answerable to the other. "There is no use in a strong impulse," Pound wrote to Harriet Munroe, "if it is all or nearly all lost in bungling transmission and technique." Yet technique means, he says, "nothing but a transmission of the impulse intact";[39] "The tradition is a beauty which we preserve and not a set of

[37] Letter to Felix Schelling, 17 November 1916, in SL, p.99. See also R, p.5.

[38] "T. S. Eliot"(1917), in LE, p.422. See also R, p.12, and the letter to Harriet Munroe, January 1915, in SL, p.49.

[39] Letter to Harriet Munroe, probably September 1913, in SL, p.23.

fetters to bind us."[40] Pound's stance is not unlike that of the original vers libristes, who, we remember, were willing to countenance all formal devices as long as they were selected to suit the unique needs of the individual.[41] It is in the end, too, much like that expressed by Kandinsky in The Art of Spiritual Harmony:

> The artist must be blind to distinctions between 'recognized' or 'unrecognized' conventions of form, deaf to the transitory teachings and demands of his particular eye. He must watch only the trend of the inner need, and hearken to its words alone. Then he will with safety employ means both sanctioned and forbidden by his contemporaries. All means are sacred which are called for by the inner need. All means are sinful which obscure that inner need.[42]

vi) The Linguistic Materials.

It is when we examine Pound's specifications about the linguistic materials wielded by the poet in his construction of the poetic "arrangement" that his remarks most resemble those of Hulme. He shares Hulme's conviction, first of all, that it is the poet's vocation not to draw upon the "armoury" of clichés, but to create his own, original linguistic weapons. He suggests, secondly, that the poet does not handle his words blindly, but visualizes the concrete things to which they correspond. Finally, he maintains that the language of the

[40] "The Tradition"(1913), in LE, p.91.

[41] See Chapter I, p.128 of this thesis. Cf. "T. S. Eliot," p.421.

[42] Kandinsky, p.35.

poem ought to bring the reader as close as possible to the things of the world, that it ought not to confront him with empty abstractions. It was on this final issue, we shall see, that Pound in one sense significantly diverged from Hulme, under the influence of the interpretation of the "concrete" he discovered in the writings of Ernest Fenollosa.

Pound's discussions of practical literary matters are full of warnings against the use of cliché. In his advisory letters to Harriet Munroe, the editor of Poetry, he laments the fact that there are so few contemporary American poets who "can write natural speech without copying clichés out of every Eighteenth century poet still in the public libraries,"[43] and asserts categorically that in poetry "There must be no clichés, set phrases, stereotyped journalese."[44] He writes of his own attempt to eliminate from his translations of Catullus "wedding-cake cupids and clichés like 'dregs of pain,' etc.,"[45] and cautions the fledgling poet Iris Barry against her use of borrowed phrases.[46] One of Pound's earliest written objections to cliché, in the "Osiris" articles of 1911 to 1912, appears to bear the mark of Remy de Gourmont's description of the activity of the ideo-emotive writer. Unlike the sensorial writer, we recall, who made an effort to carve new metaphorical expressions to suit his feelings, the ideo-emotive writer

[43] Letter to Harriet Munroe, March 1913, in SL, p.15.

[44] Letter to Harriet Munroe, January 1915, in SL, p.49.

[45] Letter to Harriet Munroe, February 1916, in SL, p.69.

[46] See letter to Iris Barry, 17 April, 1916, in SL, p.76.

borrowed the products of other men's struggles. He manipulated groups of words which were transparent to his inner eye, but which were charged "au sentiment qui les enveloppe d'un réseau électrique...."[47] Pound says in "Osiris" that he would like to disintegrate all those stock expressions in poetry, those "magnetised groups" of words which, whatever their emotional associations for the poet, will in their impersonality stand always as barriers "between the reader of poetry and the drive of it" (GLO, p.41).[48] Gourmont condemned the ideo-emotive writer, we recall, as a kind of automaton, spewing out his clichés without being truly engaged with the words which compose them. Pound presents a haunting picture of men engaged in such "reflex speech" in Canto VII:

> And all that day, another day:
> Thin husks I had known as men,
> Dry casques of departed locusts
> speaking a shell of speech...
> Propped between chairs and table...
> Words like the locust-shells, moved by no inner being;
> A dryness calling for death....[49]

Pound, like Hulme, sees the poet as the man who will forgo the convenience of ready-made expressions, who will always apply a concentrated attention to what he is writing. Like Hulme, too, he echoes Gourmont's dictum that the role of the true poet is not to borrow expressions, but to create them, that

[47] See Chapter III, p.232.

[48] See also p.28, where he says that those men are unfortunate who think "in blocks and cliches of words...."

[49] "Canto VII"(1921), in The Cantos of Ezra Pound (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p.26.

his place is not at the cash-register, but at the mint, in the inevitable circulation of language (WP, p.331).

In holding that the poet is mentally engaged with his language, moreover, Pound shares Hulme's view that what is present to his mind is a "word with an image sticking on it, never a flat word passed over a board like a counter."[50] In the "Osiris" articles he states that those writers are "favoured of Apollo" who think "in words that hover above and cling close to the things they mean," and expresses his regret for those whose minds are filled with "words disconnected from the objects to which they might correspond" (GLO, p.28). In a 1918 article on the work of Marianne Moore and Mina Loy, he distinguishes Imagism from "logopoeia," the experience of writing poetry which entails no reference to mental images, but which is merely a "dance of the intelligence among words and ideas."[51]

The view that the poet is not a man who blindly manipulates mental "counters" was also something which Pound encountered in Fenollosa's essay on the Chinese ideogram, which came into his hands in 1913. Fenollosa's objection to what Ribot called "la pensée symbolique" takes the form of an attack on the practice of the Medieval logicians. He describes this practice as one of playing with "abstractions, concepts drawn out of things by a sifting process."[52] Like Ribot in Idées

[50] See Chapter V, p.354.

[51] "Marianne Moore and Mina Loy," in SP, p.394.

[52] Fenollosa, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry (San Francisco: City Lights, 1936), p.3. Pound first published Fenollosa's essay in The Little Review in September,

<u>générales</u>, he imagines a hierarchy of concepts of increasing degrees of abstraction, based upon the decreasing conspicuousness of the characteristics "sifted" (p.26). The logicians, he says, played a kind of "checker-board juggling," linking concepts with positive or negative copulas, according as one concept was or was not contained under another in the hierarchy (p.26). Fenollosa, like Gourmont and Hulme, is highly suspicious of the mode of thought which entails such a manipulation of concepts, maintaining that it leads inevitably to a distorted picture of reality, both because of the fixity of its components and because of the rigidity of the rules by which they are allowed to be related. The only respectable mode of thought, he asserts, and that to be manifested in poetry, is the kind which proceeds in the presence of clear images of the world. It is that which "consists in following as closely as may be the actual and entangled lines of forces as they pulse through things," which "deals with no bloodless concepts but watches <u>things</u> <u>move</u> under its microscope" (p.12). Pound, who perceived in Fenollosa's essay "the fundamentals of all aesthetics" (p.3), shared this conviction.

Influenced by Gourmont and Fenollosa, then, Pound concurred both with Hulme's specification that the poet must craft original expressions, and with his view that the poet is conscious in the act of expression of the realities to which his words correspond. He was in agreement with Hulme, moreover, in asserting that it was the poet's duty to bring his reader

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October, November, and December, 1919. Further references will be incorporated in parentheses into the text.

into touch with some concrete reality, to prevent him from gliding through some abstract process. Poetry assumes a vital role in the progress of thought and expression, he said, only when it lives "'close to the thing!.. " (GLO, p.41). One of his "Don'ts" for the would-be "Imagiste" was the warning to "Go in fear of abstractions" (R, p.5); he instructed Iris Barry that the worth of poetry depends in the end on the presence of "enough images of concrete things arranged to stir the reader."[53] Pound found a confirmation for his sense of the importance of a concrete poetic language in Fenollosa, who stated that "Poetry differs from prose in the concrete colours of its diction" (p.21). Fenollosa's purpose in the essay on the Chinese written character was, effectively, to define what a truly concrete language, a language most evocative of the nature of reality, would be; it was in taking his conclusions to heart that Pound diverged from Hulme.

In Fenollosa's essay, Pound found an image of the world in complete keeping with his own picture of a "universe of fluid force." Informed by discoveries in the physical sciences, Fenollosa describes a world composed essentially of "motion and change" (p.19). Natural phenomena, he says, are forces; "Things are only the terminal points, or rather the meeting points, of actions, cross-sections cut through actions, snap-shots" (p.10). The crux of Fenollosa's theory is that the Chinese ideogram, which he holds up as a model for the poetic world, portrays in its lines the essential motion of the things

[53] Letter to Iris Barry, 27 July 1916, in SL, p.90.

it represents. He attempts to emphasize this in fact apocryphal property of the ideogram, by contrasting it to the type of notation found in algebra, where there is "no natural connection between thing and sign..." (p.8). His description of the contrast is very Hulmean: "In reading Chinese," he says, we seem to be "watching <u>things</u> work out their own fate"; "we do not seem to be juggling mental counters...." Fenollosa goes to some lengths to illustrate how individual Chinese figures are invariably "shorthand pictures of actions or processes" (p.9), pictures of things-in-action. He attempts to illustrate, too, how the customary arrangement of ideograms reflects the transference of force between the objects-in-action which is the basic fact about their coexistence.[54]

The most important implication of Fenollosa's view of the universe of force and its reflection in the Chinese character, for English poetry, is that the latter should avoid wherever possible the stringing together of nouns and adjectives with copulas, and employ wherever possible the verb. The kind of writing, he points out, in which nouns and adjectives, like bricks, are stuck together by copulas "into a sort of wall called a sentence" (p.26) is incapable of conveying the motion essential to reality, because it can only portray a world composed of hard little units. It drastically restricts, too, with its rules based on the hierarchy of classifications, the number of natural interactions which a writer can acknowledge (p.27). "We need in poetry," Fenollosa says, not

[54] See below, p.456.

nouns and adjectives and copulas, but "thousands of active words, each doing its utmost to show forth the motive and vital forces" (p.28). He approves particularly of transitive verbs, because they convey not merely motions but the actions which things exert upon each other: nature's transferences of force. He maintains that a poetry composed of verbs will be the most truly concrete poetry, the poetry which lives most "close to <u>things</u>" (p.13), for the basic fact about any thing in the world is that it "is all that it does" (p.28). His sense of the concrete diverges therein from Hulme's, who, as we have seen, conceived a concrete poetry to be composed essentially of nouns: images of still objects in a stable juxtaposition. Pound, we shall see, was to follow Fenollosa's lead rather than Hulme's, and to employ the verb as the essential component of a number of dynamic poetic "arrangements" in the Vorticist period. In a reminiscence of his London years, in the <u>ABC of Reading</u>, he in fact distinguished his stance as a Vorticist from that of the earlier Imagist poets on the grounds of its recognition of the necessity of casting not stationary but moving images upon the reader's visual imagination:

> The defect of earlier Imagist propaganda was not in misstatement [sic] but in incomplete statement. The diluters took the handiest and easiest meaning, and thought only of the STATIONARY image. If you can't think of imagism or phanopoeia as including the moving image, you will have to make a really needless division of fixed image and praxis or action.[55]

[55] Pound, <u>ABC of Reading</u> (London: George Routledge, 1934), p.36. Cf. the letter to Iris Barry, June 1916, in <u>SL</u>, p.82.

vii) The Arrangement.

The predominant theme in all of Pound's remarks concerning the poetic arrangement is much the same as the one in Kandinsky's remarks on the arrangement in paint. He stresses, that is, the power which the individual components have to work upon one another, to augment through their juxtaposition the effects which any of them would have individually. One of his first, striking statements of this principle is found in the "Osiris" series, where he exploits again, for purposes of metaphor, the principles of electromagnetism. He likens the poet's words to "hollow cones of steel" possessed of positive and negative forces; carefully arranged, the cones will not neutralise each other, but will cause each other's powers to multiply. "This peculiar energy which fills the cones," he says, "is the power of tradition, of centuries of race consciousness, of agreement, of association..." (GLO, p.34).[56] In acknowledging the importance of controlling the "powers of vague suggestion" (GLO, p.33) which words possess, Pound resembles, in a very general way, Mallarmé. His account of how the individual forces multiply each other could be seen as an expression, newly cast in the language of science, of Mallarmé's account of how the manifold effects of "des mots" combine to create the "mystère qui constitue le symbole...."[57]

Pound describes the careful arrangement of words

[56] See also p.27 of this essay for an account of the organic working of the elements in the poetry of Arnaut Daniel.

[57] See Chapter I, p.106.

again in his book on Gaudier-Brzeska. Here the analogy he draws is between the elements in the poetic metaphor and the forms, colours and planes arranged by the painter and sculptor. The result of the juxtaposition, again, is a striking new synthesis:

> ...the artist, working in words only, may cast on the reader's mind a more vivid image of either the armour or the pine by mentioning them close together or by using some device of simile or metaphor, that is a legitimate procedure of his art, for he works not with planes or colours but with the names of objects and of properties. It is his business so to use, so to arrange, these names as to cast a more definite image than the layman can cast, in like manner it is the painter's or the sculptor's business so to use his planes, his colours, his arrangements that they shall cast a more vivid, a more precise image of beauty upon the mind of his spectator, than the spectator can get of himself or from a so different department of art. (GB, pp.120-21)

In this passage, Pound represents the result of the juxtaposition of the images simply as the conveyance of a beauty previously unrecognized. From his treatment of the issue in the essay on "Vorticism," however, it is evident that he regards its function to be precisely that which Hulme attributed to his analogous images: the transmission of a particular feeling experienced by the poet in response to some vivid perception.[58] This is clear from his citation of, and commentary upon, two brief two-image poems. The first of these, in which the image of a cat's foot-prints on snow is juxtaposed with the image of

[58] Cf. Eliot's "objective correlative," in "Hamlet," in Selected Essays (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), p.145. Eliot does not trace the feeling, necessarily, to a perception.

plum-blossoms, he describes as conveying the feeling evoked in a Japanese naval officer when he first perceived the feline foot-prints. The other, his own "In a Station of the Metro," sets the image of faces in a crowd alongside one of petals on a wet, black bough; he says that this expresses his own emotion in response to the former. Citing certain poems of Richard Aldington and H. D. as works exemplifying a similar presentation of matter, he remarks that these differ from his examples only in the strength of the emotions which they convey (V, pp.88-9).

It is worth noting that in his discussion of the arrangement of poetic materials Pound shifts his personal definition of the "image" to designate a two-image poem. He describes poems of "super-position," in which "one idea /is/ set on top of another," as "one image" poems (V, p.89), and elsewhere equates the "image" with the "interpretative metaphor."

Referring to the "interpretative metaphor," in a note to Fenollosa's essay, Pound sets it in contrast to the "untrue, or ornamental, metaphor."[59] His message in doing so is precisely the point made by Hulme when he spoke of the analogy being "the thing, not merely decoration," when he said that "Very often the idea, apart from the analogy, or metaphor which clothes it, has no existence."[60] Pound is saying, that is, that the effect of the juxtaposition of images in the ideal "one image" poem is something newly, uniquely achieved

[59] See Pound's note, in The Chinese Written Character, p.23.

[60] See Chapter V , p.335.

by that juxtaposition, that the metaphor is essential to the meaning conveyed, not incidental. He points to the discovery of significance entailed by the recognition of the metaphor by referring to the language in the "one image" poem as the "language of exploration" (V, p.88).[61] The degree of accord which existed between Hulme and Pound on this matter is substantiated by the presence in Pound's work of the time of a number of poems of similar structure to Hulme's. There is nothing in principle to distinguish the workings of Pound's "In a Station of the Metro," or "Alba," or "The New Cake of Soap,"[62] from the poems in which Hulme juxtaposes pairs of clearly analogous images.

The most significant feature to be detected in Pound's work from the London years, however, is not the stillness of poems such as these, but the motion traceable in the poems and translations which reflect the influence of Fenollosa. Like Hulme, Fenollosa acknowledged metaphor as an essential ingredient of poetry, asserting in Symbolist fashion that the likenesses it highlights are symptomatic of the multitude of "homologies, sympathies, and identities" (p.22)[63] which fill the world. Unlike Hulme, however, Fenollosa did not regard the presentation of analogies in poetry as the means by which

[61] Pound recalls Hulme's enthusiastic response to his description of the kind of precise, interpretative metaphor found in Guido Cavalcanti in "Cavalcanti," LE, p.162.

[62] See CSP, pp.119, 119, and 108, respectively.

[63] Fenollosa owed his view of the universal sympathies to Emerson, who had been inspired by Swedenborg.

to create a kind of oasis of stability. He did not relish the idea of a poem which merely reassured the reader by allowing him to focus on a case of objective likenesses, as if focusing simultaneously on two lines in a sculpture which trace the same pattern. That Fenollosa would have been impatient with Hulme's fascination primarily with the synchronic, or sculptural potential of poetry, as opposed to its diachronic, musical potential, is evident from a passage in his essay where he says that the primary reason for his attraction to Chinese poetry is its simulation of the passage of time:

> Contrast the Laocoön statue with Browning's lines:
>
> I spring to the stirrup, and Jorris, and he
>
> . . . . . .
>
> And into the moon light we galloped abreath.
>
> One superiority of verbal poetry as an art rests on its getting back to the fundamental reality of time. Chinese poetry has the unique advantage of combining both elements. It speaks at once with the vividness of painting, and with the mobility of sounds. (p.9)

Fenollosa's sense of the intimate relationship between poetry and "the fundamental reality of time" stems from an acute consciousness both of the passing sounds of its constituents and of the power of the verb to convey visual images which move - properties for which Hulme expressed no concern.

The model for Fenollosa's poetic arrangement is the universe of force. The essential fact about the elements in such a universe, in his view, is that they act upon, or transfer power to, each other. The ideal linguistic unit in a poem, therefore, is the sentence in which there is a transference of

force from one term to another, *via* a transitive verb (p.12). Such transferences of force are not, moreover, isolated occurrences with clear beginnings and clear endings. In nature, Fenollosa points out, "there is *no* completeness," only an indivisible chain of processes:

> The man who sees and the horse which is seen will not stand still. The man was planning a ride before he looked. The horse kicked when the man tried to catch him. The truth is that acts are successive, even continuous; one causes or passes into another.

The ideal sentence, accordingly, would be one in which one term transferred force to another term, which transferred force to another, which transferred force to another, and so on forever:

> All processes in nature are interrelated; and thus there could be no complete sentence (according to this definition) save one which it would take all time to pronounce. (p.11)

The lessons which Fenollosa believed the Chinese language could teach the English poet are dutifully followed by Pound in the translations of Chinese poetry which he constructed from Fenollosa's notes. A simulation of the universe of fluid force is used to especially moving effect in the "Exile's Letter" of 1915, where a dense series of verbal images evoke a season of celebration which ends abruptly, sadly, in stillness (*CSP*, p.144). Similar sequences of moving images appear in the translations "Sennin Poem by Kakuhaku" (*CSP*, p.149) and "Old Idea of Choan by Rosarin" (*CSP*, p.151). In Pound's original poetry, we find suggestions of a restless world in "A Song of the Degrees" (*CSP*, p.104) and "The Coming of War:

Actaeon" (CSP, p.117), and in "Gentildonna" (CSP, p.101) a use of motion put to similar melancholic effect as that in the "Exile's Letter." Pound's enthusiasm for the principle of verbal poetry is especially evident in his contributions to the two volumes of Blast. The brief poem of H. D.'s which he cites in his "Vortex" article as a perfect example of poetic Vorticism presents a string of imperative verbs to convey the image of sea waves in violent motion (B1, p.153). The imperative verb is the back-bone, similarly, of "Come my Cantillations" (B1, p.46). The special energy of the song in "Ancient Music" (B2, p.20) is owed to its density of archaised verbs.

Fenollosa's prescriptions are perhaps best exemplified, however, in the poem in Blast, 2, entitled "The Game of Chess" (B2, p.19). In this composition, with which Pound aimed to highlight the analogy between an arrangement in words and the arrangement of forms in a Vorticist painting, the constituent images are chess-pieces - "Red knights, brown bishops, bright queens." These pieces are represented, moreover, not as dead counters at rest on the chessboard, but as pieces alive, in motion, radiating energy: "This board is alive with light; these pieces are living in form...." In the chess-piece Pound finds a perfect example of an object whose significance depends greatly on its power of movement, an object which in a very special sense "is all that it does." He represents the pieces engaged in their characteristic moves, moves whose pattern he traces, perhaps in imitation of the mimetic calligraphy of the ideogram, with Roman letters: the knights are "falling in

strong L's of colour"; the queens are tracing "X's"; the pawns cleave the board in a pattern like a "Y." The pieces-in-motion, furthermore, do not merely act, but like the objects in a Fenollosan universe act upon each other. The crossing rooks clash with the angling queens, who are looped by the leaps of the knights; the pawns are embanking the king, who falls and is sucked into a vortex. As if, finally, in acknowledgement of Fenollosa's contention that the chain of natural processes is unending, Pound concludes the chain of events leading to the king's demise with a "Renewal of contest"; he tells us that the pieces will endlessly "break and reform" their pattern. Pound's poetic chess-game, with its evocation of the geometrical lines of a Vorticist painting (one thinks particularly of Edward Wadsworth's "Slack Bottom"(1914)) neatly connects Fenollosa's poetics with the desire expressed by painters like Lewis and Wadsworth to create paintings which would radiate the energy of what they perceived as a violent universe. Lewis' affinity with Fenollosa is powerfully clear in the densely verbal language with which he evokes "the violences of all things," in his poetic effort in Blast, 1, "The Enemy of the Stars."[64]

viii) The Significance of the Arrangement.

When Pound proclaims in Gaudier-Brzeska that the Vorticist artists are united in the "unending adventure towards

[64] See Bl, pp.64 and 75, in particular.

'arrangement,'" he asserts that their quest culminates in the discovery of the "equations of eternity." A sculpture of Gaudier-Brzeska's, a painting of Lewis', a handful of Imagist verses, are all in some way equivalent, he says, to "a formula like $(x-a)^2 + (y-b)^2 = r^2$" (GB, p.122). The likeness between the highest work of art and such an equation is a point to which Pound returns many times in the writings of the London years (SR, pp.115-6; WP, pp.331-2; V, pp.90-3). The details of those discussions make it possible for us to conclude our study by establishing Pound's position on a point which we have traced from the Symbolists, through Pater and Yeats, to Hulme: we may see quite clearly what he imagined to be the ultimate significance of the product which the poet leaves to his reader.

The particular equation which Pound cites in Gaudier-Brzeska is one written in the language of Cartesian geometry. That the work of art amounts to this and no other kind of equation is a crucial aspect of Pound's mathematical analogy; he goes to some lengths in the "Vorticism" article to outline what kinds of equation the work of art is not, and why. He is adamant, first of all, that the product of the Vorticist's labours is not the equivalent of a merely arithmetical equation, like $3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$. Such an equation, he says, is the "simple statement of one fact," which "does not implicate any other" (V, p.90), and the significance of the ideal work of art is never so restricted. The ideal poem, he seems to be saying, will never simply amount to a statement that a particular man had a particular emotional reaction to

a particular scene at a particular point in time. In asserting that the work of art is of wider significance than this, however, he is not suggesting that it merely presents some generalization drawn from many particular cases; he denies that it is the equivalent of the algebraic equation $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$, the general principle which summarizes a number of similar facts, like $3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$, $6^2 + 8^2 = 10^2$, $9^2 + 12^2 = 15^2$. The poem, he implies, will not consist in a statement of a general truth gleaned, let us say, from the experience of many similar emotional reactions to similar things at similar times. The language of poetry, he suggests, is not the "language of philosophy," which "applies to a lot of facts" and "MAKES NO PICTURE." Lastly, Pound asserts, the work of art is not the equivalent of the kind of equation which describes the relative dimensions of geometrical figures. A Euclidean equation like $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$, which describes the relations of the lengths of the sides a and b and the hypotenuse c of a right-angled triangle, is something, he says, which <u>describes</u> form but does not <u>create</u> it. Such an equation more closely resembles "talk about art" (V, p.91) than art itself.

The work of the Vorticist artist, Pound maintains, has its closest analogue in the kind of equation found in analytical geometry: the equation with which, given a system of axes and coordinates, it is possible to create innumerable examples of a particular geometrical form. The equation he cites as an example is $(x-a)^2 + (y-b)^2 = r^2$, with which one is able to construct countless circles of varying sizes.

Instead of governing geometrical forms, he says, the works of art are lords over "states of consciousness" (WP, p.332) or "race-long recurrent moods." With this assertion he posits a new definition for the poet's "image":

> By the 'image' I mean such an equation; not an equation of mathematics, not something about a b and c, having something to do with form, but about sea, cliffs, night having something to do with mood. (V, p.92)

Pound describes the equation governing the circle in familiar terms:

> It is the circle. It is not a particular circle, it is any circle and all circles. It is nothing that is not a circle. It is the circle free of space and time limits. It is the universal, existing in perfection, in freedom from space and time. (V, p.91)

His identification of the Vorticist poem with such an equation amounts, of course, to the statement about the significance of art which we have traced from Schopenhauer, through the Symbolists and Yeats, to its rejection in Hulme's theory of poetry. Pound is saying that the poem does not merely describe a particular thing, but that it presents its reader with the Idea of a thing; it does not merely convey the idiosyncratic mood of one man at a certain moment, but captures some universal form of human experience. In focusing on the poem's special likeness to the equation of analytical geometry, with its function not merely of describing some fact or facts, but of enabling its possessor "actually to create" (V, p.91), Pound seems neatly to be reiterating something like the

Mallarméan view that the function of poetic language is not merely to convey some meaning through the passing of a linguistic currency, but actually in each experience of reading to cause the recreation of some reality for the reader. The essentially generative function of the Cartesian equation recalls the essentially generative function which Schopenhauer attributed to the Idea, when he spoke of its power endlessly to inspire, "in him who has comprehended it, ideas which are new as regards the concept of the same name...."[65] Our sense of the affinity between Pound's views about the power of the poem and Schopenhauer's description of the art of Idea is strengthened by Pound's redefinition of the "image" as a "vortex":

> The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing. (V, p.92)

Pound's choice of the language of mathematics to convey a message about the connections between the work of art and some "infinite" realm may be indicative of the same self-consciousness which prompted him to recast his claims about the mystical apprehension into the language of physics. Discussing the equations contained in art in The Spirit of Romance, he indicates that talk about such equations is simply an alternative, for some, perhaps, a more acceptable way of describing what can equally well be described as the working of a kind of magic. "If one have a mind which inclines to

[65] See Chapter I, p.67.

magic rather than to science," he concedes quite happily, "one will prefer to speak of these equations as spells or incantations; it sounds more arcane, mysterious, recondite" (SR, p.5). In general, however, Pound shows much less discomfort than Hulme with the claims for art which carry with them an amount of "romantic," "metaphysical baggage." The claim for the "infinite" significance of art which he makes in comparing it to the analytical equations is supplemented by a number of other remarks about art's power to bring its beholder into contact with some higher realm. In the prescriptions for Imagism which he set down in March, 1913, he describes the poem which presents an "image" as one which conveys "that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art" (R, p.4). He makes the point again in his review of the March 1914 exhibition at the Goupil Gallery, pointing to the transcendental quality of the sculpture of Gaudier-Brzeska and Epstein as the feature which confirms their greatness:

> These things are great art because they are sufficient in themselves. They exist apart, unperturbed by the pettiness and the daily irritation of a world full of Claude Phillipses, and Saintsburys and of the constant bickerings of uncomprehending minds. They infuriate the denizens of this superficial world because they ignore it. Its impotences and its importances do not affect them. Representing, as they do, the immutable, the calm thoroughness of unchanging relations, they are as the gods of the Epicureans, apart, unconcerned, unrelenting.[66]

66 "Exhibition at the Goupil Gallery," p.109.

CONCLUSION

When he said that the experience of Hulme's ideal artist was the same as that of the "Romantic voyant," simply described in different philosophical language, Frank Kermode was achieving little more, effectively, than the matching of ghosts whose very identity he was at the same time stripping away. He would have done better to have taken heed of I. A. Richards' remarks at the beginning of The Philosophy of Rhetoric, concerning a similar mistake made by the philosopher Berkeley:

> Berkeley was fond of talking about these 'bare notions,' these 'naked undisguised ideas,' and about 'separating from them all that dress and encumbrance of words.' But an idea or a notion, when unencumbered and undisguised, is no easier to get hold of than one of those oiled and naked thieves who infest the railway carriages of India. Indeed an idea, or a notion, like the physicist's ultimate particles and rays, is only known by what it does. Apart from its dress or other signs it is not identifiable.[1]

Kermode was seriously misguided in assuming that he could take the descriptions of creative activity given by Schopenhauer, Mallarmé, Yeats, Hulme and Pound,[2] dispose of their incompatible language, and be left with identical naked ideas. Laid side by side, the anti-positivist aesthetics of these writers prove in many respects to be analogous. But the glow of the

[1] I. A. Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), p.5. Subsequent references to this work appear in the text with the abbreviation PR.

[2] Kermode includes Pound and his "moving Image" or "Vortex" in his list of anti-positivist writers and their "aesthetic monads." See, for example, Romantic Image, pp.118 and 135-6.

supernatural which adheres to some, and not to others, makes it inadvisable to reduce them to one. As a careful reading of Hulme, in particular, has revealed, it was not a merely incidental fact that he could not tolerate references to the "magical properties of the image" or to the "exact parallel between poetic and mystical cognition." His insistence on describing the artistic activity "in a plain way," without "hocus-pocus" or "metaphysical baggage," sprang from a deep-rooted attitude which he took some time to define, and which he hoped his writings would work to promote. This "classical" attitude did not preclude an adherence to some of the tenets of the English Romantic and French Symbolist aesthetics, but it was absolutely intolerant of the attachment of transcendental significance to the experiences of either the artist apprehending nature, or his audience his art.

I began my study with an attempt to clarify the precise points of difference between the positivist account of the creative experiences typical of the Parnasse and the idealist aesthetic of Symbolism. In subsequent chapters I have noted the repetition, in various guises, of the features of the latter account which reflected a disapproval of the role ascribed by Taine to the analytical and generalizing intellect. These have included the descriptions of a non-analytical moment of apprehension, a process of articulation in which significance is not merely translated but discovered, and a product whose implications will ultimately elude all attempts by the intellect to comprehend them. In the movement from Schopenhauer to Hulme, <u>via</u> the accounts of Ribot, Gourmont and

Bergson, we have seen the restatement of these tenets in ways designed to strip them of their unearthly light.

Perhaps the most interesting redescription we have seen has been that of the moment when the artist pierces through his "veil" to apprehend reality. In Bergson's account of the experience of "intuition" we have seen the pane of glass which Carlyle and Mallarmé smashed to achieve contact with the "Infinite" transformed into a veil of concepts. The penetration of this interface by the artist, in an intense reversal of normal thought processes, results in the recognition of the interpenetrated flux of things still firmly rooted in the world of time. Hulme found this account most appealing, a way of redescribing a familiar state of mind without "spilling religion" or invoking timeless "Ideas." He saw it as the truth to replace beliefs about mystical apprehension which he believed could be credited simply to an intensity of emotion.

A second major redefinition suggested in Hulme's notes, and traceable back through Bergson to Ribot, is the explanation of the process of discovery in terms of the development of the "conception idéale." Aided by the unconscious mind, to which no deeper metaphysical connection was ascribed, this construct of mental images was said to continue to develop through the struggle to give it objective form. Ribot acknowledged a role both for the emotions and the intellect in the dissociation and association involved in its growth, rendering it unnecessary to cite, as Schopenhauer had done, the presence of an inspiring "Idea." In his account of the "logique des images," furthermore, he provided a model for an experience

of recognition untranslatable into a language of concepts, without having to attach to it any sort of mystery. The unstable emotion-based associations which Ribot attributed to the "imagination diffluente" served to account for the strange clusters of images in Symbolist verse which had been ascribed by their makers to mysterious spiritual relations. His description of these associations, together with Bergson's explanation of how a cluster of diverse images may so frustrate the intellect that they force a reader into a state of "intuition," has been seen to go a long way towards redefining the effect which Schopenhauer and Mallarmé had explained as the precipitation of an "Idea." The more stable, objective analogies which Ribot identified in the working of the "imagination plastique," with its stronger but by no means exclusive presence of the "facteur intellectuel," have been seen more aptly to describe Hulme's own verses, designed as tiny oases in the flux of a "cindery" world.

The process of demystifying the Symbolist account of the poetic activity and its product in many respects culminated in the work of I. A. Richards. The number of points of affinity between Hulme's theories and the discussion in Principles of Literary Criticism (published, like Speculations, in 1924) is remarkable. Richards formulated clearly, for one thing, in his definition of the "emotive" and "scientific" uses of language,[3] the distinction between an immediate poetic

[3] See I. A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism, p.211. Subsequent references to this work appear in the text with the abbreviation PLC.

language and a language of "counters." He saw that words could be wielded both to express attitudes, through their intrinsic powers, and truths, through the extrinsic meanings for which they are mere symbols. His acute consciousness of how language functions to express attitudes, moreover, led Richards as it had Hulme to the realization that in discourse aimed to move or convert "logical arrangement is not necessary" (PLC, p.212). As regarded his sense of his own vocation, moreover, it made him intent on countering certain attitudes which he saw reflected in certain modes of discourse, and in the language of aesthetics in particular. In the text of Science and Poetry (1926) he refers to the transition over the past seventy years from "the Magical View of the World to the scientific":[4] from a view which invokes spirits in the interest of satisfying the need to account for primary causes, to a view which ignores such a need and neutralizes the world by concerning itself only with phenomena. He makes it clear there that it is his own desire to further this shift; in Principles and Coleridge on Imagination (1934) his locus for that effort is an account of the creative imagination:

> There is nothing peculiarly mysterious about imagination. It is no more marvellous than any other of the ways of the mind. Yet it has so often been treated as an arcanum that we naturally approach it with caution. It is desirable at least to avoid part of the fate which befell Coleridge, and our account will be devoid of theological implications. (PLC, p.149)

[4] I. A. Richards, Poetries and Sciences: A Reissue of Science and Poetry (1926, 1935) with Commentary (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p.51.

The most direct parallel with Hulme to be found in Richards' demystified account of the creative process is his direct attack on the descriptions of the apprehension given in what he labels "Truth and Revelation" doctrines. Among these he cites Wordsworth's pantheistic interpretation of the imaginative experience in "Tintern Abbey" (PLC, p.198) and Carlyle's claim about the artist seizing and binding into his art "'eternity looking through time, the God-like rendered visible'" (PLC, p.201). For all such descriptions of moments when, as in Middleton Murry's words, "the hidden truth seems to break through the veil" (PLC, p.204), Richards offers a simple, deflating explanation. Like Hulme and Ribot,[5] he attributes expressions of mystical belief to a mere intensity of emotion; such claims, he says, may be "emotionally satisfying" (PLC, p.204) but they must not be mistaken as referentially true. His own explanation for the states so described is that they are moments in which the individual's mental "impulses," his nerve-based responses to stimuli, are so organised as to leave him in a state of absolute disinterestedness (PLC, pp.197-8). Richards' redefinition of the moment of apprehension differs from Hulme's in being avowedly materialist.[6] It accords with Hulme's generally,

[5] Richards acknowledges Ribot's Problemes de psychologie affective in PLC, p.73.

[6] Richards was grinding the axe not of the "classical" attitude, but of a "Materialist trying to reinterpret...the utterances of an extreme Idealist." See Coleridge on Imagination (London: Kegan Paul, 1934), p.19. Subsequent references appear in the text with the abbreviation CI. Hulme pointed out that the "classical" attitude was not to be equated with materialism. See RC, p.117.

however, in being designed to combat "bogus entities" like "the ineffable, ultimate, unanalysable, simple Idea" (PLC, p.12) and the unique "aesthetic emotion" which Clive Bell envisioned lifting an individual out of time (PLC, p.11).[7]

In Coleridge on Imagination Richards moved beyond the apprehension to reconsider the notion of the organic process of articulation and its product. It is his contention there that Coleridge's account of the experience of Imagination, although a definite improvement on the associationist description of Hartley, has since been corroborated, and is better described, by recent developments in the very psychological tradition he sought to counter. Among these developments he cites the theory of the emotion-based association of images and ideas which we have seen in Ribot (CI, pp.67-8). Richards devotes a great part of his study, further, to the translation into psychological terms of what Coleridge had called the transformation of the reader into "an active creative being" (CI, p.83): the same phenomenon which Schopenhauer had attributed to the presentation of the generative "Idea." His analysis of the "mutual modification" of images in the product of Imagination (CI, pp.83-9), together with his account of metaphor in The Philosophy of Rhetoric, constitutes a satisfying redescription of the workings of the product which Mallarmé had depicted as a vehicle of mysterious spiritual relations, or a cluster of stones exchanging magical light.

[7] Cf. Hulme's aversion to this notion as discussed in Chapter VI, p.414.

In the closing lecture in The Philosophy of Rhetoric, Richards directly acknowledges the work of Hulme, (PR, pp.127-34). His remarks there are critical but by no means, as Kermode has wrongly suggested,[8] dismissive. The major point he wishes to make is that Hulme failed to develop a comprehensive account of metaphor, and that he focused perhaps too exclusively on the power of language to evoke visual images. His general tone, however, is one of disappointment that Hulme did not live to develop his intuitions to their full potential. In this regret he is not alone.

[8] See Romantic Image, p.132.

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